

JAN PIROŻYŃSKI

(7.03.1936 – 8.10.2004)

Professor Jan Pirożyński was mainly attached to two very distinguished scholarly institutions: the Institute of History of the Jagiellonian University and the Jagiellonian Library, although he also worked at the Archives of the City of Cracow and the Department of Librarianship and Scientific Information of the Institute of Polish Philology of the Jagiellonian University. It was these connections that in a large measure directed his interests and shaped his profile as a researcher of the history of culture. He started his studies with the history of the Reformation, and under the direction of Prof. K. Lepszy wrote his master's thesis about the social views of Marcin Czechowic. His PhD dissertation written under the direction of Prof. J. Gierowski (degree in 1968), devoted to the Warsaw Sejm of 1570, also referred to the history of the Reformation in Poland, although at the same time it involved J. Pirożyński in the current of research into the history of parliamentarianism. A new direction in his interests — the history of printing and books — arose in connection with his work at the Department of Incunabula of the Jagiellonian Library, where he was employed in the years 1964–1979. Apart from that his interests centred on the Polish–German cultural relations in the Renaissance era, especially the previously little known person of Zofia Jagiellon, the daughter of Sigismund I and Bona Sforza, married to the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, as well as on her library, which became the basis of the great ducal library at Wolfenbüttel, a centre of learning and culture active till to-day.

The fruit of his extensive and scrupulous inquiries and studies was Zofia Jagiellon's biography, published in 1986 and accepted at the Historico-Philosophical Department of the Jagiellonian University as the basis for his qualification as assistant professor in 1987. J. Pirożyński continued his studies of the Duchess's activity for several years, and published a number of articles on this subject (among others an extremely interesting, extensive study of the role of Zofia Jagiellon in the vicissitudes of the first *interregnum* and of her attitude to the Habsburgs' candidature for the Polish throne.) These works led to the publication in Germany in 1992 of the German version of Zofia Jagiellon's biography and the history of her library, more extensive than the Polish one, for enriched with new sources and reflections. Finally, a few months before his death, Pirożyński published a new Polish version of Zofia Jagiellon's biography, which is an excellent study not only in the history of culture and politics but also in mentality (J. Pirożyński, *Zofia Jagiellonka [1522–1575] i jej księgozbiór [Zofia Jagiellon (1522–1575) and her library]*, Kraków 2004, PAU, Rozprawy Wydziału Historyczno-Filozoficznego, 339 pp.)

A few years ago Jan Pirożyński took up another important subject: the problem of circulation of information in early-modern Europe. This was connected with his previous studies of incunabula and books, but he concentrated on one aspect of this issue, that is revolution in the possibilities of information, linked to the appearance of leaflets and newspapers in the 16th and 17th centuries. These interests produced many works in the field of the history of printing and book trade. Pirożyński discussed the function of the Renaissance courts as centres of information and propaganda. He analysed the polemic writings and lampoons circulating in Germany and Poland at the threshold of the early modern era. These

works were crowned with the book entitled *Z dziejów obiegu informacji w Europie XVI w. Nowiny z Polski w kolekcji Jana Jakuba Wicka w Zurichu z lat 1560–1587* (*From the History of the Circulation of Information in 16th c. Europe. News from Poland in the Collection of Johann Jacob Wick in Zurich in the Years 1560–1587*). Kraków 1995. While presenting the person of the collector from Zurich Pirożyński analysed the state of familiarity with Poland in Switzerland, reconstructed the contacts, information routes and the profiles of informants and recipients. He showed the mechanism by which information circulated and was transmitted (official printed letters, correspondence, written and printed newspapers, illustrations), and discussed the centres interested in receiving information (the rulers' courts, the municipalities, merchants' and bankers' firms) as well as the conditions which stimulated the transmission of news, the development of travelling techniques, that is progress in ship-building and navigation, the state of roads and the growing density of their network, the appearance of maps and travel-guides, the development of professional specialized postal institutions, the function of fairs (with their barriers: state and church censorship, the poor development of printing and literacy, language barriers). A separate part of his book is devoted to the characterization of persons and whole groups interested in information as its creators, producers, and recipients, consumers. The book includes a scrupulous, detailed analysis, based on an extensive use of the sources, as well as an integral, general view of the subject, embracing various countries in the European comparative perspective; the author also takes into account the social aspects of this issue (the access of various social groups to information). What we get as a result is a perfectly constructed study of an important — may be even essential element of the culture of the Renaissance era. The book may serve as a model of good scholarly work, it is also innovatory in its interpretations. The latest years have seen few works representing such a level of scholarship.

It has to be said that the entire scholarly output of Prof. Pirożyński should be evaluated very highly. An excellent expert on the archives, not only Polish but also foreign (especially in Germany and Switzerland), he made several long trips abroad to carry out extensive source inquiries and study the literature concerning the subjects of his interest. His writings are very abundant, embracing over 200 items. Jan Pirożyński is for instance the author of 53 biographical essays published both in volume I part 2 of *Drukarze Dawnej Polski* (*The Printers of Old Poland*), and in *Encyklopedia Krakowa* (*The Encyclopedia of Cracow*); this was a splendid and time-consuming work requiring great erudition. Another valuable work of Pirożyński was the publication of the texts of some important 16th c. sources together with their analysis and discussion (among others the lampoon written in Gdańsk in 1573 about Henry of Valois and Poles, or the anti-Jewish letter printed in Prague the same year). Among his important publications there is the edition and preparation for print of part 2 volume I of *Drukarze Dawnej Polski. Małopolska* (*The Printers of Old Poland. Little Poland*), Kraków 2000. Thus we owe to Prof. Pirożyński the continuation of the important series concerning the Polish printing industry, started years ago by Prof. Alodia Kawecką-Gryczową. Another valuable initiative taken up by J. Pirożyński in co-operation with German historians was the publication (jointly with L. Belzyt) of the volume entitled *Metropolite Europy środkowo-wschodniej w XVI w.* (*The Metropolitan Cities of Central-Eastern Europe in the 15th and 16th Centuries*), Kraków 2000. His editorial output also includes the editing and publication of the volume of articles in the field of philology, philosophy and history written by Polish fellows of the Herzog-August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel (jointly with O. Dobijańska-Witczakowa, J. Garewicz and J. B. Korolec, entitled *Beiträge der polnischen Stipendiaten der Herzog-August Bibliothek zur Philosophie, Geschichte und Philologie*, Kraków 1994) as well as a volume of source studies in the Polish-Austrian relations (jointly with W. Leitsch, *Quellenstudien zur polnischen Geschichte aus österreichischen Sammlungen*, Wien 1990).

Prof. Pirożyński was well-known and respected internationally, among other things due to his many publications in German. He also presented his papers at many learned conferences in England, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium and Holland. He co-operated closely with the Herzog-August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, was a member of several renowned international learned societies (among others Schiller-Gesellschaft and Leibnitz Sozietät). In 1989 he became visiting fellow of Oxford University, in 1993 lectured at the University of Mainz, and between 1997 and 2000 he spent several months at the Centre of Research into the History of Central-Eastern Europe in Leipzig as visiting professor.

An important stage in his scholarly career in Poland was his directorship of the Jagiellonian Library (1981–1993). He was a member of Polish learned societies and committees, took part in the edition of some periodicals (among others "Acta Poloniae Historica" and "Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce"), sat on many scholarly councils (among others those of the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library, the Polish Academy of Sciences and the PAU Libraries). He was extremely active and assiduous. As a result he was awarded many prizes and distinctions (among others The Chevalier's Cross of the Order of Poland's Revival, the prizes of the Minister of Science and Academic Schools as well as of the Rector of the Jagiellonian University).

Prof. Jan Pirożyński left us a bequest of important, innovatory works, introducing many findings to the scholarly circulation, especially in the field of history of culture (in particular the function of books and printed publications in the early-modern era) and the Polish-German and Polish-Swiss relations. He departed prematurely, in the prime of his creative powers. His death is a great loss to the world of science.

*Maria Bogucka*