

Stanisław Leszczycki

MEMOIRS FROM 1939-1945

Abstract: The paper contains war memories of Prof. S. Leszczycki, an outstanding scholar, who, as a young geographer, began his career in Cracow, in 1930. Arrested by Nazis with the group of Jagiellonian University professors, he returned happily to Cracow in 1941 and took part in the secret teaching. When German troops left Cracow in January, 1945, S. Leszczycki reorganised the Institute of Geography after the 5.5-year break and became its head. Although next year he moved to Warsaw, continued his formal and informal contact with Cracow geographers.

Key words: Second World War, secret teaching, Nazi occupation, war memoirs

Many years have passed since the events I would like to focus on in these memoirs. These are facts of differing levels of importance and significance put together according to what my memory has retained. I cannot exclude the possibility that the memoirs include some inaccuracies or gaps not resulting from any biased perceptions. Only some descriptions of facts are based on the documents from my collection. I tried to limit my memoirs to just activity connected with the Jagiellonian University. I also made use of the notes of S. Milatowa, M.A., which I asked her to write after the war. They shed light on our common action of securing and taking over the university buildings on the day of the liberation of Krakow. I am very grateful to her for that. I mostly refer to my own experiences, so the facts mentioned may not always be essential for the further activity of the University. However, at that time, as a senior assistant, I had no access to the issues that were crucial for the existence of the University. Nevertheless, irrespective of their varying importance, the events described are usually unknown. Therefore, they may contribute to the official history of the Jagiellonian University in 1939-1945.

As for many other Poles, the outbreak of World War II was quite an unexpected event for me. At that time I had just signed a contract with the Jagiellonian University dated August 17, 1939 (No. 7114/39). Pursuant to that contract I was appointed a Senior

Assistant at the Institute of Geography from 1 September, 1939 to 31 August, 1940 and I was awarded my earlier remuneration according to the eighths pay group. In total, together with the compensation allowance, that amounted, as far as I can remember, to 270,00 zloty.

That allowed my family and myself to enjoy a restful holiday in Koscielisko near Zakopane. Also the visit of my friend, Roman Gajda, had a calming influence on me. At that time he was an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he assured me that the war would not break out soon. Such an atmosphere prevailed till the announcement of general mobilisation, which made us return to Cracow in a hurry.

Several days later, the War began. Being exempt from military service I stayed at home with my family. In the early days of September, my wife, our little daughter and I joined the crowd of refugees. Our daughter was in her pram. We headed eastwards, walking mostly along field paths and, after several days, we reached the village of Grobla in Bochnia region. There we lived with the Wydra family, relatives of my uncle's. We stayed there till the Polish-German front became distant enough. Some days later, we headed back to Cracow. Our apartment on ul. Focha (street) had been temporarily taken over by German soldiers. Aware of the fact that, without proper means, I would not be able to maintain a separate flat we moved in with my mother-in-law, Olga Stolfowa, who lived at ul. Retoryka 1.

As soon as we had returned to Cracow, I went to the Institute of Geography on ul. Grodzka. The building was "protected" by two caretakers, Adam Figuła and Alojzy Szafruga, who lived on the premises. Professor Jerzy Smoleński had not yet returned from his holiday. Docent Wiktor Ormicki and several other assistants from the Institute were also absent. Therefore, I visited the Rector, Professor T. Lehr-Spławiński, and presented a report on the current condition of the Institute of Geography. At the end of our conversation, I was entrusted with the care of the Institute and its premises. The Rector gave me a letter dated 11 September, 1939, reading: *It is hereby certified that Doctor Stanisław Leszczycki, a senior assistant at the Jagiellonian University, takes care of the Institute and the building of the Institute of Geography (ul. Grodzka 64) of the Jagiellonian University. Rector of the Jagiellonian University (T. Lehr-Spławiński).* A round seal of the Rector of the University was impressed on the document.

In September, I would frequently go to the Institute of Geography. First Professor J. Smoleński, Docent W. Ormicki, Doctor M. Klimaszewski, Docent J. Szaflarski, Doctor Z. Figlewiczówna and then several other employees of the Institute returned to Cracow. Among them was the third caretaker, Jan Dziuba, who had relatives in the village of Giebultow near Cracow. We were getting ready for the beginning of the academic year, since we had received news that the Rector was conducting negotiations with the occupational military authorities concerning the inauguration of the academic year 1939/1940. According to general opinion, the talks were successful. From time to time we would meet our former German students in town wearing uniforms. They mostly came from Bielsko or Silesia. Some of them pretended not to know us, others would nod but without stopping to talk. Only one of them, Sommer, was an exception. After we had been arrested in November 1939, he apparently visited the institute (according to

A. Figuła, a caretaker) and told the caretaker that everything had changed and that the changes would also affect the Institute.

At the beginning of November we obtained information that a meeting of University and occupational authorities was to be held on 6 November, 1939. In the address issued by the Rector all professors, docents and lecturers were asked to attend that meeting. Since I was in charge of the “Study of Tourism” at the University at that time and I had been conducting lectures and classes since 1936, I decided that I was also obliged to participate in that event.

On my initiative and with the support from the Voivodship Office a postgraduate studies programme in the form of the “Study of Tourism” was established at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University. It was one of the first such institutes of an academic level in Europe and it developed successfully both from the didactic and academic points of view. Twenty graduates with master’s degrees from different faculties were admitted to this one-year study program. The study also conducted academic research and published two periodicals entitled *Prace (Works)* and *Komunikaty (Announcements)*. It was known abroad and had vivid contacts with similar academic centres in Europe. I was its head in 1936-1939. Because of its pioneer nature in Europe at that time, forty years later I was elected to be a honorary member of the International Association of Academic Experts in Tourism in St. Gallen in Switzerland. It was an act of recognition of the contribution to creating the academic bases of tourism.

On 6 November, almost all of us were present at the institute. Half an hour before the planned meeting with the German authorities three of us decided to leave. They were Professor Smoleński, Docent Ormicki and myself. On the way Professor Smoleński, maybe because of a hunch, told us that he wanted to visit the Theological College to see his son, Stanisław (who is now a bishop in Cracow). So we went to the college for a moment. Professor Smoleński said goodbye to his son not knowing that it was their last meeting. From the college we went to the “famous” lecture of Obersturmbaunführer Müller. We were arrested and then sent to a prison in Wrocław and to the concentration camps in Sachsenhausen and Dachau. The so-called *Sonderaktion Krakau* is well known and it has been described many times. That it why I am not going to elaborate on it in these memoirs.

I returned from Dachau in January 1941. The situation in Cracow was entirely different. The building of the Institute of Geography on ul. Grodzka 64 had been taken over by the Health Agency of the German General Guberniya Office. I learnt from the caretakers that the building had been remodelled and adapted to serve the needs of that agency. All the lecture halls, seminar rooms and larger units were converted into small rooms. A corridor was created in the middle of the main lecture hall situated on the ground floor. On both sides of it there were numerous doors leading to the small rooms. This situation lasted till 1944. During the last six months of the war the building was used by German soldiers who completely devastated the institute’s furnishings. The only two employees of the Institute who remained on the premises were the caretakers – A. Figuła and A. Szafruga, Professor Smoleński died in the camp

in Sachsenhausen and Docent Ormicki in Mathausen. M. Klimaszewski and Z. Figlewicz worked in the Population and Social Welfare Division of the General Guberniya situated on the former ul. Wolska (at present ul. Piłsudskiego). S. Milatowa with a considerable part of the Institute's property moved to the Landeskunde des Institutes für deutsche Ostarbeit, which was situated in the College of Physics, Collegium Maius, on ul. Gołębia. In order to undertake that employment Milatowa obtained a permit from the Polish underground authorities. In her notes she mentions that she had incongruous orders. According to some of them, she was to break up and partially destroy the collections of the Institute of Geography while moving them to the Institute für deutsche Ostarbeit. Other orders, including mine after my return, emphasised the need to preserve them as far as it was possible so that they could be used for academic work after the liberation.

Several weeks after my return from Dachau I was visited by Professor F. Klute from Wrocław, whom I knew from before the war. I was once his guest during my brief stay in Wrocław in 1936. He offered me a job at the Institute für deutsche Ostarbeit. I turned it down explaining that my health was too poor after the long stay in the concentration camp.

At that time Professor Władysław Szafer was the Rector of the "secret university". He managed the underground education and arranged financial help for professors and other university employees, as well as gathering information about the material standing of the university and the current events. He was really in charge of all the activities that were part of University life. During the occupation, after he had been evicted from his flat near the Botanical Gardens of the Jagiellonian University, he lived in the district of Podgórze, on ul. Na Zjeździe, near the bridge.

I reported to him and showed him the above-cited letter from Rector Lehr-Spławiński of 11 September 1939. He, on his part, also entrusted me with the care of the Institute of Geography of the Jagiellonian University and suggested that I should be involved in the underground tuition system.

Several weeks after my return from Dachau, I undertook employment as a "bilingual" telephonist at the Municipal Waterworks Company. I got that job thanks to the Company's vice-director Mr Tokarski. Several months later, I was promoted to the post of a section official in the supplies division. In 1942, I was moved to the Division for the Care of the Evicted which was later incorporated into the Chief Care Council, where I was in charge of the food warehouse and following M. Klimaszewski's detention, of the supplies division.

In the camp where I found myself very much by chance I made use of the "lesson" I was taught there, namely that I was staying there because I was a Pole. After my return I understood that I could no longer be an apolitical pacifist, which had been my view before the war. That is why I started looking for some contacts with underground political organisations. I developed considerably wide contacts with several organisations ranging from monarchist to communist ones. In 1944-1945, I published several articles in *Kurier Powszechny*, e.g. *On the Polish-Soviet Conflict* (R.Z. of 23 December, 1944), *On the English Guarantees Given to Poland* (R.I. of 30 December, 1944); *For a Common Opinion of the Polish Society* (R.II. of 31 January, 1945) or *On Introducing the Planned Economy in Poland* (June 1944).

However, I was mostly involved with PPS (the Polish Socialist Party) to which I had been introduced by the mechanics employed at the City Waterworks Company. In 1945, I became a member of the revived PPS and had direct connections with the party's leadership in Cracow and later in Warsaw.

From the beginning of 1945, I belonged to a group within PPS that was responsible for preparing changes to the constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1935. We were also concerned with the new social order, new administrative division and a number of social and cultural reforms, also including issues related to university education.

Earlier, most probably in 1944, we organised a political group that had no connections with any political parties. Within that group we discussed the matters related to the Poland of the future, such as the system and political, social, cultural and other issues. As far as I can remember, Witold Trąpczyński, A. Grosicki, Leon Marszałek, Stanisław Dobrowolski, Włodzimierz Reczek, Bronisław Oyrzanowski and many others were members of that group. Our discussions, if I am to evaluate them today, were of a self-teaching nature, because many future activists of the People's Republic of Poland, who took over a number of responsible positions in 1945, originated from that group. Some of them even reached the Polish government in Lublin in 1944.

At the same time I started lecturing at the underground university. I lectured at the faculty of geography (anthropogeography, political and economic geography) and at the Institute of political sciences (geopolitics).

Probably in 1943, I organised meetings at my apartment for the employees of the Jagiellonian University, mostly of docents and assistants. The premises were relatively safe, because my mother-in-law, Olga Stolfowa, was a music teacher, so her home was frequently visited by her pupils and other people. The participants were mostly former inmates of different concentration camps. During our meetings we mainly discussed issues related to academic education in Poland in the future and, in particular, the organisation system of studies at the Jagiellonian University. I do not remember the details of our discussions. However, we voiced our desire that the universities in Poland should undergo democratisation, which particularly concerned the Jagiellonian University. Among others, we were disgusted at the conservatism and nepotism prevailing at the Jagiellonian University.

After several such discussion meetings, we decided to establish a "club" which was later often referred to as the *Club of Democratic Professors*. Officially that club was established as late as 1945, after the liberation. At that time we used to meet at the *Esplanada Café* that was later converted into a Institute store.

At one of such meetings during the occupation I started a discussion concerning the work that should be undertaken at the Jagiellonian University at the end of the war and immediately afterwards, before the official authorities of the University could be appointed.

Just by chance I have preserved the theses of that paper, which, unfortunately, is not dated, but I think that I presented it at the end of the war, probably in 1944.

Below I quote the contents of that paper, which consists of 12 points:

A group of employees of the Jagiellonian University, having in mind the well being and development of Polish academic education and, in particular, of the Jagiellonian

University, hereby appeals to the University Authorities for a favourable approach to the remarks presented below.

Being aware of the fact that the Authorities of the Jagiellonian University might have already solved, arranged or even implemented many of the discussed issues (about which, for different reasons, the said group might not have been informed), a list of the following proposals is put forward:

1. ***Common opinion.*** Working out a common and uniform opinion of the representatives of academic education, especially of the Jagiellonian University, concerning the organisation and activity of the University during the transition period, as well as the future reform of the higher education system and academic work in Poland, is for numerous reasons of great significance for future development and it may protect Polish learning and education from irreparable losses. This opinion should be independent of extra-university factors. The creation, implementation and popularisation thereof should now be the objectives and the signers of this document put forward these remarks as the basis of the discussed opinion and declare active co-operation on these issues.
2. ***Co-operation during the transition period.*** During the transition period, from now until the moment of the official establishment and complete organisation of academic education system, a close co-operation within all university circles (professors, docents, assistants, auxiliary and technical staff) is particularly desirable, especially on the issues listed below.
3. ***Inventory of the property of the particular departments of the Jagiellonian University.*** To ensure proper care of the property of the Jagiellonian University's Institutes (which is necessary to continue work during and after the transition period), it is advisable to contact the heads of particular Institutes in order to carry out detailed cataloguing of the property of the Institutes and to entrust them with the care of these Institutes. In case of the Institutes that for some reason or other have no management, deputy-heads should be appointed for the transition period and obliged to take good care of the Institutes entrusted to them.
4. ***Cataloguing commissions for particular groups of departments.*** For this purpose, cataloguing commissions should be appointed for particular groups of Institutes (e.g. within the existing faculties). They will make lists of the property of the Institutes and establish (propose) a list of responsible persons in charge (or their deputies).
5. ***Duties of the heads.*** The head of a Institute is obliged to: 1) take constant care and hold updated information of the Institute (the building, inventory, equipment, library, collections, instruments, etc.); 2) protect it, especially in the period of changes, war and political turmoil. In connection with this, the head is authorised (because of his age or health condition) to appoint his deputy as well as members of the auxiliary personnel.
6. ***Agreement with the official authorities.*** For the proper safeguarding of property belonging to the Jagiellonian University in the mentioned period of political changes, it seems necessary for the University Authorities to seek agreement with the so-called *official factors*, that is underground political authorities. The employees of the Jagiellonian University offer solidary co-operation in this respect.

- 7. *Immediate restitution of the Jagiellonian University's Institutes.*** As a result of the occupant's activities many Jagiellonian University's Institutes have suffered considerable damage. Therefore, the Jagiellonian University employees are under obligation to carry out the immediate reconstruction thereof as soon as the war is over. The pace and quality of that reconstruction will testify to the strength and organisation of university circles. For this purpose, the heads (or their responsible deputies) will now prepare the reconstruction plan for the particular Institutes so that they may be reopened immediately at the right moment. The Institutes may suffer unpredictable losses because of any delays or organisational omissions committed during the break-through period. Work aimed at the reconstruction of the Institutes in the initial phase should, in the first place, be concerned with reopening the Institutes as educational institutions and only then as research centres.
- 8. *Reconstruction principles.*** The reconstruction of the Institutes should consist in: 1) recovering or finding proper premises; 2) collecting the existing inventory, collections, library, etc. that are scattered throughout Cracow; 3) recovering from outside Cracow what was taken away; during the reconstruction of the Institutes their heads will prepare, apart from the most detailed inventories, lists of the sustained losses that will constitute the basis for claiming damages (instead of the existing estimates drafts); they will also thoroughly analyse the possibilities of property vindication.
- 9. *Facilitating academic research.*** The Authorities of the Jagiellonian University are kindly requested to issue an appeal to the university circles for the most effective help and co-operation concerning facilitated access to literature, materials and resources for faculty members. This primarily concerns help for those evicted, those who work in the country (away from Cracow) and for those who are preparing studies commissioned by underground authorities.
- 10. *Facilitating students' work.*** The action of facilitating studies (the so-called "underground tuition") for university students during the transition period is considered extremely beneficial, therefore, the authorities of the Jagiellonian University are kindly requested to support this issue wholeheartedly. If there are no competent examiners, their replacements should be appointed.
- 11. *The simplification of studies after the war.*** The issue of simplifying studies for all students after the war requires more thorough elaboration (possibly by the commissions mentioned in section 4 hereinabove). A substantial approach (range of knowledge, methodology, etc.) should be adopted rather than a formal one (the number of years of studies, the sequence of studies, subjects or intervals between the exams). The University should aspire to have active and reliable employees who are ready to accept the work entrusted to them, even if that were to be achieved at the cost of giving up some (to a certain extent) of the extensive curriculum that was obligatory before 1939. The preparation of the programmes seems to be necessary at this moment in order to avoid the mistakes made after the previous war. It should also be taken into account that there will be a period with two parallel modes of studies. Some students will be completing their education within

the simplified system while others will be commencing them within the newly established system of university education.

12. *Reconstruction of the university education system.* The substantial and organisational drawbacks of the pre-war system of university education are well known. Therefore, we should now think about how they may be eliminated. The shock caused by the war points out the proper moment for conducting the relevant reforms. The drafts of the reforms should be worked out before starting the actual reconstruction of the Institutes. The authors of this document are also involved in preparing these reforms and they will present their conclusions to the authorities of the Jagiellonian University at the proper moment.

During the occupation, while discussing the issues of university education on the basis of the Jagiellonian University, drawing experiences from it, discussing particular facts and acquainting myself with a wide range of opinions, I developed my own ideas about university education. They evolved during the discussions held by a wider circle of participants, which also included some senior professors. Thus, in 1945, I was relatively well prepared for work concerning the reforms of university education system even in the first years after the liberation.

I conducted discussions concerning higher and, in particular, university education in several organisations. One of them was the Club of Democratic Professors in Cracow. As far as I can remember, its members included such people as K. Piwarski, H. Batowski, S. Urbańczyk, K. Lepszy, L. Sieppel, J. Hano, S. Skowron, A. Listowski, K. Starmach and many others.

The effect of that club's activity was the opinion or a spectrum of views to a certain extent adopted by its members who sporadically voiced their opinions during subsequent discussions concerning the university education and, in particular, the autonomous organisation of the Jagiellonian University.

In 1945, after several public meetings had been held at the Polish Academy of Skills and at the Jagiellonian University, which failed to bring any positive effects, the Council of Higher Education Schools was appointed. It was chaired by W. Sokorski. The Council prepared new legislature related to university education in the People's Republic of Poland. I was involved in the activities of that body.

In summer 1944, the Soviet front was approaching the borders of Cracow's Voivodship. At that time I was actively involved in conspiracy and had connections with the region of Podhale (the province of Nowy Targ). I would go there frequently, mostly on behalf of the Home Army (AK), but I was most fascinated by the contacts with the population of the Polish part of Orava, which then belonged to Slovakia. To reach it I had to cross the border between the General Guberniya and Slovakia that was guarded by the German Grenzschutz.

The occupation was coming to its end. Although the Soviet offensive came to a halt in autumn, it was resumed in winter. Our conspiratorial activities were intensified. In January 1945, during the Soviet air raid of Cracow, a splinter of a missile hit my calf on ul. A. Potockiego. When I visited Professor Michał Patkaniowski I saw a town house on fire on ul. Studencka. On 18 January 1945, under the pressure of the nearing Soviet

army, the Germans were leaving Krakow in a very hasty and chaotic manner. From 16-18 January, my family and I spent the nights in a shelter situated in the cellar at ul. Retoryka

On 18 January, early in the morning, I was paid a visit by Stanisława Milatowa, M.A. She was an assistant from the Institute of Geography employed at the Institut für deutsche Ostarbeit on ul. Gołębia. I then remembered the letter of Rector Lehr-Spławiński of 11 September, 1939, which obliged me to take care of the Institute of Geography. For five years that document had been hidden and useless, but now it was time I took action and carried out my duty.

According to a radio broadcast from London, Krakow was about to be liberated at any moment. Thus one had to act. We left. In the morning there was little activity going on in the streets and German soldiers were nowhere to be seen. According to S. Milatowa's report, we first went to the College of Physics on ul. Gołębia. We could stay there safely, because S. Milatowa was in possession of a letter from the last head of the Landeskunde Institute, a German – Doctor Graul, authorising her to protect the collections of the Institute. However, there was no one there. We entered several rooms, saw the library and the cartographic collections, as well as objects and instruments left behind by the escaping employees. The building was open, so it should have been locked but there was no key. We decided to write notices reading *The Jagiellonian University – No Entry*. We prepared several cardboard notices like that and we found some string for hanging them. While we were leaving the College of Physics we met a surprised caretaker who lived there. Together we closed the main gate and put up a notice reading: *The Jagiellonian University – No Entry*. We decided to do the same in other buildings belonging to the University.

So the three of us went to Collegium Novum, the main university building situated in the Planty Park. The building was empty. We entered and saw that the office rooms had been hastily abandoned. Furniture was scattered about and the place was in a mess. In some rooms Hitler's portraits had been knocked off the walls. On one of them there was a huge ink stain. It was not Luther throwing an inkwell at the devil, but a desperate official of the General Guberniya taking revenge on his "Führer". I was also overcome by a revenge passion. The assembly hall was almost empty, however, a bronze bust of Hitler stood on a plinth near the platform. As a student I used to play football. I was about to give the bust a kick, but Mrs Milatowa told me that some Germans could still be in the building and that the noise of the falling bust could bring them there. So we decided to move Hitler's bust to the corner of the hall. We both got ready to carry its heavy weight and then it turned out that it was made of light gypsum and painted brown. We just looked at each other in a telling manner. And when we had thrown the bust into the corner I could not resist the temptation and I kicked it using my whole strength. That made Hitler's head roll into the centre of the assembly hall.

We went down to the doorkeeper's room. There, on the table, we found a heap of keys to lecture halls and rooms. We raked them all together into a paper bag. When we were leaving we just shut all the doors, because it was difficult to match the keys to the locks in a hurry. We drew the outer bars, tied them with a piece of string and hung up a notice reading: *The Jagiellonian University – No Entry*. This way, at least outside, the old

name was restored to the University's main building and it was secured by means of a piece of paper hanging on a piece of string. We took the keys to Professor S. Kutrzeba who lived nearby on ul. Studencka. I knew quite well that, during the occupation, meetings and political debates were held at his place and that a number of homeless academics would occasionally find a haven there. I was looking for some kind of support for my solitary activities. As always, the Professor received us politely, but did not quite know what to do with such a load of keys. He thanked us for the initiative of safeguarding the university buildings and authorised us to carry on with it.

Overwhelmed by our first success, we went to explore other university buildings. They were not entirely empty. We found a caretaker or a janitor living in almost every one. Thus our role was reduced to the provisional closing of the main doors and hanging up a piece of cardboard with a notice. If we met former caretakers I made a short speech to them on behalf of the Polish university authorities commanding them to protect the buildings. I felt that Professor Kutrzeba empowered me to do that. That was supposed to safeguard the buildings against thieves. I counted on people's patriotic feelings and on the significance of the words that had been forbidden for five years: the *Jagiellonian University*. We visited all the buildings situated in the vicinity, on ul. Gołębia and ul. Św. Anny. I persuaded the caretaker at Collegium Maius to lock properly the drive-in gate on ul. Jagiellońska, which had been damaged by a bomb. Fortunately, the bomb fell on the courtyard and created only a large crater between the buildings. Collegium Maius, however, was intact. We repaired the gate and tied it with a piece of wire.

After having "secured" the complex of buildings near the Planty Park, we went on along ul. Grodzka. There were more passers-by in the streets now and the atmosphere was that of vivacity and excitement. Street fights aimed at the liberation of Cracow were expected to start at any moment. Some people were already beginning to plunder buildings abandoned by the Germans.

There was a caretaker in the building at ul. Grodzka 53. The gate was locked. Nevertheless, we put up our notice reading *Jagiellonian University*. Again on behalf of the University authorities I gave him the order to take care of the building and its furnishings that would be needed when the University was reopened.

Finally, we reached our building – the Institute of Geography at ul. Grodzka 64. There I acted legally, since I had the Rector's letter of 11 September 1939. The building was full of furniture. There was a portrait of Hitler in almost every room. We counted as many as thirty of them. While we were tidying the place up I decided that the portraits should be removed from their frames and discarded. The frames could prove useful later for other purposes. Alojzy Szafruga, a caretaker, lived on the premises and had not left the building during the war. Our meeting was very cordial – a strong handshake. Then the notice was put up on the door: *The Jagiellonian University – No Entry*. The order of Rector Lehr-Spławiński was fulfilled!

During the subsequent days we had to retrieve the Institute's collections and to furnish the building so that the Institute of Geography of the Jagiellonian University could soon be reopened as a didactic and scientific centre. First of all, we had to move the collections and furnishings from the Landeskunde Institute to ul. Grodzka. The person in charge of that was S. Milatowa. She was helped by B. Winid, a student

of geography, and Jan Dziuba, a caretaker at the Institute of Geography. The work was not easy. In the first place, Professor Weyssenhoff, who had already taken over the Institute of Physics, was not willing to give away the furniture claiming that it had automatically been taken over by the College of Physics as former German property. However, after long negotiations, we succeeded in reaching a compromise. As far as taking away the geographical collections was concerned, he did not voice any objections. The collections, including books, maps and instruments, were loaded onto a metal bed netting attached to little sledges and pushed with much effort to the Institute of Geography on ul. Grodzka. This work took several days.

At the same time it was necessary to take furniture from the house next door (ul. Grodzka 62). The Germans evicted its tenants and made inner passages between the two buildings thus expanding the premises of the Health Agency of the General Guberniya. We soon dealt with the furniture moving it to the Institute. I was afraid that the former tenants could turn up at any moment and refuse to give up the former German furniture.

On behalf of Leopold Macharski, the owner of the Spiski Palace in the Main Market Square, I was the administrator of the building that used to house the German Office of Regional Planning. I had no difficulty in taking over the office and using a horse-drawn lorry I transported all the furniture, equipment, instruments, books and materials collected for preparing the regional plans of the General Guberniya to the Institute of Geography.

The Royal Hotel was situated next to the Institute, in the Planty Park. During the occupation the Germans took it over and furnished their army offices there. On the ground floor they had their nightclubs and entertainment facilities. On 18 January 1945, before noon, the inhabitants of Cracow started plundering the place. I took part in this with one caretaker and several students. From there we took typewriters, calculating machines, field-glasses, office and drawing materials, as well as many other objects that were very useful for the Institute. We didn't only take any military equipment, although there were considerable amounts of grenades, panzerfausts (non-recoil bazookas), etc. This way the premises of the Institute were soon furnished and equipped. The only thing we had to do was carry out a selection and leave only equipment that could really be useful for the Institute. We did that together with the employees and caretakers.

There was also the issue of the repositories of the maps formerly belonging to the Germans. It was necessary to move them to ul. Grodzka as quickly as possible. The first maps came from the collections of the German Office of Regional Planning in the Spiski Palace. Another large repository was situated in the former Industrial Vocational School on al. Mickiewicza. We also learnt that there were maps in the school on ul. Ujejskiego. There we found a Soviet outpost. The negotiations were successful. A higher-rank member of the crew told us that they needed "bumaga" (Russian word for "paper") to write reports and letters home. And thus we were allowed to take away the maps in return for an envelope full of beautiful letter paper.

An enormous warehouse of topographical maps was situated in the cellars of the monastery near the Garrison Church at Stradom. A crew of Polish soldiers was stationed there. I parleyed with a Lieutenant of the Polish Army who was in command

of that outpost. He agreed to give us the maps on condition that we emptied the cellars in just two hours. The work was tiring and had to be done very quickly. Klimaszewski, Winid, Milatowa, the caretakers and some students took part in it. We also brought maps from several other smaller warehouses, e.g. from a school on ul. Krupnicza. We transported them on sledges to which we had attached laundry baskets.

This way we gathered around a quarter of a million topographical maps of different scales ranging from 1:25000, 1:50000, 1:100000, 1:200000, 1:300000, 1:500000 to 1:1000000. The maps covered areas of Poland, the western parts of the Soviet Union, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, parts of Bulgaria, Italy and France. Some small-scale maps also showed the Asian part of the Soviet Union, the Middle East and even India. They were mostly German reprints of original maps. The vast areas they covered testified to the planned invasion range of the German army.

Around noon on 18 January 1945, I was already at home. But passing by the *Sokół* building on ul. Wolska I noticed that the warehouses of the German police were being emptied of summer and winter army uniforms, balaclavas, flasks, mess kits, cookers, belts, tent cloths, etc. That equipment could be very handy for students during their geographical expeditions. I just could not miss such an opportunity.

At about 2 p.m. small groups of German soldiers appeared in the city. During their escape westwards their progress was checked by the Soviet army. Thus they could only go southwards crossing the previously destroyed bridges on the Vistula River. At about 4 p.m., street riots started on ul. Wolska and ul. Smoleńsk, near the place where I lived. One hour later, I was among the Soviet soldiers. I helped two of them to reach the dressing-station on ul. Smoleńsk. One of them had a wounded leg, the other a wounded neck. Krakow was free! On the following day we welcomed squads of the Polish Army and several representatives of the Lublin Government.

On 19 January 1945, I ran to Collegium Novum. My notice was lying on the ground near the bars. The doors were wide open. I went into several rooms on the first floor. I did not meet anyone. Only when on my way down to the ground floor I met a caretaker with a group of Soviet soldiers and a dog. They had detectors for locating mines in the cellars. However, there were no mines. Our conversation was short and friendly. Being duly authorised by Professor Kutrzeba, I acted as a representative of the Jagiellonian University. On the bars of the entrance gate I again hung up the yesterday's notice. Next to it there was another one reading *Мин нет* (a Russian expression meaning *No mines*). My role in taking over and safeguarding the university buildings was over. Now it was necessary to get involved in the reconstruction of the Institute of Geography. As I have already mentioned, within just several days, we gathered a lot of furniture (but no desks for students and professors or blackboards), office equipment, maps, books and diverse objects that could serve as school materials. All those things had to be ordered. S. Milatowa looked after the library. I took care of the maps arranging them according to the catalogues in the Institute's attic. Students and assistants helped me with that task. It turned out that we had many duplicates of the same maps. Later, we started giving them away to other Institutes, in particular to Poznań, Warsaw, Łódź, Lublin and higher pedagogical and economic schools.

We demolished the unnecessary partitions in the Institute of Geography. This way we again had the lecture halls on the ground floor and the first floor. The rooms were allocated to the particular units and employees of the Institute. The organisation and furnishing of specialised laboratories began as well. January and February were over and educational activities could begin. The University announced the enrolment of students and many of our former students reported directly to the Institute. We worked out a provisional time-schedule of classes, established the opening hours of the library and reading room. The University was getting ready for the inauguration of the first academic year after the war and for beginning normal studies. At this time, Rector Lehr-Spławiński appointed Docent J. Szaflarski the head of the Institute. Efforts were made to restore the second geographical Chair of Anthropogeography that had been liquidated already before the war by Minister Jędrzejewicz. Then Professor Eugeniusz Romer became Head of the Institute. In spring 1945, the didactic classes resumed their almost normal course. Some research work was also undertaken. Its basic objective focused on the study of the recovered lands in the West and in the North. The publication of articles, dissertations and maps of Poland within its new borders and with new names was commenced.

In May 1945, my habilitation at the Faculty of Philosophy took place. I presented my habilitation dissertation entitled *Geographical Study of Settlement in Anatolia*. I wrote that work during the occupation based on the materials gathered in 1936 on location, mainly in the Taurus Mountains, in Southern Anatolia, during the scientific expedition of Professor Tadeusz Kowalski, a distinguished orientalist and turkologist. The dissertation was reviewed by Professors E. Romer, T. Kowalski and J. Dąbrowski. The habilitation committee, the first at the Jagiellonian University after the war, attracted a lot of interest. Eighteen professors asked me questions. The habilitation was approved by the Minister of Education, Czesław Wycech, on 13 September 1945.

The circumstances became favourable for establishing the second geographical Chair. I have preserved a copy of the document¹ reading:

“The Board of the Philosophical Faculty has decided that, after the intended division of the faculty of Philosophy, the Chair of General Geography (delayed by the death of Professor Smoleński of blessed memory) will remain at the Faculty of Humanities. At the same time, a resolution has been passed that its name will be changed to the Chair of Anthropogeography. It follows from the above-cited characteristics of Doctor Stanisław Leszczycki that his main fields of work and interest are anthropogeography and settlement issues. Therefore, the Faculty Board hereby resolves to appoint him to the said Chair.”

I suppose that was the resolution of the Faculty of Philosophy passed in autumn 1945, after my habilitation. The resolution was executed through the signing of an employment contract with me as a docent on 31 October, 1945. I was appointed to the post of an extraordinary professor from 1 November 1945 until the end of the academic year. The contract was signed by Rector T. Lehr-Spławiński and approved

¹ Unfortunately there is no signature or date on that copy.

by the head of the Institute of the Ministry of Education, E. Kuroczka, on 24 January 1946. My nomination act of an extraordinary professor was signed on 24 December 1945 by the Minister of Education, Czesław Wycech.

In autumn 1945, I again became the head of the Institute of Geography. We improved the didactic curricula and undertook scientific research. We also started the systematic gathering of materials for a peace conference. The main objective was to justify the legitimacy of our new western border along the Odra River and the Nysa Łużycka River. These materials proved very useful during further work carried out for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the Congress Office and during the conference in Potsdam. We also prepared some minor changes of the southern border with Czechoslovakia.

I remember that the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Poland, Edward Osóbka-Morawski, gave me 500,000 zloty from the funds that were at his own disposal. This amount was designated for the modernisation of furnishings at the Institute of Geography on ul. Grodzka. I used it for the final remodelling of the building, for its redecoration and for equipping it with didactic materials. Before the war I saw several Institutes of geography in some European countries, e.g. Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. I was familiar with several others thanks to descriptions in literature. I decided to make the Institute colourful. Each room was painted a different colour. In lecture halls, the lightest the walls were those next to which the lecturers' tables were situated. Storage rooms holding maps and collections were painted dark grey. The drawing room had a black ceiling, etc. That was to be something new. Only several years later did Professor M. Klimaszewski, as the Head of the Institute, restore its pre-war appearance.

I was involved in a number of Polish national affairs and, later, state affairs. In May 1945, among others, I became a deputy to the National People's Council (KRN) and then to the Legislative Parliament (1947-1952). Because of this, I could not be entirely devoted to the Institute of Geography at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. At the Institute I received help from Docent J. Szaflarski, Doctor W. Milata and others. In autumn 1946, I became a Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. I had to move to Warsaw, but I frequently visited Cracow.

In 1948, I asked for a transfer to the Chair of Anthropogeography at the University of Warsaw. On 25 March 1948, I was appointed a Professor at the University of Warsaw. Thus, I formally parted with the Jagiellonian University, but for a number of years I continued to feel strong bonds with it. I suppose these ties will last for the rest of my life.

Wspomnienia z lat 1939-1945

Streszczenie

Zachowane w pośmiertnej spuściźnie Prof. S. Leszczyckiego wspomnienia dotyczą okresu II wojny światowej w Krakowie. Z polecenia ówczesnego Rektora UJ, prof. dr T. Lehr-Spławińskiego, ówczesny młody asystent S. Leszczycki objął opiekę nad gmachem Instytutu Geografii UJ, przy ul. Grodzkiej 64. Jak wiadomo, dnia 6 XI 1939 r. hitlerowcy aresztowali i wywieźli grupę pracowników naukowych Uniwersytetu, w tym geografów prof. dr J. Smoleńskiego, doc. dr W. Ormickiego i autora tych wspomnień. Po powrocie z obozu w Dachau do Krakowa w lutym 1941 r. S. Leszczycki zastał gmach IG UJ zajęty przez niemiecki urząd okupacyjny, a zbiory przeniesione do niemieckiego Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit.

S. Leszczycki przystąpił wówczas do akcji tajnego nauczania, zorganizowanego w konspiracji przez władze UJ, a od 1944 r. z grupą przebywających w Krakowie uczonych przygotowywał plany odbudowy życia akademickiego w wyzwolonej Polsce. Po odwołaniu Niemców z Krakowa, 18. I 1945 r., S. Leszczycki z przedwojennymi pracownikami IG UJ przejął i zabezpieczył opuszczony gmach Instytutu Geografii oraz odzyskał część zrabowanych książek, map, instrumentów i umeblowania. Umożliwiło to rozpoczęcie zajęć dydaktycznych wiosną 1945 r. i podjęcie pracy naukowej, w tym studiów nad odzyskanymi przez Polskę ziemiami zachodnimi i północnymi. Jesienią tego roku S. Leszczycki, który jako pierwszy po wojnie habilitował się z geografii w maju 1945 r., objął stanowisko dyrektora IG UJ. Choć w następnym roku przeniósł się do Warszawy, nadal utrzymywał bliskie kontakty z krakowskimi geografami.

Stanisław Leszczycki (1907-1996)

Institute of Geography, Jagellonian University (1930-48),

Institute of Geography, Warsaw University (1948-53),

Institute of Geography, Polish Academy of Science, Warsaw (1953-77)

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