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ABOUT MY BROTHER

My brother, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, the creator of Poland's new foreign policy after 1989, a lawyer, the president of the Iran–United States Claims Tribunal and judge *at hoc* in the International Court of Justice in the Hague, has been the subject of several publications¹ and two special conferences (one held in London² the other one in Warsaw³) My brother's public activity was also the topic of Minister Władysław Bartoszewski's talk delivered on 12 December 2014 at the ceremony that inaugurated the Krzysztof Skubiszewski Cabinet at the Western Institute in Poznań.⁴

I do not feel competent to add anything to those publications and statements. I do not intend to elaborate upon my brother's contribution to the science of law and public affairs. However, I wish to shed light on something that is probably less familiar to people who met Krzysztof professionally, but cannot be ignored if we want to provide insight into his personality. What I have in mind is Krzysztof's attachment to his family and to Poznań, the city where he was born, where he spent his early years, where he studied, and where he worked as an academic for many years. My brother would often speak of the bond he had with his parents, siblings, nephews, as well as

¹ From among many publications I will mention only two titles: *Pozycja Polski w Europie*, (ed.) D. Popławski, Fundacja Studiów Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 1994 and *Krzysztof Skubiszewski – dyplomata i mąż stanu*, (ed.) R. Kuźniar, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2011.

² Proceedings of the conference organized on 14 November 2013 by the Polish Embassy in the United Kingdom, Lauterpacht Centre for International Law – University of Cambridge and Queen Mary University of London School of Law are published in: James Crawford, Grzegorz Dziemidowicz, Rosalyn Higgins, Zdzisław Kędzia, Bartłomiej Krzan, Marek Prawda, Ryszard Stemplowski, *Professor, Minister, Judge – Krzysztof Skubiszewski 1926-2010*, Preface by Ambassador Witold Sobków, Coordinated by Ryszard Stemplowski, Contains biographical data and photos courtesy of the Skubiszewski Foundation and the Skubiszewski Family Photo Archives, Warszawa, Scholar Publishing House, 2015.

³ *Krzysztof Skubiszewski Minister Spraw Zagranicznych RP 1989-1993. Materiały konferencji zorganizowanej przez Fundację imienia Krzysztofa Skubiszewskiego, Instytut Stosunków Międzynarodowych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego oraz Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Warszawie 12 września 2014 roku*, (eds.) P. Skubiszewski and J. Stańczyk, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2016.

⁴ During this celebration I presented a shortened version of the present paper.

close and more distant relatives. On public occasions he talked about the impact of his family legacy on his life. For example, the following is what he said in his address at his doctoral renewal ceremony at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań on 10 December 2004: “First and foremost, I fondly remember my parents and the atmosphere of my family home. It was a home where books played a key role [...]. My parents urged their children to learn foreign languages from their early years [...] I will say one more thing: my parents made sure that their children attended the best schools that were available at the time”.⁵ He often shared the memories of his parents in the last years of his life after his tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs. We had long conversations about our family in his apartments in Warsaw on Lewicka Street or in the Hague on Parkweg (Fig. 1). We also met at my place on Karowa Street in Warsaw, where he visited my wife and me when he arrived from the Hague and where every year the three of us would gather for the Christmas Eve supper (Fig. 2). When I recently read the notes of my conversations with Krzysztof about our war experiences, it struck me how much our parents had been involved in them and what they had done for us.⁶

The second theme that so strongly resonated in my brother’s memories was his sense of attachment to Poznań and Wielkopolska. He emphasized this point during the doctoral renewal ceremony. This is what he said in his interview to the *Głos Wielkopolski* daily: “I was born in Poznań. I was raised here, and I lived here, excluding the war period, until 1989. This experience makes me identify as a Poznanian to the core”.⁷ He moved to Warsaw when he was appointed minister. Then he established a second home in the Hague, where he served as a judge at international courts, over one of which he presided. My brother quickly settled in new places. However, as we chatted in later years about various places that our destiny led us to, he was always nostalgic about Poznań.

When the German Nazis were expelling us from Wielkopolska in late November 1939, Krzysztof was a thirteen-year-old boy. Thanks to his excellent memory, he cherished the image of the pre-war Poznań, of our mother Aniela’s family (the Leitgebers) that had been living there for generations, and of the wide range of places in Wielkopolska where he traveled with his parents, older sister Marychna, and me, his younger brother.⁸ In the memories that my brother shared with me in the last years of

⁵ The quote comes from the transcript of his speech. The transcript as well as other documents quoted in this text is stored in our family archives.

⁶ The conversations took place in 2006-2007. Their transcribed or recorded versions are kept in our family archives.

⁷ “Poznańczyk. Z profesorem Krzysztofem Skubiszewskim rozmawia Wojciech Nentwig”. *Głos Wielkopolski*, 10 December 2004, p. VII.

⁸ For information about our father see Roman Meissner, „Skubiszewski Ludwik Marcin” [in:] *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. Vol. XXXVIII, Warszawa-Kraków 1997-1998, pp. 492-495. For information about our mother see S. Leitgeber, *Dzieje rodziny Leitgeberów od XVIII do XX wieku*, Poznań-Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Historyczne, 2002 („Biblioteka Genealogiczna”, vol. 7), pp. 184-186. This

his life, both themes, the family and Poznań as well as Wielkopolska, were blended into one.

His thoughts always came back to our apartment on Dąbrowskiego Street, which I, five years Krzysztof's junior, still distinctly remember as the heart of our family life both before and after the war (Fig. 3). We returned there with our parents in 1945, when the Nazi occupation was over. The apartment was situated on the third floor of the building our paternal grandfather Jan, who owned a cigar factory, had commissioned to be built in 1907. Until the end of his life, he lived on the first floor of the same building with his wife Maria (née Otmianowska) and four children. Behind our residential building stood the factory building, also commissioned by our grandfather. Behind the factory spread the garden, where our mother used to play with her siblings. But these were only stories for us. After World War I, the factory was taken over for a short while by the Polish Tobacco Monopoly. The former factory building was then home to the Brunon Czajkowski private gymnasium. Today, as I recall our mother's stories about the state take-over of the factory after World War I and the history of that building, I wonder whether Krzysztof, whose knowledge of 20th century history never failed to amaze me, learned his first history lessons from our mum.

Before World War II, the three of us attended the same elementary school: the Janina Sulerzyska school on Św. Marcin Street. We always got there by tram. Krzysztof graduated one year after his sister, in June 1938, and by the time the war broke out, he had managed to complete the first year of gymnasium in the Karol Marcinkowski State Gymnasium and High School. The school was within walking distance so he walked there.

As Krzysztof and I often recalled our childhood in the pre-war Poznań, one of the recurrent themes was our memory of Sunday walks with our parents and family visits after the mass at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the district of Jeżyce. We either walked or took a tram through Teatralny Bridge 'to town', as we used to call it. There was usually some sightseeing on the agenda. I best remember our visits to the Wielkopolskie Museum (now the National Museum), where we were fascinated by folk costumes and products that were on display in the grand hall on the ground floor at the side of from Nowa Street.⁹ The exhibition was situated in the Ethnography Department, headed by Wiesława Cichowicz, who was an acquaintance of our parents. At the end of our Sunday trips, our father would invite us to lunch at the Hotel Bazar.

Our mother cared very much for the family ties. From the pre-war period I remember four homes that the three of us often visited with our parents. The closest one was situated on Słowackiego Street: it was the home of Roman Leitgeber, my mother's oldest living paternal uncle. From his youth, he had been a member of the

book provides information about all of the members of the Leitgeber family mentioned in the present text.

⁹ Today Paderewskiego Street.

National League, later on renamed the National Party. He was a co-founder, then the major shareholder, and finally the head of a large newspaper publishing business called “Drukarnia Polska”. He befriended Roman Dmowski.¹⁰ The major topic of discussions in that home was politics.

Not far off from our house, on Jasna Street,¹¹ in the district of Jeżyce was Aunt Jadwisia’s apartment. Her full name was Jadwiga Heidinger, née Otmianowska. She was our grandmother’s sister and the widow of Witold Heidinger, a councilor and a senator.¹² The apartment where she lived with her children was spacious. For this reason, I liked it a lot because I could run through the enfilade of rooms. The main topic of conversations was family.

In the Old Town, on Wielka Street, was the apartment of Uncle Władysław Seyda, the husband of Aunt Marysia, the only sister of our Grandfather Jan Leitgeber. As far as I remember, the only subject of discussions was politics because Uncle Władysław, a lawyer, the former chair of the Polish Circle in the Reichstag, a minister of the Former Prussian District, and the First President of the Supreme Court, was an activist of the National Party.¹³ I was too young, though, to be interested in those issues. What fascinated me were huge piles of newspapers stacked on the floor of the big study where Uncle Władysław received his guests. I was allowed to browse through them provided that I put them back in the right order.

Finally, the last place that I distinctly remember from my family visits was one of the rooms in the Transfiguration of Jesus Hospital on Bernardyński Square. My paternal uncle, Feliks Skubiszewski, lived there. He was a disciple and then a close associate of Antoni Jurasz, and a lecturer at Poznań University.¹⁴ We all liked Uncle Feliks, who was our sister’s godfather. He was joyful and extremely friendly to us, children; he told us jokes that we easily understood. I remember that during our visits to the hospital, the adults talked primarily about medicine and the professors from the Faculty of Medicine. What always grabbed my attention in my uncle’s room was a huge basket which stood on the table and was filled to the brim with oranges, mandarins, bananas and a pineapple at the very top.

Our parents invited many guests over.¹⁵ I remember evenings when the dining room and my father’s study were completely full of guests, mostly our relatives but

¹⁰ Adam Galos, „Leitgeber Roman” [in:] *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. Vol. XVII, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1972, pp. 12-13.

¹¹ Today Roosevelta Street. The house no longer exists.

¹² Lech Trzeciakowski, “Heidinger Witold” [in:] *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. Vol. IX, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1960-1961, p. 334.

¹³ Henryk Korczyk, “Seyda Władysław Kazimierz” [in:] *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. Vol. XXXVI, Warszawa-Kraków 1995-1996, pp. 359-361.

¹⁴ Stanisław Tadeusz Sroka, “Skubiszewski Feliks” [in:] *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. Vol. XXXVIII, Warszawa-Kraków 1997-1998, pp.490-492.

¹⁵ I think that it is our mother who should be credited for this as she continued the tradition of such gatherings in her parents’ home and from the extremely hospitable home of her Grandmother Stanisława Leitgeber (nicknamed Businka). The atmosphere of the family meetings in the latter home was evoca-

also our parents' friends. I was too young to remember the discussions that were held, but quite likely many of those topics were raised during the family gatherings in the same place after the war (Figs. 4 and 5). And those topics I remember well; they had to come back because many of our relatives survived the war and gathered in our place on Dąbrowskiego Street. The generations of our parents, their fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts and cousins spent part of their lives under the partitions, and another part in the interwar Poland, which was a sovereign state. It was then that Krzysztof, Marychna and I realized the extent to which those old times had shaped our views. The discussions were lively as the older guests were joined by people from the younger generation, primarily my sister's and brother's friends, including Krzysztof's closest friends: Jerzy Łukaszewski and Janusz Ziółkowski. One of our guests was Uncle Roman, who had managed to survive the war even though he had been continuously hunted by the Gestapo. In the Communist time, he promulgated nationalist ideas, which had previously had a strong following in Poznań. Not everyone shared his views, though.

Our father belonged to a different world. Born in the village of Czemierniki in the Lublin region, he attended gymnasium, first in the town of Łosice, then in Lublin. He was expelled from the latter school for his involvement in the 1905 school strike, but following the amnesty, he was allowed to take final exams in Biała Podlaska. He went on to study medicine, which he completed in Kiev. Then our father settled down in the Russian town of Millerovo, in the Rostov Governorate, where he worked as the chief physician of the local Red Cross Hospital. It was not until 1919 that he left Donland, fleeing the Bolsheviks. He was one of many thousands of Poles who lived and worked in the Russian Empire, coming into contact with its various languages and cultures. It was certainly a world oppressed by the system of tsarist autocracy, but at the same time it was a world which was highly complex and full of people with rich experience. When our father spoke at the family table, the Polish issues were suddenly framed from another perspective, which was so different from a perspective set by one district or one community.

Krzysztof was actively involved in those post-war discussions and it was at that time (which I distinctly remember) that his eminent personality began to shape clearly. He was well-read and had an excellent knowledge of Poland's modern political history. He was also precise in his wording and was able to make an incisive comment on every topic. Krzysztof soon became an interlocutor who was eagerly and carefully listened to by everyone: his family, friends and also the oldest guests. We knew at home that he was receiving increasing acclaim in the academic world. Following Stalin's death, he seized the opportunity to go west to complete a postgraduate program abroad. In July and August 1956 he attended lectures in international

tively rendered by my mother's brother Bolesław; see Bolesław Leitgeber, *Parafia zdrowego rozsądku* [in:] *Kraj lat dziecińczych*, London, M. I. Kolin Publishers, 1942, pp. 151-169 [2nd edition: London, Puls Publications, 1987, pp. 124-138].

law at the annual summer course at the Hague Academy of International Law (years later he went on to lecture there himself and join the governing body of this institution). Soon afterwards, in the winter-spring semester of 1956/1957, he studied political science at the *Centre Européen Universitaire* in Nancy. Finally he spent the following academic year at the Law School at Harvard University, where he obtained the Master of Law degree. Along with his friends, Jerzy Łukaszewski and Tilghman Evans, he traveled extensively throughout the United States (Fig. 6).¹⁶ After each trip abroad, he returned to Poland with greater legal expertise. But more importantly, what we all noticed at home was that he had grown attached to the western world and was increasingly nurturing the values that our parents had instilled into us since our childhood. That made us extremely happy.

It was already the time when our family was quickly decreasing in numbers. In 1957, our father died. Many of our permanent guests were gone too: our grandmother, Uncle Roman and Leon Leitgeber, a more distant relative of our mother, who often visited us and whom we liked so much. Our youth was also gone and all of us had become immersed in the issues of adult life in a communist country. Some of our guests, including Jerzy Łukaszewski, Krzysztof's close friend, left Poland for good. The residents of our house on Dąbrowskiego Street were gradually moving out. I left home in 1961 after I got married, and three years later I moved permanently to Warsaw. Marychna got married too and left for England in 1967. The communist authorities did not allow two people to live in a four-room apartment any longer. As a result, our mother and Krzysztof were ordered to move in to a communist residential block at Słowiańska 18¹⁷ where each of them was offered a tiny one room apartment. A large portion of the family furniture had to be given away, while Krzysztof's books and research archive could be barely squeezed into the small area of his new apartment. In those years, when I visited him with my own family, he also invited over his international guests. They could not believe that their colleague, a renowned scholar who taught international law at Europe's and America's top universities, had to live and work in such conditions. But I also remember that Krzysztof had somehow got accustomed to living in his cramped apartment. At that time he also looked after his mother. I cannot find words to express my admiration for his commitment with which he took care of her until her final days.

As I am now trying to capture what shaped the mind and attitude of young Krzysztof, there is one thing that comes to my mind, and this is something that was inextricably linked with our family life, namely our travels. That theme was very eagerly taken up by my brother as we both recalled the old times.

¹⁶ Soon afterwards, Tilghman Evans was invited by Krzysztof to Poland, and the three of us went on a sightseeing tour of the Wielkopolska region and Chełmno Land. I will never forget the culture shock that Krzysztof's guest experienced as he rode on the disintegrating shabby buses or had pork chops with cabbage in local restaurants managed by the Peasants' Self-Help Cooperative (GS Samopomoc Chłopska).

¹⁷ Today Maczka Street.

Before the war the number one destination for our family trips outside Poznań was Wielkopolska. We traveled to Borzykowo in Września County, where our family had a small estate, which our grandmother had bought after the take-over of our grandfather's factory and the sale of our house on Dąbrowskiego Street.¹⁸ Every year we spent summer holidays in Borzykowo (Fig. 7). We went to the field to see the harvest and then, for hours, we would stare at the steam-powered traction engine that stood in the yard and drove the threshing machine. In Borzykowo we had numerous guests from Poznań and abroad, and I remember two major meeting places. The first one was a large veranda, where everyone gathered for the afternoon tea. The other one was the lawn in a small park where we played croquet or "rotten eggs". I can still hear Aunt Gerda, the Danish wife of Uncle Bolesław, shouting "Krysz, Krysz", as she was throwing up the ball. She could not pronounce the name Krzyś correctly (short for Krzysztof). In the Borzykowo garden Krzysztof had his favorite stone he jumped on first as the whole bunch of us went for a walk there. He did not allow anybody, especially his younger brother, to step on that stone.

From Borzykowo we set out on visits to our grandmother's neighbors. What I best remember is our outings to the nearby Neryngowo for the afternoon tea. That estate was managed by Uncle Antoni Śmigielski, the husband of our mother's sister, Aunt Ewa, who was my godmother. In Neryngowo we played with their children, Wojtek and Jacek. The youngest one, Andrzej, was still in the cradle.

Another popular destination for our trips from Poznań was the village of Laskownica Mała in Wągrowiec County. The estate we stayed at was owned by my godfather, Stefan Kuczyński, the husband of one of our mother's cousins, Janina Kuczyńska, née Seyda. From the house terrace we used to run down the wide and long staircase towards the lake, where we all had a swim. I remember best my stay in Laskownica at the start of the 1939 summer holiday. Krzysztof went horse riding with his cousin, my aunt's son whose name was also Krzysztof (Fig. 8). My brother brandished a brand-new boy scout uniform as he was a member of the "Błękitna Czternastka" ("Blue Fourteen") scouting team at his gymnasium. Those days, the one and only topic of discussions was Poland's political situation and Józef Beck's parliamentary speech. I was barely eight years old at the time and I could hardly follow those discussions. What I remembered, though, was the word 'honor', which was used by Beck at the end of his speech. That word was enthusiastically repeated by everyone. I can still visualize Krzysztof talking to the adults in Laskownica.

There were other family trips to the countryside, which Krzysztof and I recalled in our discussions as we both looked through the albums of photos taken by our mother. For example, we traveled to Głębokie in Gniezno County to visit

¹⁸ The house in Borzykowo is mentioned by Marcin Libicki & Piotr Libicki, *Dwory i pałace wiejskie w Wielkopolsce*, Poznań, Rebis, 2003, p. 30. After the war, it was reshaped as the veranda had been removed and new wings had been added.

Czesław Leitgeber, our Grandfather Jan's cousin. On one occasion we were driven there by Uncle Bolesław.¹⁹ We also went to Tarnów, in Inowrocław County, to visit Władysław Seyda's estate.

What came as a breakthrough in our family trips and visits was the summer holidays of 1938 and 1939. Our parents took the three of us to Czemierniki, the home village of my father. Czemierniki was once a village in Lubartów County, and then in Radzyń Podlaski County. For many years, it used to be a town, but it lost its status, having been punished by the tsarist authorities for the role the residents of Czemierniki had played in the 1863 uprising. Our father recalled a story told by his Grandfather Andrzej about a skirmish that was fought between the Polish insurgents and the Cossacks by the levees around the ponds by the former Firlej palace. I was probably not aware of that fact then, but for Marychna and Krzysztof, who were reaching adolescence and had fully-developed long-term memory, the holidays in Czemierniki were a meeting with a world they were not familiar with, a world that was certainly different from the one we were all raised in. So they first discovered life on a 14-hectare farm in the house of our grandparents, Marcin and Józefa. They also spent time in a small estate owned by my father's sister Celina and her husband Antoni Abramowicz, who was an agricultural engineer. It was also our first meeting with their sons, and our cousins, Andrzej and Adam. Like on other holidays, Marychna and Krzysztof would go horse-riding, and the boys would shoot at sparrows with air guns (I was out of this, to my despair). We hiked to the nearby forest to pick wild strawberries. We were also discovering something new, something we did not get to know in Poznań. In the market square we saw groups of bearded men wearing black robes and kippahs on their heads. The road along our grandparents' house led to a nearby Jewish cemetery. Now and then, down that road came a black funeral procession with weeping female mourners. We were all figuring out that Poland could not be viewed solely from the Poznań perspective.

We realized that Poland did not look the same in all of its regions on our way from Poznań to Czemierniki. As we headed east by train, and passed the village of Strzałkowo, located at the former Prussian-Russian partition border, our parents asked us to look out the window to see the changing landscape, which was different from the one in Wielkopolska. Then there was Warsaw, where we always stayed for a few days, usually in a hotel on Aleje Jerozolimskie, across from the new central station that was under construction at the time. As we looked down out the windows, we were enthralled by the unfamiliar views and sounds. We stared at the streams of cars, coaches and buses. We listened to Warsaw street noise. In the evenings, we marveled at the sea of colorful billboards. The other time we stayed at the apartment of one of our mother's distant aunts. It was situated in the district of Praga, in a house on the corner of Brukowa and Wrzesińska Streets. In the mornings, we were woken

¹⁹ The house in Głębokie is mentioned by M. Libicki & P. Libicki, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

up by the street traders' calls and by the highly distinctive sounds that came from conversations in Yiddish.

My mother was always excellent at planning. When we arrived in Warsaw, there was time for both family visits and sightseeing. In Warsaw we visited three houses of my mother's relatives. As for the sights, I remember the National Museum, the Łazienki Park, where I was more attracted by the squirrels than by its main attraction – the palace, and the Royal Castle. After the tour of the castle, we fed pigeons in the Old Town Market Square, which was great fun (Fig. 9).

Our first trip to the Lublin region opened up an unknown chapter from our father's life. We learned about his beloved paternal uncle, Father Franciszek Skubiszewski. On our way to Czemierniki in 1938 we stopped at the village of Serniki on the Wieprz river, where he had died as the parish priest of the local church. We visited his grave. My father was visibly moved as he spoke of his uncle as someone who had had a strong influence on his early life. As a young boy and a gymnasium student, my father used to spend his holidays at his uncle's place in Serniki. He made many friends there, including Ludwik Grabowski, who was the owner of the local estate and the well-known stud farm.²⁰ From our father's stories we also learned that his uncle had been persecuted by the tsarist authorities. Unfortunately, being very young, we were not inquisitive enough to ask any further questions. Later on, Krzysztof and I were intrigued by this topic and raised it on numerous occasions as we talked about our family's history. What made it even more intriguing was the fact that – judging by the collection of books that Father Franciszek Skubiszewski had left as his legacy – he must have been a well-educated and open-minded priest.²¹

Krzysztof repeatedly encouraged me to try to find out more about that priest, our father's uncle, whom we both found a little mysterious. Finally, I found some time and in 2007 I traveled to Czemierniki, where I searched the parish church archives. I also went to Lublin, where I thoroughly searched the archdiocesan archives, using the list of the then ecclesiastics.²² As a result, I was able to partially reconstruct Father Skubiszewski's biography and later share it with my brother.

²⁰ See Witold Pruski, "Grabowski Ludwik" [in:] *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. VIII, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1959-1960, pp. 500-501.

²¹ His collection amounted to well over a thousand volumes, and besides the most numerous collection of religious works, it contained encyclopedias, fiction, and moral science books. Unfortunately, it was dispersed. When I visited Czemierniki in 1951, only a few hundred volumes were preserved. I keep some of the old prints from that collection in my home library.

²² The Archdiocesan Archives in Lublin, Rep. 60.II.B. S 53. The personal files of Fr. Franciszek Skubiszewski (1844-1907). The legacy Fr. Franciszek Skubiszewski left behind among his parishers was described by Szczepan Wróbel, "Smutek w Syrnikach [sic]", *Zorza Warszawska*, 18 April 1907, p. 310. He was depicted as a priest persecuted by the tsarist authorities by Paweł Kubicki, *Bojownicy kapłani za sprawę Kościoła i Ojczyzny w latach 1861-1915. Materiały z urzędowych świadectw władz rosyjskich, archiwów konsystorskich zakonnych i prywatnych*. Part 1. *Dawne Król. Polskie*. Vol. II. *Diecezje: Lubelska z Podlaską i Płocka*. Sandomierz, self-published by the author, 1933, pp. 218-219.

When he was ordained in December 1867, Franciszek Skubiszewski pursued a traditional path of a young priest. He was a curate in several parishes of the then Lublin Diocese. In 1875 he was for the first time appointed a parish priest by Bishop Walenty Baranowski. He was in charge of the parish church in Parczew in the Włodawa Deanery. In the same year, he suffered repression by the tsarist authorities for hearing confessions of the local Uniates (eastern Orthodox believers who acknowledged papal authority). Father Skubiszewski had to leave Parczew and for several years he was not allowed to serve as a parish priest. However, he did not seem to give in to the restrictions imposed by the Russian invaders. As the parish priest of the church in Krzeszów (Biłgoraj Deanery), in 1886, with no formal consent, he led a Corpus Christi procession into the surrounding fields. He was forced to pay a fine of 50 rubles for that. In July of the following year, the tsarist police discovered that he was involved in the illegal Heart of Jesus Brotherhood. For that, he was sentenced to a month's seclusion in a single monastic cell. He served the sentence in the Capuchin Monastery in Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą. As Krzysztof and I looked through the copies of the archived documents that I had brought we realized why our father spoke so highly of his paternal uncle. In our house on Dąbrowskiego Street, our parents had kept an old photograph of the priest. When Krzysztof moved from Poznań to Warsaw, to the apartment on Lewicka Street, he framed the photo and hung it over his desk, which was actually his father's former desk.²³

The trips we went on with our parents gave us a wealth of opportunities to explore various parts of Poland and get to know people who were connected with those places. I firmly believe that this experience fostered Krzysztof's love of exploring the world. What I mean here is not the numerous business trips that he went on as an academic or an official. I intend to elaborate on the trips he made as an ordinary tourist without any professional obligations. And I know for sure how much he must have enjoyed them because I accompanied him on several occasions.

One such trip was just charming. It was a trip to Switzerland and Italy in September and October of 1969, which took nearly five weeks. There were three of us: Krzysztof, my wife and I. Krzysztof drove his VW the whole time. The first stage was La Châtaigneraie-Founex at Lake Geneva, where Uncle Bolesław had his house and a small vineyard (Fig. 10). Our uncle was very hospitable and had cocktail parties while we were there. We discussed politics a little bit as we still could not get over the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies. We were also still

²³ Krzysztof was truly interested in the history of our family on our father's side. In the last years of his life, he wrote down all facts about the family members, including his 19th century ancestors as well as our relatives living in Alsace and Lorraine until the present day; he kept these notes in the family archives. We often discussed this topic. As he encouraged me to collect some information about Father Franciszek, he also asked me to find out as much as possible about our ancestors and determine where they were from. Unfortunately, I never had enough time to do systematic research into this topic. All I could relay to him was a few loosely connected facts from the documents in the parish archives of Czemierniki and Węgrów. According to those sources, the Skubiszewskis arrived in the Lublin area at the turn of the 19th century. Earlier on, they had lived in the Podlasie region.

miserable in the aftermath of the anti-Semitic campaign launched by the Communist government in Poland. Krzysztof himself felt bad following the rejection of his university's motion to grant him the title of professor.²⁴ But once we crossed the St. Bernard Pass, drove into Italy, and started seeing its sights, the beauty of this country chased away the sad thoughts. We quickly reached Rome, where we left our car in a garage. We stayed at the tiny *Pensione Monini* by the Piazza Sant'Ignazio.²⁵ The hotel had been chosen by my wife, who liked it a lot as she had sometimes stayed there during her trips to Rome. Anyone who has been to the Piazza Sant'Ignazio will surely never forget its architecture spreading around the square as if it were a theater stage design. I still remember Krzysztof's reaction as we went down to have our morning coffee outside the hotel. He marveled at the sight of the Baroque *theatrum* displaying all of its beauty in the morning sunshine. In Rome we mainly went sightseeing. Krzysztof very attentively listened to what his sister-in-law and brother, both art historians, were telling him about the monuments of the Eternal City and the paintings in the galleries. Sometimes he would write something down. Yet again I was discovering how curious he was about the world and how open he was to the fields that were remote from his professional life. We also had ample time to see our relatives and friends in Rome: Father Andrzej Deskur, Karolina Lanckorońska, Teresa and August Morawski. During those visits, I noticed in him something that had struck me since his early years: the ability to focus other people's attention on him. When he spoke, he set the tone of the conversation thanks to his knowledge, the significance of the topics he discussed, and his incisive comments.

The way back through Umbria, Tuscany, Emilia, Veneto and Friuli was much longer than the journey across the Swiss border to Rome. On our way we did much sightseeing and Krzysztof, with his focus and attention, absorbed Italian art. We spent a few days in Tuscany, where in the town of Fiesole we were hosted by Krystyna Marek, who treated us to delicious dinners. I know that despite the age difference, she and Krzysztof developed a deep friendship. My wife and I could see that they had a lot to talk about and that they shared mutual trust. Today when I look at Krzysztof's photos taken in Assisi, Siena and Padua, I can see his smiling and cheerful face. We drove back through the Adige Valley, and Brenner to stop in Vienna for a few days. It turned out that the recently shot "Battle of England" was on in Vienna's movie theaters. Krzysztof loved war films and as there was no chance that this

²⁴ I am quoting here a copy of the letter sent to Adam Mickiewicz University, which is kept in our family archives. "The Ministry of Education and Schools of Academic Rank. No. DU-4-198-40/68. Warsaw, 16 December 1968. Confidential. Rector of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, ul. Stalingradzka 1. The Ministry of Education and Schools of Academic Rank is returning the application documents in connection with the motion for granting Doc. Dr. Krzysztof Skubiszewski the title of professor extraordinarius of law. We kindly inform you that the application is null and void. Head of the Department /illegible signature/ (Wit Drapich)". Undoubtedly, that decision was a punishment for Krzysztof's stance on the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies. In one of his first lectures in international law in the academic year 1968/1969 he said that the intervention was illegal.

²⁵ The hotel does not exist any longer.

movie would ever be shown in communist Poland, we just had to see it in Vienna. Krzysztof was delighted.

There were other opportunities for family meetings combined with travel and sight-seeing. One of them I remember particularly well. It was the spring holiday in April 1988. Krzysztof came to see me and my family in France, where we lived. Marychna also joined us from London. First we stayed at Saint-Palais-sur-Mer, where we walked along the Gironde estuary (Fig. 11). Then we saw the major sights of our town, Poitiers and its surroundings – the Poitou-Charentes region, which Krzysztof had never been to. As always, he had done some background reading before the trip so he was well-prepared to explore the ‘uncharted area’. But I also noticed that when he saw with his own eyes the magnificent Romanesque art of western France, he approached it enthusiastically, forgetting what he had read about it back home. We explored various topics. First and foremost, we talked about family issues which for Krzysztof always came first. And we had an additional reason to discuss them: we had not been able to see each other for a few years. Krzysztof arrived feeling lonely after our mother’s death. He had been very attached to her in the last years of her life. For two years, he had been living in his apartment block alone and now that our mum was gone, he had no reason to walk two floors down for daily dinner, which was a routine activity for him. However, here in France, I had the impression that his nearest and dearest were slowly making him more cheerful again and less pessimistic. That negative mood was shared by most Poles in the gloomy period after the introduction of martial law.

Not surprisingly, those days our conversations to a large extent evolved around politics. We were discussing various themes, such as, for example, the views that the idea of communism is inexplicably incompatible with human nature, and that communism is dangerous because it atomizes society. But we both agreed that there was something grotesque about that system. We spoke a great deal about the crisis of that system, which was so alien to Poland, and about the perestroika program implemented in the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev. I cannot recall whether either of us predicted any change for the better, let alone such radical change as the one that occurred the following year. What I recall, though, is that during our discussion Krzysztof, as he often used to, made historical references and shared the view that sometimes an unexpected event could disrupt the course of history, which had so far run in one direction, resulting in unpredictable consequences.

What largely gave us food for discussion was *Rozważania o wojnie domowej* (*Thoughts on Civil War*), a book by Paweł Jasienica. Krzysztof had just offered me that book as a gift. Our conversations about the uprising in the Vendée department against the French Revolution were taking on a strangely topical tone. Vendée was not part of the Poitou-Charentes region but as the former part of the historical Poitou County it was strongly linked with Poitiers through its culture and population migrations. Its large section, commonly referred to as ‘white’ was, just like our town, a strong Catholic center in western France. When the Socialist Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy decided to combine state-owned schools with private Catholic ones into one

educational system, the latter lost their independence. As a result, various demonstrations were held, the greatest of which were held in Paris on June 24.²⁶ According to the organizers, a huge proportion of demonstrators had arrived from western France (as compared to other regions). All of our French close friends and acquaintances including their families joined in that protest. I remember that Krzysztof, who was always very sensitive to the links between past and present, listened to our accounts of those events and vividly commented on them.

Besides the trips during which Krzysztof explored new cities and regions, their history and monuments, he truly enjoyed purely recreational trips, whose sole purpose was contact with nature: a walk in the forest or along the water. He routinely took our mother to the forest areas near Poznań or to more distant locations outside Wielkopolska. They even traveled to Nieborów, which is quite a long way from Poznań, from where Krzysztof enjoyed trips to the nearby village of Arkadia with its beautiful park (Fig. 12). He also frequently went to Wieleń by the Noteć river to visit Zygmunt Czarnecki, who was the forest district manager and husband of Aunt Inia (Irena Czarnecka née Holtzer), one of our mother's distant cousins. Our mother and aunt have been close friends since early years.²⁷ A huge area of forests by the Noteć river offered numerous hiking opportunities (Fig. 13). The forester's house, where our uncle and aunt lived, was furnished in a pre-war cottage style and allowed its visitors to forget about life under Communism. Later, when Krzysztof came to see us when we were on holiday in Dębki in Pomerania (Fig. 14), I could see how he enjoyed his daily walk to the magnificent forest across the Piaśnica river. He walked unhurriedly down the road to Białogóra, looked up at the trees and at the undergrowth, and did not speak much. I think he must have recalled his old dreams. When he was young, Krzysztof wanted to be a forester. Despite his interests in history and politics, he was carefully preparing to pursue a career in this field. During the Nazi occupation, when he came from Warsaw to Międzyrzec Podlaski to see his parents for school holidays, he served his internship in the local forest district of the huge manor owned before the war by Andrzej Potocki.²⁸ His plans fell through, though, due to a severe heart ailment, which he suffered from 1944 following a bout of scarlet fever. Those side effects affected his health for the rest of his life. Quite recently, my sister Marychna and I recalled our brother's early plans and his wish to live and work in the forest surroundings.

This memoir is a description of the world that disappeared long ago. But I could not have approached this topic differently if I was to share my personal memories of Krzysztof. It was that old world that shaped his personality and as a matter of fact proved to be the driving force behind everything he said and did.

²⁶ According to different sources, the demonstration was attended by 800,000-2 million participants.

²⁷ Our mother and Aunt Inia had a common great-grandfather, Hipolit Trąpczyński.

²⁸ Krzysztof served his internship under the supervision of the then forest district manager in Międzyrzec Podlaski, Stefan Nowakowski.



1. Marychna, Piotr, Maria, and Krzysztof in Krzysztof Skubiszewski's apartment on Lewicka Street in Warsaw. August 1997. Photo by P. Skubiszewski



2. Józef Zakrzewski, Gabriela Zakrzewska, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, and Maria Skubiszewska in Maria and Piotr Skubiszewski's apartment in Warsaw. New Year's Day 2006. Photo by P. Skubiszewski



3. Ludwik Skubiszewski with his children in the apartment on Dąbrowskiego Street in Poznań. March 1937. Photo by A. Skubiszewska



4. 25th wedding anniversary of Aniela and Ludwik Skubiszewski. Aniela and Ludwik Skubiszewski, Roman Leitgeber, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, and Maria Leitgeber. 24 June 1949. Photo by P. Skubiszewski



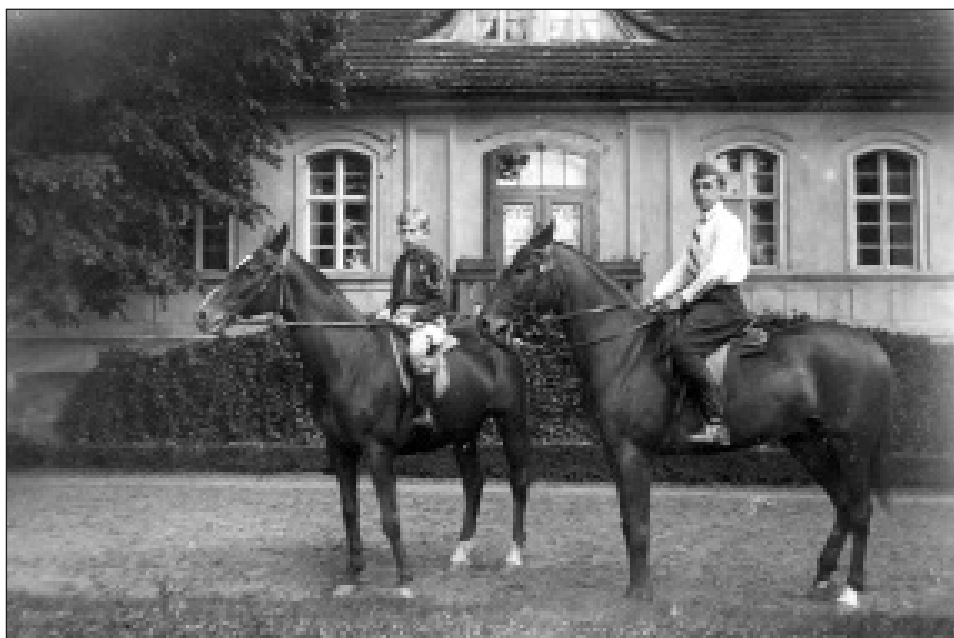
5. Christmas Eve in the apartment on Dąbrowskiego Street. Ewa, Andrzej and Jacek Śmigielski, Marychna Skubiszewska, Wojciech Śmigielski, Maria Leitgeber, Aniela, Ludwik and Krzysztof Skubiszewski. 24 December 1952. Photo by P. Skubiszewski



6. Krzysztof Skubiszewski and Jerzy Łukaszewski in Florida in the US. June 1958.
Photo credit: unknown



7. Marychna, Piotr and Krzysztof Skubiszewski on holiday in Borzykowo. August 1936.
Photo by A. Skubiszewska



8. Krzysztof Skubiszewski and Krzysztof Kuczyński in front of the house in Laskownica. July 1939.
Photo by A. Skubiszewska



9. Piotr, Marychna and Krzysztof Skubiszewski feed pigeons in the Old Town Market Square in Warsaw. August 1939. Photo by A. Skubiszewska



10. Krzysztof Skubiszewski and Bolesław Leitgeber in La Châtaigneraie-Founex. September 1969. Photo by P. Skubiszewski



11. Marcin and Krzysztof Skubiszewski on holidays in Saint-Palais-sur-Mer. April 1988.
Photo by P. Skubiszewski



12. Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Gabriela Zakrzewska, Aniela Skubiszewska, Maria Skubiszewska
with Marcin and Piotr Skubiszewski in Arkadia near Nieborów. 1 May 1973. Photo by J. Zakrzewski



13. Zygmunt and Irena Czarnecki, Krzysztof Skubiszewski and Ewa Śmigielka. Wieleń 1977.
Photo by A. Skubiszewska



14. Marie-Hélène, Ewa and Marcin Skubiszewski, Ewa Deskur and Krzysztof Skubiszewski
on holidays in Dębki. August 2006. Photo by P. Skubiszewski