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The Diary of Waław Sieroszewski as an Example of the Borderline Between Literature and Historical Policy*

Pamiętnik Waław Sieroszewskiego jako przykład
pogranicza literatury i polityki historycznej

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Abstract. The diary of Waław Sieroszewski – writer and political activist from the Young Poland era, connected with Józef Piłsudski’s political camp – was published by Andrzej Lam in the late 1950s (as Volume 16 of *Dziela [Works]* by Sieroszewski) in an abridged edition, mainly due to censorship. It is an example of a personal document, situated at the intersection of fiction, non-fiction, and historical policy. Its analysis shows how historical events and the author’s political perspective modelled his narrative in the diary, thus giving the literary text a hybrid form, which is difficult to unambiguously assign to a single genre.

Keywords: Waław Sieroszewski, Andrzej Lam, diary, diary narrative, historical policy

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Abstrakt. Pamiętnik Wacława Sieroszewskiego – młodopolskiego pisarza i działacza politycznego, związanego z orientacją polityczną Józefa Piłsudskiego – wydany został przez Andrzeja Lamę pod koniec lat 50. XX wieku (jako tom 16. *Dzieł Sieroszewskiego*) w wersji okrojonej, przede wszystkim ze względów cenzuralnych. Jest to przykład dokumentu osobistego, sytuującego się na pograniczu beletrystyki, literatury faktu i polityki historycznej. Jego analiza pokazuje, jak wydarzenia historyczne i światopogląd polityczny twórcy modelują jego narrację pamiętnikarską, powodując, że tekst literacki przybiera formę hybrydyczną, daleką od jednoznacznej klasyfikacji gatunkowej.

Słowa kluczowe: Wacław Sieroszewski, Andrzej Lame, pamiętnik, narracja pamiętnikarska, polityka historyczna

SOME REMARKS ABOUT THE DIARY'S AUTHOR AND ITS NARRATIVE

As a writer, Wacław Sieroszewski is rather well known to scholars dealing with Young Poland literature, in particular those interested in the phenomenon of exoticism and popular prose. He is also familiar to historians dealing with the fate of the Polish political exiles and the history of the branch of the socialist movement, whose representatives cultivated Romantic ideas of irredentism and were influenced by the charismatic leader Józef Piłsudski. Finally, he also grabs the attention of anthropologists and ethnographers studying the culture of the Siberian people and the functioning of Eastern civilisations.

He was born in 1858 to an impoverished noble family, five years before the outbreak of the January Uprising, in which his father Leopold took an active part. His grandfather Kajetan, an officer of the 1st Light Cavalry Regiment of the Imperial Guard, first fought alongside Napoleon and then participated in the November Uprising. The legend of the Polish independence uprisings – nurtured in the family home – influenced not only the shape of the future writer's childhood and upbringing but also his later attitude. Taught the imperative of patriotic service and the order to fight, burdened with Romantic mythology, he was a model example of a person ejected from the saddle. The destruction of the family estate, as a result of the contributions following the failed uprising, coincided with the premature death of Sieroszewski's ailing mother Waleria, *née* Ciemniewska and the forced departure of her father (who was under strict police surveillance) to Galicia, beyond the cordon. It was then that ten-year-old Wacław settled in Warsaw, where he began his education in the 3rd grade of grammar school and soon revealed his non-conformist character traits, which contributed to his dismissal from school – this forced him to quickly find a paid job and he became an apprentice at a locksmith's workshop. The young man's rebellious attitude was deepened by his interest in socialism, which led him to dabble in clandestine socio-political activities – he co-organised

illegal workers' clubs, smuggled forbidden clandestine papers, weapons and printing machine parts from behind the cordon, took part in the creation of resistance funds in factories to sustain strikes, etc. The anti-government activity finally led to his imprisonment in the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel and exile to Siberia. There he turned out to be an unusual exile because apart from the obvious attitude of aversion towards the enemy (manifesting itself twice in a brave attempt to escape from Verkhoyansk), he was also a watchful observer of the natives' lives. His fascination with a foreign company led him to reject the martyrdom of exile in favour of empathy and far-reaching integration with the native people (he started an "exotic" family in exile, marrying a Yakut woman and bringing up his daughter born of this relationship). While in Siberia, he also developed as a peculiar self-taught writer and ethnographer. An ethnographic monograph on the Yakuts, which he had been working on for many years, enabled him to return to Poland after sixteen years of exile.

Upon his return, Sieroszewski joined the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and took part in many of its activities, thus breaking the promise made to the Russian authorities to abandon all political activity in his home country. This resulted in his second imprisonment in the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel and a severe punishment – a second deportation to Irkutsk in Siberia. Thanks to the intercession of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, this punishment was commuted into the participation by the former exile in a scientific expedition to the Japanese Islands. Sieroszewski's stay in the Far East was interrupted by the outbreak of the Russian Japanese war. He returned to Poland at the beginning of 1904 and when the 1905 revolution broke out in the Kingdom of Poland, he joined it with unbridled enthusiasm. He spoke at political rallies and party meetings, co-organised propaganda lectures, participated in workers' demonstrations and protests, and gave speeches in various cities, where he promoted the socialist-independence ideology. After the split in the PPS, he decided to follow Piłsudski's programme, namely the ideology of the Revolutionary Faction of the PPS, focused on irredentism. In August 1914, following the future Commander-in-Chief, he joined his Legions to fight for the Polish cause with weapons in hand – something he had dreamt of. He took part in numerous battles, wrote chronicles, cooperated with Piłsudski within the Central National Committee and the National Independence Party. After Poland regained independence, he continued his political activity, still following Piłsudski – he was involved in various activities aimed at building an independent state, in 1920, he was sent to the USA on a political mission in order to promote the National Loan. He also loyally stood by the Marshal after the May Coup, when many of his former companions turned away from him. He served him faithfully not only as a political activist but also as a writer, creating a hagiographic image of a fearless leader and

using his journalistic and fictional texts (including his diary) to build the legend of a man of the state. At the outbreak of World War II, he was too old to go into battle with others. He died in April 1945, at the age of 87. He passed away as a fulfilled man and somebody who had more than experienced the Polish fate.

He started writing his diary at the end of his life and he kept at it for five years: from July 1939 to April 1944. The manuscript – stored in the National Library in Warsaw¹ – has over a thousand pages and seven volumes: I, II, III, X, XI, XII and XIII. The diary narrative begins with a description of childhood and family (Volume I) and ends in 1929 – the last record concerns the second trip to the USA, which was carried out at Piłsudski's request (end of Volume XIII). The majority of the content of the diary (about 75% in total) covers the presentation of the circumstances of the author's exile to Siberia and a description of the experience of a twelve-year stay in Yakutia. Therefore, the diary reports in detail the journey to the place of exile, two unsuccessful attempts to escape from Verkhoyansk (the first in 1881 by land, and the second in 1882 via the Yana River to the Arctic Ocean), as well as the most important events from his stay in various places of the vast country on the Lena River (in Verkhoyansk, Andylakh, Srednekolymsk Jaża, Bajagantajski Ułus and Namski Ułus). The memoirs of the exile also include the death of Sieroszewski's wife Arina Czełba-Kysa (1886), obtaining legal guardianship of his daughter Masha (1890), obtaining a settlement passport (1892), allowing him, as a convict, to move freely throughout the Russian Empire except for the Kingdom of Poland, and, finally, his departure from Siberia to Petersburg (1894).

There is a six-volume gap in Sieroszewski's diary preserved in the archives of the National Library (Volumes IV–IX are missing) which seems mysterious if one takes a closer look at the numerical order of the volumes established by the author. The disappearance of the middle volumes during the Warsaw Uprising, as suggested by the writer's family (see Sieroszewski, 1959, p. 631), seems unlikely, because Volume III, written in the second half of 1941, ends with the information about his departure for Irkutsk, while Volume X, written since mid-1943, begins with a description of his memories of 1898 when he moved to Warsaw. What is missing, therefore, is a gap of only four years of Sieroszewski's life (1894–1897), when he was in Irkutsk and then in Petersburg. It can be assumed that he stopped

¹ The manuscript of the first three volumes can be found in the National Library's special collection under signature: II 6388 / I, II, III (mf. 13 304): Sieroszewski Waclaw, *Pamiętnik 1859–1892*, while the remaining ones (X, XI, XII i XIII) – under signature II 5203 (mf. 42 306): Sieroszewski Waclaw, *Pamiętnik. Wspomnienia z okresu od powrotu z zesłania (ok. 1891) do 1929 r.* All the fragments of the original diary cited in this paper are cited in parentheses with the acronym A, followed by the number of the volume and page.

writing his diary² for some time and after a year and a half he changed – perhaps unknowingly – the concept of the whole work, disregarding the previously planned structure and numbering. It should be noted, however, that the last four volumes of the diary (X–XIII) are clearly different from the first three (I–III). They are much more modest in size and their structure is much more disorderly, the narrative is often achronological, chaotic and fragmented, and the narrative often breaks in the middle of a description of an event. These volumes include the writer's return to Warsaw, joining the Polish Socialist Party, his second imprisonment in the Warsaw Citadel, a trip to Japan, participation in the 1905 revolution, activities connected with the outbreak of the Great War, and, finally, his departure for the USA.

Due to the writer's deteriorating health and dramatic events in his personal life (Sieroszewski's beloved wife died at the beginning of 1942, and in 1944, he himself broke a shoulder bone and had to stay in hospital) and the turmoil of the war, the author did not manage to organise or publish his memories. They were eventually published at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s by Andrzej Lam in the twenty-volume edition of Sieroszewski's *Dziela* [*Works*] (1959–1963) in three different volumes: 16th, 18th, and 20th; however, this edition omitted many fragments, which is a particularly important thing to note. The omissions chosen by the editor seem to have been the wrong thing to do.³ He freely shortened extensive parts of the diary, left out the original repetitions and descriptions of previously mentioned facts, removed paragraphs that did not fit the chronology of events, omitted many important documents and so on. Lam's decision to leave numerous fragments of the manuscript in print, and thus disrespect the author's will, resulted in structuring the document over the author's head. Due to the incompleteness of Lam's edition, my analysis of Sieroszewski's diary is based on the manuscript and all accompanying documents, instead of its printed version.

² The interruption could have been caused by a key event in the life of the writer, namely the death of his beloved wife Stefania, who was 14 years younger than the writer, on 17 January 1942.

³ Let us take a closer look at the following example. On page 26 of Volume XI, Sieroszewski wrote about attaching the “typescript (28 quarters) of *Wspomnienia z X Pawilonu* (Warsaw 1928)” [“maszynopisowego druku (ćwiartek 28) *Wspomnienia z X Pawilonu* (Warszawa 1928)”. Lam decided to publish only the first paragraph (!) of this extensive typescript – see Sieroszewski (1961, p. 91). He did so probably because earlier (in Volume II of his diary), Sieroszewski described his imprisonment in the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel in detail. However, the editor's decision can be considered controversial (all the more so as he reprinted a two-page fragment of this typescript in the first part of Volume 20 of Sieroszewski's *Dziela* [1963, pp. 114–115]). And yet the publication of the entire typescript in the place indicated by the author would enable the reader to compare the information contained therein with the earlier description of Sieroszewski's imprisonment in the Citadel. The reader could then see the change in the psyche of the author occurring during the war, who at first rewrote his text (changed the order of his paragraphs, added numerous remarks), and then, clearly tired, added an old document to the current account, without making any changes at all.

This manuscript is an example of a personal document, which is on the boundary of fiction, non-fiction, and historical policy. It illustrates a specific type of memoir narrative, which is clearly shaped by historical events and the political view of the author. This is one of the reasons why the literary text takes on a hybrid form, situating Sieroszewski's diary at the genological borderline.

SIEROSZEWSKI'S DIARY AS A BORDERLINE OF TEXTS

The heterogeneous structure of Sieroszewski's work is made up of various texts.⁴ The typical diary records (manuscript) is complemented not only with the author's memoirs, reportages, sketches and articles previously published in the press, in the form of typescripts or cut-outs of printed works, which he pasted on the pages of the manuscript or on separate, unwritten pages,⁵ but also his drawings (explaining the text), private letters, leaflets and postcards (at the end of Volume XIII – p. 155, p. 156 and p. 158 – there are three postcards depicting respectively: Patom Highlands, the gold-bearing Preobrazhenska Valley and the Chinese New Year celebration known as “Dragon's Dance”), separate sheets of paper with notes not directly related to the events described at the time (such as page 367, which concludes Volume III, contains a list of distances between various towns in Siberia), extensive, handwritten passages from the ethnographic monograph *Dwanaście lat w kraju Jakutów* [*Twelve Years in the Country of the Yakuts*], previously printed literary sketches and short novellas, as well as various official certificates. Besides that, he decided to include his own biography and excerpts from the books of heraldry concerning the origin of the Sieroszewski family.

Sieroszewski's complete manuscript (that is, the diary and all documents attached to it) reveals an interesting evolution of the narrative, which testifies to how the psyche of the ageing artist kept changing with the passage of time and traumatic life experiences, while his memory and mind were getting weaker. This caused him to repeat the same or similar passages. Attaching or pasting various excerpts of his previously printed articles and typescripts to the manuscript, the content of which often disturbed the structure of his text and destroyed the chronology of the described events, the old Sieroszewski was unable to fully control the logical structure of the whole composition of the diary, which transformed into some sort of a notebook on

⁴ The contemporary reader can browse the entire manuscript thanks to its digital version, available in the Polona Digital Library, run by the National Library.

⁵ Extracts of works previously published in the press and typescripts are corrected by the author – some passages are crossed out, some sentences are overwritten over the main text or added on the margins.

the last few dozen pages. He could not control the composition or perhaps he did not manage to put his writing in order and create a final, clean version.

After all, it is not only the presence of diverse matter that determines the heterogeneity of the work. Some fragments of the diary turn into a journal, for example, in the middle of Volume III, there is an entry that reads:

5 June 1941. I was sick. I caught a cold in the week when they turned off the heating. (**1 May**). I was bedridden for two weeks (**from 15 May**); the illness took both my lungs, and I was coughing terribly. **To this day** I did not recover, I am still weak and apathetic. It is only **today** that I tried to continue writing my diary [emphasis – G.L.]. (A, vol. III, p. 213)⁶

In Volume XIII there are as many as three elements suggesting this kind of writing:

9 February 1944. *Diary*, Volume XIII: The end of the 19th century the first years of the 20th century were very turbulent in our country [emphasis – G.L.]. (A, vol. XIII, p. 117)⁷

21 Mar[ch] 1944. Through Paris, Havre, Dover, along the southern shores of England, I went to Southampton, because at that time it was the only [city – noted by G.L.] from where one could get straight to New York without going anywhere and stopping at all [emphasis – G.L.]. (A, vol. XIII, p. 122)⁸

8 April, Easter Saturday. Before leaving for America, I made an arrangement with Stefa that I would write a letter to her every day, telling her about new places and people [emphasis – G.L.]. (A, vol. XIII, p. 125)⁹

Thus, this characteristic change of genre would also situate Sieroszewski's record on the borderline of texts.

The presence of various matter in Sieroszewski's diary, contributing in some places to the lack of continuity, repeating the same information or broken chronology of the reported events, is not the only issue encountered by the reader. The heterogeneous structure of the diary is further complicated by the fact that the

⁶ “**5 czerwca 1941.** Chorowałem. Przeziębłem się w tygodniu, kiedy przestano palić w kaloryferach (**1 maja**). Dwa tygodnie przeleżałem w łóżku (**od 15 maja**); miałem oba płuca zajęte i kaslałem okropnie. **Do dziś** nie mogę przyjść do siebie, jestem wciąż słaby i apatyczny. Dopiero **dziś** podejmuję dalszy ciąg pamiętnika [podkr. – G.L.]”

⁷ “**9 lutego 1944.** *Pamiętnik*, tom XIII: Końcowe lata dziewiętnastego i pierwsze lata dwudziestego wieku były bardzo burzliwe w naszym kraju [podkr. – G.L.]”

⁸ “**21 mar[ca] 1944.** Przez Paryż, Havre, Dover, wzdłuż południowych brzegów Anglii udałem się do Southampton, gdyż w owym czasie z tego tylko [miasta – uzup. G.L.] można było dostać się wprost do New Yorku, nie zbaczając nigdzie i nie zatrzymując się wcale [podkr. – G.L.]”

⁹ “**8 kwiet[nia], Wielka Sobota.** Przed wyjazdem do Ameryki umówiłem się ze Stefą, że będę do niej co dzień pisał list z opowiadaniem o nowo widzianych miejscach i osobach [podkr. – G.L.]”

literary matter is mixed with equally heterogeneous historical matter. For this very reason, Sieroszewski's record can be treated as an example of the borderline between literature and historical policy. In many fragments of the text, it is impossible to even separate these intertwined, different manners of narration from each other.

A good example of mixing up the content is, for example, the *Wstęp do pamiętnika* [*Introduction to the Diary*], which covers 19 pages (for unknown reasons, Lam decided to print only its first paragraph). It is filled with biographical information pertaining mainly to the area in which Sieroszewski grew up and an attempt to reconstruct the family he came from. The *Introduction...* starts with the author's explanation of the reasons for writing a diary, with the initial motivation for the intention to record memories in the form of a diary clearly emphasises the role of the memoir as a historical source. Sieroszewski states:

I started writing down these memories at the age of 80. It is an obvious thing that I no longer recall many details, many dates, and names. I will, however, undertake this work with the conviction that my long and interesting life reflects to some extent the history of my epoch and will be useful to the future historian, and reading these memories will strengthen the will of my fellow countrymen to uphold the Polish state. May my fate in Our Homeland never repeat again!... [emphasis – G.L.]. (A, vol. X, p. 1)¹⁰

This preliminary declaration can be treated as a typical rhetorical figure in the field of politics of remembrance or historical policy, understood as a discourse about the past, shaping the official historical consciousness in a deliberate manner.¹¹ In the following section of the *Wstęp...* [*Introduction...*] the writer, however, gives up this kind of rhetoric and begins a detailed reconstruction of the genealogy of the Sieroszewski family. Citing an abundance of source documents – excerpts from Kasper Niesiecki's *Herby y familie rycerskie tak w Koronie jako y Wielkim Xięstwie Litewskim zebrane* [*Coats of Arms of Knightly Families Collected in Both the Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*] (Lviv, 1728) and *Herbarz Polski*,

¹⁰ “Pamiętniki te zacząłem spisywać w osiemdziesiątym roku życia. Rzecz prosta, że wielu szczegółów nie pamiętam, że wielu dat i nazwisk nie mogę ustalić dokładnie. Przedsiębiorę jednak tę pracę w przeświadczeniu, że moje długie i rozmaite życie odzwierciedla do pewnego stopnia dzieje mojej epoki i przyda się jej przyszłemu historykowi, a czytanie tych wspomnień wzmocni wolę państwowego istnienia w rodakach. Oby już nigdy, przenigdy nie powtórzyły się losy moje w Naszej Ojczyźnie!... [podkr. autora].” The author wrote these words at the beginning of July 1939 unaware that in a few months' time he would witness the invasion of the German forces and the outbreak of World War II.

¹¹ I am aware that the term “historical policy” is entangled in various meanings, depending on multifaceted phenomena and heterogeneous contexts, including historiosophy, historiography, public dialogue about the past, collective (official) memory, popular memory (political rites and myths), political theology, ideology of history, etc. (see Misztal, 2005; Korzeniewski, 2008, pp. 10–12; Ponczek and Sepkowski, 2010; Chwedoruk, 2018).

powiększony dodatkami z późniejszych autorów, rękopisów, dowodów urzędowych [*Polish Armorial, Supplemented with Additions of Later Authors, Manuscripts, Official Evidence*] (vol. 3, Leipzig 1841), as well as Bartosz Paprocki's book *Herby rycerstwa polskiego* [*Coats of Arms of the Polish Knighthood*] (Kraków, 1858) he argues that he is a descendant of old nobility, with the Nabram *alias* Waldorff coat of arms. He focuses for a while on the description of his grandfather Kajetan Sieroszewski (a brave and peaceful man) and grandmother Eleonora *née* Jaskłowska (an energetic woman interested in politics), he tells the story of his father's relatives – good farmers, hunters and soldiers, and relatives of his mother, Waleria *née* Ciemniwska – passionate about art and science. The factual records are mixed with a narrative characteristic of fiction, used to build a legend. The following is an example of this kind of combination:

Niesiecki deals with the Sieroszewski family briefly: "Sieroszewski of the Nabram coat of arms, in the Poznań province. N. Sieroszewski married Barbara Kobierzycka, daughter of Stanisław, castellan of Krzywiń. In 1778, Antoni Sieroszewski, castellan of Krzywiń, Krasicki". Family legend has it that the Sieroszewski family initially belonged to a powerful noble family of Śreniawa. During the conflict between Bolesław the Bold and Bishop Stanislaus of Szczepanów, the Śreniawa family stood by the king's side. Since then, the family has fallen apart; some have changed their coats of arms and took family names from their inherited estates. [...] Kajetan Sieroszewski, my grandfather, at the age of twenty-six, joined the 1st Regiment of the Imperial Guard (on 5 May 1807), where he was promoted to a brigadier (10 April 1811) and sergeant major (12 May 1812), and he held this rank until 7 March 1815. He lived through the entire Spanish campaign. [...] While my grandfather was a quiet and peaceful man, my grandmother, born Jaskłowska, was famous for her combativeness. It was said that Tuchołko himself, the executioner of the insurgents of 1863, was not able to deal with her when she kept pestering him to release my father from the 10th Pavilion, where he was imprisoned for some time. Daughters in law trembled in her presence. [...] I remember my grandmother as a tall, well-built old lady, dubbed "Colonel's wife" by all, even though my grandfather only ever got to the rank of a Captain. (A, vol. X, pp. 5–6 and 9–10)¹²

¹² "Niesiecki załatwia się z Sieroszewskimi krótko: »Sieroszewski herbu Nabram, w poznańskim województwie. N. Sieroszewski, miał za sobą Barbarę Kobierzycką, córkę Stanisława kasztelana Krzywińskiego. W r. 1778 Antoni Sieroszewski kasztelan Krzywiński – Krasicki«. Legendy rodzinne zaś mówiły, że rodzina Sieroszewskich początkowo należała do potężnego rodu szlacheckiego, mającego zawołanie »Śreniawa«. Śreniawici w czasie zatargu Bolesława Śmiałego z biskupem Stanisławem Szczepanowskim stali przy królu. Od tego czasu ród rozpadł się; niektórzy zamienili herby i pobrali rodzinne nazwiska od włości dziedzicznych. [...] Kajetan Sieroszewski, mój dziad, mając lat dwadzieścia sześć wszedł w służbę wojskową do Pułku I-ego Gwardii Francuskiej (1807 r., 5 maja), gdzie postąpił na brygadiera (1811 r., 10 kwiet[nia]), na wachmistrza (1812 r., 12 maja), w którym to stopniu zostawał do 1815 r., 7 marca... Odbił kampanię całą hiszpańską [...]. O ile dziad mój był cichym i spokojnym człowiekiem, o tyle babka z domu Jaskłowska słynęła z bojowego charakteru. Opowiadano, że sam Tuchołko, kat powstańców 63-go roku, nie mógł sobie dać z nią rady, gdy go nachodziła, robiąc starania o wypuszczenie mego ojca z X pawilonu, gdzie był przez pewien czas

The combination of literature and historical policy, characteristic of the *Wstęp...* is a distinguishing feature of the whole diary. I will try to illustrate it further by analysing its fragments selected from various volumes.

THE DIARY OF A WRITER AND ACTIVIST AS A TEXT ON THE BORDERLINE BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORICAL POLICY

Here are three fragments of Sieroszewski's diary, selected from various volumes:

I only got my first shoes when I was six years old. This day has stuck in my memory because – proud and delighted with the new gift – I rushed to share my joy with my friends, huge black-and-green frogs, living in the pond in front of the distillery. When I stood over the water on the footbridge and stretched out my leg to show the new shoes to the oncoming frogs, I slipped and fell into the waist-deep water. I barely managed to get to the shore, but it was only there that I noticed that I did not have one shoe – it got stuck in the mud and remained there, much to my despair. [...] It goes without saying that I had to hide myself in the jasmine bushes and I was brought home only in the evening. The cane of goat's leg,¹³ hanging by the door in the children's room was used on that day, but it did not manage to rid me of my love of adventures (A, vol. I, p. 6).

As a result of the great work we have done, Siberia has become almost a second homeland for us. The fact that Słowacki put his *Anhelli* there, and Zieliński wrote a beautiful poem *Kirgiz* was not an accident. The Siberian country, although harsh and wild, is nevertheless beautiful [...] the sun, the stars, and the moon shine like nowhere else... On the other hand, the short spring has a charm and momentum so intoxicatingly mad, rivers and streams of melting snow pour in with powerful and stormy cascades, the hustle and bustle of passing birds is so joyful and exciting, the bloom of vegetation so fast that people walk as if intoxicated and commit various "springtime follies" (A, vol. II, pp. 163–165).

[...] the duke exposed the upper part of his body from both sides and – checking the sharpness of his sword – he pulled the blade across his right lower back through his trousers, marking a five-inch cut. After this, he shouted with a smile of satisfaction:

– Oh, the sword cuts beautifully!

He pushed the blade slowly into the left side of the stomach and pulled it from the bottom up. Then he said:

– It is time! ... Please, help me!

Isoda Budaju approached him from behind and relieved him by cutting his head off with a long sword. According to the custom, the head hung on his chest on one inch of uncut skin. [...] The body of the executed man was buried in the Sengakudzi Temple in Takanawa, Siba... (A, vol. XI)¹⁴

więziony. Synowe drżały przed nią. [...] Pamiętam babkę jako wysoką, mocno zbudowaną staruszkę, tytułowaną przez wszystkich »pułkownikową«, choć dziad dosłużył się zaledwie kapitaństwa.”

¹³ A tool of corporal punishment made from a goat's leg and thin strips of leather attached to it.

¹⁴ “Pierwsze buty dostałem dopiero w szóstym roku życia. Ten wypadek wbił mi się w pamięć z tego powodu, że dumny i ucieszony z nabytku, pośpieszyłem podzielić się moją radością z moimi przyjaciółkami, ogromnymi czarno-zielonymi żabami, jakich pełna była sadzawka przed gorzelnią.

It can be clearly seen that the quoted fragments differ from each other in the narrative strategy and style used by the author, although each of them is undoubtedly an example of a literary text, full of fictional elements. The first fragment is an exemplification of a typical recollection, which serves to mythologise past events. This type of text is a colourful story, which one could find in old tales or works by Sienkiewicz. This kind of storytelling virtually dominates the first three volumes of the diary. The second fragment comes from a fictionalised sketch entitled *Syberia, ziemia słońca, śniegu i wygnania* [*Siberia, a Land of Sun, Snow and Exile*], incorporated by the author into Volume II of his diary, while the third is an excerpt from the *Harakiri księcia Asano Naganori* [*Harakiri of Prince Asano Naganori*] novella, attached to Volume XI.

The heterogeneous nature of the literary matter in Sieroszewski's diary (storytelling and memoirs adjacent to article sketches and fictional works) goes hand in hand with its equally heterogeneous parts which contain strictly historical text and shape the specific policy of remembrance intended by the author. Let us take a look at three fragments:

The Historical and Archive Committee of the Association of Former Political Prisoners collects materials concerning the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel in order to publish the history of this tsarist slaughterhouse, which has been active in the heart of Poland for nearly a century. We ask

Gdym stanął nad wodą na kładce i wyciągnął nogę, by pokazać nowe buty nadpływającym żabom, pośliznąłem się i wpadłem w wodę po pas. Z trudem wygramoliłem się, lecz dopiero na brzegu zauważyłem, że jednego buta nie mam: ugrzązł błocie i tam ku mej rozpaczce pozostał. [...] Rozumie się, że musiałem się ratować w jaśminowych krzakach i sprowadzono mię do domu dopiero wieczorem. Dyscyplina na koziej nóżce, która wisiała koło drzwi w dziecinnym pokoju, była w robocie, lecz nie oduczyła mnie miłości przygód (A, t. I, k. 6).

Syberia wskutek wielkiej dokonanej przez nas pracy stała się dla nas jak gdyby drugą naszą ojczyzną. Nie darmo Słowacki umieścił tam *Anhellego*, a Zieliński napisał piękny poemat *Kirgiz*. Kraj sybirski, choć surowy i dziki, jest jednak piękny [...] słońce, gwiazdy i księżyc mają blask niezwykły, jak nigdzie... Ale za to krótka wiosna ma czar i impet tak odurzająco szalony, rzeki i potoki topniejącego śniegu leją się takimi potężnymi i burzliwymi kaskadami, gwar przelotnego ptactwa jest tak radosny i podniecający, rozkwit roślinności tak szybki, że ludzie też chodzą jak upojeni i dopełniają rozmaite „wiosenne zaleństwa” (A, t. II, k. 163–165).

[...] książę obnażył górną część ciała z obu stron i próbując ostrości miecza, powiódł nim po prawej łędźwi przez spodnie, znacząc cięcie pięć cali długości. Po próbie wykrzyknął z uśmiechem zadowolenia:

– Ach, miecz tnie doskonale!

Bez pośpiechu wbił go w lewą stronę żołądka i powiódł nim z dołu do góry. Naówczas dopiero powiedział:

– Teraz czas!... Proszę, pomóżcie mi!

Isoda Budaju przystąpił doń z tyłu i ulżył mu, ściągwszy długim mieczem głowę, która, zgodnie z obyczajem, zawisła na piersiach na jednym calu nieprzeciętej skóry. [...] Ciało straceńca zostało pochowane w świątyni Sengakudzi, w Takanawie w Siba...” (after: Sieroszewski, 1961a, pp. 9–10).

everyone who can provide any information about themselves or their friends [...] to send it to the address the Association. (A, vol. I, p. 308, recto i verso)¹⁵

After “bloody Wednesday”¹⁶ the police activity in the Russian partition of Poland went down, they refused to participate in searches and arrests of revolutionaries without military assistance. Even such assistance did not guarantee success, because Ziuk [Józef Piłsudski – translator’s note] forbade shooting at the soldiers, not only because there were many Poles among the privates, but also because the revolutionary movement was also spreading within the army. [...] Internal relations in the Austrian state were very relaxed; the attitude towards Hungary was blurred, ever-changing and further intensified the breakdown of the Austrian state organisation. (A, vol. XI, pp. 42–43)¹⁷

[...] once I found a tapping alphabet engraved on a wall behind the stove, presumably back in 1863, and then I found its confirmation scratched on the canteen, in which my dinner was brought. I understood what it meant, and I started to learn diligently. One tap, pause, one tap – meant the letter A. One tap, pause, two taps – that was B... First tap – row, second tap – sequence!... [...]. Tapping alphabet: ¹⁸

	1	2	3	4
1	a	b	c	d
2	e	f	g	h
3	i	k	l	ł
4	m	n	o	p
5	r	s	t	u
6	w	y	z	

(A, vol. XI, p. 76 and 140–141)

The first fragment of the historical narrative comes from the announcement of the Historical-Archive Commission *Do Byłych Więźniów X-go pawilonu*

¹⁵ “Komisja Historyczno-Archiwalna przy Stowarzyszeniu byłych Więźniów politycznych zbiera materiały dotyczące X pawilonu warszawskiej Cytadeli celem wydania historii tej carskiej karni, tkwiącej niemal sto lat w sercu Polski. Prosimy wszystkich, mogących udzielić jakichkolwiek danych bądź o sobie, bądź też o swoich znajomych [...], aby je przesłali pod adresem Stow[arzyszenia] B[yłych] Więźniów Politycznych.”

¹⁶ This term refers to the first mass attacks of PPS militia against the tsarist authorities, which took place on 15 August 1906 in 19 cities of the Kingdom of Poland, in which eighty Russians, mainly policemen and gendarmes, were attacked.

¹⁷ “Po »krwawej środzie« działalność policji w zaborze rosyjskim bardzo osłabła, odmawiali udziału w rewizjach i aresztowaniu rewolucjonistów bez asysty wojskowej. Lecz nawet z taką asystą nie zawsze się udawało, gdyż Ziuk zabraniał strzelać do żołnierzy, nie tylko dlatego, że wśród szeregowców było dużo Polaków, lecz i dlatego, że ruch rewolucyjny z wolna ogarniał i wojsko. [...] Wewnętrzne stosunki w państwie austriackim były bardzo rozluźnione; stosunek do Węgier niewyraźny, zmienny, bardziej jeszcze wzmagał rozkład austriackiej organizacji państwowej.”

¹⁸ “[...] pewnego razu znalazłem alfabet stukania wyryty za piecem na ścianie, przypuszczalnie jeszcze w 63 roku, a następnie znalazłem jego potwierdzenie wydrapane na menażce, w której przyniesiono mi obiad. Zrozumiałem o co chodzi i pilnie zacząłem się uczyć jedno uderzenie, przerwa, jedno uderzenie – to litera A; jedno uderzenie, przerwa, dwa uderzenia – to litera B... Pierwsze uderzenie – rząd, drugie uderzenie kolej!... [...]. Alfabet do stukania.”

warszawskiej Cytadeli [*To the Former Prisoners of the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel*] attached by the writer to Volume I. The second is a factual historical account describing political events following the 15 August 1906. The third contains an explanation of the use of the alphabet used by prisoners of the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel to communicate with each other and a table recording the alphabet.

All the “historical” fragments of Sieroszewski’s diary are written from the perspective of “Piłsudski’s man” – somebody who was linked with Piłsudski’s camp, a follower of the former PPS Revolutionary Faction activist, a faithful soldier of the Legions, who kept advocating for the implementation of the political programme, first by the Commander-in-Chief, and later by the Head of State. Piłsudski’s political views, which Sieroszewski discovered during his clandestine activities in Warsaw after his return from exile, were still very close to the heart of the author. It is not surprising, therefore, that he intended to add a new edition of *Życiorys Józefa Piłsudskiego* [*Biography of Józef Piłsudski*], published in Warsaw in 1935 after the Marshal’s death to Volume XI of his diary. The overarching theme of this biography was Piłsudski’s clandestine and independence activities, and the work was concluded with information about the funeral ceremonies at Wawel Castle and the burial of an urn with his heart in the Rasos Cemetery in Vilnius. In Sieroszewski’s opinion, Piłsudski embodied the irredentist idea, which was the most important in his life, as well as values such as a sense of national pride, patriotic steadfastness, readiness to take the risk of fighting a stronger opponent, civic honour and the memory of ancestral traditions. He believed Piłsudski was a Romantic man of state, that he embodied the qualities of a perfect leader, striving to liberate Poland with its own armed forces. The author’s decision to add *Życiorys Józefa Piłsudskiego* to his diary should be considered an expression of a specific historical policy. Piłsudski’s figure has been turned into a myth, and the events of the past related to his figure were mythologised, in line with the previously assumed goal of writing a diary, which was, let us repeat: “strengthen[ing] [translator’s note] the will of my fellow countrymen to uphold the Polish state” [“wzmocnienia woli państwowego istnienia w rodakach”] (A. vol. X, p. 1). For this reason, Sieroszewski’s diary can be analysed not only as a personal document revealing the author’s mature political views, reflecting the political ideology of the late Piłsudski, but also as a text shaping a specific, subjective and often deliberately mythologised vision of history. These two aspects of expression are, of course, closely connected.

When preparing Sieroszewski’s diary for print at the end of the 1950s, Lam dropped Piłsudski’s biography because he had to reckon with the agenda of the authorities at the time and their historical policy. For this reason, he left out not only *Życiorys Józefa Piłsudskiego*, but also many other fragments from the author’s biography, which could not be reprinted at the time and which were directly or indirectly

connected with the figure of the Marshal. These included Sieroszewski's independence activities during the 1905–1907 revolution (A, vol. X, pp. 39–47), the writer's participation in the military movement preceding World War I – forming the ranks of the Strzelec, Riflemen's Associations and the Legions (A, vol. X, pp. 37–38 and vol. XI, pp. 84–99), the march of legionnaires from Oleandry (A, vol. XI, p. 84), the frontline service at the side of the Commander (A, vol. XI, pp. 86–99 and pp. 102–103), and then in the ranks of the Warsaw Battalion (A, vol. X, pp. 20–23), and finally the circumstances surrounding Sieroszewski's biography of Józef Piłsudski (A, vol. X, pp. 35–36). The editor did not print as many as 28 pages from Volumes X and XI, which contained political content that could not be published during the communist era.

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The analysis of Sieroszewski's diary as a record characterised by its heterogeneous structure and narrative leads to the following conclusions. One of its characteristic features is the internal diversity of genres, transforming the memoir into a borderline space of texts that are not uniform in terms of their genology. At the same time, the author's diary is very clearly situated on the borderline of literature and history. It is an example of a personal document, which has the intention to shape a specific remembrance policy. The diary presents a biography of a heroic man, following the trend of the “clandestine people” – rebels, who followed paths that conditioned the ideas emerging from the Romantic philosophy of action and the Polish tradition of independence uprisings, popular at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. In this sense, it is a source document that can be analysed as a tool of historical policy. The diary is filled with a great literary narrative, which makes its extensive parts read like an intriguing adventure novel, describing “a long and interesting life” (A, vol. X, p. 1) of a rebellious man, filled with a passion of exploring the world, fascinated by foreign cultures, open to unknown and different situations – a man whose life was certainly abundant with extremely interesting events.

Translated into English: Lingua Lab

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