



## **PRO MEMORIA**

**Paweł Adamowicz**

**(1965-2019)**

**Mayor of Gdansk City**

**(1998-2019)**



**PAWEŁ ADAMOWICZ  
(1965-2019)  
THE MAYOR OF GDANSK AND HIS  
SELF-GOVERNMENTAL LEGACY**

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**Abstract**

In contemporary world politics, especially Polish politics, there is an increase in aggressiveness in the language of politics. Political adversaries divide society and influence the radicalization of its views. Individuals who are deprived of intellectual reflection and give in to hate speech become a threat to social order. The Mayor of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz, has become a fatal victim of a dangerous phenomenon which is allowing verbal aggression in politics, which turns into aggressive actions.

**Key words:** *local-government, language of politics, hate speech, verbal aggression, political murder*

**INTRODUCTION**

Paweł Adamowicz's figure, his life and professional path was closely related to politics. Apart from political elements, the biography of the President of the City of Gdansk includes his identification and education.

Paweł Adamowicz described himself as a Gdansk citizen. He was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1965 in Gdańsk to a family resettled from the Vilnius region (now Lithuania, until 1939, a Polish territory). Both of his parents were active community activists in Gdańsk, among others, involved in the reconstruction of St Brigid's Church in Gdańsk. He also had an older brother, Piotr, who was involved in anti-communist activities. Paweł Adamowicz grew up in Śródmieście district on Mniszki Street near the Polish Post Office building, which is the place where Polish postmen were attacked by Wehrmacht soldiers in September 1939, St. Brigid's Church, which

is the place where masses of solidarity for striking shipyard workers took place, the Jan II Sobieski monument, which is the place where anti-communist demonstrations took place. Paweł Adamowicz grew up in an environment and in a place whose space was filled with the spirit of patriotism. The city centre is also a district where numerous traces of the Kashubian community living in Gdańsk have been preserved. All these factors contributed to the fact that Paweł Adamowicz perceived his multidimensional Gdansk identity through the prism of a native Gdansk citizen, a native of a family of settlers, a citizen of Gdansk who understood Polish but also the multicultural specificity of his city. He included a specific credo in the statement: "I am a citizen of Gdańsk, jo jem z Gduńska, Ich bin ein Danziger, I am from Gdańsk. [Adamowicz 2008]. He expressed his understanding of the multiculturalism and openness of Gdańsk as the city's mayor by initiating and providing organizational support for many events presenting and promoting various cultural groups living in the city.

The International Congresses of Gdańsk citizens enjoyed great popularity, during which both Gdańsk citizens from other cities and countries and descendants of pre-war Gdańsk residents living in other countries took part. For the numerous Vilnius community settled in Gdańsk after World War II, Kaziuki Gdańskie, a market inspired by the traditional fair held in Vilnius, was organized. Paweł Adamowicz also took care to preserve the Kashubian heritage in Gdańsk. A jubilee 10th Kashubian Congress was organized in the city and plaques with the inscription " Gduńsk historcno stoleca Kaszeb " were placed on the city's corners. Carefully but noticeably Paweł Adamowicz cared about the memory of Gdańsk from the interwar period. A symbolic reference to that period in the history of the city was the transfer of the seat of the City Council to the building where from 11 February 1920 to 1 September 1939 the seat of the League of Nations High Commissioner in the Free City of Gdańsk was located. During holidays or important events, two preserved traditional trams Bergmann from 1927 and the Ring from 1930 with "Danzig" signs ran in the city.

The multiculturalism of Gdańsk as a heritage of the city's earlier belonging to the Kingdom of Poland, the Principality of Prussia or the Free City of Gdańsk corresponded with the current policy of openness towards other nations and cultures. On the initiative of Paweł Adamowicz, the Gdansk Model of Integration of Immigrants was developed and implemented in the city. The family of origin, place of birth, knowledge of the history of the city and the region caused that Paweł Adamowicz, as the Mayor of Gdańsk, perfectly understood the specificity of the city and felt its cultural pulse. [Michałowski 2018]

The city of Gdańsk, under the rule of Paweł Adamowicz, owes its specific order and organizational culture to his education. The whole educational path was realized by the future president in Gdańsk. Here, he began his education at Primary School No. 50, then attended the renowned Gdańsk I High School nr 1 and studied law at the University of Gdańsk. After graduation, he was employed as an assistant at the Faculty of Law and Administration. He also completed an apprenticeship which resulted in passing an exam and obtaining legal counsel qualifications. The academic career of the future Mayor of the City of Gdańsk was crowned by taking up the post of the Vice-Rector of the University of Gdańsk for Students Affairs, which he held between 1990 and 1993.

## 1. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Paweł Adamowicz came into contact with the world of politics relatively early. Already in high school, under the influence of his brother, he became involved in the activities of the democratic opposition. The first of his major roles was to distribute leaflets and magazines among the students of the school and the youth of Tricity. As a high school student, he started publishing. Initially, he presented the wall newspaper "Emblem" in the school display case, then he was the editor and co-publisher of the periodical "Jedynka", in which he published the first anti-communist texts. During his studies, his attitude as an activist of the democratic opposition clearly intensified. It adopted an institutionalized form of participation in organizations that were protesting against the socialist reality of students. He was an active member of the Lech Bądkowski Gdańsk Political Club, the "Dean's" Political Thought Club, the "Liberal Congress" of Gdańsk Academic Association. He also continued to publish, being the editor of "ABC" magazine. During his studies, his worldview was shaped by the circle of Tricity's oppositionists, with whom he remained in constant contact. His main mentor was Aleksander Hall. It was in his apartment that Paweł Adamowicz participated in meetings organized by Gdańsk oppositionists such as Donald Tusk, Grzegorz Grzelak, Bogdan Borusewicz, Janusz Lewandowski. [Śliwiński 2012].

He also took part in underground lectures by Jadwiga Staniszkis, Ryszard Legutko, Paweł Śpiewak, Stefan Kisielewski. Therefore, he cooperated with the leaders of the democratic opposition and independent intellectuals. Later on, the political paths of many of them were separated, but for Paweł Adamowicz the period of his studies was the time of his political formation. The pluralism and differences of views, as well as the culture of disputes, which he observed as part of his activity in the oppositionist circles, equipped the future mayor of Gdańsk with respect for different views and, above all, with the ability to distinguish the presented views from a person. It seems that he acquired the ability to disagree with someone else's views while maintaining respect for that person. This feature will continue to characterize him until the end of his life, also in the period of active political dispute in which he participated with the current authorities in the country.

Apart from their intellectual value, Paweł Adamowicz's political struggle had a practical dimension. In 1988 he headed the student strike committee at the University of Gdańsk. It was an occupational protest for the legalization of the Independent Students' Association and a solidarity strike in support of the strike taking place in the Gdańsk Shipyard. A member of the strike committee was also the later Polish Deputy Prime Minister Przemysław Gosiewski. [Łupak 2018]

Thanks to his active attitude, Paweł Adamowicz started to function in the political environment in Gdańsk. Between 1990 and 1993 he was a member of the Liberal-Democratic Congress, a member of the National Congress and a vice-president of the Gdańsk region of this group. Then, from 1994, he was a member of the Conservative Party, where in 1997 he was the chairman of the voivodship board. At that time, the party was headed by the mentor of Paweł Adamowicz, Aleksander Hall. In 1997, the Conservative Party was incorporated into the emerging Conservative-Popular Party. In the new grouping, Paweł Adamowicz served as a member of the provincial board and political council in Warsaw. In 2002, Paweł Adamowicz joined the Civic Platform and took over the leadership of its structures in Gdańsk. He was a member of the party until 2015, when he suspended his membership due to irregularities related to

his financial statement. Since then, until his death, he remained a non-partisan local government member associated with the All for Gdańsk association.

Throughout his life, Paweł Adamowicz went through a number of stages. In the early stages, he was associated with the conservative and Christian community and was co-organizer of the First and Second Liberal Congresses. However, the turn of the 1980s and 1990s was a time when the opposition circles did not have crystallized differences in world views or economic ideas directly resulting from the definition of political doctrines. There was a kind of semantic disorder, whose main goal was to distinguish and say goodbye to socialist circles. The separation of conservative and liberal views was achieved later in the Polish right and centre-right circles. Paweł Adamowicz, however, went beyond the definition framework. As a Catholic and conservative, he was able to take an active part in the "Equality Parade" or advocate the admission of emigrants to Poland. His attitude expressed a certain maturity manifested in his ability to include elements of the current reality in his declarative views. He did not dig into the doctrine, contesting or fighting against other attitudes or views. His conservatism was syncretic. Paweł Adamowicz had the ability to integrate seemingly contradictory values. Importantly, he also had the courage to present and defend his beliefs. It can therefore be said that Paweł Adamowicz's attitude, which was based on a conservative worldview, evolved over the years. [Lis 2019].

## **2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY – CITY COUNCIL**

In 1990, Paweł Adamowicz, a candidate from the list of the Civic Committee, was for the first time elected to the City Council of Gdańsk. In the same year he became a delegate to the Local Government Sejm (provincial assembly) of Gdańsk Voivodeship and for a year served as its vice-chairman. It was a representative body of the community self-governments from the area of the Gdańsk Province, performing mainly consultative functions. In the Local Government Sejm (provincial assembly), Paweł Adamowicz's activity as a lawyer focused on organizing the activity and then leading the Local Government Appeal College of the Gdańsk Province. [Ustawa 1990] As a councillor of Gdańsk and a delegate to the Local Government Sejm, he was involved in the establishment of local law, while as the chairman of the College, he considered appeals against administrative decisions of the mayor and the mayor of a specific town or community. These early experiences translated into the ability to understand the meaning of an administrative decision and its consequences. It was of a great educational value because it made us aware of the importance between the current political decision and the far-sighted local government decision. It was then that Paweł Adamowicz pointed out that the city should be managed and not ruled, i.e. a ruler should be more of a manager than a party functionary. [Adamowicz 2018] During the next term of the Gdańsk local government in 1994-1998, Paweł Adamowicz was the chairman of the city council. Entrusting this position was the crowning achievement of his previous local government activities. As a councillor, he knew the specifics of the functioning of the city council as a resolution-making body of local government. The experience he gained in the local government council gave him the ability to position a particular local government in comparison with others in the region and to understand the importance of cooperation between particular municipalities and cities. In turn, when he headed the Self-Government Appeal

College of the Gdańsk Voivodeship, he understood how important it is to make good laws prudently. Despite his still young age, he was already a self-government man with extensive experience and great skills. The function of the city council chairman entrusted to him made it possible to supplement his qualities with much-needed public recognition. Favourable conditions for this were created by the 1000th anniversary of Gdańsk in 1997, where Paweł Adamowicz, as the chairman of the city council, actively participated in the setting of the ceremony.

### **3. MAYOR OF THE CITY**

In 1998 Paweł Adamowicz was elected for the third time a councilor of the city of Gdańsk. At that time he had a very good position in the local government resulting from his experience, knowledge, skills but also from being recognizable and popular. Additionally, he had a strong political background and the support of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Gdańsk. The Solidarity Electoral Action Committee, from which he was running, had won the parliamentary elections in Poland a year earlier and enjoyed considerable support in society. All these elements resulted in the fact that Paweł Adamowicz, who was 33 years old at that time, was elected by the City Council as the Mayor of the City.

Subsequent local government elections were held in accordance with the new electoral law, according to which mayors and town mayors were elected in direct elections. In 2002, Paweł Adamowicz ran for the Civic Platform election committee. In the second round he defeated the Democratic Left Alliance candidate Marek Formela and gained support of 72.3% of votes. In the next elections in 2006, running from the same committee, he received 60.9% of votes in the first round. He repeated this achievement in 2010 winning 53.78% in the first round. He also ran from the Civic Platform committee in the 2014 elections, beating the candidate of the Law and Justice committee Andrzej Jaworski in the second round with a result of 61.3%. In his last election in 2018 he was an independent candidate running from the All for Gdańsk committee. In the second round, he won with the Law and Justice Committee candidate Kacper Płażyński with 64.8% support.

To sum up, Paweł Adamowicz served as the Mayor of Gdańsk from 1998 to 2019. He won all the direct elections in which he competed, but the election results indicated a downward trend with each subsequent term. For many people in Gdansk, he was the only city leader they knew. During his term of office, Gdansk developed economically, culturally and socially. In 2012, the city hosted football tournaments as part of Euro 2012, and in 2016 the city took part in the competition for the European Capital of Culture. Paweł Adamowicz was not free from ambiguities and inaccuracies and probably also from mistakes in public action. Many people saw Paweł Adamowicz as a man who had his own vision of the development of Gdańsk. Sometimes these visions were criticized constructively, but recently his presidency has been subject to increased personal criticism.

The culmination of his more than 20 years of presidency was the establishment of the Gdansk Metropolitan Area and the adoption of the Gdansk Model of Integration of Immigrants. The Gdańsk Metropolitan Area, currently the Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia Metropolitan Area, is a formula of an association comprising of 57 local governments from the area of the Pomeranian Voivodeship, under which joint initiatives of supra-local importance are undertaken. Mayor Paweł Adamowicz spoke about the Gdańsk

Model of Integration of Immigrants: "We want to give immigrants a chance to build a decent, normal life here. We want to prevent their exclusion. Many people from Gdańsk also went out into the world looking for these values. We are convinced that counteracting exclusion, sensible hospitality and openness is a guarantee of building a community based on traditional Gdańsk values: respect, tolerance, justice and solidarity." [Fedas et al 2016: 3]

#### **4. MURDER OF THE MAYOR OF GDAŃSK**

The Mayor of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz, was stabbed with a knife on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The attack took place during the 27<sup>th</sup> Final of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity. On the next day, at the University Clinical Centre in Gdańsk, he was pronounced dead. This tragic event is situated in the current political situation in Poland.

The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity is a nationwide charity event which took place for the first time on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1993. It is organized by a foundation of the same name, whose founder and president is Jarzy Owsiak. The formula of this undertaking is characterized by the fact that in the first half of January the Grand Finale takes place, during which money for a specific charity purpose is collected. The main idea is to provide help in medical care for newborns, children and recently also the elderly. The Foundation buys medical equipment for the collected funds and donates it free of charge to hospitals all over Poland. Indicatively by 2020 the total amount collected by the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity is over 1 billion PLN. The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity follows the tradition of social charity based on the collection of voluntary donations from individuals by volunteers acting free of charge. The Foundation does not benefit financially in the form of grants from the state budget or other forms of support from the government.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Grand Finale of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity in Gdańsk was crowned with the concert "Gdańsk for Orchestra". The last words spoken from the stage by Paweł Adamowicz just before the attack sounded: "Gdańsk is generous, Gdańsk shares the good, Gdańsk wants to be a city of solidarity. I would like to thank you for all this, because - in the streets, squares of Gdańsk - you donated money, you were volunteers. This is a wonderful time to share your good. You are great. Gdańsk is the most wonderful city in the world. Thank you!" It was a declaration by the Mayor of the city but also an active participant because during the 27<sup>th</sup> Final of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity Paweł Adamowicz was a volunteer and collected the amount of about 5500 PLN. After his murder, an action called "Let's fill up the last can of the Mayor for the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity" was initiated and the amount of about 16 million PLN was collected.

#### **5. THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THE MURDER**

The tragic event of 13<sup>th</sup> January 2019 was described by the killer himself as a political act. From the scene, holding up the murder weapon in a triumphant gesture, he said: "Hello! Hello! My name is Stefan W... I was innocent in prison. I was sitting innocent in prison. The Civic Platform<sup>1</sup> tortured me. That's why Adamowicz died."

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<sup>1</sup> Civic Platform - a Polish political party founded in 2001. In the years 2007-2015 she won the parliamentary election twice. The politicians of the Civic Platform were: Prime Minister of the Republic

The killer served a prison sentence for a bank robbery during which he used a signal pistol. The court classified this act as an armed robbery, which Stefan W. did not accept. He considered the sentence to be unjust and transferred the responsibility to the then ruling political group. Stefan W., left prison a month before the murder and most probably did not know that Paweł Adamowicz formally withdrew from the Civic Platform and was elected the Mayor of Gdansk as an independent candidate. [Włodkowska, Wojciechowski 2019], [Włodkowska 2020]. Therefore, there is a thesis about the political background of the murder, because the perpetrator wanted a spectacular murder of a leading Civic Platform politician and not Paweł Adamowicz personally.

Political killings, although not frequent, are always associated with strong emotions. In Poland, the most identifiable politically motivated murders are the assassinations of President Gabriel Narutowicz, Minister of the Internal Affairs Bronisław Pieracki, Solidarity chaplain Fr Jerzy Popiełuszko, Law and Justice office worker Marek Rosiak. The memory of the victims is still alive in Polish society. Unfortunately, they function properly in the collective memory of their killers: Eligiusz Niewiadomski, Hryhorij Maciejko, Grzegorz Piotrowski, Ryszard Cyba. Currently, in view of the ongoing trial of Paweł Adamowicz's killer, he functions as Stefan W. [Nowosielska 2019] It seems that the murder of Paweł Adamowicz, or basically its spectacular course, as well as the taking over of the microphone by the perpetrator and the public introduction and confession of guilt, was the aim of putting him in the spotlight. Political murders are, on the one hand, an attempt to physically eliminate a particular representative of the opposing political force, on the other hand, a spectacular attempt to manifest the killer's political views, or an ordinary attempt to make him appear in the collective consciousness as a person committing a spectacular act.

## CONCLUSIONS

Paweł Adamowicz's idea was open and tolerant Gdańsk. He often spoke about the need to build a community with respect for each and every person. He conducted a policy that fostered multiculturalism and diversity while preserving the traces of tradition. He created an inclusive Gdansk identity. In public debate, he did not cross the boundaries of cultural language and respected his interlocutor.

In spite of his membership in political parties and being a member of their governing bodies, Paweł Adamowicz never stood as a candidate in parliamentary elections or held any function in state administration. In the last years of his life, he was a non-partisan self-government activist.

In view of the above, it is difficult to understand Stefan W. The question arises as to how he formed his opinion about Paweł Adamowicz as a prominent politician of the ruling camp in the previous parliamentary term of office.

There is a presumption that a kind of mechanism of transfer of the hate from the speech of hatred to the plan of action may have worked. In the current political dispute in Poland, the language of public debate is becoming more and more violent and sharper. There is a consent for symbolic aggression against the adversaries of political life [Tökölyová, Déd 2019: 18-19]. The clearest illustration of this

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of Poland Donald Tusk and President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski. At present, it is the largest political group opposing the ruling "Law and Justice" party in Poland.



phenomenon was the fact that the prosecutor's office discontinued the investigation of people who placed images of MEPs on gallows [Polityka 2019 a].

In the public discourse there were also invectives addressed to Paweł Adamowicz to discredit him. One of the MPs, disapproving of his policy, addressed him "Mr. Adamowicz, Gdańsk is not a "Free" German city but a Polish city! The central authority for it is Warsaw, and not Berlin you are not the German governor of Gdansk, but only its poor Polish servant and you have POLISH responsibilities".

Paweł Adamowicz often criticized the social and political reality created by those currently in power in Poland, and he often went beyond for the mayor's position. However, he had the right as a citizen to have his own opinion and articulate it publicly. There were no personal invectives in his message to specific individuals. [Polityka 2019 b]

Paweł Adamowicz, who died on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019, became a victim of political murder because he was a public figure, associated with the Civic Platform.

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