

A note on biography

Jerzy Tomaszewski was born on 8 October 1930 in Radomsko to Dionizy Tomaszewski and Irena Stanisława Podgórska. After graduating from the Książę Józef Poniatowski Secondary School, he began to study economics at the Central School of Planning and Statistics [SGPiS] in Warsaw, where he was awarded a master's degree in 1954, having submitted his thesis in the history of economics entitled *Kapitały obce w Banku Handlowym w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym* [Foreign capital at Bank Handlowy in Warsaw in the interwar period]. In 1957, he married Zofia Antosiak, a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Their first and only child, Agata, was born a year later.

A year after obtaining his master's degree, he was awarded a PhD degree at SGPiS, under the guidance of professor A. Grodek, and after his death – professor Witold Kula, on the basis of the dissertation entitled *Polityka stabilizacyjna Władysława Grabskiego* [Władysław Grabski's stabilization policy]. In 1963, at the age of only 34, he successfully submitted his post-doctoral (habilitation) dissertation entitled *Z dziejów Polesia 1921-1939. Zarys stosunków społeczno-ekonomicznych* [The history of Polesia 1921–1939: Outline of socio-economic relations]. He was awarded the title of associate professor [profesor nadzwyczajny] in 1972 and full professor [profesor zwyczajny] in 1980.

Jerzy Tomaszewski was committed to scientific research from the beginning of his studies. In his first year of studies, he was the originator of the tutorial in economic history. After graduation, he spent two years as assistant [aspirant] at the Institute of Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party [KC PZPR]. In January 1957, following the closing down of the Institute of Social Sciences, he returned to SGPiS, where he was initially employed as research assistant [asystent] and next as adjunct at the Chair of Economic History. He was continuously employed at SGPiS until 1965.

In 1965, he took up a position at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW, where he was in charge of Międzywydziałowe Studium Nauk Politycznych [Inter-Faculty Department of Political Science]. In 1969, by the minister's decision, Jerzy Tomaszewski was transferred from the Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW to the Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw. There, from 1972, he headed the Section of Contemporary Political History, and from 1975 the Section of Contemporary Political and Social History. Between 1972 and 1975, he was elected deputy dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw. In 1983, he initiated a seminar dedicated to the history of Jews in Poland at the Institute of History of the University of Warsaw. In 1990, he brought to conclusion the agreement between the Jacek Fliderbaum Foundation and the University of Warsaw. As a result, the Mordechai Anielewicz Centre for the Study and Teaching of the History and Culture of Jews in Poland was created within the Faculty of History of the University of Warsaw. Jerzy Tomaszewski served as head of the Centre until his retirement in 2001. He continued his scientific activity afterwards. He was a lecturer at the Higher School of National Economy in Kutno [WSGK Kutno] and conducted a master's seminar at the Institute of History.

Jerzy Tomaszewski never cared very much about political activity. He became increasingly interested in communism in his young years, only to lose interest soon. Subsequently, he was active in the political organizations of the Polish People's Republic [PRL]. From March 1947 he was a member of the Association of Fighting Youth [ZWM], where he was responsible for editorial work and propaganda, as well as finance, and later on served as district management board member. In June 1949, he was admitted to the Polish United Workers' Party [PZPR]. In the 1980s, he headed a small unit of the *Solidarność* Trade Union at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Warsaw. From 1988 he firmly declared that he was not a member of any political organizations.

He maintained international relations throughout his scientific career. He often visited Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, the UK, the USSR, Finland and other countries. He conducted research i.a. in Hungary, Bulgaria, the GDR, USA and Sweden. He spent a year in Israel (1986–1987). His participation in international conferences was often preceded by a private invitation from his colleagues – professors, which demonstrates that he was a highly valued scientist. His intensive international scientific visits ended with a one-year scholarship program at the Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University (1989–1990).

Jerzy Tomaszewski's scientific interests were affected, as he mentioned himself, by his recollections from the Second World War. These experiences made him a firm opponent of antisemitism. He was the founder and member of the Programme Council of the Association Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia *Otwarta Rzeczpospolita*. From 1970, he was also a member of the Scientific Council of the Jewish Historical Institute and later on the chairman of the Council. He was active on the editorial board of *Biuletyn ŻIH* [Bulletin of the Jewish Historical Institute], continued as *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* [Jewish History Quarterly]. He played an important role in the establishment of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN. Jerzy Tomaszewski died on 4 November 2014.

About the book

The publication consists of 19 papers by Jerzy Tomaszewski, handpicked by the editors. The editorial board has made the selection based on their subjective judgment and their members' conviction about the relevance, weight and usefulness of the papers in contemporary research on the history of the Jews in Poland and in historical disputes. Most texts refer to Poland's history in the 1920s and 1930s as this was the period that Jerzy Tomaszewski took the greatest interest in. The topics revolve around three theme blocks: society and politics, economy and historiography. The papers were originally published by various publishing houses, both in Poland and abroad, and in various periods, hence a bibliography of the works included in this volume can be found at the end, with references to original publishing houses. Please note that two selected texts have been found in the author's archive, and have not been published in Polish yet.

Impact on historiography

Owing to his versatile education and interests, Jerzy Tomaszewski is remembered by many not only as an outstanding historian, but also as one of the last polyhistorians. His interests were initially focused on the economic history of the interwar period. He soon shifted his attention to general history, in particular the Central European countries of the 20th century. He was highly regarded as one of the few Polish specialists in Czech studies. He mainly focused on the history of the interwar and postwar Czechoslovakia, and next the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria. His research resulted in various relations, which he fostered throughout his scientific career. He returned to these topics at the end of his life and published books about the history of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria, which recapitulated and crowned his research in these fields.

He dedicated almost 40 years of his life and successful academic career to national and ethnic minorities in the Second Polish Republic. This topic came to prominence in his entire scientific and extrascientific activity. Jerzy Tomaszewski's first texts mainly elaborated on the economy, obviously in respect of his education. Later on, he enlarged on other issues such as Polish-Jewish relations, antisemitism, political, social and legal processes.

His social engagement and activity to the benefit of marginalized and demonized minorities, were reflected many a time in the texts that he had written. He avoided generalizations, seeking to present different points of view. He encouraged other researchers to act in the same manner. Jerzy Tomaszewski's research and activities made him one of the best-known researchers in the international world of academia. Throughout his scientific career he maintained international relations with researchers from all across the world whose fields of interest included the Jewish issue in the 20th century Poland. He was a pioneer in this area, charting the course for Polish scientific research. As a result, Polish achievements in this domain have been publicized outside Poland, while Jerzy Tomaszewski's papers and publicizing activity have helped broaden the social knowledge of national minorities and have made a valuable contribution to a debate in Poland.