

ZBIGNIEW FLESZYŃSKI

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Tytuł fragmentu relacji	The school in Narutowicza Street
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The school in Narutowicza Street

I went to primary school in Narutowicza Street, to the so-called „teacher training school”. It was a primary school at the Teacher Training College. After leaving that school I passed an exam to Stanisław Staszic Secondary School in Lublin, where I went until WW2 i.e. 1939. I lived near the school, it was a 2 minute walk, because our school was at the square which is today called the Liberty Square, where Unia Lubelska secondary school is situated at present. Staszic Secondary School was moved later on to another building, but it had been earlier very close to the building where I lived: just opposite the building where I was born, yet they moved to the newly built edifice in Racławickie Avenue so I had quite a long way to walk to school; so I had to go out early enough to get to school i.e. it was at the least a forty minute walk. I had school colleagues of different backgrounds, from various parts of town and of various denominations. At the teacher training primary school to which I went at the beginning... classes were conducted ... the school building was not large, because there was the teacher training college there as well and except for lessons we had with regular teachers we also had classes with the students of the teacher training college. They had their practice classes with the primary school students. Before the war, unfortunately, I do not remember the date now, a gym was built for us; it was equipped quite well. We also had a canteen, where we could eat breakfasts, and lunches and which served free meals for impecunious students. They had free breakfasts and lunches paid by the school. My family went to the Church of the Nuns of the Visitation. It was also just a few steps away from my primary school; it was one minute and a half or two minutes away from the school. After leaving primary school I went to Staszic secondary school, which was the most modern school of its time in Lublin, where there were no classrooms assigned to each class of students, but classes of particular school subject were conducted in different classrooms. So, there were geography classrooms, well equipped physics and chemistry classrooms, the biology classroom was well equipped, too. Next, there were three history classrooms. I studied the German language so I remember that there was a classroom for German lessons, and there was an inscription above the classroom reading in Gothic letters: „Hier wir nur deutsh gesprochen.” So when we entered that classroom and someone wanted to leave for a while or to be excused from class he had to speak German to ask for that. When the headmaster issued a circular letter which was frequently brought to classrooms by the school care taker, that letter was read out in

German. Our German teacher was at first Mr. Józef Klinkhofer, and later on Ms. Gertruda Hermanowa. Both of them were killed during the Nazi occupation in Poland because they were Jews. I also remember other teachers of Staszic secondary school: the headmaster was Mr. Tadeusz Moniecki, who was of short height but highly respected by the students. Next, I well remember Professor Jan Dobrzański with whom I had been in contact almost until his death a few years ago. Professor Dobrzański was later a professor of Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin, so me and some of my colleagues visited him at his flat even in the last days of his life; he had lived in Graniczna Street before he passed away. I remember him very well. Next, I remember my class tutor, who was born Ukrainin; his name was Mr. Wasilij Biłyk and was a craft teacher, and I must say that the craft classroom was very well equipped. We started from cardboard, paper, later it was wood, metal, glass, we did compositions of the combination of all those materials. And I also remember the Latin teacher, Professor Bąk, and the other Latin teacher, Professor Pluciński; there also was Professor Wojciechowski, who worked at the Lublin Board of Education, Professor Zalewski who was a gym teacher, and Professor Franciszek Dec, a geography teacher. Maths was taught by Mr. Tadeusz Lewacki, who later worked at Staszica secondary school after the war. Reverend Czesław Nowicki had religion classes with us. Mr. Józef Ostrowski was our music and singing teacher. Mr. Dymitr Sentaroski or Santocki, I do not remember his name exactly taught us the Polish language and literature. The physics teacher I told you about was Mr. Kazimierz Trzeciak, whereas our French teacher was Mr. Ludwik Zengteler, Ph.D. I very well remember the school care takers; there was Mr. Bogucki with such large handlebars, which were twisted upwards; another caretaker was the stockily Franciszek Charuta. I do not remember one of them: I know there were four of them and the fourth one was Mr. Józef Limek, who was also a stoker, and a handyman; later he ran driving licence courses for motorcycles at our school. The school had a gym which was quite well equipped; there was a large sports field where we played football, basketball and netball in the summertime, and in winter an ice hockey court was arranged where I quite frequently played, because I was on the school ice hockey representation team in the years 1935 – 1936. So I played hockey in winter, and in summer: I was in the school tennis club. We also had school self-government, class self-governments, whose representatives i.e. class mayors were members of the school self government. We had a school shop which was quite well supplied and skillfully managed. I do not remember any swindle or scandal connected with that school shop ran by students. We could buy biscuits, doughnuts, sweets, notebooks and other necessary things during every break. The classrooms called subject laboratories included: the Polish language laboratory, the French language laboratory, the German language laboratory, the Classical languages laboratory, the history laboratory, the geography laboratory, the biology laboratory with a natural specimen room, and a show room because our chemistry and physics teachers demonstrated practical exercises to us. Except for that, there was the so-called spare room – for those students who had the same kind of classes concurrently with the other class but with other teachers. Besides that, there was a large room, where all school events took place: the school year end and beginning ceremonies were organized in that room. There were also other events and shows conducted there. There was a gym, where we had showers, changing rooms and a cloak room, and a sports equipment storage room. Besides that, the school had a large canteen and school associations rooms: i.e. the school youth council, “Brotherhood Assistance”, Sports Circles. There was also the Scout’s Chamber, a doctor’s surgery, a dentist’s surgery. Our school had such facilities. There were cloak rooms downstairs. At the entrance to school there were stairs to school rooms, and a pair of stairs on both sides leading to the cloakrooms; you could also see the inscription above the stairs to the cloakrooms (I still remember that): „the fairy tale about our untidiness is based on the fact that the one who entered this school did not wipe their shoes.” So every student who entered the cloakroom had to read that inscription, then went down to

the cloakroom, changed his clothes, left his shoes and had to put school shoes on. There were also flats for the school personnel. That is all I remember about the school's appearance. Oh, our school had also a bike park, so that each student or teacher had their own bike rack; I must say that a lot of students went to school by bike before the 2nd World War. I do not remember, whether we had to pay for the bike rack but, anyway if there was such a fee, it was rather very little. Anyway, every student had their own rack and parked their bikes at that bike park. I also went to school by bike in autumn, spring and summer. It was quite expensive to travel to school by bus before the war – the bus ticket was probably 25 groszys. It was an equivalent of the price of 2.5 of a biscuit, as one biscuit cost 10 groszys, doughnuts were around the same price as well, so it was quite expensive for a school student; I did not travel by bus, and even if I got money for the ticket I preferred to go on foot, and save the money for other purposes. The school was attended by students of different backgrounds, as I said before. As far as I remember, most of them came from the craftsmen's families. Except for that, they were sons of freelance occupation families and inteligentsia families i.e. their parents were teachers, state government and local government officials. As far as faiths were concerned the prevailing number of the students was Roman Catholics, the next largest group was Greek Catholics and other Orthodox Church members, Evangelical Church members and those of Jewish faith, who were the second largest group. So let me start again: Roman Catholics, Jews, Greek Catholics and Evangelical Christians. All those faiths were represented at the Staszic secondary school. There were a few Jews in my class; they were children of Jewish intelligentsia: doctors, dentists, lawyers. We also had one student who was Evangelical; his name was Olek Reske. He was killed in the Warsaw Unprising. Majority of the students lived with their parents or relatives. Others lived in lodgings or boarding houses. Modern foreign languages taught in our class included French and German. A majority of students had chosen German. Classes consisted of thirty to forty students. The scouting team was led by Professor Dymitr Senatorski. I already do not remember now what his rank was; anyway he must have been a scout instructor. So, at first I was a Cub Scout (when I was at primary school), next I was a scout and further when I became more involved in sports I could not attend scout meetings so frequently. Anyway, later on I had no time for scouting as I was on the hockey team and on the tennis team; besides, we established a jazz band. And I also was on the school orchestra where I played the flute. The scouting movement had been quite active and broad and quite a number of people belonged to that movement; I cannot say now how many boys were the members of the scouting team at "Staszic"; anyway there were quite a lot of them, boy scouts. And I remember that particularly younger classes took part in parades. Older boys wore school uniforms: navy blue uniforms with silvery eagles and red insets. The caps were navy blue, with blue insets for lower secondary school and red insets for upper secondary school. The cap peak was plastic and there was the "torch of enlightenment" on the cap. Each student had to wear a badge with our school's number (492), the lower secondary school students had blue badges, while the upper secondary school students wore red badges: the same number but different colours. The Unia lower secondary school (there were three state lower secondary schools in Lublin) had number 493, while the Zamojski lower secondary school in Ogrodowa Street had number 494. Besides, there were also other lower secondary schools: the private owned Vetter secondary school for boys in Bernardyńska Street and the private owned Batory lower secondary school [the School of Lublin] in Ewangelicka Street, where today is Medical University. Later on, that building was given to the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL). The Batory school donated that building to KUL after the Second World War. Another private-owned school was Ms. Arciszowa's secondary school for girls, the so-called „white heads” as the girls wore white caps; there was also Ms.Sobolewska's secondary school, Ms.Czarnecka's lower secondary school, and Canonic Nuns lower secondary school in Podwal Street. Except for that, there was also a vocational school for tailors, and General Construction and Road

Construction Secondary Vocational School located in Raławickie Avenue; all of them were schools situated in Lublin. The only higher education institution was the Catholic University of Lublin. There were no other universities in Lublin. When I was at secondary school I took part in only two school outings: we went to Wola Okrzejska because the patron of our class was Henryk Sienkiewicz who was born in Wola Okrzejska. There was a museum devoted to the Nobel prize winner. The other outing, when I was a third or fourth grade student, was to Warsaw, where we visited the National Museum and the Grand Theatre (I do not remember the name of the performance); there was enough impressions for one day so that I even cannot recall what the title of the play was. Anyway, I remember that we spend a few hours at the Museum, next we had lunch, then we went to the theatre and returned home by train late at night. What else I remember? I remember army parades where I went as a scout. Older students wore guns for the 3rd May Parade and the 11th November Parade. Other school events I remember well are the beginning of the school year events. They were not particularly nice events but the end of the school year was always pleasant: the season was warm and we had the perspective of holidays in front of us. A group of us also arranged for excursions. I do not remember who the group's members were – we were not linked by scouting but established the group spontaneously: we just went for excursions. There was some older friend of ours who took care of us: we went to the Dominican Church where we visited the church vaults and I still remember the open coffins with the dead bodies of monks; the bodies were brownish, all of them were of that colour. Next, we explored the vaults, but access to most of them was blocked, they were in a very bad condition. However, we got to the part which was not available to the public: under the today's centre of culture. That part was managed by the army; there was a square of the Army's Sports Club; there was a sports yard which was large and fenced; and an army hospital there, and from the central building it was possible to descend to the cellars. One of the entries was blocked by wood planks which we removed and explored the vaults not once but several times. There were a few storeys of those vaults and I remember visiting at least three of them. All of us were really scared when we visited the vaults because there were inscriptions everywhere reading: „No trespassing. Danger of collapse”. But we could not help going there and we explored a part of those vaults.

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