

REMEMBRANCE

ZBIGNIEW MAZUR (1943-2016)

The passing of Zbigniew Mazur on 6 January 2016 remains a painful loss for the Instytut Zachodni (Institute for Western Affairs) in Poznań and for German studies in Poland. He earned a special place in Polish historiography thanks to his studies on the history of Western thought, which made him possibly the most renowned specialist on that subject in Poland. A prominent place on the list of his scholarly achievements is taken by his publications on European affairs.

Zbigniew Mazur was born on 15 September 1943 in Wierzchowiny, Krasnystaw county, to Edward and Aniela *née* Metzsig, who were members of the intelligentsia originating from the Wielkopolska region. After the war ended the family settled in Zielona Góra, where Zbigniew completed secondary school. From his childhood days his favourite pastime was reading books. He was particularly passionate about American and French literature, as well as essays on literature and philosophy. In his intellectual activity he shied away from any kind of snobbery. In 1961 Mazur began studying history at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. As one of the most talented students, he impressed others by his erudition, which went far beyond the scope of the required reading list, as well as his command of French and English, which he was continuously perfecting. Some time later he also mastered German.

After graduating in 1966 Mazur was employed by the Instytut Zachodni. He quickly became known as a person of distinctive character and manner. He truly enjoyed social life. He was free from envy of others' successes, not to mention their material status. Financial reward was the last thing that could drive his scholarly interests. He did not care at all about holding managerial positions. It was only after years of working at the Institute that he accepted an offer to manage, in 1991–1992, the editorial team of the *Polish Western Affairs* quarterly journal. It took much effort to persuade him to speak in public, even at events that could advance his academic career. Yet he was certainly not a loner. He loved having long conversations with his friends, not only on scholarly topics. He spoke with great passion about the problems which he encountered during his work on various projects and texts. As the years went by he became an invaluable mentor to an increasing number of younger colleagues.

Throughout his life, Zbigniew Mazur was an uncompromising rationalist who could resist all mythologies and parascientific theories, however widely held. With time he became increasingly frustrated with the political situation in Poland. He welcomed the establishment of the Workers' Defence Committee (*Komitet Obrony*

Robotników) and other opposition organisations in the mid-1970s. The underground press took a prominent place among his reading matter. It was with conviction that he joined Solidarity in the early autumn of 1980. He was one of the founders of the branch of that organisation at the Instytut Zachodni, and firmly believed that it would be a driving force behind irreversible changes in Poland. It is therefore no surprise that he was deeply disappointed with the introduction of martial law in Poland on 13 December 1981.

As a member of the Solidarity local committee, Mazur was involved between 1989 and 1990 in actions intended to reform the programme and organisational profile of the Institute. It was thanks to him, among others, that those actions ended in success. In June 1990 he became a member of the Institute's Scientific Council for the first time. Mazur remained a member until 1995, and held the position again in 2008–2011 and 2013–2015. From 1996 he sat on the committee responsible for the Institute's research projects. Political affiliations had little influence on the nature of Mazur's academic career. He stood in stark contrast to the typical research worker who cared about the number of publications regardless of their quality. The course of his career was not directed by efforts to obtain successive degrees and titles, as is sometimes the case in the academic world.

From the beginning his research interests were varied. He published his first article in 1969, in the journal *Przegląd Zachodni* ("Western Review"), on the cost of the stationing in West Germany of the British Army of the Rhine. Despite it being his first published paper, it sparked interest abroad. Zbigniew Mazur remained interested in post-war British politics, but in a slightly different context. In 1971–1977, again in *Przegląd Zachodni*, Mazur published a series of articles on the contribution of Great Britain to the process of European integration. He followed these in 1977–1978 with two articles on British policy during World War II.

At the same time, in the early 1970s Mazur began working towards his doctorate under Professor Antoni Czubiński. The subject of his thesis, the Four-Power Pact signed in 1933, proved that he had the talent to handle multifaceted subjects with regard to both chronology and the issues involved. During seminar discussions he often surprised others by referring to then poorly known concepts such as the Concert of Europe. In 1975 Mazur presented his thesis entitled *Pakt Czterech 1933* [The Four-Power Pact 1933] which gained him his doctoral degree and a position of assistant professor (*adiunkt*) from 1 January 1976. Four years later his thesis was printed and made available to a wider public, winning him recognition in academic circles. The reviews of his work emphasised the author's excellent research skills, as well as his ability to present synthetically a very significant issue in European interwar politics.

Deciding not to follow a well-trodden path in the academic world, it was only after several years of working at the Instytut Zachodni that Mazur had an opportunity to carry out serious scientific research abroad. In 1974–1975 he participated in a study visit to Babelsberg, where he studied international relations. It was the award of a fellowship by the Kosciuszko Foundation that enabled him to spend the academic year

1977/1978 on a secondment at Georgetown University in New York. This had a significant influence on his future work.

Materials collected during his stay in the United States allowed Zbigniew Mazur to expand his studies of American politics during and after World War II. He published numerous articles in *Przegląd Zachodni* on these subjects. In the first half of the 1980s Mazur began preparing to work towards his post-doctoral (“habilitation”) degree. The subject of his dissertation was to be an analysis of the place of Germany in American thinking during World War II. In 1988 Mazur published a book entitled *Amerykańskie koncepcje stosunków między Wschodem i Zachodem po II wojnie światowej* [American concepts of relations between East and West after the Second World War] which was intended to be the subject of his habilitation exam. However, he was not determined enough to meet the formal requirements to be admitted to that exam. When Mazur was preparing his book for printing, and when writing earlier articles on similar subjects for *Przegląd Zachodni*, he experienced an unprecedented wave of censorship, which was mostly unofficial in nature. Like other authors writing about issues of international relations, he was not permitted to give a fully objective presentation of American intentions, particularly with regard to relations with the Soviet Union. Despite these circumstances, it was at this time that his talent in dealing with issues of US foreign policy doctrine was brought clearly to light.

As the years went by, apart from British and American affairs, Zbigniew Mazur became interested in German issues. What was to become a subject of genuine interest for years to come was introduced in a historiographic study edited by J. Rachocki entitled *Niemcy współczesne jako przedmiot nauki polskiej (1945-1970)* [Contemporary Germany as a subject of Polish studies (1945–1970)]. His broad-ranging German studies were mostly presented in a number of articles published in *Przegląd Zachodni*. Mazur discussed subjects such as the Soviet–West German talks, the issue of a separate East German nation, West German reactions to the Holocaust, as well as the controversies surrounding *DDR-Forschung* in the 1970s. A book published in 1985 entitled *Republika Federalna Niemiec w dobie rządów koalicji socjaldemokratyczno-liberalnej (1969-1982)* [The Federal Republic of Germany in the times of the Social Democratic and Liberal coalition (1969–1982)] edited by A. Czubiński and L. Janicki included Mazur’s deliberations on West Germany’s foreign policy. Once censorship ended in Poland in 1989, Mazur undertook to fill in some of the blank spaces in Polish history by publishing an article on the German–Soviet agreement of August and September 1939. He settled his past accounts with the censors by publishing articles on divisions between the powers during World War II (*Przegląd Zachodni* 1990) and on American policy to curb global Soviet political expansion (*Przegląd Zachodni* 1993).

Mazur reacted with exceptional speed to German reunification. Various aspects of this event were discussed in five articles published in *Przegląd Zachodni* in 1990–1991. With unfaltering resolution he published more and more articles concerning Germany in the Instytut Zachodni’s quarterly and as part of collective works. They mostly discussed German foreign policy. Mazur was the editor of a collective work entitled *Rola nowych Niemiec na arenie międzynarodowej* [The role of the new Ger-

many in the international arena] published in 1996. He thereby confirmed his position as one of the leading specialists in the foreign policy of the reunited Germany. However, his German studies also covered social issues and biographical studies. A prominent example of such a publication is the extensive study *Niemiecka elita polityczna w obliczu przyłączenia NRD do RFN* [The German political elite in the face of the attachment of East to West Germany] included in a 1999 collective work edited by H. Orłowski and M. Tomczak entitled *Elity w jednoczących się Niemczech* [Elites in Germany during reunification], and appropriate entries in *Niemcy współczesne. Zarys encyklopedyczny* [Contemporary Germany. An encyclopaedic study], which Mazur also co-edited.

Despite these achievements, he was perhaps not completely satisfied with his academic work. His works published so far seemed to revolve around one theme and rarely ventured beyond the history of international relations. At that time he certainly did not live up to his full intellectual potential. In the meantime, the fall of the authoritarian system in Poland gave Mazur an opportunity to study subjects which had not previously been addressed in the scholarly literature. He was not only successful in undertaking such novel research, but he also did not hesitate to venture into territories that historians rarely explored. Extensive reading of works on philosophy, cultural anthropology, sociology, pedagogy and art history allowed him to freely explore topics beyond political history. This interdisciplinary approach took practical shape in Mazur's own output. Its first fruit was a book published in 1995 entitled *Obraz Niemiec w polskich podręcznikach szkolnych do nauczania historii 1945-1989* [Germany as presented in Polish school history textbooks in 1945–1989]. An important underlying theme of this work was the paradigm of class and nation. Mazur was known for his habit of thoroughly studying any subject prior to writing an article, not to mention a whole book; but this time, as he began by studying Plato and Aristotle, he may have surprised even his close colleagues – although this was not the primary reason for which his book was highly praised by Polish historians and publicists. They emphasised Mazur's ability to present the topic without politically driven emotional involvement, which was notorious when it came to the presentation of various aspects of Polish–German relations in Polish historiography, especially before 1989. Mazur was recognised for his superb writing in 1995 when he was awarded the “Klio” prize, highly valued among Polish historians. For anyone who knew him it was no surprise that he decided at the last moment not to attend the presentation ceremony in Warsaw.

Beginning from the 1990s Zbigniew Mazur found a new area of scholarly interest. He began studying issues relating to the western and northern Polish regions, the so-called Regained Territories. The abundant literature on the subject from the times of the Polish People's Republic kept silent on certain issues. One such taboo was the issue of German cultural heritage in those regions. The fact that this subject was brought to light can be primarily attributed to the efforts of Zbigniew Mazur. A logical consequence of this was the appointment of Mazur in 1994 to head the research team responsible for a project called *Stosunek władz i społeczeństwa polskiego do niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych* [The

attitude of the Polish authorities and society towards German cultural heritage in the Western and Northern Lands]. This was one of a number of research projects entrusted to the Instytut Zachodni in the 1990s. Mazur stood out from others thanks to his broad interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as his awareness of the need to perform field research and to collaborate with a large number of researchers. As a project leader, he was very consistent in working to fulfil the objectives of the project. The aims and first results of his project were published as articles in *Przegląd Zachodni* and in the journal *Osteuropa*, and in 1997 a collective work edited by Mazur was published under the title *Wokół niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych* [On German cultural heritage in the Western and Northern Lands]. Apart from a comprehensive introduction to the publication, Mazur also wrote two of the chapters, again confirming that he had the talent to analyse subjects far beyond political history, which had been his main area of interest. The two chapters were titled *Albumy o Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych* [Albums of the Western and Northern Lands] and *Między ratuszem, kościołem i cmentarzem* [Between town hall, church and graveyard]. Subsequent results of research were presented in a collective work entitled *Wspólne dziedzictwo? Ze studiów nad stosunkiem do spuścizny kulturowej na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych* [A common heritage? Studies on attitudes towards cultural legacy in the Western and Northern Lands] published in 2000, and again edited by Mazur. He himself contributed an analysis of *Obchody świąt i rocznic na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych (1945-1948)* [Celebrations of holidays and anniversaries in the Western and Northern Lands (1945–1948)]. The project also led to shorter but very insightful independent publications by Mazur: *Dziedzictwo kulturowe Ziemi Zachodnich i Północnych w stosunkach polsko-niemieckich (1945-1970)* [Cultural heritage of the Western and Northern Lands in Polish–German relations (1945–1970)] published in 1999, and *O adaptacji niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych* [On the adaptation of German cultural heritage in the Western and Northern Lands] (2000). His writing discussed subjects that had previously been considered highly sensitive and mostly omitted from the literature on the subject.

Mazur was also interested in the western and northern territories in an entirely different context. Simultaneously he studied their significance in the Polish political thought of the 20th century, as well as in the Polish independence movement during Nazi occupation. Again, he decided to investigate a subject that had been poorly explored by Polish historiography. Three articles published by Mazur in the second half of the 1970s were indirectly related to this subject: an article on Polish–French relations during World War II published in *La Pologne et les affaires occidentales* in 1977, and two articles published in *Przegląd Zachodni* in 1979: *Memorandum Seydy-Lipskiego w sprawie polskiej granicy zachodniej* [The Seyda–Lipski Memorandum on the Polish western border] and *Zachodnia granica Polski w koncepcjach Departamentu Stanu podczas II wojny światowej* [The Polish western border in the concepts of the Department of State during World War II]. A crowning achievement of Mazur's extensive studies on the Polish history of Western thought was the book *Antenaci. O politycznym rodowodzie Instytutu Zachodniego* [The Ancestors. On the

political background of the Instytut Zachodni] published in 2002. The title reflected Mazur's characteristic modesty about his work. Reviewers noted that the book's scope reached far beyond the genesis of one institution, and deserved a prominent place in the historiography concerned with Polish political thought. This publication formed the beginning of a new series called the Library of *Przegląd Zachodni*, which focused on various historical sources related to the Institute. Mazur contributed several works to the series: „*Ojczyzna*” 1939-1945. *Dokumenty. Wspomnienia. Publicystyka* [“Homeland” 1939–1945. Documents. Memories. Political commentary] (published jointly with Aleksandra Pietrowicz), *Raporty z ziem wcielonych do III Rzeszy* [Reports from the territories incorporated into the Third Reich] (jointly with A. Pietrowicz and Maria Rutowska), and *Instytut Zachodni w dokumentach* [The Instytut Zachodni in documents] (jointly with Andrzej Choniawko). The authors of the latter publication aimed to describe the history of an institution which created a common ground for scholarship and politics. This publication formed a potential basis for a more general reflection on the links between the humanities and politics in both authoritarian and democratic states.

Mazur's achievements had for some time already been sufficient for him to obtain his habilitation degree. A decisive role in his decision to initiate the procedure was played by the then head of the Instytut Zachodni, Professor Anna Wolf-Powęska. At his habilitation exam, which took place at the Faculty of Humanities of Szczecin University in 2004, Mazur's lifetime academic achievements were evaluated. After receiving the degree, in May 2005 Mazur was promoted to the rank of *docent*, and pursuant to the *Act on research institutes* of 2010 he became an associate professor.

His academic interests still revolved mostly around German studies and political aspects of the history of the western and northern Regained Territories. He avidly followed political life in Germany, beginning every day at the Institute by reading German newspapers. The actions of Erika Steinbach, the president of the Federation of Expellees (*BdV*), aroused particular emotions. In 2006 he published a paper entitled *Centrum przeciwko wypędzeniom* [A centre against expulsions], which chronicled the events of 1999–2005 during successive stages of the Polish–German conflict concerning the establishment of a Centre as proposed by the Federation of Expellees. Mazur discussed Polish reactions to the proposed Centre in the journal *Problemy humanistyki* (“Issues of Humanities”) in 2007. In 2009 he published a paper entitled *Widoczny Znak 2005-2009* [The Visible Sign 2005–2009] in the Instytut Zachodni's journal series *Zeszyty Instytutu Zachodniego*, concerning the role played by the discourse surrounding the “expulsions” in Germany's internal politics. Mazur contributed significantly to the Instytut Zachodni's research project called *Republika Federalna Niemiec dwadzieścia lat po zjednoczeniu. Polityka-gospodarka-społeczeństwo* [The Federal Republic of Germany twenty years after reunification. Politics, economy, society]. This project resulted in the publication of nine volumes, and led to Mazur's book *Droga Niemiec do zjednoczenia wewnętrznego* [Germany's path to internal reunification]. He also co-authored a number of volumes published in 2012–2013: *Niemiecka polityka wobec Polski 1990-2010* [German policy towards Poland 1990–2010] (jointly

with B. Koszel and K. Malinowski) and *Kultura zjednoczonych Niemiec* [The culture of reunited Germany] (with H. Orłowski and M. Wagińska-Marzec).

His interdisciplinary approach to German studies and Polish–German relations was manifested in the area of “memory history”, which brought together history, social psychology, political studies and even art history. The first article that heralded Mazur’s interest in historical memory in Poland and German was published in 2004 in *Przegląd Zachodni* under the title *Upamiętnianie w latach 1945–1948 ofiar niemieckiej okupacji* [Commemoration of victims of German occupation in 1945–1948]. Subsequent texts on the subject by Mazur appeared in another journal of the Instytut Zachodni, *Siedlisko. Dziedzictwo kulturowe i tożsamość społeczności na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych* (“Settlement. Cultural heritage and social identity in the Western and Northern Lands”), and in *Przegląd Zachodni*. Particularly significant were the articles *Nowy patriotyzm niemiecki* [The new German patriotism] (*Przegląd Zachodni* 2008) and *Neue Wache – niemiecka pamięć* [Neue Wache – German memory] (*Przegląd Zachodni* 2011). Numerous expert analyses concerning both Polish and German historical memory were published by Mazur in *Biuletyn Instytutu Zachodniego* (“Bulletin of the Instytut Zachodni”). Since he was valued as one of the leading experts on the subject in Poland, he was frequently invited to speak at conferences organised by the most prestigious research centres. It was with enthusiasm that he joined a research project initiated by the Instytut Zachodni in 2013 called *Polskie elity polityczne wobec stosunków Polski z Niemcami w ramach Unii Europejskiej* [Polish political elites and their attitude towards Polish–German relations within the European Union].

In publications on communist Poland’s policy with regard to the western and northern regions, Mazur focused on issues that had previously been given little attention. This is most prominently manifested in three articles: *O legitymizowaniu przynależności Ziemi Zachodnich i Północnych do Polski* [On the legitimisation of the incorporation of the Western and Northern Lands into Poland] included in a collective work published in 2006 and edited by A. Sakson, entitled *Ziemie Odzyskane/ Ziemi Zachodnie i Północne – 60 lat w granicach państwa polskiego. O degermanizacji Dolnego Śląska (1948)* [The Regained Territories/Western and Northern Lands – 60 years within Polish borders. On the de-Germanisation of Lower Silesia (1948)] (*Siedlisko* 2006), and *Igraszki z niemieckim dziedzictwem* [Playing with German heritage] (*Siedlisko* 2007). Apart from his main areas of interest he studied the propaganda campaign of the Polish United Workers’ Party after the address of the Polish bishops to German bishops (*Przegląd Zachodni* 2007). He wrote separate articles about the relationship of Janusz Pajewski with the Instytut Zachodni, published in a 2007 collective work entitled *Janusz Pajewski – człowiek i uczone* [Janusz Pajewski – man and scholar] and about the research into the German occupation carried out at the Institute by Karol Maria Pospieszalski (*Przegląd Zachodni* 2009). In 2011 he published in *Przegląd Zachodni* an article on the topography of the Nazi terror during World War II.

Despite the fact that for a long time he effectively resisted any attempts to engage him in teaching work, he eventually gave in, overcoming his aversion to public

speaking. He prepared his lectures and seminars with utmost care, and delivered them to students of the College of Humanities and Journalism in Poznań (2005–2006), Szczecin University (2006), the Institute of Applied Linguistics at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (2009–2010), and the College of National Economy in Kutno (2011–2015). His lectures concerned various aspects of German studies, Polish–German relations, and Polish foreign policy.

His last text, an article entitled *Max Weber i niemiecka klęska* [Max Weber and the German defeat], published in 2015 in *Przegląd Zachodni*, reflected Mazur's new direction of interdisciplinary research concerning German historical memory. The research focused on World War I, which Mazur had not previously studied in this context. The result of this broader research was intended to be a major publication on the subject. At the same time he was preparing a work on Germany's path towards external reunification.

Despite his deteriorating health, Zbigniew Mazur could not imagine a life without studying and research. For his colleagues at the Institute, he will remain a model of analytical thoroughness and creativity.

Andrzej Choniawko