

The Basket Workshop Warehouse Manager: Memory by Alfred Wielopolski on Józef Kostrzewski's Fate During the German Nazi Occupation Time (1941–1943)

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Abstract: The narrative by professor Alfred Wielopolski recently discovered by the author at the Ossolineum Library in Wrocław. During World War II Wielopolski offered shelter at his Klemensówka/Kolanko farm in Nisko district to professor Józef Kostrzewski, a prominent Polish archaeologist, who, hunted by the German secret police *Gestapo*, spent over three years concealed there, writing his five most important books.¹

Keywords: Józef Kostrzewski, Alfred Wielopolski, World War II, *Gestapo*, conspiracy

Count Alfred Wielopolski² (1905–1996) has written the short memory presented below at the request of professor Konrad Jażdżewski³ (1908–1985), a close friend and long-time associate of professor Józef Kostrzewski⁴ (1885–1969). Jażdżewski then used some details contained within in his diary (Jażdżewski 1995). The author of these words, within his thorough research on the life and work of Józef Kostrzewski, carried out in 2009–2017, took up the search for that document (among others – in the private archive of Konrad Jażdżewski in Łódź⁵ and at the Szczecin State Archive where Alfred Wielopolski was an employee). Finally, the manuscript was found in its author's legacy deposited at the Ossolineum Library in Wrocław.⁶ It is kept there as non-catalogued material; the text has been written on the reverse sides of the recycled cards, in two slightly different versions: as a manuscript and a typescript. We present it below with necessary comments in the footmarks and the editor's additions in rectangular brackets (Fig. 1–14).

¹ Kaczmarek and Prinke 2017.

² Economist, politologist, historian of law and economy; owner of Klemensówka estate near Nisko. MA in law (Warsaw University, 1927), PhD in political sciences and economy (Freiburg, 1931); professor of Technical University in Szczecin.

³ Prehistorian specializing in the Neolithic of Central Europe and Early Middle Age of Poland; pupil of Józef Kostrzewski; Professor of Łódź University and Head of the Łódź Archaeological Museum during the years 1945–1971 (Mikołajczyk 1991; Blombergowa 2018).

⁴ Prehistorian, professor of Poznań University, member of Polish Academy of Sciences; ca 1000 publications on Polish and Central European prehistory; leader of numerous excavations in Poland including the long term research of the fortified settlement of Lusatian Culture in Biskupin, Żnin district (Kaczmarek and Prinke 2017).

⁵ Now deposited at the Łódź Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum.

⁶ The Ossolineum Library in Wrocław, Department of Manuscripts, ref. Akc. 109/97.

The Document

Alfred Wielopolski

On Professor Józef Kostrzewski at Klemensówka during the [German Nazi] occupation

'In 1940 or perhaps in 1941 (I do not remember exactly) the late [professor] Zygmunt Wojciechowski⁷ turned to me and suggested that I give shelter to prof[essor] Józef Kostrzewski, who was in danger of falling into the hands of the Gestapo.⁸ I lived then in Zarzecze near Nisko.⁹ It was a property owned by dr Stanisław Hofmokl,¹⁰ grandfather of my wife. The manor house, surrounded by a garden, was located on a hill just above the San River, at a distance of about 3 km from Klemensówka manor; the owner lived in this manor house.

I with my wife and children had then moved to [neighbouring] Klemensówka, where I worked on the farm, which included agriculture and production of baskets (I was a demobilized lieutenant back then, after the September [1939] Campaign, and had avoided detention in a POW camp).

⁷ Zygmunt Wojciechowski (1900–1955), historian of state and law, co-author of the doctrine of the Polish Western Thought; PhD at Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov (1924); since 1925 at Poznań University (deputy head of the Chair of the History of Polish Law, professor in 1937); head of the Western Institute (Instytut Zachodni) in Poznań (1944–1955); member of Polish Academy of Sciences (1952).

⁸ Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei) – German Nazi political secret police.

⁹ Zarzecze near Nisko – village in SE Poland, 250 km SSE from Warsaw.

¹⁰ Stanisław Hofmokl (1869–1943), lawyer, landlord, maecenas of arts and artists, publicist; attorney in Lvov, owner of the Zarzecze estate near Nisko since 1908; grandfather of prof. Alfred Wielopolski's wife Salomea Woytkowska. During German Nazi occupation, apart from Kostrzewski, several other eminent persons found shelter at Zarzecze (Ogiński 2001).



Fig. 1. Map of the wandering of Józef Kostrzewski (1885-1969) during the period of German Nazi occupation. Prepared: A. Prinke.



Fig. 2. Alfred Wielopolski (1905-1996) – economist, politologist, historian of law and economy; owner of Klemensówka estate. Photo of his marriage ceremony with Salomea Woytkowska, granddaughter of Stanisław Hofmokl (21 September 1935). Photo from the Village Archive of Zarzecze near Nisko.

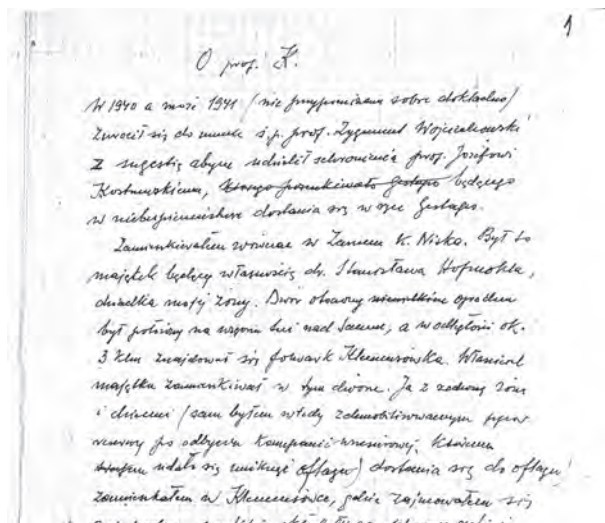


Fig. 3. Memory by Alfred Wielopolski: manuscript version, page one (fragment). Photo from the Ossolineum Library, Wrocław.

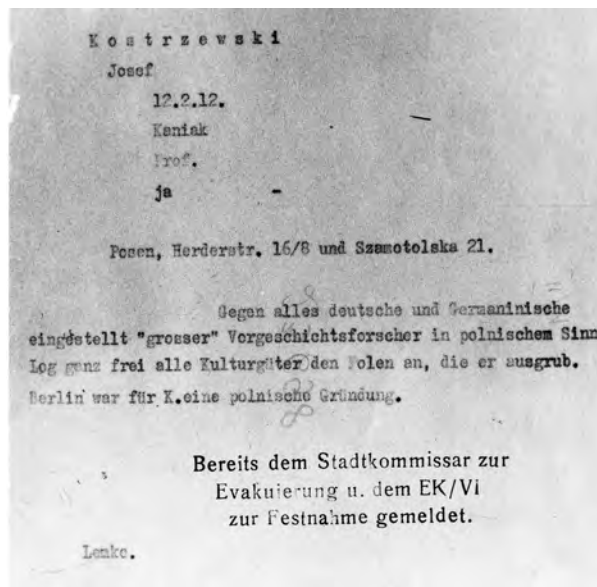


Fig. 5. Order of detention of Józef Kostrzewski issued by German Nazi administration soon after the outbreak of the war (1939). Photo from the Polish Academy of Sciences – The Archives in Warsaw – Poznan Branch (ref. III P-51).

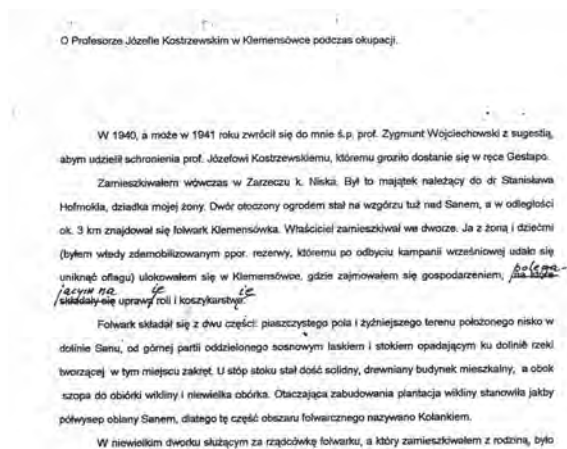


Fig. 4. Memory by Alfred Wielopolski: typescript version, page one (fragment). Photo from the Ossolineum Library, Wrocław.

The farm consisted of two parts: a sandy field and a more fertile part, located low in the San valley, separated in the upper part by a border of pine forest and sloping down to the valley. At the foot of the slope there was a wooden residential building, a hut for the processing of wicker and a small shed. The whole surrounding field (a wicker plantation) was something like a peninsula surrounded by a bend in the river; because of the configuration, this part of the farm was called: Kolanko (The Little Knee). I lived with my family in a small manor [at Klemensówka], serving as an agronomist's house, where it was very cramped for space, and also from time to time, uninvited guests on behalf of Kreislandrat¹¹ appeared there: so I decided to host



Fig. 6. Stanisław Hofmokl (1869–1943) – owner of Zarzecze near Nisko estate. Photo: A. Prinke (2012).

¹¹ Kreislandrat – head of the district in the system of the German Nazi administration in occupied Poland.



Fig. 7. Manor house of Stanisław Hofmokl at Zarzecze near Nisko. Photo from the Village Archive of Zarzecze near Nisko.



Fig. 10. Kolanko farm near Nisko. Basket workshop's warehouse. 2012. Photo: A. Prinke.



Fig. 8. Manor house of Alfred Wielopolski at Klemensówka. 1999. Photo from the Village Archive of Zarzecze near Nisko.



Fig. 9. Kolanko farm near Nisko. Basket workshop. 2012. Photo: A. Prinke.



Fig. 11. Karol and Klementyna Bilicz – Józef Kostrzewski's landlords, with their daughter Bogusława (Gusia), professor's pupil during his stay at Kolanko. Photo from the Polish Academy of Sciences – The Archives in Warsaw – Poznan Branch (ref. III P-51).

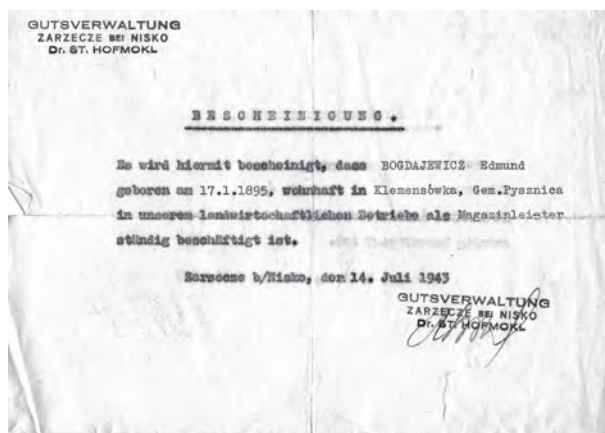


Fig. 12. Certificate of Józef Kostrzewski's job as the manager of the basket workshop's warehouse at Kolanko (14 August 1943). Photo from the Polish Academy of Sciences – The Archives in Warsaw – Poznan Branch (ref. III P-51).



Fig. 13. Soon after the war, Józef Kostrzewski expressed his gratitude to the hospitable Bilicz couple in the way he used to do: by dedicating to them his book *Pradzieje Polski* [Prehistory of Poland], written at Kolanko. Poznań 1949.



Fig. 14. View of the urn cemetery of Lusatian Culture at the edge of the San River valley near Kolanko. 2012. Photo: A. Prinke.

prof[essor] Kostrzewski, hiding under the pseudonym Edmund Bogdajewicz, in that wooden house at Kolanko. He occupied the house with the family of Mr Karol Bilicz, my right hand man in the management of basket manufacturing.

Professor Kostrzewski lived there in a modest room under the direct care of this noble family. Mr Karol Bilicz was completely trustworthy and the care of his wife, plus location of the house ensured the best conditions for safety. On the other hand the professor was forced to remain in near isolation, the only luxury that he had, was enough kerosene for his lamp during the long autumn and winter evenings, during which he wrote his scientific works.

Ironically, on the slope along the road leading to Kolanko, there was a cemetery of a pre-slavic culture.¹² Before the war, when cultivating this field, urns were found and several items were secured in very good condition. Strolling along this field, the professor probably sometimes fancied archaeological research, but this could result in attracting unwanted attention.

Despite living separately, I met with the pleasant guest almost every day. Our conversation mainly concerned the current military and political events, they often referred also to the scientific interests of the Professor: I remember his polemic enthusiasm against some (but I do not remember which) Brückner's¹³ thesis: it stuck in my memory, because in such moments Professor mumbled the name of his opponent: 'Brückmark' says this or that. As we chatted the Professor repeatedly asked me to give him some work on the farm, sometimes we sat on sacks of grain while I supervised threshing. The Professor was extremely subtle and delicate, and I never heard any grumbling or resentment at his situation worthy of pity from his mouth. I never heard him refer to his current living conditions, which, unfortunately, were all too Spartan; instead, he often asked me to entrust him with some real farm work. I was troubled by this, not wanting to expose him to the efforts to which he was not accustomed. At his insistence I offered him one early spring the screening of crowns of trees in a cherry orchard adjacent to the farm. The Professor performed this task with incredible regularity in a sometimes cool March wind.

As happens in daily contact with each other, sometimes I playfully teased with the professor on two topics: his anti-alcoholic and anti-Semitic approach, but as for the

¹² Cremation cemetery of Lusatian Culture.

¹³ Aleksander Brückner (1856–1939), Polish philologist and slavist, historian of literature and of Polish culture. Studies in Lvov, habilitation in Vienna (1878); docent of University in Lvov; since 1881 professor of Berlin University. Member of Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cracow, Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg and Scientific Society in Lvov (Berbelicki 1989).

second, it happened that a Jew from some distant place showed up to find shelter for a few days. I remember that the professor, when hearing about it, sprang up vigorously from a bag of grain, on which he was sitting and ran to the local farmers in search of refuge for the newcomer.

At the end of his stay, in 1943 or 1944, conditions in the area became very difficult. German raids against the partisans started, resulting in the deportation of people to work in Germany, also the security conditions were getting worse. Due to the nightly attacks from the forest, I often fell victim to such visits, which deprived the farm not only of livestock, but also of personal resources, including a wardrobe.¹⁴ Once the house at Kolanko was attacked and Mr Karol Bilicz was severely beaten, and lost his personal belongings.¹⁵ This, as well as the possibility of obtaining another shelter, prompted the professor to leave his hiding place at Kolanko.

I kept the memory of a man of extraordinary modesty and subtlety of feelings. A few years later, when they were grown, my children asked me who this mysterious gentleman was. I tried to explain to them his scientific achievements and on this background a tale was created, which I allow myself to attach to this short report'.

[A note below the document:] 'Memory rewritten from a fragment of a manuscript, which is located on the back of item 24: The story of Janina, in the file titled *Fragmentary notes*; retyped by Aleksander Labuda'.

Acknowledgments

My acknowledgments go to: prof. Aleksander Labuda, Wrocław, for his valuable consultations; the staff of the Ossolineum Library, Wrocław, for their

substantial help in locating this *discovery*; the staff of the Szczecin State Archive (Ms Maria Frankel, MA – deputy director and Maciej Szukała, PhD) for their help in the reserch; Mrs Maria Jażdżewska-Majda, Lodz – for enabling my access to the private archives of her Father – prof. Konrad Jażdżewski; Mrs Aniela Ryznar, Zarzecze near Nisko – my guide through the area of Klemensówka and its environs; and, last but not least, for Mrs Tessa (Teresa) Kostrzewska-Mendez, granddaughter of professor Józef Kostrzewski, for the revision of this text as the native speaker of English.

Translated by Katarzyna Wasiak and Tessa (Teresa) Kostrzewska-Mendez

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¹⁴ One of the victims was Stanisław Hofmokl, owner of Zarzecze estate, who was shot at the threshold of his manor house (Kostrzewski 1970: 239).

¹⁵ Incident described by Józef Kostrzewski who also suffered during this robbery (Kostrzewski 1970: 235–238).