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RESTITUTA. AUTHOR'S FAMILY LIFE MEANDERS IN GDAŃSK AND POMERANIA

Introduction

On the basis of the Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28th, 1919 and ratified by Germany on January 10th, 1920, under the custody of the League of Nations, the Freie Stadt Danzig (Free City of Danzig), at the Vistula estuary, has been established. Formally, it was partly dependent on Poland – mainly concerning the harbour control, the custom-duties, the railway administration, and certain foreign affairs. However, in practice the Free City of Danzig enjoyed a remarkable extent of autonomy. Differently, the status of Pomerania (Pomorze) has been settled, which – as the Province of Pomerania (Województwo Pomorskie) with its headquarters in Toruń – has become a fully embodied part of the reborn state of Poland.

Issue of railways

As it will be shown later, railway matters are here of special concern. In 1921 their administration was shifted to the Polish Dyrekcja Kolei Państwowych w Gdańsku (Direction of the State Railways in Gdańsk); it functioned until 1929. Later, 1929–1933, it operated as the Dyrekcja Okręgowa Kolei Państwowych Gdańsk – DOKP Gdańsk (District Direction of the State Railways Gdańsk). In 1933 it was transferred to Toruń, partly also to Bydgoszcz, leaving in Gdańsk only an allotted office – directly subordinate to the authorities in Warsaw. Parallely, the Biuro Portowe (Harbour Bureau) of the Polskie Koleje Państwowe – PKP (Polish State Railways) was running also in Gdynia. During the German occupation in 1939–1945, there was the Reichsbahndirektion Danzig (Direction of the State Railways Danzig), but after the liberation in 1945, the DOKP Gdańsk was acting again. Later, in 1962, the DOKP Olsztyn joined that in Gdańsk, and the Północna Dyrekcja Okręgowa Kolei Państwowych (Northern

District Direction of the State Railways) emerged. The well known historical seat of all the quoted railway authorities in Gdańsk, now – at ul. Dyrekcyjna 2–4 – has been built in 1911–1914, i.e. – prior to WW1.

Family imprint

Announced family life meanders will be considered with special reference to the person of my father Piotr Paweł Cywiński, who was a long-standing railway engineer at the PKP; here he is the “chair-person” and all the given data will be set around himself. Therefore, his links with the PKP are here of fundamental importance.

However, certain other facts concern also myself – as the representative of the next generation, although in my life I had only limited ties with PKP. Today, my father’s generation passed away already long ago, and that of mine (being presently 91 years old) – is heading its turn. Thus, today our both ventures can be treated in terms of history.

Now, let us first concentrate on Piotr Paweł Cywiński. Born on June 29th, 1888 in the then Culmsee (Chełmża – *Terra Culmensis*), due to the premature death of his father Jan Cywiński (Carpenter: 1848–1898), shortly later had to work several years in the mason profession. Yet, recognizing the virtues of knowledge, thereafter he studied in Prussia civil engineering – beginning at the Königlich-Preussische Baugewerkschule in the then Thorn (Toruń) – the capital of that region. Many years later, after WW2, it happened that the main building of that school became the seat of the Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń), where – due to the turns of history – subsequently, one of my daughters, and one of my grandsons became its graduates.

My father began his professional work in 1921 – just in the mentioned Polish Direction of the State Railways in Gdańsk. That fact is here confirmed by two figures. Fig. 1 shows himself in the entrance hall of the Direction building and Fig. 2 – his “historical signature” put on the front page of the Ernst & Sohn (E&S) German professional manual published in 1920. Now, how to explain a “fresh” zigzag of history that exactly I – the member of the next but pulling out generation, since 1999 a retired professor of the Politechnika Gdańska – PG (Gdańsk University of Technology – GUT) – have written already about 160 scientific reviews of books edited after WW2 just by E&S and published in several top Polish journals of civil engineering?

After making his first professional steps in Gdańsk, my father was later in charge of the railway-track construction and maintenance in Toruń, Bydgoszcz, Białystok, Toruń, and Grudziądz – except the time of WW2 when he did not work for the Deutsche Reichsbahn (German State Railways); he had to experience a hard time resulting in the drop of his body weight from 110 kG in 1939 to 60 kG in 1945. By chance, it happened that after WW2, finally, he worked again for the DOKP Gdańsk, terminating his job in 1953 (Fig. 3), when he reached the age of retirement.



Fig. 1. Piotr Paweł Cywiński, 1921, Hall of the State Railways Direction Building in Gdańsk*

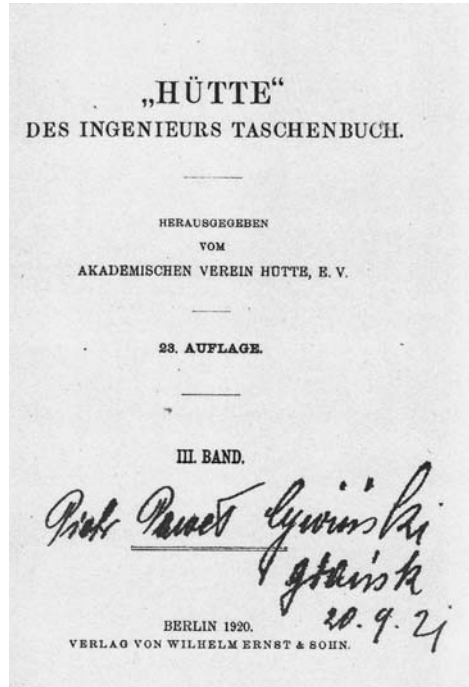


Fig. 2. "Historical signature", 1921

In the interwar period, my father's participation in the strengthening process of the Toruń railway bridge¹ (Figs. 4 and 5) and in the construction and maintenance of the coal route Śląsk (Silesia) – Gdynia (Fig. 6) should be exposed. At the end of his work in Gdańsk, also his taking part in design and construction of the Szybka Kolej Miejska – SKM (Urban Fast Rail) Gdańsk – Gdynia must be underlined.

Piotr Paweł Cywiński died on November 30th, 1963 in Czempin near Poznań – the cradle town of my mother Irena Cywińska (1902–1990), nee Mazurkiewicz. I have to add that in the building located some 80 m from the Toruń railway bridge entrance, just opposite to the station Toruń Miasto (Toruń City), I was born on February 12th, 1929 – on a heavy winter day of -30°C , presently not experienced anymore.

Also by chance it occurred that Stanisław Błaszkwia – author of this bridge strengthening structure, as well as – after-war professor and head of the Katedra Mostów Stalowych PG (Chair for Steel Bridges of GUT), who completed his c.e. studies

* All figures due to author's personal archives.

¹ „Osoby mające udział w modernizacji pomostu kolejowego”, B. Obiegalka, *Mosty w Toruniu i ich budowniczowie*, Warszawa 2017, p. 64.



Fig. 3. Echo of fairwell, 1953



Fig. 4. Toruń railway bridge strengthening, 1929



Fig. 5. Bridge rail track terminated, 1929



Fig. 6. On control of the Śląsk–Gdynia railway line, 1932

during the interwar period at the Technische Hochschule der Freien Stadt Danzig (Free City of Danzig University of Technology)² – became my study adviser when I was preparing my master of engineering thesis at GUT in 1954; just afterwards I became – at the quoted Chair – his assistant and senior assistant. Could I ever imagine such movements in my life?

I remember that Toruń railway bridge very well, because in summer my father used to take us – my elder brother Witold and me – often to walk along it, in order to bathe in the Vistula southern flat by-pass; hereby, we had to go down the brick tower steel stairs to reach the river level. Similarly, when after WW2, early 1945, I was working few months for PKP, I had my office room in the building of my birth. At that time, I had the daily look towards the blown-up bridge, observing the first attempts of its repair.

Born at the mid-point of Poland's interwar period, prior to the outbreak of WW2 I was 10 years old. For that time I wish to regard one event only. In July 1939, my brother and I have been taken by our father for a tourist railway trip to Gdynia,

² “On July 27th, 1921, the allied commission [...] decided to convey the school to the jurisdiction of Danzig. Thus, the *Technische Hochschule der Freien Stadt Danzig* (Technical University of the Free City of Danzig) was brought into being”, Z. Cywiński, *100 years of the technical university education in Gdańsk 1904–2004. Echos of local press records*, Gdańsk 2004, p. 50; “Die Wiedergeburt Polens und die Gründung der «Freien Stadt Danzig» nach dem 1. Weltkrieg hatte zur Folge, dass die TH nun in die «Technische Hochschule der Freien Stadt Danzig» umbenannt wurde und 1921 in Besitz der Stadt überging”, Z. Cywiński, *Von der Technischen Hochschule Danzig zur Politechnika Gdańska*, “Stahlbau” 2005, vol. 74, issue 5, p. 383.

Puck, and the Hel peninsula. On this way, we had to pass Tczew, Danzig, and Zoppot. I remember fairly our short stop at the Tczew former station – just in front of both the existing Vistula bridges. Their outstanding shapes evoked my sincere interest. Now, how to explain the fact that exactly 60 years later I have become the co-chairman of the International Conference “Preservation of the Engineering Heritage – Gdańsk Outlook 2000” – devoted to the lattice-work Tczew historical bridge of 1857?³ (Fig. 7).

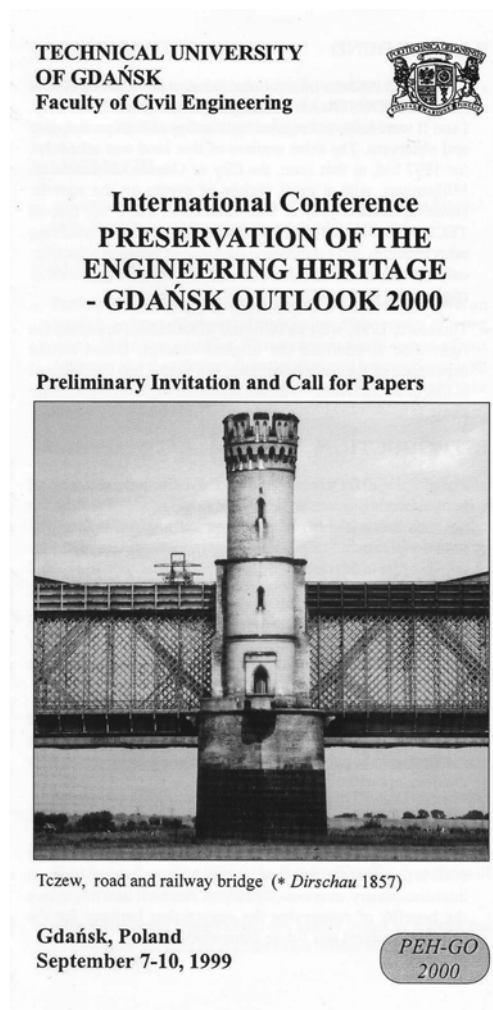


Fig. 7. Announcement of the PEH-GO 2000 International Conference, 1999

³ *Zeugin der Geschichte: Die alte Weichselbrücke in Dirschau. Świadek przeszłości: Dawny most przez Wisłę w Tczewie*, hrsg. von W. Ramm, mit Beiträgen von Ch. Groh et al., Kaiserslautern 2004, pp. 1–217.

On the very same train travel, it happened that after passing Langfuhr (presently – Wrzeszcz), looking through the compartment window, I caught sight of the Danzig Airport runway and parking-lot. I spotted several airplanes with the swastika on their tails. Even being only 10 years old, I was aware that they were German. However, obviously, at that time I could not suppose that some 50 years later, just in this place of the present Zaspas, all my three daughters and their families would live in their flats. Still, I could push such thoughts farther – when adding that just in Gdańsk I have spent later the major bulk of my life, where at the Gdańsk University of Technology I found the girl-student and later graduate Helena Wilczyńska who in 1956 became my wife, where all our four children were born, and where one of them completed the studies of architecture etc. etc.

Considering all that – could one doubt the Bible words that “chance and mischance”⁴ befall all human beings? The relevant Polish or German written Bible texts are even more instructive: “Bo czas i przypadek rządzi wszystkimi”, or „[...] jeden treffen Zufall und Zeit”.

It means that our human life is hit, in a serious extent, by randomness and time. I shall try to deepen that question at the end of this paper.

In the continuation, some other details of my early years, as they have been presented by Maciej Bieniek⁵ – Professor Emeritus of the Columbia University in New York, USA, are the following:

“Prior to the outbreak of World War II, Zbigniew completed four years of elementary education. After the defeat of Poland by the German army, in September 1939, Toruń became a part of the Third Reich and Zbigniew was compelled to enter a German elementary school, which was the only one available, with German as the language of instruction. This gave Zbigniew fluency in that language; the first step in his future mastering of several foreign languages. Zbigniew’s elementary education ended in 1943; not being allowed to continue the general education on the secondary school level, he entered a vocational school and soon thereafter started working in a transportation enterprise.

With the end of the war in 1945, Zbigniew was able to start his secondary school, first at Toruń and, since 1946, in Grudziądz. He graduated in 1949, receiving a diploma authorizing him to enroll at a university [...] – to register, in 1949, as a student in the Department of Civil Engineering at the Gdańsk Technical University.

It is difficult to think a place more conducive to the intellectual and professional development of a young man than the City of Gdańsk⁶ and its Technical University. First the City: In its thousand year history (Fig. 8), Gdańsk has played a crucial role

⁴ *Qoheleth 9, 11, The New Jerusalem Bible*, London 1986, p. 771.

⁵ Z. Cywiński, *Profesor Maciej Bieniek (5.1.1927 – Wilno, 23.1.2006 – Atlanta)*. *Wspomnienie*, „Pismo PG” 2009, issue 1, pp. 38–41; K.-E. Kurrer, *The History of the Theory of Structures – Searching for Equilibrium*, Berlin 2018, pp. 971–972.

⁶ Notice: In one of the best books about the history of Poland – N. Davies *God’s playground. A history of Poland*, vol. I and II, New York 1982, on the total number of 1330 pages, Gdańsk has been indexed on exactly 100 of them.



Fig. 8. Postal commemoration of the Gdańsk Millennium

in the cultural and economic life of Poland and Europe; in fact at that time in this country, the events in Gdańsk, influenced the course of the world history.

Second, the University: Gdańsk Technical University, since its inception, has occupied a position of excellence in education and research. In the post-war years, due to the farsighted planning of the early department administrators and perhaps, unbelievably good fortune, the University has acquired a faculty of unsurpassed technical competence, enthusiasm, and dedication. Zbigniew, many of his colleagues, including this writer, and indirectly many in the younger generation of the University graduates and faculty are the beneficiaries of the talent and effort of the early professors of the post-war era [...] only some of them can be mentioned: Professors Witold Nowacki⁷ (structural mechanics), Stanisław Błaszkwia (bridge engineering), Bronisław Bukowski (concrete structures) and Władysław Bogucki (steel structures)⁸.

Now, I neglect the fortune of my later life, which is here out of the scope of this paper. However, readers interested in the adjoined history of my life can look into other publications⁹.

⁷ K.-E. Kurrer, *The History of the Theory of Structures...*, pp. 1040–1041; „Na Jubileusz 65 lat Politechniki Gdańskiej warto przywołać, raz jeszcze, osobę Witolda NOWACKIEGO, absolwenta politechniki w Gdańsku (Technische Hochschule zu Danzig) z 1934 r., jednego z wielce zasłużonych pionierów Politechniki Gdańskiej w pierwszych latach po II wojnie światowej, a później – cenionego organizatora i działacza Polskiej Akademii Nauk oraz wybitnego profesora i uczonego rangi światowej”, Z. Cywiński, *Witold Nowacki – koryfeusz mechaniki w Polsce i na świecie*, „Pismo PG” 2010, issue 4, pp. 40–42 (p. 40).

⁸ M.P. Bieniek, *Professor Zbigniew Cywiński, C.E., Ph.D., D.Sc. – A biographical note* [w:] *International Conference “Preservation of the Engineering Heritage – Gdańsk Outlook 2000”, Special Issue 70th birthday of professor Zbigniew Cywiński*, Gdańsk 1999; pp. 11–13.

⁹ J. Ziółko, *Zbigniew Cywiński 80 Jahre*, “Stahlbau” 2009, vol. 78, issue 2, pp. 133–134; A. Tomaszewska, J. Górski, *90-lecie urodzin Profesora Zbigniewa Cywińskiego*, „Inżynieria

Philosophy of chance

As found by Qoheleth, on the example of Cywiński father and son, it has been shown that human life can abound various accidental events which very difficult could be explained by logic.

After Michał Heller, the highly valued author of the book *Filozofia przypadku*¹⁰ (“Philosophy of chance”), I share his opinion that the experience of accidental occurrences in human life should be referred to the inherent laws of nature, even more – to the structure of universe with its “cosmic fugue” realities.

Following that way, I wrote: “The philosophy of chance declares that «chances are not «abnormal bodies» in the structure of nature laws but are being their essential elements». They create a rather disordered mosaic of scattered miniature stones in form of a delicately composed structure – the Grand, Infinite Matrix, on which the universe is dependent”¹¹.

I added: “In my opinion, our world is certain «integrated organism» and, in its development, it respects laws of which we know only a very small part – who knows, could them be an infinite number? Generally, the view can be risked that it is subordinate to a specific evolution, together with its occurring mutations – to such an evolution that happens in the living nature. Our world, and even more – the total universe is a «living» organism and – as Einstein said – «the universe is feeling». Therefore, it will develop [...] in such a manner which is conditioned by world’s harmony”¹².

Is the present corona virus pandemic disease a confirmation of such a mutation, and of the tendency to harmonize our future life?

I, personally, believe in God’s protection. For that, I am able to enclose a final accord. In 1970, facing my university job in Mosul (Iraq), I decided to travel there by car¹³; it was needed to live there. I travelled alone, leaving at home in Gdańsk my wife Helena and all our four children – the youngest being only four months old. After seven days of travel, passing Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Syria, on some September Sunday, I arrived in Mosul. It was still time to attend a mass. I visited the Latin Church in the Mosul old quarters. After entering the church, at my first glance I spotted the icon of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa¹⁴, of which

Morska i Geotechnika” 2019, vol. 40, issue 2, pp. 104–105; www.de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zbigniew_Cywi%C5%84ski [dostęp: 18.01.2021].

¹⁰ M. Heller, *Filozofia przypadku. Kosmiczna fuga z preludium i codą*, Kraków 2012, pp. 1–331.

¹¹ Z. Cywiński, *Dziewięćdziesięciolatka jubileuszowe podziękowania i refleksje*, „Pismo PG” 2019, issue 4, pp. 21–24 (p. 23).

¹² Ditto, p. 24.

¹³ Z. Cywiński, *Niespodzianka*, „Pismo PG” 2013, issue 3, pp. 48–50.

¹⁴ “In which way the icon showed up in Mosul? Now, it was made and installed in church by Polish soldiers [...] who in November 1942 came to Qayara near Mosul, where they have stayed several months, before undertaking their farther conduct to Poland”, ditto, p. 50. I have to add that the majority of them could never fulfil that dream. Many of them have fallen in the battle of Monte Cassino and

the original is venerated in Poland since the 14th century, and where in 1926 my parents got married. I became very much shocked and deeply moved – recognizing that fact as love greetings from Poland, from all of my family at home.

Finally, I apologize to the readers of this paper, who might not accept such a personal reasoning of mine, rather uncommon in scientific papers. Fortunately, it is only one paper and probably the last among the 777 published by myself until now. I ask to treat it in line with the boundaries of the topic problem of random occurrences in human life – doing a casual exception and approving it.

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in all Italy. Others – not willing to live in communist Poland, or having lost their homes behind its new eastern frontiers – stayed abroad. For them, the turns of history appeared very much adverse.

Zeugin der Geschichte: die alte Weichselbrücke in Dirschau. Świadek przeszłości: Dawny most przez Wisłę w Tczewie, hrsg. von Wieland Ramm, mit Beiträgen von Christoph Groh et al., Technische Universität, Kaiserslautern 2004.

Ziółko Jerzy, *Zbigniew Cywiński 80 Jahre*, "Stahlbau" 2009, vol. 78, issue 2, pp. 133–134.

Summary

On the centenary of Poland's rebirth in 1918, I found the need to touch the life of Polish people in Prussia before WW1 and later – in Poland during the interwar period, in Nazi Germany (1939–1945), and in after-war Poland since 1945; the place has been limited to the historical Pomerania, situated on the Vistula.

A general approach I replace by a brief description of some casual events concerning my own family that can be characteristic for the particular times. In this paper, such standing has been modestly related also to the milieu of chance and mischance in human life.

Keywords: Preussen, Pomorze, Freie Stadt Danzig, Danzig–Westpreussen, Gdańsk, contingency and randomness

Restituta. Życiowe meandry rodziny autora w Gdańsku i na Pomorzu

Streszczenie

W stulecie odrodzenia Polski w 1918 r. poczułem potrzebę dotknięcia życia Polaków w Prusach przed I wojną światową i później – w Polsce okresu międzywojennego, w nazistowskich Niemczech (1939–1945) i w Polsce powojennej od 1945 r.; miejsce ograniczono do historycznego Pomorza Nadwiślańskiego.

Podejście ogólne zastępuję krótkim opisem niektórych zdarzeń przypadkowych dotyczących mojej własnej rodziny, które mogą być charakterystyczne dla owych szczególnych czasów. W niniejszej pracy takie stanowisko odniesiono też w ograniczony sposób do warunków powstawania przypadków w ludzkim życiu.

Słowa kluczowe: Prusy, Pomorze, Wolne Miasto Gdańsk, Gdańsk – Prusy Zachodnie, Gdańsk, przypadek, losowość