

*Mariusz Wołos*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6943-1069>

Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences  
Institute of History and Archival Research, Pedagogical University in Cracow

**“AN UNFULFILLED WRITER WHO BECAME A HISTORIAN”\*.  
JERZY WOJCIECH BOREJSZA  
(22 AUGUST 1935 – 28 JULY 2019)\*\***

**Abstract**

Jerzy Wojciech Borejsza was the son of communist activist Jerzy Borejsza, referred to as an ‘international communist’, and Ewa née Kantor. His grandfather Abraham Goldberg was one of the leaders of Polish Zionists. Borejsza described himself as ‘a Pole of Jewish origin’. His personality was greatly influenced by the Second World War experiences, including the pogrom of Jews in German-occupied Lwów in July 1941 and the tragic events of occupied Warsaw. As a result of the decision of the communist party authorities, in 1952, Borejsza was sent to study in the Soviet Union, first to Kazan, then to Moscow. This made it impossible for him to study Polish philology in Warsaw; Borejsza, therefore, chose historical studies. After returning to Poland in 1957, he undertook research on the history of Polish emigration after the January Uprising (1863–4). He was also interested in the history of the Polish socialist movement and its connections to socialism in Western Europe. Later, Borejsza intervened in the historiography of the Crimean War (1853–6), intending to bring this forgotten armed conflict back to light. He coined the phrase ‘the beautiful nineteenth century’, in contrast to the twentieth century as a time of hatred, extermination, and the Holocaust. Initially, Borejsza worked at the Polish Academy of Sciences (1958–64), then at the University of Warsaw (1964–75). In the early 1970s, he began research on Italian fascism and Italy’s unsuccessful attempts to create a fascist International. He also conducted research on the worldview of Adolf Hitler, formulating the view that, apart from anti-Semitism, another vital component of the Führer’s racism was anti-Slavism. Borejsza was the author of a textbook on totalitarian and authoritarian systems in Europe in 1918–45 (entitled *Schools of Hatred*). After the anti-Semitic campaign

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\* This is how Jerzy W. Borejsza described himself in his last book, see Jerzy Wojciech Borejsza, *Ostaniec, czyli ostatni świadek* (Warszawa, 2018), 527.

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launched by the communist authorities in March 1968, he was removed from the University of Warsaw (1975). From then until the end of his life, he worked at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. In the years 2004–12, he was also employed at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. In the last years of his life, he researched Russian archives, dealing with the history of communism as a totalitarian system and the Comintern's attitude toward Poland and Stalinist persecution of Polish communists. Jerzy W. Borejsza was an outstanding Polish researcher of the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He also witnessed the tragic history of the century of extermination.

**Keywords:** Jerzy Wojciech Borejsza, Polish historiography, history of the nineteenth century, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in Europe

## I

### AN EPISODE. INTRODUCING BOREJSZA – THE MAN

In late March 2008, I was on my business trip to Omsk in West Siberia. Once back in Moscow, where I was Director of the Polish Academy of Sciences' Research Centre, I came across a letter handwritten by Jerzy Wojciech Borejsza. Here are the excerpts:

1. We have had a four-hour-long scientific/social gathering at the Centre, which was the conclusive meeting of the Crimean War grant project participants (L[eonid] Gorizontov, V[ladislav] Grosul, V[alery] Stepanov, Olga Pavlenko, and V[ladimir] Bobrovnikov). ...
3. Under pressure from N[atalia] S[ergeevna] Lebedeva and others (accompanied by the promises that more archives will open), I have agreed to join the conference in October. The topic of my paper would probably be 'Polish public opinion between Stalinism and Nazism on the eve of the Second World War'. ...
5. I have collected a draft agreement with the RGASPI [Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History in Moscow] – actually, a master agreement, from K[irill] M[ikhailovich] Anderson [the Archive's Director in 1992–2008] – it can well be a ten-year contract (as I talked with Anderson), but the devil's in the 'detail' – there is no genuine biography whatsoever without two or three other archives! [all underlining by Jerzy W. Borejsza] I have taken further steps, but it is a tedious effort. (There's no biography without it!!!). We worked nine days without a break...
6. We talked with Lebedeva many a time about three, rather than two volumes of *Коминтерн и Польша* [The Comintern and Poland]. Anderson knows about it. (And he is aware of the volumes' form too).

But without you, Sir, it is hard to decide anything *in absentia*, whilst email and telephone are not always for use here.

So, I look forward to a longer meeting with the Author and Director of the Centre.<sup>1</sup>

This is only an excerpt of the letter – and a fragment of Borejsza’s activity during a short research sojourn in Russia’s capital city, one of the many such trips he made at the time. The grant related to the books on the Crimean War,<sup>2</sup> the plans regarding an address at the conference on the eightieth anniversary of the 1938 Munich Agreement (the event he indeed joined a few months later),<sup>3</sup> intensive work in Moscow archives, mainly focused on biographical material concerning Polish workers’ and communist movement activists (especially those who suffered repressive measures under the Stalinist regime) and, finally, the idea (never brought into being) of compiling a three- or, possibly, four-volume collection of documents regarding the Comintern’s activities in respect of Poland in the years 1919–43. After all, the afore-quoted letter was penned by a seventy-two-year-old man – no more a youngster. He did not consider himself retired, either. The reason was straightforward: history was his passion that propelled his career and posed a challenge to his everyday life. The words quoted above also testify to the importance attached by Borejsza to the archival research in Russia and the contacts with Russian historians.<sup>4</sup> His academic life has come full circle: as a student, he researched Russian archival documents, and his last years saw him

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<sup>1</sup> Borejsza’s letter to the author, 29 March 2008 (kept by the author).

<sup>2</sup> The project resulted in the production of multi-author monographs: Jerzy Wojciech Borejsza and Grzegorz Paweł Bąbiak (eds), *Polacy i ziemie polskie w dobie wojny krymskiej* (Warszawa, 2008); Jerzy W. Borejsza (ed.), *The Crimean War 1853–1856: Colonial Skirmish or Rehearsal for World War? Empires, Nations and Individuals* (Warszawa, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Ежи В. Борейша, *К вопросу о польском общественном мнении относительно Мюнхенского соглашения (между Третьим рейхом и СССР)*, in Наталья С. Лебедева and Мариуш Волос (eds), in cooperation with Юрий М. Коршунов, *Мюнхенское соглашение 1938 года: история и современность. Материалы международной научной конференции, Москва, 15–16 октября 2008 г.* (Москва, 2009), 269–74.

<sup>4</sup> Borejsza’s contacts with Soviet and Russian scholars have been discussed in more detail by Leonid Gorizontov and Piotr Głuszkowski, who collaborated with him for many years; see Леонид Е. Горизонтов, ‘Ежи Борейша: историк и свидетель’, *Новая и новейшая история*, vi (2019), 188–98; Петр Глушковский, *Ежи В. Борейша и Россия* (text kept by the author). This aspect is also mentioned in another of my texts, see Mariusz Wołos, *Prof. Borejsza otaczał się młodzieżą*, <https://dzieje.pl/edukacja/m-wolos> [Accessed: 5 Jan. 2020].

involved with the central archives in Moscow again; meanwhile, he had visited archives in seven other countries.

## II ASPECTS OF THE SCHOLAR'S BIOGRAPHY

Jerzy Wojciech Borejsza was born in Warsaw and lived there with his parents before the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> His parental grandfather, Abraham Goldberg (1880–1933), was a journalist and editor-in-chief of *Haynt*, the widely-read and influential Zionist organ, published in Yiddish.<sup>6</sup> His father, Jerzy Borejsza (1905–52), an ‘international communist’ with wide contacts in left-oriented political and intellectual circles in many countries, the man who built the powerful publishing concern ‘Czytelnik’ in post-war Poland, broke off entirely with his Jewish identity. His mother, Ewa Jadwiga née Kantor (1912–2004), a nurse by education, considered herself Polish though she never forgot about her Jewish roots and ancestors.<sup>7</sup> It was she who had a prevalent influence on the upbringing of her son, whose first name was given in honour of the Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov.<sup>8</sup> The role of his permanently busy and absent father, increasingly ailing, was immeasurably more minor in this respect. Until March 1968, Jerzy W. Borejsza referred to himself as a Pole; afterwards, he would describe himself as “a Pole of Jewish descent”.<sup>9</sup>

His experiences as a child during the Second World War’s German occupation greatly impacted his worldview and character. In his memory of those times of contempt, a particular place was taken by the pogrom

<sup>5</sup> ‘Rękopisy znalezione w Moskwie’ [J.W. Borejsza talks to Tomasz Siewierski], *Newsweek Polska. Historia*, 2 (2019), 61.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Historyk w świecie wydawców. Z prof. Jerzym W. Borejszą rozmawia Piotr Dobrołęcki’, *Wyspa. Kwartalnik Literacki*, ii (2019), 96; Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow, ‘Jerzy W. Borejsza (22 August 1935 – 28 July 2019)’, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 120 (2019), 283; for more, see *ead.*, *Mówić we własnym imieniu. Prasa jidyszowa a tworzenie żydowskiej tożsamości narodowej (do 1918 roku)* (Warszawa, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Borejsza’s family background is most completely portrayed in his father’s biography, see Eryk Krasucki, *Międzynarodowy komunista Jerzy Borejsza. Biografia polityczna* (Warszawa, 2009), 23–35; also, see Barbara Fijałkowska, *Borejsza i Różański. Przczynek do dziejów stalinizmu w Polsce* (Olsztyn, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 83.

<sup>9</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *A Ridiculous Hundred Million Slavs. Concerning Adolf Hitler’s World-View* (Warsaw, 2017), 15; *id.*, *Ostaniec*, 451.

in the summer of 1941 in the German-occupied Lwów,<sup>10</sup> which Jerzy eye-witnessed together with his mother, themselves miraculously escaping death – along with the later images from the German-occupied Warsaw.<sup>11</sup> Even those on closer terms with him, knowing him as an extremely suave man, full of humour and empathy, tolerant to people not sharing his views, were not really aware of how deep the trauma was rooted in his personal experiences occupation time. This changed, perhaps, only after he published the book *Ostaniec* [An Outlier], a few months before his death.

In 1944–6, Borejsza lived, together with his mother, first at Międzyborów near Żyrardów and next at Jaktorów not far from Warsaw, then in Łódź, before he returned to the destroyed capital city. He passed his secondary-school finals [*matura*] in 1952, at the Society of the Friends of Children [TPD] School no. 3 in Warsaw, at Wiktorska St. – just a few months after his father died; Jerzy Wojciech, then aged below seventeen, faced the need to choose a career path. He wanted to study Polish literature at the University of Warsaw, dreaming of a creative writer's career; he had written poetry when a teenager.<sup>12</sup> But the decision was made by the others on his behalf: Franciszek Mazur, Zenon Nowak, and Edward Ochab of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party [Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR] resolved to have him sent to the Soviet Union to study<sup>13</sup> – not in Moscow or Leningrad but to Kazan on the Volga, where a university functioned, established in the early years of Emperor Alexander I's reign. Jerzy stayed there for the months, from 1 September 1952 to 1 July 1953.<sup>14</sup> Now, he had to quit the idea of studying Polish for good. Thus, the unfulfilled writer commenced his studies in history, which was a rare thing among the Poles sent

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<sup>10</sup> For a broader discussion, see John-Paul Himka, 'Pogrom lwowski w 1941 roku. Niemcy, ukraińscy nacjonałiści i miejski tłum', in Andrzej A. Zięba (ed.), *OUN, UPA i zagłada Żydów* (Kraków, 2016), 281–312; Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, 'Przebieg i sprawcy pogromu we Lwowie latem 1941 roku. Aktualny stan badań', in *ibid.*, 313–41.

<sup>11</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 31–3.

<sup>12</sup> 'Rękopisy znalezione w Moskwie', 62.

<sup>13</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 131.

<sup>14</sup> Archiwum Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu (hereinafter: AUMK), Akta osobowe prof. dr. hab. Jerzego Borejszy, ref. no. K 2285/9 (hereinafter: AJB), Zaświadczenie wystawione przez Biuro Uznawalności Wykształcenia i Wymiany Międzynarodowej, 21 July 2000, 8.

to study in the Soviet Union, as most of them would choose science, technology, or medicine.<sup>15</sup>

Borejsza-senior's attitude to Borejsza-junior is aptly described by Eryk Krasucki in a posthumous recollection of Jerzy Wojciech:

His attitude to his father was warm, full of admiration, but there were many things that he found troublesome in him, above all a specific sort of frivolity and the fact that he had wasted his talent as a writer. It was not one of those simple stories about a loving family. There was too much complication to all that, and there was the almost unceasing touch of history (also the one spelt with a block 'H') – pitiless, smashing the hearts and the minds to a larger extent than being kind or friendly. When talking about his father, Professor [Jerzy Wojciech] initially kept a sort of distance. He was a historian in the first place, and a son after that. However, the proportions were changing, especially after the publication of my book *Międzynarodowy komunista*. He then found talking about his father easier, with more freedom, childhood and youth reminiscences, and more light.<sup>16</sup>

In one of his last interviews, Jerzy Wojciech admitted that his father had instilled in him a cult for learning languages and for the distant and unknown country of Spain. He wanted his son to become an engineer, possibly an architect, to which Jerzy Wojciech did not feel predisposed at all. As he said in an interview with Tomasz Siewierski, “The name of my father was often a helpful thing in Poland, and a hindrance at times. In the West of Europe, it opened many a door”.<sup>17</sup>

His stay in Kazan in the academic year 1952/3, which fell on the last months of Joseph Stalin's rule, was for the young Pole from Warsaw the first opportunity to confront the myths on the achievements of socialism, brought along from Warsaw, with the realities of a Soviet provincial area, with its common poverty, omnipresent alcoholism, rampant banditry, and the reluctance of numerous citizens toward the Stalinist rule and Stalin himself. For a young man from the country on the Vistula, who believed in the greatness of Stalin and the powerfulness

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<sup>15</sup> For more, see Mirosław Golon, ‘Młodzież polska na studiach cywilnych i wojskowych w ZSRR w okresie klasycznego stalinizmu (1950–1956/1957)’, *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i Materiały*, vii (2006), 61–121.

<sup>16</sup> Eryk Krasucki, ‘Uśmiech Profesora – pożegnanie Jerzego W. Borejszy’, *Kultura Liberalna*, xxxix (24 Sept. 2019) [electronic version].

<sup>17</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, ‘Moją ojczyzną jest język polski i polskie lasy. Z Jerzym Borejszą rozmawia Tomasz Siewierski’, *Nowe Książki*, 2 (2019), 5.

of the Soviet Union, those “first days, first months came as an enhancing shock”.<sup>18</sup> Borejsza’s adventure with history started in what is today the capital of Tatarstan. He would revisit Kazan willingly in the later years, not without a sentiment for the city and its university. During his 2009 stay, he proposed that the memory be honoured of the Polish professors at Kazan University by naming one of the campus streets after them. Although this idea has not been put into effect, another idea of Borejsza has luckily been implemented as October 2011 saw the unveiling of a commemorative plaque to Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, the founder of the Kazan linguistic school.<sup>19</sup>

Borejsza spent the years between 1953 and 1957 in the Soviet Union’s capital city as a student at the Faculty of History of the Lomonosov Moscow State University [MGU]. Moscow offered considerable opportunities to the visitor from Poland, even in the tough Stalinist time and in the first years of post-Stalinist thaw: “it appeared to be a metropolitan centre, compared to Kazan, that reserve of poverty and backwardness”.<sup>20</sup>

He became a student at the Chair of Southern and Western Slavs (which exists to date). His teachers represented an interesting group of Soviet scholars. He attended the classes and lectures of Kazan-born Anatoly Ado, then a young man, specialising in the history of the French Revolution;<sup>21</sup> Igor Reisner, an expert in the history of Afghanistan and India, who in his youth years had worked for foreign intelligence in Germany and Scandinavian countries;<sup>22</sup> Boris Shtein, a professional diplomat, former Soviet envoy (ambassador) to Finland (1932–4) and ambassador in fascist Italy (1934–9);<sup>23</sup> among his teachers was also Petr Zayonchkovsky. Leonid Gorizontov probably legitimately stresses the latter’s role in forming Borejsza as a nineteenth-century

<sup>18</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Stulecie zagłady* (Gdańsk–Warszawa, 2011), 20.

<sup>19</sup> Глушковский, *Ежи В. Борейша и Россия*, 9; Wołos, *Dziennik moskiewski* (notes dated 9 Feb., 10 March, 15 Apr., 6 May, and 18 June 2011) [kept by the author].

<sup>20</sup> Borejsza, *Stulecie zagłady*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Владислав П. Смирнов, ‘Анатолий Васильевич Адо: человек, преподаватель, учёный (1928–1995)’, *Новая и новейшая история*, i (1997), 184–209.

<sup>22</sup> Вячеслав М. Лурье and Валерий Я. Кочик, *ГРУ: дела и люди* (Санкт-Петербург–Москва, 2003), 458; Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 164–5.

<sup>23</sup> Игорь С. Иванов and Анатолий В. Торкунов (eds), *Очерки истории Министерства иностранных дел России 1802–2002*, ii (Москва, 2002), 127 (incl. a biographical note of Shtein); Sabine Dullin, *Des hommes d’influences. Les ambassadeurs de Staline en Europe, 1930–1939* (Paris, 2001), 50 ff.

historian;<sup>24</sup> born into a landowning family from the Smolensk region, Zayonchkovsky dealt with the history of reforms under Tsar Alexander II, with a focus on the outstanding role of the long-serving Minister of War Dmitry Milyutin, as well as Russia's foreign and internal policies in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Among the lecturers, there were others too who incited Borejsza to study the nineteenth century. The young Pole was fascinated by the lectures of the faculty's head Sergey Nikitin<sup>26</sup> on the history of the Balkans, which inspired him to deepen his knowledge on the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–8.<sup>27</sup> Borejsza studied under Irina Belyavskaya (née Tyszkiewicz), who devoted her doctoral thesis to Alexandr Herzen's contacts with the Polish independence-oriented movement in the 1860s and was an eminent expert in the post-Partition history of Poland.<sup>28</sup> Belyavskaya supervised Borejsza's master's thesis.<sup>29</sup> Her seminar was attended by several Polish students, to name Eugeniusz Duraczyński, Tadeusz Samborski, Irena Spustek, and Feliks Tych.

The figure of Ivan Voronkov significantly marked the academic career of Jerzy W. Borejsza, historian of Polish historiography and

<sup>24</sup> Горизонтов, *Ежи Борейша*, 189.

<sup>25</sup> П.А. Зайончковский (1904–1983). *Статьи, публикации и воспоминания о нём* (Москва, 1998); *Петр Андреевич Зайончковский. Сборник статей и воспоминаний к столетию историка* (Москва, 2008); Александр Д. Степанский, 'Уроки П.А. Зайончковского', *Вестник архивиста*, 2 (2000), 198–207; Лариса Г. Захарова, 'Петр Андреевич Зайончковский', in *Портреты историков. Время и судьбы*, i: *Отечественная история* (Москва–Иерусалим, 2000), 332–46; *ead.*, 'Зайончковский Петр Андреевич', in *Историки России. Биографии* (Москва, 2001), 750–7; Андрей В. Мамонов, 'П.А. Зайончковский и его школа в Московском университете (по материалам международной научной конференции)', *Вестник Московского университета*, серия 8: История, i (2005), 85–93.

<sup>26</sup> *Профессор Сергей Александрович Никитин и его историческая школа. Материалы международной научной конференции* (Москва, 2004), 7–84.

<sup>27</sup> Borejsza, *Stulecie zagłady*, 20–1.

<sup>28</sup> Иван А. Воронков, 'Ирина Михайловна Белявская (некролог)', *Советское славяноведение*, 6 (1975), 139; A.G. [Aleksander Gieysztor], 'Irina Michajłowna Bielawska (9 V 1913 – 16 V 1975)', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, lxxxiii, 2 (1976), 497; Валентина С. Парсаданова and Альбина Ф. Носкова, 'К 90-летию И.М. Белявской (1913–1975)', *Славяноведение*, 2 (2003), 116; Геннадий Ф. Матвеев and Харис Х. Хайретдинов (eds), *Профессор МГУ И.М. Белявская. Материалы конференции, посвященной 90-летию со дня рождения профессора МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова И.М. Белявской* (Москва, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 161–2.



source editor, who specialised in the history of the Polish independence movement in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> He was the one who opened to the young Pole the path to the archives – initially the university ones but later on also the State archives, particularly the Central State Historical Archive of Moscow [TsGIAM] (containing the documentation of the Police Department, incl. the secret archive of the Third Department of His Majesty's Own Chancellery, Investigative Committee materials, the legacy of Emperor Alexander II, Fedor F. Berg, Andrei Budberg) and the Central State Archive of the October Revolution and Socialist Construction in the USSR, renamed today as the State Archive of the Russian Federation [GARF].

Borejsza could find outstanding records at the Archive of the Foreign Policy of Russia (presently, 'of Imperial Russia'), with a focus on the extraordinary correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' headquarters and its branches, albeit in this particular case, the inventories were not available to him – unless the archivists in charge would let him use them. At the expense of his university classes, he pursued possibly extensive queries, consulting the documents concerning the Great Emigration, the Second International, and Polish workers' movement of the 1880s and 1890s. According to Piotr Głuszowski's findings, GARF preserves Borejsza's letters to the authorities in charge of the archives requesting for sending the microfilms of his particular interest to Warsaw.<sup>31</sup> For the young historian, these were genuine treasures, thitherto outside scholarly circulation, which he later on kept in his private archive until his death, using them and sharing them with his students and associates.<sup>32</sup> In the later period, due to political reasons, Soviet authorities denied Polish historians, including communist party members, access to the materials Borejsza could look through earlier on.<sup>33</sup> The records he managed to collect included the memoirs of Minister Dmitry Milyutin from the January Uprising period (1863–4), which the young scholar translated into

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<sup>30</sup> Иван Александрович Воронков – профессор-славист Московского университета. Материалы научных чтений, посвященных 80-летию со дня рождения И.А. Воронкова (1921–1983) (Москва, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Глушковский, *Ежи В.Борейша и Россия*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> 'Rękopisy znalezione w Moskwie', 63.

<sup>33</sup> Jan Szumski, *Polityka a historia. ZSRR wobec nauki historycznej w Polsce w latach 1945–1964* (Warszawa, 2016), 295, 322.

Polish and intended to publish; this work, however, was halted by the censors. Jerzy completed his studies at the MGU in 1957, submitting a dissertation on the history of the Second Proletariat (1888–92).<sup>34</sup> For many years, Stanisław Mendelson, the key figure in this context, attracted Borejsza's interest; the historian intended to remind him to the modern readers by writing his biography based on the material he gathered in his young years in Moscow.<sup>35</sup> As he wrote in 2010,

Pan-Slavism, Austro-Slavism, anti-Slavism – in any case, the interests once aroused at the MGU reverberated in me years later, fructifying recently in the form of my books and articles on Hitlerite plans of mass annihilation of all the Slavs. ... My years of study have not been wasted. I have got acquainted with a great country, its people, language, and culture.<sup>36</sup>

Jerzy Wojciech completed his studies at the Moscow University's Faculty of History with honours on 25 June 1957.<sup>37</sup>

Back in Warsaw, Borejsza paved his way through (not without some problems) to the doctoral seminars of Henryk Jabłoński, the eminent nineteenth-century scholar Stefan Kieniewicz, and internationally recognised economic historian Witold Kula. He treated all of them later on as his masters, with a leading role in this respect of Jabłoński, historian of the Polish socialist movement, who did not shun from making historiographic trips into the eighteenth century and the interwar period of 1918–39. Jabłoński crowned his long-developing career with the office of Chairman of the Council of State, which formally made him the head of the state. He was promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General with the military. As determined by Jan Szumski, Jabłoński was among those who, still before the Thaw

<sup>34</sup> He had excerpts of it published in Polish: Borejsza, 'Powstanie II Proletariatu i początki jego działalności', *Z Pola Walki*, i, nr 2 (1958), 21–56.

<sup>35</sup> Borejsza, 'Mendelson i dama socjalizmu', *Polityka*, 30 (23 July 2013), 48.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*, *Stulecie zagłady*, 22–3.

<sup>37</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (hereinafter: AAN), Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, Departament Kadr (hereinafter: MEN), Borejsza Jerzy 1957–1975, ref. no. 8413: Kopia dyplomu ukończenia studiów, 1; Instytut Historii im. Tadeusza Manteuffla Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Warszawie (hereinafter: IH PAN), Akta osobowe Jerzego Borejszy, no. 115 (hereinafter: AJB): Zaświadczenie wydane przez Ministerstwo Szkolnictwa Wyższego, 9 Sept. 1957 [n.p.].

of 1956, informed the Soviet diplomats residing in Warsaw on the sentiments voiced among Polish scholars.<sup>38</sup>

Borejsza was not offered an academic position at the University of Warsaw at once. This status of temporariness extended to several years, during which he intensely prepared his doctoral thesis. He initially worked at the university as a trainee assistant lecturer (1957–8).<sup>39</sup> In 1958–64, he was a staff member at the Polish Academy of Sciences' (PAN) Section of the 19th- and 20th-Century History of Polish Print Media [Zakład Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego XIX i XX wieku],<sup>40</sup> which was strictly connected to the subject of his dissertation. From March to September 1964, he worked at the PAN's Institute of History, Research Group of the History of Central and Eastern Europe (the Section of the History of the USSR and Central European Countries [Zakład Historii ZSRR i Krajów Europy Środkowej]).<sup>41</sup> He spent almost six years with the PAN before finally anchoring at the University of Warsaw. His career was still supervised at that time by Henryk Jabłoński.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Borejsza pursued extensive research on aspects of the history of the Polish emigration after the January Uprising, preparing a doctoral thesis on this topic. Jabłoński's support enabled him to obtain a three-month scholarship, in November 1959, for a trip to France (École des hautes études en sciences sociales), which paved the way for him to pursue queries at Paris archives and libraries, followed up during his subsequent sojourns in the city on the Seine (incl. at the Archives Nationales, Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Archives de la préfecture de police [presently, Service historique de la Défense], Bibliothèque Polonaise in Paris) as well as in the provinces (Strasbourg and elsewhere). It was Borejsza's first trip to a Western European country, indispensable for the completion of his PhD thesis. The voluminous (751-page) typescript of the dissertation was ready by the late 1961, entitled *The Political Portrait of Polish Emigration Press in the West of Europe (1864–70)*. The degree

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<sup>38</sup> Szumski, *Polityka a historia*, 45.

<sup>39</sup> Archiwum Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego (hereinafter: AUW), Borejsza Jerzy 1957-11-01–1958-10-31, K 3324, Świadectwo pracy, 24 July 2000 [n.p.].

<sup>40</sup> AUMK, AJB, Zaświadczenie wystawione przez Centrum Upowszechniania Nauki PAN, 26 Feb. 1997, 10; *ibid.*, Jerzy Borejsza. Curriculum vitae, 2.

<sup>41</sup> IH PAN, AJB, Życiorys [bd] i świadectwo pracy wystawione przez Instytut Historii PAN, 17 Aug. 1977, [n.p.].

procedure was initiated in May 1962. The thesis was reviewed by Professors Rafał Gerber of the University of Warsaw/IH PAN and Witold Łukaszewicz of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, both of whom appreciated the very rich body of records employed and a pioneering character of the dissertation. The PhD degree was conferred upon Jerzy W. Borejsza by Resolution of the Faculty Council of 19 February 1963; the supervisor was Henryk Jabłoński.<sup>42</sup>

1963 saw Borejsza visit France again, as an *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* scholarship holder. He used this opportunity on complementing the records of use in his book on the post-1863–4 emigration, being a considerably broadened version of his PhD thesis, and in yet another study to be compiled in view of obtaining his post-doctoral (habilitation) qualification. The monograph prepared on the basis of the doctor's thesis was published in 1966 as *Emigracja polska po powstaniu styczniowym* [The Polish Emigration after the January Uprising], and the author was awarded with the Emil Kipa Prize.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps, the highest mention for the young historian was the words of Henryk Wereszycki, an eminent nineteenth-century researcher from Cracow's Jagiellonian University, who openly stated in a private letter that he highly esteemed Borejsza's study, with which he had got acquainted before it was submitted for print.<sup>44</sup> Wereszycki went as far as claiming that the study's author had left a durable mark in Polish historiography.<sup>45</sup>

Borejsza got to know France during his scholarship sojourns in 1959–60 and 1963 when he conducted his research both in Paris and outside the capital city. During his first stay, he obtained a completion certificate from Strasbourg University's Faculty of Journalism. He attended lectures at the Sorbonne.<sup>46</sup> Later on, he would visit Paris repeatedly to join conferences (and delivering his papers there) and pursue scientific queries. He considered Pierre Renouvin, author of the monumental *Histoire des relations internationales*, outstanding expert in the history of international relations and theorist of research into the history of diplomatic service, whose lectures he attended, as one

<sup>42</sup> AUMK, AJB, Odpis dyplomu doktorskiego Borejszy, 19 March 1964 [n.p.].

<sup>43</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Emigracja polska po powstaniu styczniowym* (Warszawa, 1966).

<sup>44</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz – Henryk Wereszycki. *Korespondencja z lat 1947–1990*, with an introduction and edited by Elżbieta Orman (Kraków, 2013), 230–1.

<sup>45</sup> Borejsza, 'Moją ojczyzną', 6.

<sup>46</sup> AUMK, AJB, Jerzy Borejsza. Curriculum vitae, [n.p.].

of his academic mentors. Renouvin appreciated the role of demography and geography in the shaping of international relations, emphasising these aspects in his studies. In his research, he reached beyond the limits of diplomacy archives as he believed that they are unsatisfactory for reliable studies in the history of relations between states and nations. He analysed the underlying driving forces (*forces profondes*) of the historical process.<sup>47</sup> During his stays as a fellow, Borejsza did his complementary studies in the history and theory of diplomatic service under Renouvin.<sup>48</sup> While further on not delving into the history of international relations, he would definitely use Renouvin's guidelines in his own research.

In 1963, the 'Książka i Wiedza' publishers issued J.W. Borejsza's first book *W kręgu wielkich wygnańców (1848–1895)* [Among the Great Exiles, 1848–95], being an edition of Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels's multilingual correspondence with Polish participants of national uprisings and workers' movement activists, furnished with an extensive monographic introduction (of almost 200 pages) and appendices. The source material had primarily been obtained, as photocopies, from Moscow's Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

In 1963, Borejsza was a secretary of the special commission responsible for preparing the January Uprising centenary celebrations, which operated as part of the Millennium Celebrations Preparatory Committee. The Commission was chaired by his university tutor Henryk Jabłoński, who acted as Scientific Secretary with the PAN at the time, and was formed of the historians Tadeusz Daniszewski, Rafał Gerber, Stanisław Herbst (non-partisan), Emanuel Halicz, Stefan Kieniewicz (non-partisan), Zygmunt Młynarski, and Jan Zamojski.<sup>49</sup> Apart from the scholarly project and those popularising the knowledge

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<sup>47</sup> Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, 'Pierre Renouvin', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, xxvii (1975), 497–507; Maurice Le Lannou, *Notice sur la vie et les travaux de Pierre Renouvin (1893–1974) lue dans la séance du 22 mars 1977* (Paris, 1977); René Girault, 'Pierre Renouvin, la BDIC et l'historiographie française des relations internationales', *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 49–50 (1998), 7–9.

<sup>48</sup> AUMK, AJB, Jerzy Borejsza. Curriculum vitae, [n.p.].

<sup>49</sup> Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, *Nauki historyczne w Polsce 1944–1970. Zagadnienia polityczne i organizacyjne* (Warszawa, 2007), 390, fn. 234; *id.*, *Historiografia i historia w PRL. Szkice* (Warszawa, 2019), 98; Ewa Rzeczkowska, 'W setną rocznicę. Obraz powstania styczniowego w wybranych peerelowskich tytułach prasowych', *Teka Komisji Historycznej*, x (2013), 119.

of the failed insurrection, Borejsza's tasks included taking initiatives to refurbish the insurgents' tombs in Warsaw's Old Powązki Cemetery.<sup>50</sup> Fifty years later, on behalf of the Polish Historical Society [Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, PTH], Jerzy led a countrywide commission for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the January Uprising. When comparing the two anniversaries, he openly stated that the one of 1963 was celebrated with a much greater flourish, even though the communist-party authorities were afraid of enhanced anti-Soviet (rather than anti-Russian) sentiments, and therefore reduced the scale of the events, keeping an eye on the preparations. To him, this came as proof of the Poles' diminished interest in the 1863–4 Uprising, which was considered due to the furthering distance from the nineteenth century, the time which for his own generation was still part of living history. As for himself, he did much to propagate the knowledge on the insurrection in the press and popular science periodicals.<sup>51</sup>

The PhD thesis highly esteemed by specialists, archival queries done abroad, and his increasingly broad contacts among scientists and scholars paved the way for Borejsza to become settled as a full-time employee of the University of Warsaw since 1 October 1964.<sup>52</sup> Again, Jabłoński proved helpful as he wrote a letter of support for his student and ward's endeavours for a university position.<sup>53</sup> The effort was additionally supported by Gerber as head of the Chair of Modern World History at the University's Institute of History, which Borejsza eventually joined. He explained his transfer, which was completed on his own request, by a "fondness for pedagogical work", which he found helpful in scientific development.<sup>54</sup> By the moment

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<sup>50</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 420–1.

<sup>51</sup> Borejsza, 'Pochwała pokonanego powstania', *Polityka*, 4 (23 Jan. 1988), 1, 14; *id.*, 'Po co to powstanie. Bez broni, bez pieniędzy, bez wodzów, bez silnych sojuszników. Czy to w ogóle miało sens?', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16 (19–20 Jan. 2013), 30; 'Powstania nie można było uniknąć. Z prof. Jerzym Wojciechem Borejszą rozmawia Wojciech Kalwat', *Mówią Wieki*, 1 (2013), 6–9.

<sup>52</sup> IH PAN, AJB, Świadcstwo pracy wystawione przez Uniwersytet Warszawski, 9 Dec. 1975 [n.p.].

<sup>53</sup> AUW, Teka akt osobowych Jerzego Borejszy, K 1571 (hereinafter: AJB), Pismo Henryka Jabłońskiego do dziekana Wydziału Historycznego Ludwika Bazyłowa, 6 May 1964, [n.p.].

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Podanie Borejszy do dyrektora IH PAN Tadeusza Manteuffla wraz z adnotacją Rafała Gerbera, 26 June 1964, [n.p.].

he received his habilitation degree, he ran seminars and tutorials on nineteenth-century history. Later on, he lectured on nineteenth- and twentieth-century history as well as on the history of France and Slavic countries to philologists. At his monographic lectures, he discussed the most recent history of Western Europe and the history of fascist movements. Moreover, he managed master's and doctoral seminars.<sup>55</sup>

It did not take him long to write a book on Armand Lévy, a secretary of Adam Mickiewicz, which is essentially a guide to the time Lévy lived in (born 1827, died 1891). Apart from Polish material, Borejsza used French documents from Parisian and provincial archives and libraries and Romanian ones. His interest in Lévy lasted till his last days, and Jerzy came across his footprints "from London through to Istanbul and Moscow", in his own words.<sup>56</sup> On 3 December 1968, the Council of the Faculty of History resolved to grant Borejsza the degree of 'habilitated doctor' [*doktor habilitowany*], which was subsequently approved by the Ministry of Education and Higher Studies, on 4 April 1969.<sup>57</sup> The book on Lévy was first published in 1969, and its second revised edition came out in 1977. The monograph was republished in 2005, on the 150th anniversary of Mickiewicz's death.<sup>58</sup> The book brought the author the Kościelski Foundation Prize in 1974.

Jerzy W. Borejsza was a member of the communist party (PZPR), in all probability since 1956. In contrast to his father and doctoral thesis supervisor Jabłoński, he would never get involved in politics. He did not participate in the dissident movement and never took part in an anti-communist manifestation. As a researcher into the past, he declared himself as a Marxist. Describing his output, Henryk Wereszycki wrote:

Whereas in almost all the publications of Borejsza, one finds an identifiable writer's temperament, which is rooted in his involvement, it can be stated beyond any doubt how fully all his studies comply with the

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<sup>55</sup> IH PAN, AJB, Życiorys oraz pismo Stanisława Piekarczyka i Antoniego Mączaka do Borejszy, 8 July 1974, [n.p.].

<sup>56</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Sekretarz Adama Mickiewicza. Armand Lévy i jego czasy 1827–1891* (Gdańsk, 2005<sup>3</sup>), 7.

<sup>57</sup> AUMK, AJB, Pismo wiceministra oświaty i szkolnictwa wyższego do rektora Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 4 Apr. 1969, [n.p.].

<sup>58</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Sekretarz Adama Mickiewicza. Armand Lévy i jego czasy 1827–1891* (Warszawa, 1969<sup>1</sup>); the second edition was published in 1977 in Wrocław, and the third – in Gdańsk in 2005 (see fn. 56).

unquestionable technical rigours of scholarly writing. In this respect – that is, as regards the skill of reconciling and harmonious merger of the postulates of strict scholarship and learnedness and those of ideological involvement – Borejsza appears to be a perfect example of the generation of young historians who have set for themselves the task of proving that ideological zeal is not detrimental to a historian's scholarly qualities. This imbues one with optimism because my age-peers have not always, and not all of them, mustered such scientific objectivism and reliability when trying in their historical studies to express their own political and social convictions.<sup>59</sup>

The authorities could only hold a grudge against Borejsza for telling his master- and doctor-level students the truth about the past and for his failure to pay PZPR membership fees (as so many other party members did). The Security Service [Służba Bezpieczeństwa, SB] was interested in him and his family owing to his foreign trips and contacts with foreigners staying in Poland, the vast majority of whom were academics and scholars.<sup>60</sup> The anti-Semitic campaign unleashed by the authorities in March 1968 would not have left him uninvolved, though, as it could not remain indifferent to Polish humanities, historical sciences included.<sup>61</sup> The wave of anti-Semitism promoted by some prominent communist-party activists, including those in charge of science and education, slowly and unevenly calmed down. After March 1968, the process went on over the years, embracing if not all then at least a decisive majority of Poles of Jewish descent, Borejsza being one of them. Fortunately, he was allowed to complete his postdoctoral qualification, and the publishing of the

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<sup>59</sup> AAN, MEN, Borejsza Jerzy 1957–1975, ref. no. 8413: Henryk Wereszycki, An evaluation of the scholarly output and postdoctoral dissertation of Jerzy W. Borejsza, 30 Aug. 1968, 34.

<sup>60</sup> Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, Biuro Udostępniania i Archiwizacji Dokumentów (hereinafter: IPN), 01220/10/624: Operational material stored outside operational files regarding *figurants* [individuals under secret police surveillance] (foreigners) – communications and findings re. the surveillance of German historian Hans Henning Hahn, 12–15, 30–5, 78. (The surveilling secret police [Security Service (SB)] officers referred to J.W. Borejsza as 'kontakt OKO' ['contact EYE'] and his wife Maria as 'kontakt RZEŚA' ['contact EYELASH'].)

<sup>61</sup> For more, see Rutkowski, *Historiografia i historycy w PRL*, 114–33; *id.*, *Nauki historyczne w Polsce*, 504, fn. 183; Rafał Stobiecki, *Historiografia PRL. Ani dobra, ani mądra, ani piękna... ale skomplikowana. Studia i szkice* (Warszawa, 2007), 158–60; *id.*, *Historiografia PRL. Zamiast podręcznika* (Łódź, 2020), 108–11, 154.



thesis was not obstructed, however not without intervention with highly-placed persons.<sup>62</sup>

Borejsza's future as an academic teacher with the University of Warsaw was being decided for quite a long time. Contradicting tendencies were clashing behind his back, represented by diverse influential persons, balancing one another for some time. Shortly after the events of March '68, and almost on the eve of completing his *habilitation* procedure, the University authorities resolved to have Borejsza transferred to a full-time teaching post, thus increasing the number of his classes taught by him and reducing his salary.<sup>63</sup> This marked the beginning of persecutions. For some time, his good record with the scholarly circles in the Soviet Union, where this MGU graduate was remembered, proved helpful. In August 1970, on the initiative of Aleksander Gieysztor and some researchers from France, Borejsza delivered a lecture on the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1 and the Commune of Paris at the 13th International Congress of Historical Sciences in Moscow (*Entre deux périodes de l'histoire universelle: les années 1870–1871*),<sup>64</sup> which was very well received. While this was quite an honour for the young Polish scholar, it was not helpful in his several years' solicitation for the post of *docent* (reader), initiated still before the formal approval of his postdoctoral qualification. Opinions supporting his endeavours to obtain the readership were repeatedly written and submitted by Rafał Gerber as Jerzy's direct superior; Stefan Kieniewicz and Andrzej Zahorski accompanied him – all this to no avail. A blockade was imposed from the top and Borejsza was forced to hold a teaching ('didactic'), rather than research-and-teaching, post till his last days with the University.

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<sup>62</sup> Borejsza, 'Moją ojczyzną', 8.

<sup>63</sup> AUW, AJB, Pismo Rektora UW do Borejszy, 18 June 1968, [n.p.]; AAN, MEN, Borejsza Jerzy 1957–1975, ref. no. 8413: Wniosek Rektora Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego do Ministra Oświaty i Szkolnictwa Wyższego o zatwierdzenie uchwały Rady Wydziału Historycznego o nadanie Borejszy stopnia naukowego docenta nauk humanistycznych w zakresie historii powszechniej XIX i XX wieku, 20 Dec. 1968, 3; IH PAN, AJB, Świadcstwo pracy wystawione przez Uniwersytet Warszawski, 9 Dec. 1975, [n.p.].

<sup>64</sup> As per the findings of Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, Borejsza's paper would be entitled in Polish *Rok 1871 zwrotnym punktem w dziejach powszechnych* [1871, the turning point in the world history]; see Rutkowski, *Historiografia i historycy w PRL*, 160, fn. 611.

In the spring of 1971, Borejsza received a scholarship from the Luigi Einaudi Foundation based in Turin, which enabled him to travel to Italy to do research related to Italian fascism, which by then had become the main field of his scholarly exploration. Years afterwards, he stated that the shift in his scientific interests – or rather, the addition of a new field of research, was a ‘political declaration’: if he found himself unable to research into the authoritarianism ruling in Poland, he decided to explore related phenomena in not-quite-distant past, while remaining wholeheartedly devoted to the nineteenth century all the same.<sup>65</sup> He conducted his queries in the archives of Rome, especially at the Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri and the Archivio Centrale dello Stato. As he would write years later, he was introduced to the secrets of knowledge on Italian fascism by Renzo De Felice, Costanzo Casucci, and Giampiero Carroci.<sup>66</sup> A special role fell to De Felice, a meticulous scholar focusing on Benito Mussolini’s biography, regarded as the ‘pope’ of Italian fascism research; in his late years, Borejsza described him as his ‘mentor and friend’.<sup>67</sup> De Felice, his six-year senior, emphasised the differences between Italian fascism and German Nazism, regarding the former in the perspective of his nation’s and state’s history. To his mind, fascism, and even Mussolinism, resulted from the earlier historical processes, including the transformations within socialism. At the same time, he identified the far-reaching consequences of this mass movement for the lives of Italians before and after the year 1945, be it in the form of a politicised society or shortened career promotion paths. De Felice defined fascism as a regime and a social movement. He postulated a highly detailed reproduction of the facts, getting to know all the details and nuances of Mussolini’s rule, followed by explaining the historical complexities to his contemporaries without passing authoritative opinions or judgments.<sup>68</sup> This is not to say that

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<sup>65</sup> Borejsza, ‘Moją ojczyzną’, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Mussolini był pierwszy...* (Warszawa, 1989), 9.

<sup>67</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 290.

<sup>68</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Interpretacje faszyzmu*, transl. Maria de Rosset-Borejsza (Warszawa, 1976) (with a foreword by Jerzy W. Borejsza, 5–11); Michael A. Ledeen, ‘Renzo De Felice and the Controversy over Italian Fascism’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, xi, 4 (1976), 269–83; Emilio Gentile, ‘Renzo De Felice: A Tribute’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxxii, 2 (1997), 139–51; Paolo Simoncelli, *Renzo De Felice. La formazione intellettuale* (Firenze, 2001).

Borejsza agreed with him in everything as far as evaluating fascism and approach to it as a research issue was concerned.<sup>69</sup>

The University authorities consented to Borejsza's twelve-month stay in Italy (1 June 1971 to 31 May 1972); on approval of Rector Zygmunt Rybicki, the sojourn was extended by another three-and-a-half-month period, perhaps in the hope that Borejsza would stay abroad, never returning to Poland. During his stay in Italy, preparations were made to cross him out of the list of party members for non-payment of membership fees. He finally gave back his party card (not without hesitation) only in December 1981, after the imposition of martial law in Poland.<sup>70</sup> The officers of Department III of the Capital-City Internal Affairs Office [Stołeczny Urząd Spraw Wewnętrznych, SUSW] thus reported on Borejsza in their 1987 portrayal:

Active neither socially nor politically. In 1981, he returned his PZPR card after 25 years of membership, which was the only move of political significance in his life over the time concerned.<sup>71</sup>

His future as a Warsaw University employee was resolved in the mid-1970s. The appraisals formulated by the coryphaei of historical sciences did not help. In July 1974, the historian and mediaevalist Aleksander Gieysztor, whose position in the scientific milieu was very high and who enjoyed respect in the political circles too, described him thus:

His high qualifications as a research scientist, out-of-the-ordinary writing talent, versatile methodological – including linguistic – background, fondness for scholarly and teaching pursuits, together with its achievements, have established an outstanding position of J. Borejsza among the academic staff of the University of Warsaw's Faculty of History.<sup>72</sup>

In 1974, on the initiative of Alexander Rogov, his university friend, Borejsza was invited to Moscow in order to deliver a lecture on Italian

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<sup>69</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 290–7.

<sup>70</sup> IH PAN, AJB, Indywidualna karta ewidencyjno-opiniodawcza (here are the dates of his PZPR membership 1956–1981), [n.p.].

<sup>71</sup> IPN 01221/6, Notatka informacyjna dot. prof. Borejsza Jerzy, 1 Aug. 1987, koperta 62. Borejsza last mentioned his PZPR membership in June 1981 in the passport documents. IPN 1005/99736: Akta paszportowe Jerzego Borejszy, Kwestionariusze-podania, 5, 11, 21.

<sup>72</sup> IH PAN, AJB, Opinia Aleksandra Gieyszтора o Borejszy, 9 July 1974, [n.p.].

fascism to scholars from the USSR Academy of Sciences. The response from the audience was astonishing, with peals of laughter repetitively interrupting the argument. Contrary to the lecturer's intention, his description of Italian fascism was unambiguously interpreted as a set of ironic remarks about the system in force in the Soviet Union. Reports from informants reached Warsaw, as could be expected. That 'Italian' lecture closed for Borejsza the opportunity to travel to the USSR until its decomposition.<sup>73</sup> The loss of support from Moscow debilitated the position of this still-young scholar in Warsaw University. The decision to get rid of him and, thereby, separate him from the students was made because of the contents of his lectures on fascism and the Soviet aggression on Finland in November 1939. As he stated in a curriculum vitae years later, "The appendix to the final decision was, as it appeared, Interior Ministry's recordings of my lectures on the Soviet-Finnish War".<sup>74</sup>

Borejsza's removal from the University and his transfer to the Polish Academy of Sciences was agreed behind his back.<sup>75</sup> Those who had much of a say included Andrzej Werblan, Secretary at PZPR's Central Committee, who earlier on ran the Science and Education Section within the communist party's central structures; Jarema Maciszewski, who headed the said section; and Zygmunt Rybicki, Rector of the University of Warsaw. The relevant documentation was prepared at the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology, Department of University-level, Economic and Pedagogical Studies. The following options were suggested: (i) Borejsza to continue as a University of Warsaw employee but as a contractual rather than full-time *docent* (based on a periodic contract); (ii) employment as full-time *docent* possible but in an academic centre other than Warsaw (e.g., the University of Łódź or Higher Pedagogical School in Siedlce); (iii) re-transferral to the PAN's Institute of History, thus depriving him of the opportunity to teach students. Borejsza was notified of the first two options and rejected them resolutely. He was not aware of yet another option, which – to his astonishment – eventually became a reality. In the

<sup>73</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 240–1.

<sup>74</sup> AUMK, AJB, Jerzy Borejsza. Curriculum vitae, 2.

<sup>75</sup> The circumstances of Borejsza's removal from the University of Warsaw are described by him in detail, with a number of documents quoted, in Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 227–45 (the essay 'Rok 1968: świadkowie odchodzą'); also, *id.*, 'Moja ojczyzną', 7–8.

autumn of 1975, Borejsza bid farewell to his employment with the Warsaw University; the authorities of the Faculty of History remained officially uninformed for several weeks, which sheds light on how the affair was tackled.<sup>76</sup> He was allowed to complete his master's seminar for three more years. Many years later, he bitterly recollected, "between 1975 and 1989, my teaching activity was banned in tertiary schools at home".<sup>77</sup> Borejsza felt regretful till his latest days, remarking that nobody, in fact, had ever apologised to him for how he was removed from the University.

From 1 October 1975 onwards, Borejsza was again employed at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. The Institute remained his workplace until the end of his life, save for a few unpaid leaves to make longer trips abroad.<sup>78</sup> In 1975–83, he was a *docent* at the Section of 19th- and 20th-Century European History [Zakład Dziejów Europy XIX i XX wieku], managed by Piotr Łossowski; also, he served as Secretary to the Scientific Council 1981–3. According to a resolution of the Council of State dated 3 February 1983, Jerzy W. Borejsza was granted the title of Associate Professor of the Humanities. The document was signed by Henryk Jabłoński, the supervisor of his doctoral thesis, now as the Chairman of the Council of State.<sup>79</sup> As a result, Borejsza was employed as associate professor.

These years were marked by his intense work on issues such as the history of European fascisms, the worldview of Adolf Hitler, totalitarian and authoritarian systems in Europe in the former half of the twentieth century. Although he never quit his interest in the nineteenth century, this period was no more the major field of his exploration. Since 1 December 1988, he was employed with the Research Group on the History of Central and Eastern Europe [Pracownia Historii Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej], being part of the Section run by Łossowski.<sup>80</sup> A request to the President of the Republic of Poland for granting

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<sup>76</sup> AUW, AJB, Pismo dyrektora Instytutu Historycznego Henryka Samsonowicza do dziekana Wydziału Historycznego Waldemara Chmielewskiego, 24 Nov. 1975, [n.p.].

<sup>77</sup> AUMK, AJB, Pismo Borejszy do prorektora Andrzeja Radzimińskiego, 14 July 2006, [n.p.].

<sup>78</sup> IH PAN, AJB, Świadcetwo pracy wydane przez Instytut Historii PAN, 31 Dec. 2000, [n.p.].

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, Wniosek Janusza Tazbira o nadanie Borejszy tytułu profesora zwyczajnego nauk humanistycznych, 3 Feb. 1983, [n.p.].

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo Tazbira do Borejszy, 15 Nov. 1988, [n.p.].

Borejsza with the title of full professor was written on 20 August 1990 by Janusz Tazbir, the then-Director of PAN's Institute of History. It contained the following justification:

In spite of the hindrances (he was transferred from the UW [University of Warsaw] to the PAN for political reasons, he successfully completed the supervision of more than thirty master's theses and, at the PAN Institute of History, four doctoral dissertations. From 1987 onwards, he has been conducting a valuable seminar on 'The history of Poland and Europe from 1848 until present: problems and methods' for members of the academic staff of different universities.

He is a member of the Scientific Council of the PAN.

The candidate delivered lectures at numerous institutions and tertiary schools outside Poland (including in Italy, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland; and sporadically in other countries as well).<sup>81</sup>

From 1 January 1991, Borejsza was employed at the Institute of History, PAN, as full professor.<sup>82</sup> On 1 August 1996, he was relocated, on his own request, to the Section of the History of the Second World War [Pracownia Dziejów II Wojny Światowej], headed by Eugeniusz Duraczyński. This removal came as a consequence of his long-lasting research in the history of Italian fascism and Hitler's worldview.<sup>83</sup> After Duraczyński left for Moscow to become permanent representative of the Polish Academy of Sciences at the Russian Academy of Sciences and Director of the local Research Centre, Borejsza became, since 1 October 1999, head of the Section which was later renamed as the Department of Totalitarian Systems and the History of the Second World War [Zakład Systemów Totalitarnych i Dziejów II Wojny Światowej].<sup>84</sup> He ran it continuously until the end of 2010, also after he formally retired. As of 1 January 2003, he became head of the Section of the History of Poland and International Relations from 1939 to 1945 [Pracownia Dziejów Polski i Stosunków Międzynarodowych 1939–1945].<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, Wniosek Tazbira o nadanie Borejszy tytułu profesora zwyczajnego nauk humanistycznych, 20 Aug. 1990, [n.p.].

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo Leszka Kuźnickiego do Borejszy, 10 Jan. 1991, and Odpis aktu mianowania Borejszy profesorem w Instytucie Historii PAN, 15 Oct. 1997, [n.p.].

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo Borejszy do Dyrekcji Instytutu Historii PAN, 29 July 1996; Pismo Stanisława Byliny do Borejszy, 19 Aug. 1996, [n.p.].

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo Byliny do Borejszy, 1 Oct. 1999, [n.p.].

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo Byliny do Borejszy, 20 Jan. 2003, [n.p.].

The members of staff, doctoral students, and guests gathered weekly, on Tuesday mornings, to listen to papers, discuss books, or crystallise and specify their scholarly plans. Since 2011, outside the Section, Borejsza would regularly conduct a seminar for his associates and PhD students entitled 'Poland in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe. Civilisational ties. Problems and methods in historical research'. He was a part-time employee at that time and had his employment contract extended several times – the last such extension was until 31 December 2019. Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow, and subsequently Magdalena Mizgalska-Osowiecka provided him with substantive and organisational assistance.<sup>86</sup> The seminar participants met until May 2019, and thus almost to Borejsza's death.

In 1976–8, Borejsza stayed at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte as an Alexander von Humboldt fellow, conducting research in the Federal Republic of Germany, particularly in Bonn, Koblenz, and Munich. Although the Polish diplomatic outpost offered him assistance, he initially met with problems accessing the West German archival resources.<sup>87</sup> Finally, the problems were overcome and he could carry out his queries at Bonn's Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts and at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz. He moreover intended to carry out research in Austrian archives. He obtained a Historische Kommission zu Berlin scholarship as early as 1983. His trip to West Berlin was delayed due to legal reasons (residence-related business had to be attended to). The sojourn began on 1 February 1984 and was meant to last twelve months. Yet, Borejsza gained the confidence of his German partners to such an extent that they consulted scholarships for other Polish researchers with him.<sup>88</sup> Klaus Zernack and Wolfgang Treue representing the Historische Kommission proposed that Borejsza's stay in West Berlin be extended, based on his ongoing efforts in the hosting institution and his research in progress on twentieth-century history.<sup>89</sup> Not without the need to break the resistance of the Polish side, Borejsza's scholarship was extended by another five months, until

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo Borejszy do Wojciecha Kriegseisena, 14 Dec. 2011; Notatka z rozmowy 16.01.2012 z Borejszą sporządzona przez Kriegseisena, [n.p.].

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo Borejszy do „Szczelnego Pana Profesora”, 15 June 1977, [n.p.].

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo Piotra Łossowskiego do Kolegium Instytutu Historii PAN, 22 May 1984, [n.p.].

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo Wolfganga Treue i Klause Zernacka do Borejszy, 14 Apr. 1984, [n.p.].

30 June 1985.<sup>90</sup> After the political turnover in Poland, Borejsza visited, as a *Gastprofessor*, the Ruprecht Karl University of Heidelberg (1990–1). He described his contacts with German friends and acquaintances in one of his essays.<sup>91</sup>

Until the very last days of the People's Republic of Poland, its secret police (Security Service) never ceased to be interested in Borejsza, collecting information on his scholarly output as well. Another excerpt from the afore-quoted note compiled by the Warsaw 'internal affairs' officers, whose lack of sympathy for their object of observation is rather apparent, reads:

In his research activities, he is a maverick, not feeling very well as part of scientific teams. Despite this, he possesses recognition [*sic*] in the milieu, mainly owing to the quality of his historical elaborations. ...

Despite the scientific recognition possessed, he is alienated from the professional milieu. In his conduct, he is restrained, formal, with selfish inclinations.<sup>92</sup>

Among his mentors, Borejsza mentioned Henryk Wereszycki, and quite legitimately so. Their paths were intersecting for some thirty years – from 1961 until Wereszycki died in 1990. Approximately two hundred letters have remained of their mutual exchange, which scholars will undoubtedly find to be of use.<sup>93</sup> To conclude the thread of Jerzy Wojciech's scholarly mentors, let us quote the words he uttered a few months before his death:

My first superior in the University of Warsaw was Henryk Jabłoński, my doctoral dissertation supervisor on post-1863 emigration. His comments on the history of the Second Republic of Poland were at times riveting. But it was only Kieniewicz who 'has given me' the model technique and tools of a nineteenth-century scholar; with Wereszycki, we became close to each other the identity of our views and, in his opinion, my sense for the ambiances of 'his' nineteenth century. I cannot say that I have had an academic mentor who would have managed my path. I was my own boss,

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, Pismo władz PAN do Tazbira, 27 Nov. 1984, [n.p.].

<sup>91</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 250–60.

<sup>92</sup> IPN 01221/6, Notatka informacyjna dot. prof. Borejsza Jerzy, 1 Aug. 1987, koperta 62.

<sup>93</sup> Borejsza, A conversation with Professor Henryk Wereszycki [copy held by the author].



which I regret today. Apart from my professorship, my widely-read mother was the only companion to my wanderings as a historian.<sup>94</sup>

From 1 February 1991 to 31 January 1996, Borejsza was Director of the Polish Academy of Sciences' Research Centre in Paris.<sup>95</sup> The institution was revived scientifically under his management. Before then, it operated rather indolently, mainly serving as a hotel for Polish scientists staying in the city on the Seine.<sup>96</sup> Interviewed by Patryk Pleskot on the circumstances of his becoming the Centre manager, Borejsza said:

I felt a free man, fearing nobody. I went to Paris for personal reasons, also because Aleksander Gięsztor asked me to make something out of this centre... I then put forth the conditions, which you can find in the documents that I would not be a chieftain of some hobos – telling them to increase the salaries of all my team instantly. During my directorship, the wages were higher but then were reduced again.<sup>97</sup>

The Centre's area of operation extended to the whole of France, whereas Borejsza undertook active and fruitful cooperation with scientific representations of other countries based in Paris. The charming reception room on the first floor of the building at 74 rue Lauriston, where in 1919 Józef Piłsudski's delegates to the Paris Peace Conference (Kazimierz Dłuski, Antoni Sujkowski, Michał Sokolnicki) had once dwelled, was the meeting place of the luminaries of Polish and French science, representing diverse disciplines. The Centre's Director also cared about the cultural setting of scientific events by organising music concerts of high artistic quality. He developed the library, inspired scientific research, received fellows, and solicited scholarships for young scholars. Borejsza opened the Centre to the world. The superior goal was to transform it into a fundamental academic institution, a showcase of Polish science. The Director would sometimes (rarely, in fact, due to his time constraints) visit the archives at Quai d'Orsay or in the *quartier* of Le Marais, where the French National Archives were situated then.

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<sup>94</sup> Borejsza, 'Moją ojczyzną', 7.

<sup>95</sup> IH PAN, AJB, Pismo Jacka Kornackiego do Byliny, 16 Jan. 1991; Świadcetwo pracy wystawione przez Polską Akademię Nauk, 18 March 1997, [n.p.].

<sup>96</sup> For a broader account, see Patryk Pleskot, *Naukowa szkoła przetrwania. Paryska stacja PAN w latach 1978–2004* (Warszawa, 2008), 49, 102, 114, 147, 155–6.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

He has rescued for posterity the output of Paul Cazin, writer and translator of Polish fiction and verse, found in his house in a suburb of Aix-en-Provence.<sup>98</sup> Borejsza's five-year sojourn in Paris was nowise an easy or pleasant experience. Running a considerably-sized centre with its buildings in Lauriston and Lamandé Streets was tantamount to almost a permanent, always unpleasant, clashing with academic authorities and bureaucracy, overcoming human tawdriness, sometimes sheer jaundice, and the need to explain apparent things to those in charge. This was accompanied by soliciting funds for ongoing activity, new job positions, salaries for the associates, necessary renovations carried out within the framework of strict French regulations, or the attempts to settle real-estate ownership issues.<sup>99</sup>

Unlike many of his compatriots at home, the French did appreciate Borejsza's merits as Director of the Paris-based Centre for the development of scholarly and scientific contacts between the two countries. President of the French Republic Jacques Chirac nominated him Officer of the Legion of Honour in the autumn of 1996.

Having left his post of Director of the PAN Centre, Borejsza stayed in France (with some intermissions) for another two years, working as a professor at École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris and the University of Burgundy in Dijon and, *inter alia*, delivering cycles of lectures for academics and students as a *professeur invité*.<sup>100</sup> He was working on the completion of his book on European fascisms and authoritarianisms.<sup>101</sup> He maintained contacts with the French academia later on as well; for example, in the spring of 2010, he joined the conference entitled 'Les horizons de la politique extérieure française. Régions périphériques et espaces seconds dans la stratégie diplomatique et militaire de la France (XVIe–XXe siècles)' held by the Ecoles de Saint-Cyr-Coëtquidan and the Centre de recherches en histoire internationale et atlantique de l'Université de Nantes. The sessions were held initially in Coëtquidan, precisely where the Polish Army was formed during the First and the Second

<sup>98</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 344–8.

<sup>99</sup> Pleskot, *Naukowa szkoła*, 167–70, 181 ff.; Jerzy W. Borejsza, 'Uwagi niejubileuszowe. Stulecie Polskiej Stacji Naukowej w Paryżu', *Nauka Polska*, iv (1994), 127–35; Stanisław Salmonowicz, "Życie jak osioł ucieka...". *Wspomnienia* (Bydgoszcz–Gdańsk, 2014), 451.

<sup>100</sup> AUMK, AJB, Jerzy Borejsza. Curriculum vitae, [n.p.].

<sup>101</sup> IH PAN, AJB, Pismo Borejszy do Byliny, 18 Dec. 1995, [n.p.].

World Wars, and subsequently at the charming Castle of the Dukes of Brittany in Nantes.

Let us add that for several months in the year 2000, Borejsza was employed, on a full-time basis, as an analyst with the Polish Institute of International Affairs [Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, PISM].<sup>102</sup> He stayed in close touch with this institution afterwards as well. Among other activities, he was a full member of the Editorial Committee of the series 'Polish Diplomatic Documents'.

After he was released from the University of Warsaw, Borejsza longed for regular contact with Polish master's and doctor's students. To quite an extent, this circumstance was decisive for his employment taken up, from 1 October 2004, in the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (UMK) as full professor.<sup>103</sup> Professors Juliusz Bardach and Roman Wapiński prepared the related evaluations of his scholarly and teaching output. The former concluded his argument, referring to Poland's joining the European Union: "Prof. J. Borejsza's contacts as a scientist with foreign centres, and his bonds with the outstanding scholars at those centres, can facilitate for UMK to play an appropriate part in the tightening of the bonds in unifying Europe. Interdisciplinary activities and scientific mobility play today a special role in the change taking place".<sup>104</sup>

He would usually commute by train from Warsaw, reading while travelling the master's and doctor's theses prepared under his guidance at the UMK. In Toruń, he came across friends and acquaintances from more or less time-distant shared paths. One of them was Krzysztof Pomian, a childhood friend, who was employed at UMK's Chair of the History of Art and Culture; the others were Sławomir Kalembka, former rector of the University and outstanding expert in nineteenth-century history; Janusz Małek,<sup>105</sup> with whom Borejsza shared his fascination

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, Świadcstwo pacy wystawione przez Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, [n.d., n.p.].

<sup>103</sup> AUMK, AJB, Decyzja ministra edukacji narodowej i sportu Mirosława Sawickiego w sprawie mianowania Borejszy na stanowisko profesora zwyczajnego w Uniwersytecie Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, 12 July 2004, 13.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, Juliusz Bardach, Ocena dorobku naukowego i dydaktycznego prof. dr. hab. Jerzego Borejszy, [n.d., n.p.].

<sup>105</sup> Their fathers – Jerzy Borejsza-senior and Karol Małek, a Masurian activist – knew each other as well; see Janusz Małek, *Od Prus do Mazur. Szkice z dziejów Prus, Pomorza, Warmii i Mazur* (Dąbrówno, 2016), 244.

with the beauty of the Varmia and Mazuria region, where they spent holidays together; Stanisław Salmonowicz, a researcher specialising in modern era history and the history of law and administration; also, Andrzej Nieuważny, the prematurely deceased eminent specialist in the Napoleonic era, who, similarly to Borejsza, happened to have been transferred from Warsaw to Toruń; Borejsza movingly portrays him in *Ostaniec*.<sup>106</sup> The ease with which Jerzy was capable of breaking the barriers between people helped broaden his acquaintances' circle.

In line with the profile of UMK's Institute of International Relations, where he was employed, Borejsza gave classes on theory and practice of international relations, with a focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; this included lectures on the diplomatic document, the history of the Comintern, totalitarian and authoritarian systems in Europe, fundamental political concepts and notions, research methods, and more. He ran a master's seminar and a postgraduate one, and supervised doctoral theses.<sup>107</sup> He pursued UMK Rector's grant 'The Third International (Comintern) 1919–43 and international politics', closely collaborating with PAN's Research Centre in Moscow, where he conducted queries, particularly at the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History.<sup>108</sup> After the long years of the ban on entering the Soviet Union, he now willingly visited Moscow, renewing his old contacts and establishing new ones. Although he could not take advantage of what some Russian historians refer to as the 'archival revolution', as he spent the 1990s mainly in the West of Europe, he was a relatively frequent visitor to Moscow archives after the year 2000, particularly the ministerial Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. Borejsza engaged himself in organising joint master's degree studies co-organised by UMK and the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU) in 'Historical comparative studies and transitology (Poland–Russia)'. As part of this unique programme, more than fifty Poles and Russians received a double graduation certificate between 2010 and 2019.<sup>109</sup> In early 2011, signals came from Russian

<sup>106</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 349–50.

<sup>107</sup> AUMK, AJB, Kwestionariusze z lat 2006, 2007 i 2008, 22–3.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, Borejsza, Sprawozdanie z realizacji grantu rektora UMK 522-NH 'Trzecia Międzynarodówka (Komintern) 1919–1943 a polityka międzynarodowa', 22 Feb. 2010, 37/7.

<sup>109</sup> Горизонтов, *Ежи Борејша*, 193; Глушковский, *Ежи В. Борејша и Россия*, 9–10; Wołos, *Dziennik moskiewski* (note dated 9 March 2011 [kept by the author]).

partners that RGGU intended to award Borejsza with an honorary doctorate; the matter did not conclude. Borejsza was UMK's full-time employee till 31 December 2012, but until 2014 he gave classes as part of the earlier-commenced seminars. He kept in touch with the Toruń scholarly circle, including his students, till his latest days.<sup>110</sup>

Borejsza received two festschrift books produced in his honour during his lifetime by his students, associates and friends; this method of honouring outstanding and merited scholars is rooted in our historiographical tradition. The content of both these books covered aspects of twentieth-century history, with a focus on totalitarian and authoritarian systems. His youngest students and colleagues dedicated to him in 2010 a volume composed of ten texts dealing with the place and position of individuals in these systems.<sup>111</sup> Four years later, a collection of studies was published consisting of twenty-six articles prepared by historians from Poland, France, Greece, Germany, and Russia; hence the topics revolving around extermination, genocide, hatred, intolerance, negationism, anti-Semitism, dictatorships, collaboration, and 'historically-oriented policies'. Included were also texts on the 'beautiful' nineteenth century.<sup>112</sup> Both publications gave Borejsza much satisfaction; in talks with others, he emphasised their clearly defined subject matters, which is not obvious when it comes to a festschrift book project.

Borejsza was a member of the Polish PEN Club and the Polish Writers' Association [Stowarzyszenie Pisarzy Polskich, SPP], Branch of Warsaw. In 1989–92, he chaired the Publishing Cooperative 'Czytelnik' Supervisory Board, thus following up his father's early post-war activity. He consulted the popular-science Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy's (PIW) publishing series 'Omega', later on, taken over

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<sup>110</sup> AUMK, AJB, Świadectwo pracy wydane przez Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 31 Dec. 2012, 1; Henryka Duczowska-Moraczewska *et al.* (eds), *Pracownicy nauki i dydaktyki Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika 1945–2004. Materiały do biografii* (based on a concept of, and co-ed. by, Sławomir Kalembka) (Toruń, 2006), 108; *Zmarł profesor Jerzy Borejsza* – <https://www.umk.pl/wiadomosci/?id=26266> [Accessed: 6 Jan. 2020].

<sup>111</sup> Grzegorz P. Bąbiak and Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow (eds), *Trudny wiek XX. Jednostka, system, epoka* (Warszawa, 2010).

<sup>112</sup> *Wiek nienawiści. Studia*, an anthology of studies edited by Edmund Dmitrów, Jerzy Eisler, Mirosław Filipowicz, Mariusz Wołos, and Grzegorz P. Bąbiak (Warszawa, 2014).

by the Wiedza Powszechna publishers, and initiated and ran the series 'Panorama' issued by 'Czytelnik' from 1978 until 1992, which published anthologies from various fields of the humanities.<sup>113</sup> He got involved in international organisations, including as founding member of the Gemeinschaft für die neueste Geschichte Italiens in Cologne and Rome, member of the Florence-based Istituto Affari Internazionali and the 'Le Vingtième Siècle' College in Paris. Moreover, Borejsza was a member of the Polish Historical Society [Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, PTH] and the Warsaw Scientific Society [Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie, TNW].<sup>114</sup> In 2017, he was decorated by the Italian authorities with the Stella d'Italia order.<sup>115</sup>

His motherland was the Polish language and Polish forests, as he repeatedly claimed. In no other language would he express himself as precisely; no other forests would have been equally beautiful to him. These words, in fact, testify to his profound attachment to Polish culture and Polish landscapes. These factors suppressed the temptation to emigrate, voluntarily or under pressure, on which his adversaries counted in the days of the anti-Semitic persecution after March 1968. Jerzy was fond of excursions to the seaside, but above all, sought consolation in the forests of Bieszczady mountains, in Pomerania or Mazuria. Contemplation of the beauty of nature helped work the urban commotion off. In his late years, he willingly stayed at the 'Żoźna' [Bee-eater] forester's lodge in Tuchola Forests (Bory Tucholskie), where he relaxed, worked, and hosted his acquaintances and friends at times.

Jerzy Borejsza was married twice: since 1972, with Maria Zofia de Rosset; they had two sons, Aleksander (born 1974) and Karol (born 1977). In 1996 he wed Katarzyna Halina Dunin. In 2017, his granddaughter Sara Antonina, daughter of Karol and Joanna née Mazurska, was born.

Jerzy Wojciech Borejsza died of a short but rapidly developing illness. He was buried on 5 August 2019 at the Military Cemetery of Powązki, Warsaw, in his family tomb (plot A 28).

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<sup>113</sup> 'Historyk w świecie wydawców', 96–103.

<sup>114</sup> AUMK, AJB, Curriculum vitae, [n.p.]; *Kto jest kim w Polsce. Informator biograficzny* (Warszawa, 1989), 114.

<sup>115</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 531.

### III JERZY W. BOREJSZA'S MAIN FIELDS OF RESEARCH AND VIEWS ON HISTORIOGRAPHY

It is not easy to describe Jerzy W. Borejsza's scholarly output for at least two main reasons: the research areas he explored were vast and sometimes mutually distant; his abundant published output includes a dozen books and over 350 articles in a total of twelve languages.

The research field that was demarcated on the verge of his career as a scholar was the sources of Polish socialism analysed for the former and, particularly, the latter half of the nineteenth century in a broad international context. Borejsza started his exploration in this respect during studies in Moscow and continued to the late 1950s and early 1960s. Apart from a series of minor publications,<sup>116</sup> his considerations on the topic were published in the book entitled *W kręgu wielkich wygnańców (1848–1895)* [In the Circle of Great Exiles, 1848–1895]. The intent to publish Marx and Engels' correspondence with the Poles was conceived not only out of his will to show and describe the quite broad group of their Polish correspondents and broaden the knowledge on the history of the Polish cause. Borejsza intended to unveil the figures of both theoreticians of Marxism and show their 'human traits' otherwise obscured by the enormity of publications on the theory of what had become known as 'scientific socialism'.<sup>117</sup> As he demonstrated in his extensive introduction (without particular emphasis on this aspect), both Marx and Engels supported the independence-oriented efforts of Poles, not limiting themselves – as it might have seemed – to contacts with people of leftist or democratic views but extending them on members of conservative circles. It was in that period that the then-young historian's interest was conceived in figures such as the aforementioned Stanisław Mendelson or General Walery Wróblewski (I will resume this aspect below).

An adjacent field of research was the history of post-uprising Polish emigration, mainly in West European countries. This thread absorbed

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<sup>116</sup> For example, Jerzy W. Borejsza, 'Z nieznaney korespondencji Fryderyka Engelsa z Polakami w latach 1894–1895', *Z Pola Walki*, 4 (1960), 67–77; *id.*, 'Sprawa polska i Polacy w Pierwszej Międzynarodówce', *Z Pola Walki*, 4 (1964), 23–45; *id.*, 'La Première Internationale et la Pologne', in *La Première Internationale* (Paris, 1968), 363–75.

<sup>117</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *W kręgu wielkich wygnańców (1848–1895)* (Warszawa, 1963), 7.

Borejsza's attention, with changing intensity, throughout his life, particularly in the 1960s. A few monographs published in a book form and dozens of articles came out as a fruit of this area of research, which was to quite a degree pioneering at the time. Analysis of emigration press was the point-of-departure.<sup>118</sup> These issues were significantly extended to the entire history of the post-January Uprising emigration. Borejsza was interested in the entire circles of Polish émigrés, whom he described as 'romanticists of freedom on their errand route', their organisations and individual exponents, the political thought (with a focus on the attitude to the 1863 events), contacts with the home country, and emigration as part of the international context. He formulated several conclusions that have proved valid in historiography. He found that the period 1864–71 saw a change in Europe that affected the situation of Polish emigrants who lost their previous allies among the French and German bourgeoisie that made use of Polish independence slogans in the struggle for their emancipation. The transformation of the Habsburg monarchy into Austro-Hungary together with granting the subjects broad autonomy and the unification of Italy and Germany, fulfilled, to quite a considerable extent, their earlier national liberation postulates. This led to a collapse of the hope for support from the superpowers. It fell to the lot of post-January émigrés in Western European countries to confront the working-class challenge, which was barely known in the Polish lands at the time; thereby, many of them drifted towards a social radicalism.

On the one hand, Borejsza stressed the role of emigration as a function of the Polish cause in the international arena. On the other, he pointed to the minor importance of the internal history of émigré organisations. In terms of generation relay, though, it was the past-idealising post-January émigrés who handed over the baton to the subsequent generation and proved able to breathe the spirit of 'liberty-oriented romanticism' into the hundreds and thousands of their young compatriots; in other words, to 'hold up the banner of the Polish

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<sup>118</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, 'Prasa Zjednoczenia Emigracji Polskiej 1866–1870', *Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego*, iii, 1 (1964), 72–125; *id.*, 'Z dziejów polskiej prasy emigracyjnej 1863–1865', *Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego*, iv, 1 (1965), 50–104; *id.*, 'Prasa Towarzystwa Demokratycznego Mierosławskiego (1865–1870)', *Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego*, iv, 2 (1965), 59–71; *id.*, 'Trzy szkice o prasie emigracyjnej', *Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego*, vi, 1 (1967), 32–54.



irredentism', be it through the idea of the national treasury.<sup>119</sup> These conclusions are important and worthy to emphasise. Borejsza's fundamental study on the Polish post-January Uprising (1863–4) emigration [*Emigracja polska po powstaniu styczniowym*, 1966] demonstrated the scholar's research craft, his sense for the period concerned, a mature way of grasping historical processes, technical skills, well-mastered methodology and, finally, mastery of writing style: in a word, the characteristics proving relatively rare among beginner historians.

Borejsza's interest in biography writing stemmed from his extensive research of Polish post-January emigration. None of the biographies penned by him was limited to a meticulous reconstruction of the character's life. Biographies by this author are all contextual, serving as pretexts for showing more general phenomena and processes, describing entire milieus or circles, presenting the character's subjective view on events and occurrences of importance. He would not focus on foreground figures but rather those remaining somewhat in the shadow yet participating in the crucial events. He thereby restored the memory of them. He embarked on drawing a portrait of Polish socialists at an early stage of his career.<sup>120</sup> The best-known such venture is his extensive, almost literary, essay on a Polish revolutionary, which was published also in Italian, French, and German.<sup>121</sup> In his analysis of the multitude of attitudes and diverse factors shaping that man, the author finds that

A common denominator for the Polish revolutionaries, from the partitions up to the late years of the nineteenth century, despite any differences, was their attitude toward the issue of independence of Poland – they desired to fight for it with weapons, and involve the popular masses. Subsequently,

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<sup>119</sup> Borejsza, *Emigracja polska*, 419–22.

<sup>120</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, 'Portret polskiego socjalisty z czasów młodości (na marginesie książki L. Baumgartena)', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, lxxiv, 2 (1967), 457–65.

<sup>121</sup> The text was initially published in Polish in 1977 and later was repeatedly reprinted: *id.*, 'Rewolucjonista polski – szkic do portretu', in Stefan Kieniewicz (ed.), *Polska XIX wieku. Państwo – społeczeństwo – kultura* (Warszawa, 1977), 253–311; *id.*, 'Ritratto del rivoluzionario polacco', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, iii (1974), 460–96; *id.*, 'Portrait du révolutionnaire polonais', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 30 (1974), 119–62; *id.*, 'Porträt des polnischen Revolutionärs. Eine vergleichende Studie', in Werner Conze, Gottfried Schramm and Klaus Zernack (eds), *Modernisierung und nationale Gesellschaft im ausgehenden 18. und im 19. Jahrhundert. Referate einer deutsch-polnischen Historikerkonferenz* (Berlin, 1979), 93–112.

slogans of social liberation became tantamount to those of national liberation; some revolutionary organisations ranked them secondary.<sup>122</sup>

He also authored a (smaller) essay on Polish insurgents (1985).<sup>123</sup>

Borejsza has written two books being what is called in Polish ‘pretext biographies’, that is, biographies being a pretext to tell a broader story than only a life story of a given individual. One of them deals with Armand Lévy, friend and secretary of Adam Mickiewicz. Lévy is described as a ‘behind-the-scenes man’, one of those “who often play a foreground political role but much less frequently tend to be perpetuated in written history”.<sup>124</sup> The monograph is, in fact, a deep study of Mickiewicz’s last years and the poet’s relationships with France and the French. In this respect, Lévy was a liaison, guide, and bridge for the Polish bard. Borejsza emphasised the Masonic, socialist, and philo-Semitic threads in Mickiewicz’s secretary’s life, which the poet’s son Władysław, and others too, tried to erase from the memory and even from the records. Despite the difficulties in reconstructing Lévy’s biography, he did his best to identify aspects of historical truth. He highlighted the French and Italian masonry’s progressiveness and tried to show Lévy’s activity among the French, Jews, Poles, Italians, Romanians, and Bulgarians.<sup>125</sup>

The first edition of Borejsza’s biography of General Walery Wróblewski, buttered with quotations, came out in 1970.<sup>126</sup> Years later, he recollected that the title – *Patriota bez paszportu* [A Patriot without a Passport] “was provocative, it was a time when thousands of people considering themselves Poles were expelled from Poland,

<sup>122</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Piękny wiek XIX* (Warszawa, 1990), 337–8.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 371–8.

<sup>124</sup> Borejsza, *Sekretarz Adama Mickiewicza*, 321 (I use the third edition of this book: Gdańsk, 2005).

<sup>125</sup> For details, see Marcos Silber’s article in this issue of *Acta Poloniae Historica*.

<sup>126</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Patriota bez paszportu* (Warszawa, 1970). An extended edition came out in 1982, also published by ‘Czytelnik’; the third (revised) edition was published in 2008 by ‘Neriton’. A Lithuanian translation has been produced: Jerzy V. Boreiša, *Patriotas be paso*, transl. by Baniūtė Medekšaitė (Vilnius, 1973); large portions of the study have been translated into Russian. The book was initially to be published by the Publishers of the Ministry of National Defence (Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej), but in the summer of 1968 the project was prevented, probably owing to the anti-Semitic witch-hunt; see ‘Historyk w świecie wydawców’, 101.

their passports being taken off” (i.e. as the result of the March 1968 anti-Semitic campaign).<sup>127</sup> Borejsza showed in his book a gradual and deliberate evolution of Wróblewski’s views. Born and brought up on the Lithuanian-Byelorussian borderland, into a relatively affluent noble family, this initially loyal Russian subject and a noble democrat joined the January Uprising and lastly became a general with the Commune of Paris; he spent almost fifty years in different places of Western Europe, but mainly in France. The study is a journey across the milieus of Polish post-January emigration, showing its international connections. Again, this biography was but a pretext for analysis of an ideological and worldview transformation, which not always ensued from a firm intellectual calculation but resulted, at times, from intuition or even coincidence. It is a story of a man who “was unceasingly guided by the idea of Poland’s liberation” and therefore would associate with anybody who could help this idea come true, the proletariat included. The monograph, with rather scarce source references, complemented the author’s studies on the history of Polish emigration and on the history of Polish socialism. Wróblewski has been portrayed as a representative of the generation that passed the baton of the struggle for independence to people such as Bolesław Limanowski or Józef Piłsudski.

It is Borejsza who has coined the still increasingly popular phrase ‘the beautiful nineteenth century’ [*piękny wiek XIX*], first used as the title of his book – a collection of texts, mainly essays, first published in 1958 and later.<sup>128</sup> In the introduction, he wrote:

As I dealt in the recent years with the history of European fascisms, I repeatedly came across irony and scorn with which extremists of various nations held towards ‘the century of rotten liberalism’, the ‘cursed nineteenth century’ – the time that for democrats marked a hope for the promulgation of the slogans of the Great French Revolution, for the socialists, a hope to knock capitalism down and install a system of universal equality: contempt for the time when the omnipotence of progress and technology were increasingly respected and when it was believed that nations would fulfil their rights to unrestrained and independent existence. In contrast to ours [i.e., the twentieth], that century did not carry a threat of total annihilation, and

<sup>127</sup> ‘Historyk w świecie wydawców’, 101.

<sup>128</sup> There have been three editions, the first and the second (revised) ones with ‘Czytelnik’ in 1984 and 1990, respectively, the third, with Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN in 2010 (I refer here to the second edition).

did not threaten, almost on a daily basis, with a worldwide conflict. Hence, I have entitled this anthology *Piękny wiek XIX* [The Nineteenth Century: A Beautiful Age], not without some perverseness.<sup>129</sup>

The Crimean War – also called the Eastern War and, less frequently, the Russian War – reappeared many times in Borejsza’s research activity, be it on the occasion of his studies on Mickiewicz’s last years or the activities of Lévy.<sup>130</sup> However, it was only the nearing 150th anniversary of this armed conflict that propelled him to organise two scientific conferences on the topic. The first of them was held on 6 October 2006 at the Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences, in Warsaw; it was a countrywide event, and a dozen scholars from Warsaw, Cracow, Poznań, and Kielce were to deliver their papers. The second took place in Obory near Warsaw a year later, on 3–4 October 2007, with scholars from seven countries participating. An extensive volume of studies entitled *The Crimean War 1853–1856: Colonial Skirmish or Rehearsal for World War? Empires, Nations and Individuals*, composed of twenty-four articles in English, French, Russian, and Italian, was published in its aftermath. The fact that Warsaw – rather than Paris, London, Petersburg, or Istanbul – became the centre of scientific confrontation over the Crimean War was somewhat paradoxical.<sup>131</sup> In preparing the conferences and after that the related publications, Borejsza sought, in the first place, to remind the war that had mostly been forgotten by modern historiographers, with its underestimated importance, thus following up the once-uncompleted efforts of Marcei Handelsman and his circle. Also, he sought to prove that the conflict which involved the powers far from the Polish territory was essentially a ‘Polish’ conflict – and this for at least two reasons: first, Poles were engaged on both sides of the conflict; second, the then-partitioned country attached considerable hope for the imminent collapse of the Russian Empire and restoration of Poland-Lithuania’s independence. Borejsza stressed the critical influence of the Crimean conflict upon the reforms in Alexander II’s Russia, including the enfranchisement of peasants, the emergence of the Young Turkish movement, and the modernisation of the Ottoman Empire, the stimulation of the strivings

<sup>129</sup> Borejsza, *Piękny wiek XIX*, 7.

<sup>130</sup> *Id.*, *Sekretarz Adama Mickiewicza*, 123–56.

<sup>131</sup> ‘Słowo wstępne: Zapomniana wojna’, in *Polacy i ziemie polskie w dobie wojny krymskiej*, 7.

among the nations inhabiting the Balkan Peninsula to have their own respective states formed and instituted, all this accompanied by the deep revaluation taking place in the Caucasus. He formulated research postulates for the others to take up. Among the concluding remarks in one of the conference anthologies, he noticed as follows:

The Polish cause has been examined better than the history of national liberation movements in Southern and Eastern Europe or in the Caucasus. There are extensive research fields related to the Crimean War events remaining to be explored, such as the confrontation between the East and the West, the confrontation of the different civilisations – that of Islam and that of Christianity, Eastern as well as Western – the attitude of Caucasian Muslims and Christians towards both fighting sides, or, the integration or disintegration of Europe resulting from the Crimean War. The study of the world's public opinion in that period is still ahead of us, as a task to tackle: in this respect, our present knowledge is but fragmentary. It is impossible to reduce the Crimean War history to diplomatic and military affairs. It is right to remind that the venerably-aged [Prince] Adam Czartoryski named this war 'a war for the principles'.<sup>132</sup>

Borejsza's interest in the history of Italian fascism and its impacts on Central and Southern Europe, and in the attempts at creating a formation that might be called a 'fascist international', were pioneering in the 1970s, in and outside Poland. Following De Felice, the Polish scholar stressed the chronological primacy of Mussolini to Hitler and other leaders of fascist/fascist-oriented (para-fascist) movements. This was reflected in the title of the book first published in 1979 and reissued in 1989 – *Mussolini był pierwszy...* [Mussolini Came First...]. Borejsza considered extreme nationalism built in opposition to cosmopolitanism and communism, and to any movements of international character, to have been the fundamental premise of the development of fascism. He recognised this particular factor as the reason for the eventual failure of *Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma* (CAUR) and of the efforts of individuals such as Eugenio Coselschi,<sup>133</sup> whom Mussolini had entrusted with the building of an international organisation associating the political movements in Europe with a favourable attitude towards the policies he pursued. In other words, federating

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<sup>132</sup> Borejsza, "Zasada narodowości" od Wiosny Ludów do wojny krymskiej', in *Polacy i ziemia polskie w dobie wojny krymskiej*, 27.

<sup>133</sup> For an interesting essay on Coselschi, see Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 298–9.

the nationalisms into one fascist international was a challenging task; overcoming the contradictions proved to exceed the initiators' abilities. Borejsza added one more principle to the picture: a larger and more powerful fascist movement would swallow a smaller one. As he observed in the introductory remarks to the second edition of his book on Mussolini (in May 1987):

Fascism introduces modern propaganda methods by entirely monopolising the mass media, which are meant to disseminate the one-and-only generally obligatory rule. The latter is to embrace all the manifestations of social life, itself being based on a complete negation of the former system and assuming that only fascism can create a 'new man', 'new society', 'new order', 'new world', and so on.

Fascism is a cult of deed and violence, referring to emotion, myths, a mythologised national past, and creating new enemies against whom it mobilises the opinion. Its target is to make use of any and all irrational reactions typical of an average human, the man-in-the-street. The primary method of mobilisation of the masses by fascist movements and regimes is hatred.<sup>134</sup>

"A rational element is inexistent in terrorism", Borejsza repeated after Ignazio Silone.<sup>135</sup> He approached Italian fascism as an imperfect and unfinished model of a totalitarian system. He perceived the Third Reich and the Soviet Union as more ideal models. He pointed to the importance of outward aggression in the fascist states' system as a force that propelled more attacks and invasions, one that was outright an ideological precept. This observation could be extended to totalitarian states overall, and thus the Soviet Union would be included – though mentioning it under the oppressive censorship was impossible. His portrayal of Mussolini was one of a modern dictator who broadly took advantage of the twentieth-century achievements, particularly as far as propaganda and dissemination of fascist slogans were concerned – along with mobilising the masses of people, which is termed social demagogy. He opposed it to the old-fashioned, if not outright anachronistic, nineteenth-century dictators such as Miguel Primo de Rivera or Miklós Horthy. He stressed that without fascist Italy, the

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<sup>134</sup> Borejsza, *Mussolini*, 10.

<sup>135</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Rzym i wspólnota faszystowska. O penetracji faszyzmu włoskiego w Europie Środkowej, Południowej i Wschodniej* (Warszawa, 1981), 329.

Third Reich would not have been what it became.<sup>136</sup> The Italians were interested in the Polish historian's opinion on the history of fascism and its influence in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe; Borejsza's works were translated into Italian and published in Italy.<sup>137</sup>

Borejsza's constantly broadened interests in the history of totalitarian systems have led him to study Adolf Hitler's worldview.<sup>138</sup> He had no doubts whatsoever that the homicidal anti-Semitism of the Third Reich's leader "was one of the two or three constant and immutable components of his personal programme"<sup>139</sup> – long before the 1942 decision to 'finally solve the Jewish question'. He emphasised that Hitler classed Jews and Romani as 'non-humans' and condemned them to complete extermination, whereas Slavs would be 'subhuman', employing his own gradation in this respect. It is Borejsza who has introduced the notion of 'anti-Slavism' (used alternately with 'Slavophobia' at times) in the scholarly literature. It was the other constituent of Hitler's racist views, next to anti-Semitism. However, the term 'anti-Slavism' has not been commonly absorbed; as he remarked:

My attempt to introduce the concept of anti-Slavism to a broader circle of academics of Nazism in Germany was ignored. During the public debate

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 329–36.

<sup>137</sup> A modified version of the study on Rome and the fascist community has been published in Italian, in the series 'Biblioteca di Cultura Moderna': Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Il fascismo e l'Europa orientale. Dalla propaganda all'aggressione* (Bari–Roma, 1981); see, among others, *id.*, 'L'Italia e le tendenze fasciste nei paesi baltici (1922–1940)', *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi*, viii (Torino, 1974), 280–316; *id.*, 'La marcia su Varsavia del 1926 nella versione italiana', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 1 (1978), 172–91; *id.*, 'L'Italia e la guerra tedesco-polacca del 1939', *Storia Contemporanea*, 4 (1978), 607–62; also, see Enzo Collotti, 'Il fascismo nella storiografia. La dimensione europea', *Italia contemporanea*, 194 (1994), 11–30.

<sup>138</sup> The research has produced two books and a series of articles; see Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Antyslawizm Adolfa Hitlera* (Warszawa, 1988); *id.*, *"Śmieszne sto milionów Słowian..."*. *Wokół światopoglądu Adolfa Hitlera* (Warszawa, 2006); English version: *A Ridiculous Hundred Million Slavs. Concerning Adolf Hitler's World-View* (Warsaw, 2017); also, see *id.*, 'Anti-slavism: Hitler's Vision or the Germans', *Polish Perspectives*, 2 (1988), 23–39; *id.*, 'Racisme et antislavisme chez Hitler', in *La politique nazie d'extermination*, sous la direction de François Bédarida (Paris, 1989), 57–74.

<sup>139</sup> Borejsza, *A Ridiculous Hundred Million Slavs*, 19.

in Berlin in 1985, the validity of the concept of 'Adolf Hitler's anti-Slavism' was supported by the historians: Eberhard Jäckel, Wolfgang Wippermann and the anti-fascist Hans Heinrich Herwarth von Bittenfeld, former first secretary of the German embassy in Moscow in 1939. And only by them. As a German historian friend of mine explained to me after the debate: "Forty years after the war, the community is tired of ceaseless breast-beating. Accountability for the Holocaust is already a sufficient burden".<sup>140</sup>

Borejsza's research has proved that Hitler wanted to use the Slavs, once deprived of their elites, first as slaves and cheap workforce, agricultural and raw-material base for the German metropolis. Further on, he intended to annihilate them, to bring about the total extinction of Slavic nations. Although anti-Slavism has died out, Borejsza emphasised, this is not to say that it never existed – however, it was pushed far to the background by anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. From this perspective, he extremely critically approached the recently popular theories of a possible alliance between the Second Republic of Poland and the Third Reich, which would have allegedly led to a defeat of the Soviet Union whilst saving Poland as a statehood entity enjoying international recognition. And he was entirely right.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Borejsza was working on a monograph, to which he tentatively referred as a book on Hitler's political or foreign partners.<sup>141</sup> It was designed to review fascist and fascist-leaning (para-fascist) movements and authoritarian systems all over Europe, not overloaded with facts. Resulting from this research effort, a book was compiled that was first published in German<sup>142</sup> and shortly afterwards in Polish;<sup>143</sup> somewhat later, a Spanish version came out.<sup>144</sup> The study was written for the younger generation. The author deliberately used the term 'historical fascisms'. He moreover referred to the events in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, highlighting how difficult it is to knock down

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–3.

<sup>141</sup> IH PAN, AJB: Pismo Borejszy do Tazbira, 29 June 1984; Pismo Borejszy do Dyrekcji Instytutu Historii PAN, 14 Aug. 1984.

<sup>142</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Schulen des Hasses. Faschistische Systeme in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999) (the author was not satisfied with the quality of the translation).

<sup>143</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Szkoły nienawiści. Historia faszystów europejskich 1919–1945* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, 2000).

<sup>144</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, *La escalada del odio. Movimientos y sistemas autoritarios y fascistas en Europa, 1919–1945* (Madrid, [2002]).



from the outside a dictatorship that enjoys the support of the masses. Both the evoked analogies and the formulations used were meant as a camouflaged warning that the late years of the twentieth century – the age of hatred and annihilation – not necessarily mark an end of totalitarianism, authoritarianism, fascism and, therefore, genocide, wars, aggression, and conquests. Borejsza posed questions such as: Would Nazism have won in Germany, had there been no Mussolini in Italy? Did Hitlerism come, in the first place, as a response to Bolshevism and communism? Would the Holocaust have been accomplished ‘without Hitler’s personal impulse’? Did fascisms appear within Europe only, or outside it as well? And, should one refer to ‘one’ fascism, or a number of fascisms?<sup>145</sup> The answers can be found in the book, which is a sort of handbook of, and a guide to, the phenomenon/phenomena referred to as fascism(s) or authoritarianism(s), conceptually and well as interpretatively. It is, moreover, a guide to the total war and the Holocaust. In parallel, it is a guide to the related geographies, starting with Italy, through Germany, and then Hungary, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Balkan countries, to Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Britain, Switzerland, ending with Scandinavian countries. Borejsza clearly remarks that Poland between the two World Wars was *not* a fascist country, while after the coup of May 1926 it *was* an authoritarian country. His synthetic presentations of the history of fascisms and authoritarianisms offered a reliable opportunity to find and define similarities and differences. In juxtaposing, comparing, and analysing the diverse traits of the phenomena in question, he would demarcate the fundamental borderline between the totalitarian and authoritarian systems based on the extent of support by social masses – much larger, pretty universal in fact, in the former case and much more modest in the latter. The compilation of such a book called for considerable erudition, even if it was partly based upon the author’s earlier studies on Italian fascism or Hitler’s worldview.

The political transition of the late 1980s and early 1990s enabled Borejsza to elaborate on the threads that had long been bothering him – namely, to compare communism, bolshevism, and Stalinism against the other totalitarian systems. He was positive that after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decomposition of the Soviet Bloc,

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<sup>145</sup> Borejsza, *Szkoły nienawiści*, 7.

communism has not been completely buried. Yet, he would not put the equation mark between Lenin and Stalin, emphasising that the former stemmed from the methods employed by the French Jacobins and nineteenth-century socialism. He pointed to the experiences of the first Russian revolution of 1905–7, which became as a kind of memento for the Bolsheviks, making them believe that defeat would mean death for them. Borejsza identified this premise as a source of Bolshevik terror, treated as an instrument of maintaining power at any cost and expense. He utterly hammered Lenin's successor:

Stalin superimposed the idea of socialism, or communism, in one country, and later on unleashed Great Russian chauvinism, instrumentalising the international communist movement in the service of the Soviet superpower. He made the multistage homicidal terror the system's fundamental pillar, its perpetual motion machine. A few years after Lenin's death, the role of ideology was reduced, and further simplified.<sup>146</sup>

Borejsza pointed the differences and similarities between the Soviet variety of totalitarianism, on the one hand, and Italian fascism and Nazism, on the other. He identified the difference in the approach toward religion: unaccepted by Bolsheviks, religion was tolerated by Nazis and at times supported by Italian fascists. Mass physical extermination and unpredictable terror against own citizens marked the difference between the Stalinist realities and those of the Third Reich and Mussolini's Italy. As opposed to fascism and Nazism, Borejsza would not name Stalinism a movement since Stalin's men were "selected out of the already-existing Bolshevik power apparatus".<sup>147</sup> One apparent similarity between Stalinism and Nazism was the dominance of the party apparatus over the state apparatus. Borejsza pointed out to Mussolini's and Hitler's taking advantage of the fear among the moneyed classes as well as the peasantry of what might fall to their lot, based on the experience under the Bolshevik rule in Russia and then in the Soviet Union. Based on this fear, the ruling teams in Italy, Germany and elsewhere could build quite a lot for their own and their movements' purposes.

In the last twenty years of his life, Borejsza explored in the Russian archives the relations between the Soviet Union and fascist Italy –

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

focusing, this time, not on political or diplomatic relations but on reciprocal perceptions and a sort of ideological fascination identifiable in those representing both systems. Having explored these issues from the Italian standpoint, he wanted to get to know the Soviet view. With only partial access to the archives, he could carry out only preliminary studies. This led him to the path of the history of Stalinism and the Comintern (as already mentioned) and to the exploration of the post-Soviet realities. He has not managed to publish extensively on these topics but has left several essays all the same.<sup>148</sup> Borejsza stressed that no trial has ever been held against any Stalinist criminal, be it a symbolic one. Let me refer to just one quotation from a text first published in 2004:

In the former USSR territory, yearnings for a strong authoritarian power have survived, along with the willingness to maintain much of the former social achievements and standards – however minimal they might seem from the Western European perspective. ... Alongside these, common reluctance toward squaring accounts with the past prevails. These first decades in the post-Soviet territory is not a phase of cleansing, in contrast to Germany. Quite universally (let me stress it: quite universally, rather than among elitist milieus or broad circles related to those victimised and their families), it is an attitude based on suppressing the memories and pushing them into the subconscious, the willingness to conclude the affair as one's own, domestic one, all aliens to keep away from it. And yet, the terror in the Soviet Union's communist system extended to millions of those who were not the country's citizens. There is a number of phenomena that prompt one to state that a pretty mass-scale negation is appearing among the Russian Federation's inhabitants on their own co-responsibility for the past.<sup>149</sup>

Seen from a still rather close perspective of dozens of years that have passed since the above-quoted words were put down, one should basically agree with Borejsza. What is more, phenomena such as reluctance toward squaring accounts with the past or denying shared responsibility for it can be said to be intensifying. In September 2000, Borejsza on behalf of the PAN's Institute of History, together with the

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<sup>148</sup> Originally published at various occasions, these essays have finally been collected into the volume entitled *Stulecie zagłady* (incl. 'The Brown and the Red'; 'Stalin and Cosmopolitanism, 1945–53'; 'Italian Fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism from the 21-Century Standpoint').

<sup>149</sup> Borejsza, *Stulecie zagłady*, 213.

German Historical Institute in Warsaw, co-organised an international conference on the totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in Europe. His article on Italian fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism as three forms of totalitarianism seen from the twenty-first-century perspective opened a voluminous book published in English. He pointed out a new threat that emerged in the new century: individual terror in the name of ‘totalitarian religions’ striving to take hold of means of mass destruction – incidentally, much more easily available in the age of technological revolution wielded by individuals.<sup>150</sup>

It is not difficult to reconstruct Borejsza’s views on the condition of modern Polish historiography. He uttered his opinions on this topic reasonably often,<sup>151</sup> pointing to the weakness of scientific criticism that tended to focus mainly on methodological (especially, technique-related) aspects than the innovative quality of one’s scholarly exploration, formulated conclusions, arguments and propositions, polemics with the previous findings and postulates for further research. This is evident in published reviews as well as in the opinions regarding promotion applications. He moreover complained about the shrinking interest in the ‘beautiful nineteenth century’, which was his substratum as a researcher. He was not enthusiastic about the distribution of focus where extensive research is conducted on political and military history, whereas the social and economic history tends to be increasingly neglected. He expressed his critical attitude toward the research profile dominant in the Institute of National Remembrance [Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, IPN], with its focus on the criminal nature of the system superimposed on Poland by the Soviet Union in the period 1944–89 and reconstruction of the history of the underground activities and the dissident forms of resistance after the Second World War, as coupled with pushing the Nazi crimes far to the background. He argued that sociologists have more understanding of the mechanisms of Polish society’s functioning in the communist period than historians.

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<sup>150</sup> Jerzy W. Borejsza, ‘Italian Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism: Three Forms of Totalitarianism from a Twenty-First-Century Perspective’, in Jerzy W. Borejsza and Klaus Ziemer, in cooperation with Magdalena Hułas (eds), *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe. Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (New York–Oxford–Warsaw, 2006), 3–22.

<sup>151</sup> One good example is the essay ‘Historycy polscy – uczeni, sędziowie i inni’, published in *Przegląd Polityczny*, 66 (2004), 16–22, and reprinted seven years later in *Stulecie zagłady*, 222–35.

He challenged the Institute's double role, that of historians and that of judges. And, he postulated that the martyrdom of those Polish communists who opposed Stalin and Stalinism and were eventually exterminated, be recognised in Polish history.

On the other hand, however, he highlighted that a chance for Polish historiography is its traditionally high rank in the national awareness, for Poles have not yet turned into an ahistorical nation. Nevertheless, he did see the shrinking role of historians, whose scholarly studies and even public addresses or appeals cannot exert a prevalent influence on the shaping of mass awareness or imagination. He would stress that the process of exiting a totalitarian or authoritarian system affects historiography and choice or selection of research topics and the degree of historiographer's objectivism is concerned. He referred at this point to the German, Italian, Spanish, or Russian examples he was so familiar with: "The longer an authoritarian or totalitarian system has lasted, the more complicated, perforce, the coming to terms with them is".<sup>152</sup> He unambiguously suggested that Polish historiography was still squaring accounts with communism, with adequate effects produced because of the too-short time distance from the end of the People's Republic time. What he meant was not only the contestation by Poles of the communist realities but also their acceptance by a considerable portion of the society. This phenomenon called for historical research as well. He warned against history in a patriotic version, even with respect to more distant periods. The example he gave was Józef Piłsudski's expression of respect for Margrave Aleksander Wielopolski, whereas historians rarely work up the courage in this respect as they seek to avoid being charged with glorifying trade-offs or settlements with the partitioning powers. He could see their reluctance to dealing with the history of socialism and left-wing movements overall, including in the well-distant nineteenth century, and perceived it as part of 'anathema' against communism 'extended' to anything that might have had to do with left orientation or leftism – one of his quoted examples being no interest expressed in (if not sheer oblivion of) the Revolution of 1905.<sup>153</sup>

Borejsza had a precise view on 'historically-oriented policy' [*polityka historyczna*] – the notion that has recently made an astounding career,

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<sup>152</sup> Borejsza, *Stulecie zagłady*, 224.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

not only in the country on the Vistula. As he remarked in one of his last interviews,

A ‘historically-oriented policy’ is politics rather than history. One should not mistake these concepts as one and the same. I am not evaluating a ‘historical policy’ since what is squeezed under this notional umbrella is, in most cases, a falsification having not much in common with science.<sup>154</sup>

He believed that “Theories of historical probability must be based on actual facts and evidence”.<sup>155</sup> While appreciating the imminent semantic contradiction within the term ‘historical policy’, Borejsza would never disregard the phenomenon as such, older than its name, and juxtaposed it with historical truth. He approached the concepts of alternative or counterfactual history with great carefulness, warned against historical probabilism.

Borejsza did not avoid historiosophical considerations. He believed that the independence of humanists of external pressures – whatever age they happen to live in – is not frequent, if not unique, whereas approaching the historical truth has become the most demanding exercise in the area of the most recent history. He argued against Krzysztof Pomian’s categorisation of history into ‘official’ – the one written by the victors; revisionist – represented, in the first place, by the defeated; and, critical – the one closest to scientific canons. In Borejsza’s view, revisionist history may turn into an official one, and vice versa; it is not always apparent who the victor(s) and who the defeated is – and, consequently, who writes history officially and who does it ‘less officially’. Moreover, neither revisionist nor official history is necessarily stripped of criticism. He founded these statements on his own experiences as a scholar who was excellently versed in the entanglements of the Russian, German, Austrian, and Polish history in the age of partitions, as well as an intellectual who had happened to write and lecture in the realities of communist and post-communist Poland and one who was prepared for the demanding role of a researcher of the past based on the canons of Soviet historiography. In the conclusion of his considerations on the political entanglements specific to historiographers, he found that

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<sup>154</sup> ‘Rękopisy znalezione w Moskwie’, 63.

<sup>155</sup> Borejsza, *A Ridiculous Hundred Million Slavs*, 18.

A historian must observe the primary values: the multifaceted reconstruction of the history of facts and historical processes ought to be isolated from ongoing politics and orders of political parties. Just like one's own views and the system of values adhered to by every scholar should be separated from the major part of his or her work – that is, a possibly unbiased reconstruction of the past.<sup>156</sup>

Adhering to these principles has been critical to the high value of his own scientific achievements.

#### IV SUMMARY

Jerzy Wojciech Borejsza was an individualist – and an individuality too. He primarily considered himself a historian. After the political change initiated in 1989, he did not accept the offer of becoming Poland's ambassador to Mexico, knowing that joining the diplomatic service would restrict or at least delay his research activities. He was a historian of two centuries, with excellent contacts in the scholarly and scientific circles of Russian, French, Italian, and German language areas. His contacts with English- and Spanish-speaking circles were not as extensive but still considerable enough. He attracted historians, young ones in particular. It is perhaps too early yet to authoritatively state that he has (or, has not) created a historical school in its own right; it is a fact that not many students are following the paths he has beaten in the exploration of the nineteenth-century and the history of twentieth-century totalitarian and authoritarian systems. What is certain, though, is that he instilled in his quite numerous alumni and associates a possibly broad perspective of perceiving history. He regretted that the recent Polish historiography was relatively rarely – definitely much less frequently than in communist Poland – making efforts to synthetically discuss or grasp the topics attributable to what we are wont to the term 'world history'. He would never set or suggest any strict borderline between world history and the history of Poland, approaching the latter simply as an integral part of the former. He encouraged elaborations of importance, complex and problem-related issues that tended to be circumvented or not-quite-willingly explored by scholars – or, perhaps, found deterrent by them. He set the azimuths for the

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<sup>156</sup> Borejsza, *Stulecie zagłady*, 235.

others and offered examples in his publications. He warned against using lifeless language, pompous or pretentious talk or writing. Being a good writer himself, exhibiting his excellent writing and speaking skills, not shunning apt analogies or even irony, he would – perhaps unwittingly but quite resolutely – identify his writing with the notion of art, rather than science; in this respect, he was similar to the grand figures in Polish historiography who proved their mastery of written and spoken word: to name Szymon Askenazy, Marcei Handelsman, Władysław Konopczyński, or Marian Kukiel. He never went beyond the canons set by the techniques and methodology of historical science. He appreciated the importance of historical sources and records, though he avoided overloading his texts with excessive amounts of notes. Aware that historians of our day would not “rise to the rank of national bards”, as it had happened before the First World War, but are writing, instead, for “a narrow circle of those interested in the technique rather than its products”,<sup>157</sup> he would not hesitate to talk to mass media and disseminate knowledge about the past. His erudition was useful not only in the communication with his colleagues from the historians’ guild: he considered explaining the intricacies of history to the contemporaries to be the (still valid) public and social obligation of a Polish intellectual – and, specifically, the *privilegium* of a historian.

Jerzy W. Borejsza was also a witness to the history, gifted with an unusual memory. He planned to prepare a more complete version of his memoirs than the one published in his last book; the new version would have been composed of eighty-three flashback essays under a telling title of *Ostaniec*.<sup>158</sup> He has not only researched into the history of the twentieth century – the age of ‘extermination’ and ‘hatred’ – but has also experienced it himself. This is perhaps the reason why he considered himself, in the first place, a historiographer of the ‘beautiful’ nineteenth century.

*transl. Tristan Korecki*

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<sup>157</sup> Borejsza, *Ostaniec*, 528.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



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**Mariusz Wołos** – 20th-century history of diplomacy, history of the Soviet Union, Polish independence movement before and during the First World War, contemporary Russian and Polish historiography, ethnical minorities in Europe; professor at the Institute of History and Archival Research of the Pedagogical University in Cracow and the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw; in 2007–11, Director of the Research Centre of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Moscow and Permanent Representative of the Polish Academy of Sciences to the Russian Academy of Sciences; e-mail: mariusz.wolos@gmail.com