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ALOJZY KONIOR – AN OUTLINE OF THE COMENIOLOGIST’S PORTRAIT

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The traditions of Leszno comeniology reach the first half of the 19th century. Then, basing on the documents from the archives of St. John’s parish in Leszno, some authors began to describe the story of the Czech Brethren and Comenius. One of them who took up this task and deserves a special coverage is PhD Alojzy Konior. Not only is he the author and the editor of papers on the subject, but, above all, an initiator, coordinator and a popularizer of numerous events which affected the development of research on Komeński. Thanks to his activities the knowledge on Comenius and his work has a wider range.

It was merely a chance or a coincidence that Alojzy Konior settled in Leszno and channelled his interests on Komeński. He was born on 6 March in 1925 in Międzybrodzie Bialskie. At the end of the Second World War he arrived in Leszno as a young officer of the 2nd Polish Army. In 1947 he began to study professional adjustment for two years in Krapkowice. Then he studied in Coal-mining Technical School in Bytom. Starting from 1952 he was doing a course in the Central Institute of Physical Education (the latter Academy of Physical Education). Finally, he commenced pedagogical studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. He settled in Leszno for good in 1954 when he started a family. From that time he worked as a PE and social studies teacher



and ran the schools in Rawicz and in Leszno. From 1963 to 1985 he was the headmaster of the Technical School in Leszno. Alojzy Konior also worked in the local government in Leszno as a councilman from 1976 to 1982.

Alojzy Konior's interest in Comenius stems from his cooperation with Leszno Cultural Society and particularly with Zdzisław Smoluchowski who encouraged Alojzy Konior to organize a conference on Comenius. The idea derived from the theatrical passion of Smoluchowski – he was a graduate from Cracow Theatrical Study. From 1962 he run the Inter-school Theatre of Leszno pursuing the Komeński's form of a play with theater. As a result of the cooperation, from 1969 to 2009, the Leszno Cultural Society organized 53 conferences, scientific and popular science sessions. Invariably, Alojzy Konior was the initiator and organizer of these events. The first conference, under the auspices of UNESCO, took place from 10th till 20th November 1970 on the occasion of the tricentennial anniversary of Komeński's death. One of the events accompanying the sessions of Leszno students, a concert and a play „The Game of Diogenes” was a scientific conference organized from 19th to 20th November. The core of the conference was the heritage of Komeński's thought in the contemporary reality (‘Jan Amos Komeński and the issues of contemporary pedagogy’) The co-organizers of the event were the Institute of Pedagogy of UAM (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) and Greater Poland Cultural Society. The program of the conference included readings of plenty of papers by scientists to name but a few: Janina Bielecka, Heliodor Muszyński, Kazimierz Kubik, Leon Leja, Maria Walentynowicz, Jan Helwig and Stanisław Michalski.

A few further meetings were also on the subject of comeniology. One of them was the ‘Polish-Czech symposium of comeniologists’ (27th-28th May 1978). The papers were read by Emil Jelinek, Jerzy Śliziński, Zdzisław Smoluchowski, Adam Bieniaszewski, Jan Čapek, Dagmar Čapková, Marta Bečková, Josef Mátej, Andrej Čuma and many others. Alojzy Konior presented his paper ‘The Currency of the J.A. Komeński's Views in Selected Works on Pedagogical Literature of 1970-1977’. Another conference organized by PhD Konior focused on pedagogical matters ‘The Middle School of Leszno and the Middle School of Sieraków. Polish-Czech Symposium of Comeniology’ (26th-27th May 1983). The speakers, among others, were: Dorota Żołądź, Marta Bečková, Jírí Beneš, Marié Kyrálová. The organizer himself, Alojzy Konior, presented a paper entitled ‘The Ideas of Jan Amos Komeński in Selected Works of Pedagogical Periodicals from 1978 to 1982’ where he went on with his previous

research. The forthcoming conferences were of an interdisciplinary kind: 'The Contribution of Dissenters in the Development of the Culture of South-west Greater Poland' (30th May 1986), 'Daniel Ernest Jabłoński, the Rector of the Academic Middle-school in Leszno from 1686 to 1691' (1-st July 1989', a jubilee conference 'Jan Amos Komeński – Today and Tomorrow' (20th - 21st November 1992). Another conference took place a year later 'The Czech Brothers in Greater Poland in 16th and 17th Century' (16th November 1993). And yet another one, in cooperation with the State Higher Vocational School of J.A. Komeński 'The 380th anniversary of the arrival of J.A. Komeński and the Czech Brethren in Leszno' (9th June 2009). Alojzy Konior consequently invited some renowned experts on Komeński, the Czech Brethren, pedagogy and the epoch. The papers read during the symposiums were published in collective works or in 'Przyjaciel Ludu' ('Folk's Friend') – a periodical issued by the Leszno Cultural Society. Under the editorship of PhD Konior some collective volumes were published: 'Daniel Ernest Jabłoński, the Rector of the Academic Middle-school in Leszno from 1686 to 1691', 'Jan Amos Komeński – Today and Tomorrow – Publications from a Scientific Session for the 400th anniversary of Komeński's birthday' (Leszno 1992), 'The Czech Brethren in Greater Poland in 16th and 17th Century: materials from the scientific conference' (Leszno 1993), 'The 380th anniversary of the arrival of J.A. Komeński and the Czech Brethren in Leszno (1628-2008)'. Publications were also issued on the occasion of the 380th anniversary of the arrival of the Czech Brethren in Leszno and the 10th anniversary of the founding of State Higher Vocational School in Leszno (Leszno 2009).

The prominence of these publications was accentuated by the reviews of noted scientists: Janusz Tazbir, Tadeusz Pilch, Janusz T. Maciuszek who affected their final form. Some publications accompanied by introductions of remarkable representatives of the world of science, to mention Bogdan Suchodolski. The reviews of the conference publications appeared in 'Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki' ('The Quarterly Journal of the History of Science and Technology'), 'Analect', 'Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny' ('The Quarterly Journal of Pedagogy') and 'Rocznik Leszczyński' ('The Annual of Leszno'). The conferences and publications were closely connected with academic background, Polish Academy of Science and foreign institutions: The Faculty of Philosophy of the Czech Sciences Academy in Prague (Filosoficky Ustav CAV) and the German Society of Comeniologists (Deutsche Comenius Gesellschaft e.V.) PhD Alojzy Konior has been closely cooperating with the State

Higher Vocational School in Leszno, right since its inception in 1999. The outcome of the conference from 1978 was a long lasting cooperation with Adam Mickiewicz University professor Jolanta Dworzaczkowa, an indisputable scientific authority in the field of the Czech Brethren and the author of some valuable publications on J.A. Komeński. Her writings, the fruits of this cooperation, appeared in some collective works published by Leszno Cultural Society, 'Przyjaciel Ludu' ('The Folk's Friend') or 'Rocznik Leszczyński' ('The Leszno Annual'). Two publications by Dworzaczkowa deserve a closer look: 'Schooling in Leszno till 1656. Teachers and Programmes (Leszno 2003) and, published in cooperation with Leszno Cultural Society 'The Czech Brethren in Greater Poland in 16th and 17th centuries (Warsaw 1997).

Independently from organizing the conferences Konior initiated other publications on comeniology, including 'Individuality and stereotype of intellectualism in Leszno in the 17th century' (Leszno 1998) by Adam Matuszewski. The efforts of Konior lead to the translations of Comenius' letters, originally in Latin, archived at Sheffield University. As a consequence the following letters were published in 'Przyjaciel Ludu' in 1993 (nr 1 and 2): the correspondence between Comenius and Samuel Hartlib, the Komeński's letters to his son-in-law Piotr Figulus (in the publication 'Jan Amos Komeński and 380th anniversary of the arrival of the Czech Brethren in Leszno'. Publications were also issued on the occasion of the 380-th anniversary of the arrival of the Czech Brethren in Leszno and the 10th anniversary of State Higher Vocational School in Leszno, (Leszno 2009). Also in 2017 24 letters were published – a record of the acquaintance between Komeński and Cyprian Kinner. ('Jan Amos Komeński and his correspondence with Cyprian Kinner from Elbląg 1642-1648, Sheffield-Warsaw-Leszno'). This work was published in Polish and English with a critical analysis as a collective work of Polish and English researchers.

Apart from comeniology Alojzy Konior's interests revolved around other historical stories from Leszno which resulted in scientific conferences and publications: 'Jan Jonston, (Leszno, 1984), 'Leszno and the House of Leszczyńscy' (Leszno 1997), 'Stanisław Leszczyński – king, politician, writer and patron' (Leszno 2001), 'Regional Education – Cultural Heritage' (Leszno 2002), 'Jan Jonston – the 400th birthday anniversary (1603-2003)', 'European Scientific Thought...' (Leszno 2003), 'Johann Heermann. Life and Works' (Leszno 2008). Alojzy Konior came up with the idea of creating 'Biographical

Dictionary of Leszno' (Leszno 2004). Another, extended edition of the dictionary was published in 2011.

Along with his coordinating and editing activity Konior published his papers in 'Przyjaciel Ludu', 'Życie Szkoły' ('The Life of Schooling') and a Czech periodical 'Studia Comeniana et Historica' published by the museum in Uher-ski Brod.

The conferences and jubilee events were accompanied by various initiatives like, for example, casting commemorative medals. Out of more than 20 medals, 3 were devoted to Komeński: in 1970 a brass medal was created by Józef Stasiński, in 1978, on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of Komeński's arrival in Leszno another brass medal was designed by Zbigniew Łukowiak. The same artist was the author of the medal cast on the occasion of Comenius' birthday in 1992.

'From Komeński to Zamenhof' was the name of the exhibition organised on the occasion of the 405th birthday anniversary of Komeński and the 80th anniversary of Zamenhof's death. The audience could see the exhibition in Prague, Przerów, Nymburk and Ołomuniec. The venue in Poland was the Czech Center in Warsaw. The exhibition in Leszno was the result of the cooperation of Alojzy Konior and František Hybel, the head of Comenius Museum in Przerow.

Alojzy Konior has been awarded the official Polish decorations: Officer's Cross of Poland's Revival, Knight's Cross of the Order of Rebirth of Poland, Golden Cross of Merit. In 2002 Alojzy Konior received the title of the Merited for Leszno and in 2017 a medal Labor Omnia Vincit granted by the Board of Great Poland Cultural Society.

PhD Alojzy Konior has been incessantly active: he will publish another paper on the history of Leszno comeniology in 2020. He participates in cultural life very actively sharing his experience and vast knowledge. His success in managing the Technical School has resulted in his good contact with students: the school, informally, is called 'Konior'. That definitely has to be credited to his popularity and respect he has earned from students, teachers and Leszno community. Naturally, Konior's activity also falls into the pattern of utilizing Komeński's ideas in schooling.

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