

STANISLAW LORENTZ

A Memory of Old Times

Many people, myself included, have written about Jan Zachwatowicz and the great role he played in the history of conservation of historic monuments, especially during the post-war reconstruction of Poland. In this commemorative text I wish to go back to still earlier times when Zachwatowicz, born in Gatzyna near St. Petersburg, after studying at the Institute of Civil Engineers in Leningrad, in 1924 decided to return to Poland. Having worked for a short time as an assistant lecturer at the Chair of Hand Drawing at the Warsaw University of Technology Faculty of Architecture under Prof. Zygmunt Kamiński, he transferred to the Chair and Department of Polish Architecture of Prof. Oskar Sosnowski, who was able to set up an eminent centre of research on both architecture and art in Poland and employed in his Department young architects and art historians.

Prof. Sosnowski's Department embarked on an audacious publishing project. One of its major endeavours was the launch in 1932 of a quarterly periodical titled *Biuletyn Naukowy*, issued by the Department of Polish Architecture and Art History of the Warsaw University of Technology. The first quarterly appeared on September 1, 1932. The Editorial Board included Prof. Oskar Sosnowski, Witold Kieszkowski, Juliusz Starzyński, Michał Walicki, and Jan Zachwatowicz.

In the preface the Editorial Board wrote as follows:

“Under the present difficult conditions, when the publications of the Department of Polish Architecture and Art History were threatened with complete discontinuation for lack of funds (we refer here to the periodical *Studia do dziejów sztuki w Polsce*, whose 4 volumes came out in 1929 and 1930 with the financial support of the Mianowski Bank), the heads of the Department brought to life *Biuletyn Naukowy*, whose main purpose is to retain the editorial continuity and the publication at least in part of results

of ongoing scholarly research of the Department, with due consideration to studies in the area of art history”.

Already the first issue of *Biuletyn Naukowy* included Jan Zachwatowicz's article *Zagadnienie kopji barwnej w studjach nad malarstwem monumentalnym* [The question of a coloured copy in studies on monumental painting], where he discussed the objective and tasks of coloured copies, the approach of the copyist, the selection of material, drawing (outline), scale, colour and hue, and patina. This was an important article in the periodical of the Department, which included the Painting Section. Zachwatowicz, critical of Polish earlier contributions in the field, indicated the direction to be taken to make a copy which he called a “scientific” one. The article tapped the experience of the Institute of Art History in Leningrad, which carried out a systematic stock taking of objects of monumental painting and possessed holdings based on strictly defined principles of copying.

I wish to pay special attention to another type of article, i.e. a follow-up report concerning field studies. An example in point is a text by Michał Walicki and Jan Zachwatowicz titled *Sprawozdanie z poszukiwań na terenie województwa łódzkiego i kieleckiego* [Report on research in the provinces of Łódź and Kielce], published in the March issue no. 3 of *Biuletyn Naukowy* of 1933. First of all, this is a good example of a collaboration of an architect and art historian, perfectly carried out in the Department. This is also a planned examination of a particular area. The authors wrote: “Between June 15 and June 24, 1932 we were delegated by the Department to carry out research in the area of former Małopolska. We were first of all to establish the architectural history of the monasteries of the Norbertine Order in Witów, Imbramowice and Hebdów, and second of all to inspect other secondary questions related to architecture and painting being in the zone of interest of the Department. Most of the venues on our itinerary included towns known from relevant literature, yet the contradictions or over-generalisations used in the texts called for revision”.

This field study covered the three towns mentioned above as well as Koszyce, Książnice Wielkie, Nowy Korczyn, Sancygniów, Włostów, and Sandomierz, and produced very interesting results.

When we read an insightful article by Bishop Antoni Laubitz *O początkach kościoła gnieźnieńskiego w świetle ostatnich badań wykopaliskowych* [On the origins of the Church in Gniezno in light of recent excavations] published in *Biuletyn Naukowy* in September 1934, we should not overlook the note: “The enclosed map of the Gniezno Cathedral is the first documentary measurement of the current state of the building, with an addition of fragments of pre-gothic buildings, discovered thanks to the studies by His Excellency Bishop A. Laubitz. The measurements were conducted during the holiday season in 1933 and 1934 with the generous support of the Eminent Shepherd of

the Diocese by a group of students of the Warsaw University of Technology Faculty of Architecture, working under the general supervision of an engineer of architecture Jan Zachwatowicz”.

Jan Zachwatowicz's role was rather underestimated here. He himself in the *Preface* to the monumental two-volume monograph *Katedra Gnieźnieńska* [Gniezno Cathedral] issued in 1970 wrote about that time years later: “The need to write an analytical monograph of the Gniezno Cathedral has long been in demand. This was the intention of a review of the architecture of the cathedral carried out in 1933 by the Warsaw University of Technology Department of Polish Architecture. The review included the results of private research related to architecture by the then Bishop of Gniezno Laubitz. At that time I began to systematically gather archival records, measurements and photographs”.

Already at that time the collaboration of Jan Zachwatowicz in the amateur projects of a distinguished yet not too competent bishop was of major significance. After the war, as the Chief Conservator, he had a decisive impact on the major decision of 1952 of stripping the cathedral of baroque furnishings including the vaults, and restoring the gothic elements of the cathedral established during studies, and thus the complete restoration of the gothic appearance of the church.

Research on the city of Zamość played a major role in the activity of the Department of Polish Architecture and Art History. The results of the studies were summed up in a book by Stanisław Herbst and Jan Zachwatowicz titled *Twierdza Zamość* [Zamość Stronghold], published in 1936. As Prof. Oskar Sosnowski wrote in the preface, “Studies on the history of war buildings in Poland, initiated by the Department of Polish Architecture virtually since the onset of its operation, intensified gradually and led to the establishment in 1928 of a separate Fortifications Sections in the Department, with a comprehensive program of autonomous research . . . The Section collaborated with eminent specialists and is composed of technicians-architects, urban planners and humanists - historians of the military . . . The monograph of the Zamość Stronghold is the result of parallel work of a historian of the military and a historian of architecture. The results were not published by them as separate book chapters but make up an indivisible and homogenous text”.

Both the pre-war studies in Gniezno and those in Zamość were resumed after the war on a broad scale. Watching the restoration and conservation work carried out in Zamość we can only wish the Department of Polish Architecture and Stanisław Herbst and Jan Zachwatowicz were leading the momentous task of restoring and preserving the magnificent historical, architectural and urban complex.

The history of the unveiling of a fragment of the medieval defence wall, carried out by Jan Zachwatowicz on the initiative of Mayor of Warsaw Stefan

Starzyński is well known. We are likewise familiar with the post-war history and the recreation of the outline of Warsaw fortifications of the Old Town. The unveiling of the gothic bridge under the Krakow Gate, fought after in a dramatic struggle, was the last stage of a magnificent pre-war initiative conducted by Jan Zachwatowicz.

I mention in my commemorative text all that was born in those old days and was continued after World War Two. I started with *Biuletyn Naukowy* and I wish to finish with it. In 1946, as Year VIII, *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki i Kultury* came out, a quarterly periodical issued by the State Institute of Art History and Inventory of Historic Monuments of the Chief Administration of Museums and Protection of Historic Buildings and the Department of Polish Architecture and Art History of the Warsaw University of Technology. Naturally, Prof. Dr. engineer of architecture Jan Zachwatowicz was a member of the Editorial Board and the first text of the first issue was written by Jan Zachwatowicz and dedicated to the memory of Oskar Sosnowski.

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