Times *of* Upheaval

Four Medievalists *in* Twentieth-Century Central Europe

CONVERSATIONS WITH

Jerzy Kłoczowski
János M. Bak
František Šmahel
and **Herwig Wolfram**

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Introduction

History is a good teacher, only she does not have any students.

— Ingeborg Bachmann, *Malina*

Not long ago historians were regarded as professionals able to initiate and guard the process of collective self-reflection, in which one's own past and its interpretation played a crucial role. Today, however, the skepticism of Austrian poet Ingeborg Bachmann has a new urgency— the lessons of the past seem to be forgotten. Historians such as Timothy Snyder try to invigorate public sensibility towards threatened democratic values. "Alternative facts" sway people's views while professional historians are heard less and less. Economists and members of political think tanks often take over debates about the past, using history as a coat rack on which they hang their own stories of future promises. Over the last forty years members of the mass media have enhanced their public role as experts, embellishing what they cover. Yet the recent fragmentation of traditional media has led this kind of expert opinion to lose its public authority as well. Now, internet bubbles create their own truths. Historians find themselves in the position of Cassandra, whose warnings are neither given attention nor understood. This is partly because these warnings lack simplicity and therefore seem to lack urgency, and partly because historiography is an interpretative discipline and historians are trained to doubt their own narratives. Historians are also political individuals with economic interests like anybody else. They are sometimes motivated to accommodate social expectations in order to increase their own prestige and obtain economic and social benefits. And of course, many historians in the past threw themselves into the service of oppressive regimes, legitimating their ideas as well as their deeds. There is no guarantee that this will not happen again.

History needs not only good students but also excellent teachers. Its interpreters carry great responsibility. History allows us to understand the world around us and our place in it. Our view of the past, or rather our interpretation of it, shapes our world and the way in which societies approach problems, anxieties, and crises. Historiography has accompanied politics at least from the beginning of the nineteenth century, providing tools for emerging national ideologies and for the self-representation of the national state. These political roles increased immensely the potential of historiography to generate important models for trans-local social identification. Well into the twentieth century in most European countries, and at least to the end of the last millennium in the countries of the former Soviet bloc, discourses of national, politically motivated historiographies determined the themes, methods, and theoretical approaches of historical research. These nationally defined historiographies only started to change dramatically after World War II, when historians faced great challenges in both democratic and Soviet-controlled Europe.

The question of the historian and his work in postwar East Central Europe, a region united to a large extent under the Habsburg monarchy and divided by the Iron Curtain after World War II, stands at the center of this book. It contains extensive conversations with four masters of medieval studies from four Central European countries who were born in the late 1920s or early 1930s: János Bak from Hungary, Jerzy Kłoczowski from Poland, František Šmahel from the Czech Republic, and Herwig Wolfram from Austria. They were interviewed either by their former students or by younger colleagues familiar with their work and careers. All of them have engaging life stories to tell: growing up in the years before and during the war, living under Nazi occupation, emerging as young scholars in the difficult postwar period, and, for most of their careers, working in the shadow of the Iron Curtain, where two of them spent most of their lives under communist regimes. To some extent, 1989 marked a *caesura* in all of their lives and careers. The conversations therefore focus on ways in which open-minded young intellectuals became medieval historians under difficult circumstances, on how they experienced the long shadows of totalitarian regimes with their acute sensitivity for historical change,

and how their perceptions of the world around them led them to reflect on their approaches to medieval history. The histories of their nations were broken during their lifetimes. The states in which they lived ceased to exist and were re-established, came under foreign domination, and were split apart or had their territories shifted. What did all that mean for their identities and patriotic feelings? And how did those events influence their interest in medieval ethnicity and identities, in revolutions and historical disruptions, in injustice and human suffering? How can the present be reflected in the distant mirror of the medieval past? These four masters of their profession have inspired numerous other historians, students, and the general public with their teaching and publications. In this book, they reflect about their lives and shed light on their circumstances by sharing observations, anecdotes, and experiences.

Jerzy Kłoczowski was born in Bogdany, Masuria, Poland, in 1924. During the war, he was a member of the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*) and fought in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, where he lost his right hand. He became a professor at the University of Lublin and worked extensively on Church history and late medieval East Central Europe. From the late 1970s he taught abroad at the Collège de France, Oxford, the Sorbonne, and other universities, and he served on the board of UNESCO. As a member of Solidarność, he became a member of the Polish Senate after 1989 and was deeply involved in the process of postcommunist transformation, but also in the rifts that it created. He is a representative of a generation of Polish academics and intellectuals who managed to preserve a critical spirit under the communist regime and were committed to public service afterwards. The interview was conducted by his former pupil Paweł Kras.

János Bak was born in Budapest in 1929 into a Jewish family, and survived World War II and Nazi occupation in hiding. He served as a teacher under the communist regime and emigrated in 1956. His academic career took him to several countries, until he became a professor at the University of British Columbia in 1968, from where he retired in 1990. He worked on Hungarian law, rulership, and historiography in Central Europe, and co-edited a volume on the revolution of 1956. Returning to his home country in 1993, he became a professor at the new-

ly founded Central European University in Budapest, where he played a key role in turning the Department of Medieval Studies into an international hub that helped to educate a new generation of Central and Eastern European historians. He is professor emeritus since 2004. The interview was conducted by Gábor Klaniczay, his younger colleague at Central European University.

František Šmahel was born in Trhová Kamenice, a small market town in the Czechoslovak Republic, in 1934. He belonged to a Czech middle class family that was a target of persecution after the Communist Party seized power in 1948. Therefore, he had to work in a North Bohemian coal mine to get permission for his university studies. In the early 1960s, he became a researcher at the Historical Institute in Prague. Involved in the events of the Prague Spring in 1968, he participated in the compilation of the so-called "Black Book" of the Soviet occupation at the Institute. After its dissolution, he worked several years as a streetcar driver and later at the Museum of the Hussite Movement in Tábor. During these years he wrote several seminal monographs about the Hussite Revolution. After 1990, he became a professor at Charles University and one of the leading members of the Czech Academy of Sciences, where he engaged in institutional reform and taught a new generation of Czech medievalists. The interview was conducted by his former pupil Pavlína Rychterová.

Herwig Wolfram was born in Vienna in 1934. One of his earliest memories is of acts of violence on the day of Austria's *Anschluss* to Nazi Germany. He studied in postwar Vienna, when the city was still under the spell of its recent past, and soon became critical of the continuing chauvinism. This environment also influenced his critiques of essentialist concepts of peoplehood and of Germanophile interpretations of the early medieval migration period. A year spent as a visiting professor at UCLA in 1968–69 proved crucial to his intellectual development, not least because of the inspiring contacts with many colleagues who had emigrated from Central Europe after 1933. The experience in the United States also helped him in his efforts to open up the conservative and hierarchical atmosphere at the University of Vienna, where he became Professor of Medieval History in 1969. Soon after, he also established contacts with colleagues beyond the Iron Curtain, orga-

nizing academic meetings and exchanges and doing what he could to provide hope. The interview was conducted by his former pupil and successor Walter Pohl, with the help of Max Diesenberger and Roland Steinacher.

Introducing

Jerzy Kłoczowski

The life of Jerzy Kłoczowski represents a rich and multi-dimensional reality that reflects well the turbulent history of twentieth-century Poland. Born in 1924, just six years after the rebirth of Poland, he belongs to the first generation of Poles who could enjoy the independence regained after 123 years of the Partitions. As a young boy, he witnessed the painstaking process of the reconstruction of the Polish state, which reappeared on the map of Europe as a consequence of an unpredictable chain of events: the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, the disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy, and the turmoil in postwar Germany.

The Kłoczowski family nurtured patriotic traditions that combined the memory of the glorious past of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with the dream of Poland's independence. His grandfather Józef preserved the memory of the January Uprising of 1863–64. He had witnessed the execution of its last commander, Romuald Traugutt, on the slope of the Warsaw Citadel on 5 August 1864. Józef Kłoczowski passed down the memory of this dramatic event to his son Eugeniusz, and then to young Jerzy. The history of the uprising was not a narrative about some distant past; it made a strong impact on the whole family, and as such constituted an important element of its memory. Likewise, the family had a direct connection to Poland's struggle for independence after World War I. In 1920, Kłoczowski's uncle Kazimierz was killed in the war against Bolshevik Russia. His death at the Battle of Berezina was a painful loss for the family. His last letter became a family relic which was read aloud and left an imprint on young Jerzy. Even after eighty years, Jerzy Kłoczowski still remembered the words of farewell that his uncle had written to his mother Irena.

Like thousands of Poles his age, Jerzy Kłoczowski was raised in a vivid patriotism, which influenced his entire life. In his family the novels by Henryk Sienkiewicz remained favorite readings, stimulating the historical imagination of young men and women and providing them with models of patriotic heroes. At the time of the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, Kłoczowski was fifteen years old. World War II entered his native village of Bogdany like a tornado, turning upside down his family's stable life. Their estate was confiscated by the Germans and the Kłoczowskis were deported to the General Governorate, the Nazi-controlled province of central and southern Poland. They settled in Zielonka, near Warsaw. During the first years of the Nazi occupation, Jerzy Kłoczowski continued his education in the High School of the Marian Fathers in Warsaw, where he passed his maturity exam. There he made first contacts with the Polish Resistance movement. In 1943 he became a soldier of the Home Army, which was the largest resistance force in German-controlled Europe with its 400,000 men and women in arms.

Jerzy Kłoczowski underwent military training, took an oath of loyalty to the Polish state, and adopted the code name Piotruś, by which he was known to other Home Army members. He became a platoon leader, and in August 1944 commanded a unit during the Warsaw Uprising. He regarded his service in the Army as a natural choice and was very proud of it. He wanted to fight for the freedom of Poland and was ready to die in combat. During the Warsaw Uprising he demonstrated outstanding bravery and leadership. From the very first days of fighting Kłoczowski was on the front line of the *Baszta* regiment. After a month of bloody fighting in the Mokotów district, his regiment was surrounded by German forces and had to break through to Śródmieście (central Warsaw). During one of the attacks on the enemy lines Kłoczowski was hit by machine gun fire, and his right hand had to be amputated. Severely wounded, he became a prisoner-of-war. Luckily, he was among the first soldiers of the Home Army to be treated in compliance with the Geneva Convention. He spent the last months of 1944 in the hospital for prisoners-of-war in Skierniewice, where he was found by his parents and taken to Zielonka. His service in the Home Army and participation in the Warsaw

Uprising influenced all his further plans. The friendships with members of the Home Army turned out to be lifelong.

His interest in history, first inspired by his parents, was later developed in high school. Adopting his nickname Piotruś (Pete) for the Home Army, Kłoczowski had in mind his distant relative Piotr, who had been killed during the Swedish Deluge of 1655–60. As soon as World War II was over, he decided to study history, and in autumn 1945 he set off for Poznań to register with the local university. The University of Poznań was one of the first to be reopened in postwar Poland. Kłoczowski belonged to a small group of students in the MA program in history there. Among his teachers were distinguished historians such as Kazimierz Tymieniecki[1] and Adam Skałkowski,[2] who introduced him to the methodology of history and trained him in research skills. Tymieniecki, a leading expert in the socio-economic history of medieval Poland, supervised Kłoczowski's MA thesis. He acquainted his student with Karol Górski,[3] on whose suggestion Kłoczowski started his research on the medieval history of the Friars Preachers and wrote a doctoral thesis on the Polish Dominicans in Silesia in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. Published in 1956, it turned out to be a groundbreaking study on the implantation and growth of the Polish Dominican province. But the pioneering value of Kłoczowski's first book lay elsewhere. In contrast to traditional Church history, his work focused on the pastoral activities of the Dominicans and threw a new light on their role in the promotion of new forms of lay piety in late medieval Poland.

Kłoczowski's studies on Polish Dominicans opened the door for him to the milieu of leading French medievalists of that time and enabled him to get in touch with representatives of the *Annales* group. During his first visits in France in the 1960s, he gained access to recent French studies in Church history, unavailable in Polish libraries. His further research was much inspired by Gabriel Le Bras,[4] a great expert

1 Kazimierz Tymieniecki (1887–1968), Polish historian.
2 Adam Skałkowski (1877–1951), Polish historian.
3 Karol Górski (1903–88), Polish historian specializing in the history of the Teutonic Order and medieval spirituality.
4 Gabriel Le Bras (1891–1970), French jurist and sociologist.

on religious sociology, with whom he discussed his projects. A few years later he met Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff,[5] who became his good friends and collaborators. It was at that time that Kłoczowski drafted a program of complex and interdisciplinary research on the socio-religious history of Poland from the Middle Ages to the present day. This was a very broad and long-term enterprise which could not be accomplished by one man. His plans embraced the reconstruction of ecclesiastical structures in Poland (dioceses, religious houses, parishes, hospitals) and the evolution of religious practice across the centuries. To carry out this ambitious project, Kłoczowski needed a research center and a team of scholars who would share his vision and methodology. He found both at the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), which had been founded in 1918 and reopened in 1945.

In 1950, immediately after earning his doctoral degree from the University of Toruń, Kłoczowski was invited to teach in Lublin. The Catholic University of Lublin was the only academic center in the Polish People's Republic that operated outside the direct supervision of the Communist Party and was granted a limited autonomy. Furthermore, in contrast to other institutes of history, it was allowed to conduct research and publish on Church history. Here, for more than half a century, Jerzy Kłoczowski was given a free hand to implement teaching programs for history students, employ scholars, and train young researchers who would cooperate with him on his research projects. In the late 1950s, he became director of the newly established Institute for Historical Geography of the Church in Poland and the leader of the research team working on the socio-religious history of Poland. After the fall of the Wall, in 1991, Kłoczowski established the Institute of East Central Europe in Lublin, which in a short time turned into a regional center for interdisciplinary research on the history and current developments of East Central Europe.

From a present-day perspective there is no doubt that most of Kłoczowski's research projects have been effectively completed. Kłoczowski himself published more than thirty books and around one thousand articles covering a wide spectrum of problems related to the

5 Jacques Le Goff (1924–2014), French medievalist, member of the *Annales* School.

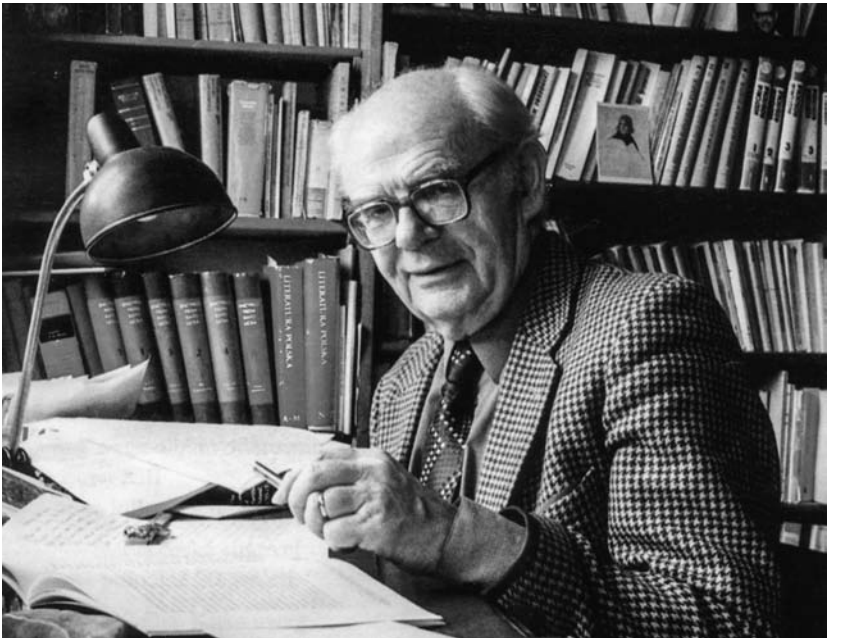
history of Christianity, monasticism, the history of Poland, and the history of East Central Europe. Alongside his own publications, he acted as initiator and editor-in-chief of numerous collective works on the history of Christianity in Poland, in particular two magisterial works: *Kościół w Polsce* (The Church in Poland)[6] and *Zarys dziejów chrześcijaństwa w Polsce* (An outline of the history of Christianity in Poland).[7] In addition, since the early 1960s Kłoczowski has been one of the most active Polish historians, establishing regular contacts with prestigious research institutions and participating in major international projects related to the history of Christianity. His name became a brand mark of high quality, and his books in French and English remain obligatory readings for any international researcher interested in the history of Polish Christianity.

Jerzy Kłoczowski did his best to promote research free of ideological bias and to encourage his students to be open-minded and critical. His work at the Catholic University of Lublin made him a target of surveillance by the communist security services. For three decades, security officers collected information on his academic activities and international contacts. In the early 1960s, they attempted unsuccessfully to recruit Kłoczowski as a secret agent. In 2004, right-wing journalists used the surveillance files to accuse Kłoczowski of collaboration with the communist security services. The attack was intended to undermine his public reputation as man of honor and high morals.

In the late 1980s, Jerzy Kłoczowski was my teacher at the Catholic University of Lublin. My decision to study at that university was inspired by his studies on monasticism, which I had read in high school. I remember Kłoczowski as a great lecturer, who had an amazing ability to attract students' attention by his knowledge and charismatic performance. In 1993, after completing my MA studies, I was offered a position at the newly established Institute of East Central Europe in Lublin, headed by Kłoczowski. For the two decades since then I have worked with him on various projects related to the interdisciplinary history of East Central Europe. This period of close cooperation let me

6 Jerzy Kłoczowski, ed., *Kościół w Polsce*, 2 vol. (Cracow: Znak, 1968–70).

7 Zbigniew Jakubowski, ed., *Zarys dziejów chrześcijaństwa w Polsce* [An outline of the history of Christianity in Poland] (Częstochowa: WSP, 1989).



Jerzy Kłoczowski
(Photo: Courtesy of the Kłoczowski family)

get to know Jerzy Kłoczowski as a man of hard work and grand vision, a brilliant mind, and a volcano of power that he has shared with his friends and collaborators.

Professor Jerzy Kłoczowski died in Warsaw on 2 December 2017, at the age of 93. He was the last living commander of Home Army units fighting in the Warsaw Uprising. His death ended an important epoch in Polish postwar historiography. Hundreds of his friends, students, and collaborators flocked to three separate funeral ceremonies in Lublin, Warsaw, and Krzynowłoga Wielka, which took place on 12–14 December, to pay tribute to the man who had an unforgettable impact on their lives and careers.

Paweł Kras

Jerzy Kłoczowski
in Conversation with
Paweł Kras

PAWEŁ KRAS (PK): *Thank you for taking the time to meet and talk about your encounters with history, your life and academic career, and the whole panorama of experiences that have shaped your personality as well as your outlook on the past. For my generation and for me personally, you are a symbol, a person worthy of his own memorial. Your life is a mirror that allows us to see the history of Poland in the twentieth century. You are a historian who devoted so much of his effort and passion to researching a vast number of issues in European and Polish history. In addition, you are my teacher and my master, who taught me how to be a historian both when I was a student of history at the Catholic University of Lublin, but also when I started to work as a young academician. You were my first mentor. Thanks to our cooperation at the Institute of East Central Europe, I had a chance to be introduced to the world of Polish and international research. For the majority of your associates and students, you are a giant who keeps the whole world on his shoulders and takes us all higher so that we can see better and farther.*

Human life and career choices are strictly dependent on one's family background, childhood, and youth. The family home is crucial for one's future growth. This is how your colleague and peer Wacława Chmielińska remembered your family house in Bogdany: "The manor house was surrounded by huge trees. There was a flowerbed in front of the house and a hedged fruit garden behind. There was a beehive, full of tasty honey. Vegetable

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The interview was recorded in Warsaw from March to November 2014. Its Polish version was authorized by Professor Kłoczowski in March 2015. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Raymond A. Mentzer from the University of Iowa for a meticulous reading and correcting the English text (PK).

patches were at the back of the garden. There was also a pond surrounded by bushes near the house."[1] *What are your memories of the family home?*

JERZY KŁOCZOWSKI (JK): The memories of my family life bring me back to these happy years of my childhood lived in the region of northern Masovia (Mazowsze). My father owned a small estate there. It comprised a manor house in Bogdany, which had some historical background. This is where I spent my early childhood.

PK: *You come from a landowner's family in Masovia, whose historical roots trace back to the late Middle Ages as far as it can be inferred from the existing documents. Bogdany is a small village in northern Masovia, which happened to be located close to the Polish border with East Prussia in the interwar period. What were the circumstances of the Kłoczowski family's residence in Bogdany?*

JK: The village of Bogdany was the seat of the House of Rykowski (coat-of-arms: Doliwa or Tres Rosae),[2] into which my grandmother was born. The Kłoczowski family descended from the House of Rawicz quite widespread in the Middle Ages, mainly over the region of Lesser Poland (Małopolska). The seat of the House was located in Kłoczew[3] (also named Kłoczów), administratively linked with the town of Stężyca. The members of the House had occupied these lands from the early fifteenth century until the collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the wake of the Partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century, they lost their estate and became civil servants. Yet they never forgot their family roots. My grandfather Józef supervised a variety of estates, settling in Duczymin in the end an estate located two kilometres from Bogdany, where my grandmother, Kazimiera Rykowska, lived. Kazimiera's father, Eugeniusz, married Waleria de domo Klicka. He consolidated three large neighboring estates: Bogdany, Krzynowłoga

1 Wacława Chmielińska, "Jestem rówieśniczką" [I am his peer], in *Historiae peritus: Księga Jubileuszowa Jerzego Kłoczowskiego* [Festschrift for Jerzy Kłoczowski], vol. 2, ed. by Henryk Gapski (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 1999), 119.

2 Bogdany Wielkie, a village in the Province of Mazovia, in the district of Przasnysz.

3 Kłoczew, a village in the Lublin Province, in the district of Ryki.

Wielka, and Rycice. When his first wife died, my grandfather Józef married Kazimiera, who was a good friend of his family. In this way, he also acquired my grandmother's estate; and this is how the Kłoczowski family came to be linked with Bogdany.

PK: *When in Bogdany, you liked playing outdoors with your friends. Apparently, it was as early as in your childhood when your leadership talents emerged. You designed and organized all kinds of games for the kids in Bogdany. Wacława Chmielińska, who participated in these games, remembered you in the following way: "He would take some treats from the kitchen and give them out to the boys with whom he played— no one forbade him to do so. The village kids were allowed to pick the orchard fruit. There were no class contrasts." She also added that you were a great event organizer: "He designed new games that positively influenced his peers. He was never conceited."[4] Do you recall these moments of your childhood?*

JK: I do remember playing with the village kids, with whom I made friends. I remember one experience particularly well, when my friends and I travelled close to the German border. It was 1935 or 1936, after Hitler had become chancellor. We crossed the border, which was possible at that time, and we went towards Grunwald (Grunewald). Popular celebrations were held at that time to commemorate Marshal Hindenburg's[5] tremendous victory over the Russian army at Tannenberg in 1914. Many Germans came there to participate in the celebrations. I remember that when the Germans saw our Polish car, they started threatening us. These threats, addressed to us Poles, moved me deeply. I remember one moment when my friends were gone, and I was alone in the car. Suddenly, a group of Germans came to the car and shook their fists at me. This experience made me realize— as a kind of rude awakening— that a new war against Poland was on its way. I was eleven or twelve then, but I have kept this memory in my mind until today.

When we returned from Germany, we met with some of the village boys and girls and decided to launch an organization named "Defence

4 Chmielińska, "Jestem rówieśniczką," 120.
5 Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934), president of the Weimar republic (1925–34).

of Birds and Animals— Armed Exercises." I became chair. I remember one of our teachers who loved nature very much and encouraged us to protect trees. Her deep care of nature went hand in hand with her strong premonition that we all needed to get ready for another war. I asked my father to order some carbines for the boys in our organization. The girls were equipped with some other kind of weapon. We organized parades and other military games and plays. This sense of our independence being endangered— so dear to us, as it had just been regained— was something about which I felt very strongly. I guess this sense of endangerment was shared by our whole generation. All these people were aware of the price of our independence regained after World War I. I daresay that without taking into account this shared sense, one is unable to understand the attitude of the Poles in 1939 and during the whole period of World War II.

One needs to keep in mind that we were the first generation to live in an independent Polish state. We were fully aware that Poland's regained independence was not so much the result of the Great War than of the victorious war against the Bolsheviks in 1920. There was the general sense of unity and solidarity among the Polish people, regardless of social status or political preferences. This unity passed the test of time in 1939, when the nation faced the growing danger of Nazi German aggression. I do not mean to be hostile towards the Germans, but Poles were determined to defend our independence at all costs. I was brought up in the spirit of love for one's homeland, but our patriotism was free of hatred towards other nations. We were not nationalists. Our patriotism stemmed from our strong conviction that Poland had a full right to be independent, and that we— the citizens— needed to be ready to defend it when the time came. This is why my generation venerates Józef Piłsudski,[6] who became a symbol of our regained independence in the interwar period. His name is inseparably linked with the Polish path to liberation. The Legions, the Bolshevik war of 1920, and the rebuilding of Poland all relate to him. I learned a lot about Piłsudski from my aunt,

6 Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935), one of the leaders of the Polish Socialist Party, founder and commander of the Polish Legions during World War I, the Chief of State (1918–22), since 1920 Marshal of Poland, commander-in-chief of the Polish Army during the war against the Bolsheviks in 1920; after the May coup of 1926 de facto leader of the Second Polish Republic until his death in 1935.

Ada Daniłowska, who lived in Warsaw and regularly visited us. She talked a lot about him. I became a great fan of Marshal Piłsudski, and I was very deeply moved by his death and funeral in 1935.

PK: ***Your family kept a living memory of its predecessors, who fought for an independent Poland. They were remembered and constantly recalled by the family. The patriotic tradition anchored in the Polish past was strong and was present in the family narrative.***

JK: I owe much to my parents—both my mother and father—in this respect. However, I also owe it to my family traditions and patriotic education. I was born in 1924. In the 1920s and the early 1930s, my family was intensely aware of Polish history. Historic events were remembered, including the older, nineteenth-century uprisings and the relatively recent events of World War I. Paintings by Artur Grottger,[7] which were copied by my grandmother, served as a source in my early historical education. I kept asking about them, and I liked listening to the stories explaining the events depicted. The memory of the January Uprising of 1863 was still vivid. My grandfather had been mayor of the town of Piaseczno (near Warsaw) at that time, and he was imprisoned in the Warsaw Citadel for supporting the revolt. His health failed, and he died soon afterwards. In addition, his older son, Bolesław, was exiled to Siberia for his active participation in the uprising. I can clearly remember my father saying: "Listen, I am going to tell you what my father—that is, your grandfather—told me." These stories were recollections of what the uprising was and what the front looked like in our local neighborhood. My father used to say: "Remember that your grandfather was amidst the throngs of people who watched the commander of the uprising Romuald Traugutt[8] being hanged outside the Citadel." My grandfather was deeply moved by this experience and never forgot it. My grandparents exhibited strong

7 Artur Grottger (1837–67), a Romantic painter and graphic artist, author of a popular series of black-and-white panels presenting the horrors of the Polish nineteenth century insurrections (*Polonia, Lithuania, Wojna*).

8 Romuald Traugutt (1826–64), general and the last commander of the January Uprising of 1863–64 against the Russian Empire, hanged near the Warsaw Citadel on 5 August 1864.

social and patriotic sensitivities. My grandmother was a clandestine teacher of the village kids. My grandfather was deeply respected by the local community, and he served as a a judge in the court of Chorzele for a long time. He took an active part in the troublesome process of land consolidation. There is a short but meaningful inscription on his tomb: "He loved people."

One of the most significant experiences constantly recalled by my father, Eugeniusz, born on 4 August 1897, concerned his singing the church song "Boże, coś Polskę" ("God, Thou Hast Poland")[9] in the parish church of Chorzele in 1905. Any time my father recalled that experience, he cried. Thus, the patriotic tradition was very firmly supported by my parents, who had married in 1924. I can remember from my earliest childhood a portrait of my mother's brother Kazimierz. He was a young officer who died in May 1920 in the battle of Berezina. He was awarded the Cross of Valor. My mother often told me about him. She told me the story of her younger brother who was killed in the 1920 war against the Bolsheviks. He was a young, vigorous boy, and my mother liked recalling him. I remember her showing me a letter that her brother had sent to their mother just before his death, in which he thanked his mother for his patriotic upbringing. Let me make it clear that the kind of patriotic upbringing I refer to was inextricably related to the awareness of what it means to have an independent Poland. The history we witnessed was the real-life experience of concrete people: our predecessors and relatives who took part in all these historic events. My father also served in the military in 1918 and 1920. I still

9 A patriotic church song appealing to God to save and restore Poland. It is an iconic church song of the period of Partitions and of the communist regime. Lyrics by Alojzy Faliński in 1814, music by Jean-Pierre Solié: "God! Thou surrounded Poland for so many centuries / With the grandeur of might and glory, / And with the shield of Your almighty protection / From ill fortunes that were to oppress her. // (refrain:) Before Your altars we carry our imploration: / Bless our free Fatherland, o Lord! // God! Thou withdrew Poland that was covered for / So many centuries with the grandeur of might and glory, / Suddenly from Your care / And raised these peoples who were supposed to serve her. // (refrain) // Thou, who then were affected by its downfall, / Thou supported her struggle for the holy cause / And as Thou wanted the whole world to testify her courage, / Among ill fortunes Thou only multiplied her glory. // (refrain) // Not long ago you've taken freedom away from Polish territory / And rivers of our tears and blood were shed; / How terrible it must be for those, / Whom Thou take freedom away for centuries. // (refrain) // One of Your words, great Lord of thunders! / Thou'll be able to raise us from the dead, / When we should ever again deserve Your punishment, / Then turn us to ashes, but into free ashes!" // (refrain).

keep in mind my father's story about what happened in Warsaw in November 1918, about the atmosphere of a newly regained independence and about the 1920 anti-Bolshevik war.

My father inherited his mother's grand piano and he used to play it a lot. Apart from the works by Chopin, he also played a vast repertoire of military and patriotic songs, which have been so dear to me since my early childhood. Another significant family ritual occurred after lunch, when my father used to read a book aloud. I remember when my father read to us *Potop* (The Deluge) by Henryk Sienkiewicz,[10] and he used this novel to explain Polish history. He presented the profiles of the novel's protagonists; for example, the little knight Michał Wołodyjowski.[11] This constant presence of Polish history in my family memories and the repeated historical references in the family narrative shaped my interest in the past.

PK: ***The patriotic family tradition, which you have presented, influenced a whole generation of young people who entered adulthood in the interwar period. To what extent was this historical memory and pride common among the Polish aristocracy and intelligentsia? To what extent was it also shared by the rural population? You mentioned Sienkiewicz's novel and Grottger's woodcuts, which were instrumental in promoting knowledge or rather a kind of imagination relating to Polish history. Do you think that a claim about a socially shared model of patriotic upbringing and education in the interwar period is justified? Was it a model that taught respect for the past and aimed to get the young ready for the active defense of independence?***

JK: I am not ready to answer these questions. I was brought up in a rural community; I played with the village kids, and I am unable to use my experience to determine what these patriotic traditions looked like elsewhere. There were many similar traditions with shared common de-

10 Hernyk Sienkiewicz (1846–1916), journalist and novelist, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1905); his trilogy: *Ogniem i mieczem* [With fire and sword], published 1884; *Potop* [The deluge], published in 1886; and *Pan Wołodyjowski* [Fire in the steppe], published in 1888– set in seventeenth-century Poland praises patriotism and individual sacrifice in the struggle for independence.

11 Michał Wołodyjowski, one of the most important characters of Henryk Sienkiewicz's trilogy, a main character in the last novel, *Pan Wołodyjowski*, and symbol of military valor and uncompromised courage.

nominators such as love of one's homeland, happiness in having an independent state, and the *readiness* to defend this independence, which was threatened by the historical turmoil of the late 1930s. Undeniably, the works by Henryk Sienkiewicz and Artur Grottger were critically instrumental in shaping the public historical memory, due to their wide public availability. Sienkiewicz's protagonists like Jan Skrzetuski[12] or Michał Wołodyjowski were convincing for young people like me. These heroes showed us how to love our country and defend it; they definitively influenced our generations. We found their dedication to the Polish cause, so emotionally depicted by Sienkiewicz, particularly relevant in the circumstances of the looming Nazi invasion.

PK: ***You have told us about the role of your family background, anchored in the memory of the Polish past. It taught you to love your homeland. This historical memory contained real-life events that were part of the Polish struggle for independence. It relied on the real-life experiences of your predecessors, who took an active part in that struggle. All these facts have influenced the way you experience and perceive history, so evidently manifesting itself since the beginning of your life. To what extent has this dramatic history of our nation influenced your interest in history and then your later choice of career?***

JK: My family background was vital for my interest in history, but my career choice came much later. Before I could even have a chance to start thinking about my career, World War II broke out. When the Germans invaded Poland, my parents were deprived of their estate, and we suffered deportation. Luckily, my father and mother avoided execution, a tragic fate that struck many families in our region. The area where we lived was incorporated into the Reich, and we were forced to leave for the General Governorate.[13] My parents settled near Warsaw, and I left for Warsaw in 1941, where I stayed until the fall of the Warsaw Uprising in the autumn of 1944. This was an extremely vital period in my life.

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12 Jan Skrzetuski, main character of Sienkiewicz's novel *Ogniem i mieczem*, representing a courageous nobleman and patriot.

13 General Governorate (Geman: *Generalgouvernement,* Polish: *Generalne Gubernatorstwo*), a Nazi colony established in October 1939 on the territories of central and southern Poland.

PK: *Your first educational experiences take us back to your childhood in Bogdany. Apart from the family education, you also attended school there. What was school education like then?*

JK: I graduated from the primary school in Bogdany with the help of a local teacher, who was my home tutor. I also commuted to the school in Chorzele. In 1937, I became a student in Adam Mickiewicz Mid-Level Secondary School in Warsaw. When my health deteriorated and I was forced to abandon school, my parents found a French tutor to teach me French. Then, I attended a school run by the Marian Fathers in the Bielany district of Warsaw. The classes were clandestine. I completed my final exam the so-called "maturity" exam in 1944, also in the clandestine form. I did it in the previously mentioned Adam Mickiewicz Mid-Level Secondary School in Warsaw. There, I met Stefan Wilkanowicz[14] and Jan Gieysztor,[15] who later became my friends.

PK: *You have mentioned the patriotic inspiration that you acquired at home, and how it influenced your life choices. For you and for many of your contemporaries who entered adulthood in the time of World War II, patriotism took a concrete form involvement in the resistance movement. But for most of you patriotism did not equal nationalism. I would like us to try to define these two concepts. Hence, how did you and your peers perceive patriotism and nationalism? Nationalism was an inspiration for Poles before World War I, but did it turn xenophobic in interwar Poland? Did the Polish nationalist movement develop hostility towards other nations or minorities living in the territories of the Second Polish Republic?*

JK: We need to keep in mind that nationalism takes different forms and degrees of intensity. Some of them are extreme, others very traditional. Some people tended to put an equal sign between nationalism and patriotism. In interwar Poland, there were representatives of

14 Setefan Wilkanowicz (b.1924), Polish journalist and Catholic activist, editor-in-chief of the monthly periodical *Znak* (1978 94).

15 Jan Gieysztor (1926 2013), soldier of the Union of Armed Struggle and Home Army in the *Baszta* regiment, soldier of the anticommunist underground movement, imprisoned by the communist regime.

the extreme type of nationalism, who were hostile towards other nations or minorities such as Jews, Germans, or Russians. We also need to remember that this sense of hostility had its roots in the negative experiences of the Partitions. This explains why the hostility was mostly declared in relation to Germans or Russians but hardly ever towards Austrians. The underlying idea of this variety of nationalism—often defined in terms of a political religion—is to interpret a nation in terms of the sacred. Other values are necessarily subservient. As we know, this variety of nationalism could transform into totalitarianism. This was the case of Lenin's ideology in Russia or the Nazis' in Germany.

The late nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of the phenomenon of social Darwinism—well discussed in the relevant sources. This ideology maintained that the survival of one community is possible when that community succeeds in conquering others. This was believed to hold true for both ethnic and religious communities. This belief led to a series of traumatic experiences in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. Each community must unambiguously define its identity, which makes it distinct from other communities. The community must preserve and defend that identity when confronted by others. Ideologies like social Darwinism paved the way for the tragic events in European history. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Europe abandoned its medieval heritage—excellently presented by Marc Bloch[16] and Jacques Le Goff. This is a key observation for me. Let me remind you at this point that Europe came into being as a civilization of communities, where the particular societies, states, and other social groups were granted their rights. This principle pertained to cities and villages that won their autonomy. This process was a source of European power. European development was fueled by the development of these communities, anchored in a stable regulatory system. In this sense, the ideology of social Darwinism—put into political practice in the first half of the twentieth century—undermined the foundations of this historical Europe. The legal autonomy of the communities that had survived throughout the ages was constrained by the state. The increase in the

16 Marc Bloch (1886–1944), French historian, cofounder of the *Annales* School.

power wielded by the state came at the cost of minor communities. This is why historians like Le Goff so desperately appeal to us that this European tradition— not as distant as it may seem— be remembered. This is also why history matters, even though it is being gradually eradicated from educational programs. Modern globalization processes encourage xenophobia, since many people choose isolationism when facing a vast panorama of hazards. They are ignorant of the historical tradition that laid the foundations for European civilization.

PK: *Interwar Polish nationalism became more powerful after Poland regained independence. Was it a consequence of abandoning the multicultural heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for the sake of Poland for Poles?*

JK: Yes, it was, but we cannot forget the whole context of the struggle for independence. It is true that National Democracy was a nationalist party, but even within this ideological movement there were many shades and variants. There was a radical organization, the National-Radical Camp (ONR), but there were far more open groups as well. Radical nationalism was a great failure of interwar Poland. The popularity of the movement related closely to the idea of the nation-state, strongly advocated by Roman Dmowski[17]— a man whose dedication to the cause of Poland's independence cannot be overestimated. His variant of nationalism was moderate, but exclusivist. It differed fundamentally from the nationalism supported by Józef Piłsudski and his federalist model of the Polish Republic. Piłsudski strove towards a federation with Belarusians and Ukrainians. Yet, these plans failed, blocked by Lithuanian nationalism and Ukrainian radical nationalism. Many contemporary commentators claim that Piłsudski's federalist attempts were premature. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the tradition of the multinational Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the role of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in that state were significant factors that shaped Józef Piłsudski's political concepts.

17 Roman Dmowski (1864–1939), Polish politician, and co-founder and chief ideologue of the right-wing National Democracy movement.

PK: *Józef Piłsudski is a symbolic person for you, your generation, and for many younger generations of Poles. His active part in regaining and rebuilding the Polish state after World War I is still venerated. There is no denying that he was a key figure in the history of that period: a creator and leader of the Polish Military Organization and the Legions, the head of the Polish state, and the victorious military leader in the 1920 anti-Bolshevik war. Yet, some historians juxtapose Piłsudski against Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk*[18]*, one of the founding fathers and the first president of Czechoslovakia, who succeeded in creating the only authentic democracy in the whole East Central European region.*

JK: This is an extremely puzzling issue, which calls for a lot of thought and research. It also calls for actions to enable a better understanding of the differences between the histories of Poland and the Czech Republic. Let me observe that Polish public opinion concerning the Czechs was hugely influenced by the bitter memory of the Czechoslovak annexation of Zaolzie (trans-Olza Silesia known by the Czechs as Těšínské Slezsko). I remember my lengthy talks with the outstanding Czech philosopher Jan Patočka,[19] when we tried to determine the roots of the negative stereotypes of a Pole and a Czech. We also noted how detrimental these stereotypes were for the mutual relations between both nations. Patočka was a strong adversary and critic of the political line adopted by Edvard Beneš.[20] At the same time, I pointed out the unwise moves of the Polish state, such as the Polish annexation of Zaolzie during the Nazi campaign in the Czech Sudetenland in the autumn of 1938. We need to keep these negative stereotypes in mind, as they caused a lot of harm to both nations. If not for these prejudices and mutual grievances, both states could have been able to form an alliance against the Nazi Reich. The Czechs had a fortified border with the Germans, and their army was quite well armed.

The differences between the subsequent situation in Poland and Czechoslovakia are clearly visible when one compares the structure of

18 Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), first president of Czechoslovakia.

19 Jan Patočka (1907–77), Czech philosopher, first spokesman of Charter 77, the Czech dissident movement during the last two decades of communist rule.

20 Edvard Beneš (1884–1948), president of Czechoslovakia (1935–38, 1945–48).

the underground resistance movements in both countries under the German occupation— which was also pointed out by Jan Patočka. For example, the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich,[21] which took place in Prague in 1942, was organized and executed by Czech and Slovak soldiers trained in England and deployed in the Czech territories.[22] It was an exceptional operation. In occupied Poland the resistance movement was so strong that executions of Nazi officers were organized and carried out by local underground army units. The Polish underground state organization comprised hundreds of thousands of people.

We agreed that Poles and Czechs need to make a greater effort to get to know and understand one another better, as this kind of understanding between the nations of East Central Europe has not yet been attained. A similar case is that of the troublesome Polish-Ukrainian relations, which are also burdened with a difficult past. We have to remember Piłsudski's flawed Ukrainian politics, for which he eventually apologized. Czech-Slovak relations are another case of mutual misunderstanding. In fact, one could mention many more cases of the detrimental impact of stereotypes on mutual relations between the nations of East Central Europe. This negative impact of stereotypes propelled historians after World War II to debate the history of the region, so as to overcome the stereotypes and prejudices. In my conversations with Czech intellectuals, such as Jan Patočka or František Šmahel, we planned actions that could help undermine these stereotypes.

In the nineteenth century, the relations among Poles in Galicia and Czechs were far from good either. The Czechs were unable to comprehend the idea of the Polish uprisings. Historians explain this in various ways. Some claim that the Czechs were a predominantly agrarian society at that time, and they could not comprehend the Polish revolts in the way the Polish nobility did. Others try to explain why the

21 Reinhard Heydrich (1904–42), chief of the Reich Main Security Office (including the Gestapo, Kripo, and SD), Deputy/Acting Reich-Protector of Bohemia and Moravia (1941–42).

22 The Operation Anthropoid (the code name for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich) was instigated by František Moravec, head of the Czech intelligence services, decided by the Czechoslovak government-in-exile and prepared by the British Special Operations Executive. Support of the underground resistance movement operating in Czechoslovakia was crucial for the success of the operation. A great number of the supporters, as well as the assassins themselves, paid for their engagement with their lives in the aftermath.

Czechs were unwilling to reach for independence, arguing that the Czech aristocracy preferred to compromise with the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. These discrepancies in the positions taken by Poles and Czechs were more than evident in the Vienna parliamentary debates. We should add that Czechs always had a positive attitude towards Russians. Furthermore, they were enthusiastic about the idea of Pan-Slavism, so eagerly promoted by the tsarist empire, and quite popular with some Czech intellectuals. Personally, I am not sure how to explain these phenomena. I am sure that a topic worthy of a debate is the stereotypes that grew and had a negative impact on the Czech and Polish politics of the first half of the twentieth century.

PK: *I would like to come back to these divergent views on Józef Piłsudski—those in Poland against those outside Poland. Despite all the possible reservations, Piłsudski is a symbolic figure who enjoys huge popularity in contemporary Poland. In the rankings that list the most significant figures in Polish history, Piłsudski is only superseded by John Paul II.*[23] *In fact, no one can fully comprehend the Polish struggle for independence during World War I and the effort to construct a new Polish state without taking Piłsudski into account. Józef Piłsudski had a well-defined vision of Poland, which emerged after World War I. He was also a man of action, of iron will, and of uncompromising determination. As you have said, as a politician, he was able to reconcile his own Romantic, idealistic thought with highly pragmatic actions. This is why he was able to accept defeat when his plan to build a new federal commonwealth failed. He was also able to modify his strategy to match the circumstances. The fact that Piłsudski is perceived as a dictator who imposed his will on others by means of military force is undeniably the result of the so-called May Coup of 1926. From the Western European or Czech perspective, Józef Piłsudski is seen as one more interwar dictator, on a par with Benito Mussolini, Miklós Horthy, or even Adolf Hitler.*

JK: These comparisons have no justification. They result from a failure to comprehend the ideas that inspired Piłsudski and to see the difficult context in which he tried to put these ideas into practice. Piłsudski

23 John Paul II (1920–2005), born Karol Wojtyła, pope of the Catholic Church (1978–2005).

deeply appreciated the traditions of the multinational First Polish Republic, and he regarded this tradition as a Polish advantage. This is why, after World War I, he was determined to build a federation with Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians. His plans to rebuild a commonwealth of many nations failed, as it met with strong resistance on the part of Lithuanian and Ukrainian nationalists. The Lithuanian resistance was particularly painful for him. We have to realize that only some decades before, Poles and Lithuanians fought hand in hand in the January Uprising in the name of the commonwealth. Yet the growth of the nationalist movement in late nineteenth-century Lithuania produced the concept of an independent Lithuanian state, built separately from any Polish influence.

Our relations with the Czechs in the interwar period were largely influenced by the sudden Czechoslovak military annexation of Zaolzie, which took place in January 1919, when the Polish army was engaged on the Ukrainian front. Many Poles felt as if they had been betrayed. We also need to keep in mind the growing role of the Czechoslovak communists, who were enthusiastic about the Red Army's raid on Warsaw in 1920. Unlike some of the Czech leaders, Piłsudski had no illusions about Russia whether tsarist or Bolshevik. He knew firsthand how the Russians treated any pro-independence aspirations of the Poles and how they dealt with political opponents. Finally, let us add here that just after the outbreak of World War II, a scheme emerged to create a Polish-Czechoslovak federation. In 1943, this project failed due to Edvard Beneš's decision to negotiate with Stalin on his own. Today we know the tragic consequences of this move for the Czechs and for Beneš himself. For many Poles, the Czech politics of collaboration with the Germans and the Soviets were difficult to understand. Both Patočka and later Havel understood that mistake. This is why the latter became deeply involved in cooperation with the Polish anticommunist opposition. I wonder if there is anything left of this close cooperation between the Polish and Czech members of the 1980s anticommunist opposition, and if this cooperation was effective in overcoming the historical prejudices and negative stereotypes.

* * *

PK: *The tragic events of World War II affected you, your family, and the whole Polish society. At the age of fifteen, you witnessed the Nazi invasion of Poland and the Soviet attack in September 1939, followed by the five long years of occupation. This was the time when you became an adult. How do you remember this time when independence was lost again and the first years of the occupation?*

JK: That was a tragic experience. The Nazi invasion and the simultaneous attack of the Soviet army resulted in a dramatic collapse of the Polish state. The territory of Poland was divided among the invaders. We left Bogdany just before the outbreak of the war. After a month of wandering, we came back home. In late January 1940, the Germans expelled us from our home, taking over our estate. Until the end of 1940, we lived in a place near Bogdany. Staying in Bogdany, we got little information— and rather late— about what was going on in Poland. We knew that a Polish government was established in Paris. We also learned about the growing number of executions in our neighborhood, which made us wonder if the Germans were going to come and murder us, too. The scale of Nazi homicide was smaller in our region in contrast with those territories that the Germans regarded as their own, and which belonged to the Reich before 1918. Our region was part of the former Russian Partition, and that is why the Nazi cruelties were different there. Those Germans who expelled us from the house in Bogdany were gentle enough to allow us to take some of our belongings and commodities.

PK: *When the Germans forced your family to settle near Warsaw in late 1940, you were sixteen and you continued your education in Adam Mickiewicz Mid-Level Secondary School in the Warsaw district of Bielany. This is how you met other people who suffered because of the war and sought refuge in Warsaw. You also got involved in the underground resistance movement at this time.*

JK: My parents settled near Warsaw at the very end of 1940, and they sent me to the boarding school run by the Marian Fathers in Warsaw. I passed my mid-level final exam there. I lived in many Warsaw loca-

tions, e.g., in the dormitory at the corner of Marszałkowska and Moniuszki streets. There were a hundred young people from all over Poland in Warsaw, which seemed to be a safe harbor for Poles from east and west. This was indeed an exceptional experience: to meet so many young people who were forced to seek refuge in Warsaw as a result of the war. Boys lived on the second floor of the dormitory, while girls also from all over Poland were on the fourth. The youth were under the custody of the Central Welfare Council. We talked and shared our life stories, which was an extraordinary experience. Listening to stories from all over Poland showed the wartime drama of so many Polish families. This is how we learned about the events that took place in the East, informed by those who had escaped the Soviet invasion. My engagement in the underground resistance movement began in 1941.

PK: ***Your biography and memoirs show that secondary school education automatically meant becoming part of the resistance movement.***

JK: Yes, the resistance movement was simultaneous to school education. I joined the movement with the whole group of my Bielany school peers. The years 1941–44 were a time when, on the one hand, I was active very active, indeed in the resistance; on the other, I took part in clandestine classes preparing me for the mid-level final exam. The classes were conducted in groups of five or six, which corresponded directly to the size of the basic organizational unit of the resistance movement, which was called a section. I joined the resistance movement inspired by my teacher, who incorporated our whole class group into a Home Army unit, later named *Baszta* (Turret). This name was taken from a staff battalion, incorporating two companies, situated in the district of Żoliborz. This was a youth, scouting initiative, which was taken over by the military and incorporated within the structure of the Polish underground army, the Armed Resistance, later renamed the Home Army (AK).[24] The Chief Command Office of the Home Army created a unit that later developed into a battalion with the same

24 The Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*), established in February 1942 by the Polish Government-in-Exile as the dominant resistance movement on the territories of Poland occupied by Nazi Gemany, disbanded in January 1945.

name. Three years later, the battalion grew into a regiment, also named *Baszta*. The commanders of *Baszta* concentrated on educating the youth to become military staff subject to regular military training. Our meetings were usually held once a week in various locations all over Warsaw. From time to time, we also met outside Warsaw. This is how I got well acquainted with the forests surrounding Warsaw. The units within our company met at night in the forest near Otwock. We had a very brave commander, whom we liked and admired. Thanks to these forest camps, I was able to find out how many students living in my dormitory were members of the resistance movement. Some of these friendships have survived until today.

PK: ***By taking a military vow and entering the underground state army, you became a regular soldier fighting against the German occupation. What did your military training look like?***

JK: It started with shooting practice. Then I participated in the non-commissioned officer training, which I completed in 1942. The training was conducted by various trainers. In 1943, I completed the officer cadet training. I remember well that the final exam for the cadet officer was far more demanding than my final secondary school exam. The exam procedure was conducted by a colonel from the Main Command Office of the Home Army, and it took almost a full day to complete. I remember the pressure: the military exercises alone took something like six hours. I did well on the exam. I was happy to score the highest in my group. This was my big success. We were involved in military activities, but first and foremost, our task was to train military staff. In 1943, when I became an officer cadet, I was nominated deputy commanding officer of a platoon. My commander and I were in charge of four squads, that is eight sections. It took me a lot of time to inspect these troops and train my platoon. I remember studying for the secondary school final exam and, simultaneously, training new volunteers. In 1944, when a course for junior commanders was organized, I became an assistant to the officer in charge. During that course, we went to the Wyszków forest, where we met a group of boys from the Jewish Combat Organization. This was a most interesting meeting, as

they told us about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.[25] They had taken refuge in the forest, protected by the Home Army, and were awaiting a new chance to fight against the Germans. They said they dreamed of continuing combat. They asked us to remember them when the Warsaw Uprising started and to let them fight.

PK: ***We are talking now about the phenomenon of the Polish underground state, which was exceptional in the history of the anti-German resistance in all the occupied territories. You were among those who initiated it and you were part of it as a Home Army soldier. Did you realize the organizational potential of that underground state at that time?***

JK: Yes, I did. The Home Army was an integral part of this state, and we felt that we were its citizens. To emphasize this civil approach to statehood, the only form of address accepted in the resistance movement was *Obywatel* (citizen). Therefore, you always addressed your superiors as "Citizen Commander." No other forms were used. This was a manifestation of an old tradition developed by the Legions and the Polish Military Organization, to which we adhered closely. This tradition expressed our conviction that we served our country and state. We felt that we were citizens and the soldiers of the Home Army – a volunteer army that continued the combat after the collapse of the Polish state in September 1939. We felt we were an army of the state that functioned despite the German occupation. The state had its government in London, but it was also represented in the occupied lands by its agents and armed forces. This sense of a continuation of Polish statehood was emphasized in our underground resistance education. We also had various conceptions of a democratic state to be built after

25 The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising started on 19 April 1943 and lasted until 16 May. It was provoked by the Nazi suppression of the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw and the extermination of Jews in the General Governorate. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was conducted by hundreds of soldiers from the Jewish Combat Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa) and the Jewish Military Association (Żydowski Związek Wojskowy). It was the first mass-scale military operation against the Germans in the General Governorate, and the first major urban combat in the Nazi-occupied territory of Europe. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising should not be confused with the Warsaw Uprising (1 August–2 October 1944), conducted by the Home Army to liberate Warsaw from German occupation.

liberation— a state where political interests and views would be in the far background of public attention. Our dormitory hosted young people from the rural areas and cities— people of different worldviews and political options. Yet we all felt we were thinking together about a new Polish state. A lot of these young people served in various units of *Baszta*.

PK: *Your resistance movement pseudonym was Piotruś (Pete). How did that happen?*

JK: I chose this pseudonym myself, and it was inspired by my interest in my family history. Once, when at Bielany School, I was browsing through old books. Among them, there was one about King Stephen Bathory's war against the Russians. This is where I found a mention of Piotr Kłoczowski, who died in the siege of Velikiye Luki in 1582. I found this story about my distant ancestor intriguing. I thought of him as a great hero who lost his life serving his country. When I was entering the resistance, I needed to pick a pseudonym. I said I wanted "Piotr" (Peter) to venerate the hero of Velikiye Luki. However, when it turned out that someone else had already taken that name, I was offered the name Piotruś, and so this became my pseudonym. I chose it thinking that if he died for the homeland and became a hero, I could also sacrifice my life for Poland. Later on, I told my family the story of Piotr Kłoczowski, and my father confirmed that he knew this old story. It seems everyone had forgotten it, so I was proud to have recalled it.

PK: *This story reveals traces of your family traditions, but it also exhibits your early interest in historical research. It seems justified to say that your enthusiasm about the past began with that experience, when one of your early library searches helped you rediscover a forebear, whom you found exemplary and worth following. Apparently, this family-rooted patriotism and the pride taken in the distant predecessor influenced your life choices. Under the pseudonym of Piotruś, you made your name in the ranks of* Baszta*, and this wartime pseudonym lasted for much longer after World War II.*

JK: Yes, I became Piotruś for much longer than the occupation. For my resistance friends, I became Piotruś for good. This is how they usually addressed me. A lot of people called me that even after the war. Quite recently, I had a phone call from a friend of mine. She was a liaison during the Warsaw Uprising, and she still calls me Piotruś.

PK: *To be a member of the resistance movement was a brave act. The type of punishment for active resistance against the German occupiers could not be more obvious. Everyone knew the fate awaiting those whose conspiracy was uncovered. Were you aware of this enormous risk you were taking? A risk of losing your life, which was highly probable in the case of resistance activities.*

JK: I need to mention the miraculous salvation that I experienced just before the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising. One day, the superiors in our dormitory asked us to leave, since our resistance activities severely endangered all the other students. Accompanied by three other colleagues, I left the dormitory and rented a private flat in a house at the corner of Marszałkowska and Śniadeccy streets. On Sunday, 24 May 1943, I left the flat very early in the morning and went to Zielonka[26] near Warsaw to visit my parents. That very night four criminals plundered our flat and killed my three colleagues: Wojciech Broszkiewicz, Tadeusz Turski, and Kazimierz Król. This criminal mystery remained forever unsolved. No one knows who was responsible for that crime. The Germans did occasionally run such actions against the Polish resistance movement, yet in this case all the attempts to determine the responsibility for the killing failed. An investigation was held, but in vain. This is why I find myself miraculously saved. When I came back to Warsaw on Monday, I met a friend who told me about this tragic event. He warned me to be watchful, as I still could be a target for the killers. This is why I took a secret shelter for some time. I will not mention other experiences, but, in a nutshell, resistance activities were hardly a piece of cake.

PK: *Your memory of being an active member of the resistance movement is still vivid. For a young man who was at the beginning of his adult life, your*

26 Zielonka, a town in the province of Mazovia, district of Wołomin, 15 km east from Warsaw.