

## A GLOSS ON THE CASE OF THE WILLS AND INHERITANCE OF IGNACY JAN PADEREWSKI

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**Abstract.** On June 29, 1941, Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941), an outstanding pianist, composer, and politician of international renown, ended his life at the Buckingham Hotel in New York. His life and work have already been the subject of extensive historiography, comprising around a thousand publications at the beginning of the 21st century. However, among these numerous Paderewian studies, it is difficult to find works that deal with the Master's wills and his considerable estate. This gloss is devoted to explaining certain issues concerning the last two wills of Ignacy J. Paderewski from 1929 and 1930, as well as the case of his half-siblings, Józef and Maria, the heirs to his estate. It is based on archival materials stored in the State Archives in Bydgoszcz, in particular documents and materials from the inheritance proceedings that took place in Bydgoszcz between 1947 and 1952, as well as the minutes of Józef Paderewski's rehabilitation hearing of May 23, 1946.

**Keywords:** last will; inheritance; Ignacy Jan Paderewski; documents; testator.

### INTRODUCTION

On June 29, 1941, Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941), an outstanding pianist, composer, and politician of international renown, ended his life at the Buckingham Hotel in New York. His life and work have already been the subject of extensive historiography, comprising around a thousand publications at the beginning of the 21st century [Janczewska-Sołomko 2001, 214-49]. However, among these numerous Paderewian studies, it is difficult to find works that deal with the Master's wills and his considerable estate. This gloss is devoted to explaining certain issues concerning the last two wills of Ignacy J. Paderewski from 1929 and 1930, as well as the case of his half-siblings, Józef and Maria, the heirs to his estate. It is based on archival materials stored in the State Archives in Bydgoszcz, in particular documents and materials from the inheritance proceedings that took place in Bydgoszcz between 1947 and 1952, as well as the minutes of Józef Paderewski's rehabilitation hearing of May 23, 1946.

As mentioned above, only a few researchers and journalists have dealt with the issue of Paderewski's wills and his legacy, and even they have not been immune to various mistakes and errors. Among those who have researched these issues are Małgorzata Perkowska-Waszek and Maciej Kledzik. The former, in her study *Za kulisami wielkiej kariery. Paderewski w dziennikach i listach Sylwina i Anieli Strakaczów 1936-1937* ["Behind the scenes of a great career. Paderewski in the diaries and letters of Sylwin and Aniela Strakacz 1936-1937"], Kraków 1994 (introduction and commentary) and in an essay published on the Internet entitled *Testament Ignacego Jana Paderewskiego – fakty i mity* ["The Will of Ignacy Jan Paderewski – Facts and Myths"], she presented her thoughts on the wills of 1929 and 1930 and the heirs to the estate. However, she did not avoid simplifications and errors. In these studies, she sharply criticizes the Swiss writer Simone Giron de Pourtalès, author of the controversial book *Tajemnica testamentu Paderewskiego* ["The Mystery of Paderewski's Will" 1996], which is an attempt to explain the matter of I. J. Paderewski's will and inheritance from 1930.

In turn, historian M. Kledzik, in his essay *Spadek po Ignacym Janie Paderewskim* ["The Legacy of Ignacy Jan Paderewski"], published in a small commemorative anthology entitled *Służyć będę aż do śmierci. Prezydent Ignacy Jan Paderewski* ["I Will Serve Until Death: President Ignacy Jan Paderewski"] (2018), emphasizes that as a result of "communist manipulation," squandering and endangering the fortune of this great Pole. Earlier, in 1991, Kledzik published three long articles in the Krakow-based magazine *Przekrój* entitled "What Remains of Paderewski?" [Kledzik 1991a; Idem 1991b; Idem 1991c].

In them, he described the struggle for the artist's inheritance. J. Jasiński argued with him, rightly pointing out, among other things, that "Paderewski's vast fortune was fragmented after his death and largely seized by people from his immediate circle" [Jasiński 1991; Lachs 1991]. It is worth noting here that the weekly magazine *Przekrój* was probably the first in Poland to publish, on May 8, 1949, correspondence from its own reporters, J. Górski and K. Szturemski, concerning the search for Paderewski's will from 1930 and its opening on April 1, 1949, at the Palais de Justice in Paris [Górski and Szturemski 1949]. In April 1957, Jerzy Kuliński commented on Paderewski's will and inheritance in the Bydgoszcz-based *Ilustrowany Kurier Polski* newspaper, publishing two of three articles from the series *Na spadkowej szachownicy* ["On the inheritance chessboard"] [Kuliński 1957a].<sup>1</sup> His goal was to remove various speculations, ambiguities, and understatements, and to arrive at the whole truth, which, as he emphasizes, "in no way detracts from the memory of this great Pole." Kuliński's articles, based on

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<sup>1</sup> The third article in the series has not been published for unknown reasons.

solid sources (documents and materials from the inheritance proceedings in Bydgoszcz), influenced later research on the issue. In 1991, articles on Paderewski's will and inheritance from 1930 appeared in daily newspapers.

And so, in early 1991, the Bydgoszcz-based *Ilustrowany Kurier Polski* published an interesting article entitled *Tajemnica testamentu Paderewskiego* ["The Mystery of Paderewski's Will"]<sup>2</sup> by Krzysztof Sidorkiewicz, a judge at the District Court in Bydgoszcz, who used documents from the inheritance proceedings in Bydgoszcz in 1947-1952. At the end of 1991, the same author returned to the subject of Paderewski's will in an article entitled "The Decimated Archive."<sup>3</sup> In it, he drew attention to the removal of the judge presiding over the inheritance case in the Bydgoszcz court and the destruction of court documents that were inconvenient for the authorities. The findings contained in Sidorkiewicz's articles were later referred to by the editors of *Przekrój* and *Życie Warszawy*.

## 1. IGNACY PADEREWSKI'S LAST TESTAMENTS

Ignacy Jan Paderewski, an outstanding pianist, also proved to be an extremely meticulous man when it came to financial matters. He often drew up wills in which he meticulously listed the assets and liabilities of his estate. He usually deposited these documents in banks, the first one in *Bank Handlowy* in Warsaw, and the last one in Morgan Bank in Paris. It should be emphasized here that Ignacy J. Paderewski was also known for his extensive philanthropic activities. Among the wills he drew up, the last two, from 1929 and 1930, deserve special attention. The 1930 will was a key document in the subsequent inheritance proceedings that took place after Paderewski's death in the 1940s and 1950s near Bydgoszcz.

I will begin with the will from 1929. On September 22 of that year, Paderewski fell seriously ill while staying at his Swiss country estate in Riond-Bosson. The doctors who were called diagnosed acute appendicitis and, given the danger of perforation and peritonitis, demanded immediate surgery. In this situation, Paderewski, a man of almost seventy, probably considering the risks involved in the operation, ordered his trusted notary and attorney Ernest Gonvers from nearby Morges to be brought immediately to Riond-Bosson to draw up a will. As he was unavailable, Marcel Gonvers, Ernest's son, also a notary working with his father, went to Paderewski. Paderewski and the notary worked late into the night to write his last will and testament. On September 23, 1929, Paderewski said goodbye to his wife Helena and his sister Antonina, married name Wilkowska, as well as his household staff,

<sup>2</sup> "IKP", no 3, from 4-6 I 1991.

<sup>3</sup> "IKP", no 243, form 17 XII 1991.

including Helena Lübke, Helena Paderewska's secretary, and went to a clinic in Lausanne, where he successfully underwent an appendectomy. According to the accounts of his household staff, Paderewski left no documents behind when he left Riond-Bosson. H. Lübke also did not find any. It is not known whether the notary Marcel Gonvers took the will with him when he left for Morges. After some time, he stated that his role was limited to signing the will in Polish and that he was never given the document [Giron de Pourtales 1996, 30-31; Landau 1935]. Although this will has not been found, the Gonvers confirmed before Swiss courts that it had been drawn up in 1929 [Giron de Pourtales 1996].

And one more important issue. At the end of November 1947, Monsignor Zygmunt Kaczyński, a friend of Paderewski, appearing as a witness in the case of the inheritance of I. J. Paderewski in the United States of America, testified under oath at the Municipal Court in Warsaw that during Christmas 1930 or 1931, he was at Paderewski's estate in Riond-Bosson. Paderewski fell seriously ill at that time and summoned a lawyer from Morges. He could not remember whether it was a notary or a legal advisor. Here, Father Kaczyński's memory failed him. As mentioned above, Paderewski fell seriously ill in September 1929, and the lawyer who was brought in was Marcel Gonvers. The rest of the witness's testimony was more important. "In the presence of myself and Henryk Opieński," he testified, "Paderewski signed his will. It contained the contents of his previous will and additions to it. In this will, Ignacy Jan Paderewski bequeathed all his real estate in Riond-Bosson, Morges, Switzerland, together with the facilities located there at the time: Morges, Switzerland, together with the equipment located there at the time: the library, his own memoirs, numerous memorabilia, all (movable and immovable) live-stock and dead stock, without exception" [Kukliński 1947b; Lachs 1991].<sup>4</sup>

Father Kaczyński then listed a number of bequests to the Warsaw Conservatory of Music and many individuals. At the end of his testimony, he could not remember "whether the will was drawn up in official or private form." He also could not remember whether he had signed the will at that time. However, there is no doubt that Paderewski wrote down his last will and testament at that time. It should be noted that, according to the explanation of the Consular Agency of the Republic of Poland in Geneva on December 1, 1947, "the will drawn up in 1929 by the late I. J. Paderewski before notary Marcel Gonvers was initially deposited with his father, also a notary. After some time, people stopped talking about this will, and what happened to it remains a mystery to this day. The local office has no authority to summon notary M. Gonvers and request a copy of the will. Only

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<sup>4</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 132-3/415, Letter from the Magistrate's Court (S. Gr.) in Bydgoszcz of 28 August 1948, card. 5; *ibid.*, Minutes from the hearing of witness Monsignor Zygmunt Kaczyński at the Municipal Court in Warsaw on 29 November 1947, card. 65-66.

the prosecutor of the Republic and Canton of Geneva can take such action as a result of a complaint” [emphasis added – J.K.].<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, the Municipal Court in Bydgoszcz (recognizing the fact that the will had been drawn up) finally requested, at the end of March 1948, through official channels via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that the Public Prosecutor of the Swiss Republic ascertain “who currently holds the will of the late Ignacy Paderewski, and arrange for the will to be handed over and sent to the local court.” In the event that the execution of the Court’s request fell within the jurisdiction of another authority of the Swiss Republic, the Court requested that the letter be forwarded to that authority. At the same time, the Court requested “an explanation of the formal and substantive basis on which the Court of Peace in Morges issued a decision in 1941 stating that the sole heir of Ignacy Paderewski was his sister Antonia Paderewska Wilkońska.”<sup>6</sup>

In his letter, the Municipal Court informed the Prosecutor about the fact that Paderewski had drawn up a will in 1929 and about the significance of Father Kaczyński’s testimony in this case. The will was deposited, wrote the municipal judge, with a local notary, M. Gonvers, for safekeeping. The further fate of the document is unknown, apart from the “circumstantial evidence that Paderewski’s former attorney, Henry Vallotton, collected it from the aforementioned notary in 1940.” The court requested clarification “whether and to what extent it is true that, in connection with the search for Paderewski’s will, criminal proceedings were or are being conducted against the notary in Morges, M. Gonvers, and with what result.” However, these questions from the Municipal Court remained unanswered.<sup>7</sup> He continued to maintain extensive correspondence with Polish diplomatic and consular missions in Paris, Bern, and New York, sending them, among other things, requests for Józef Paderewski’s power of attorney and issuing requisition notices to the relevant Swiss courts.<sup>8</sup> And so, at the end of December 1948, the Municipal Court in Bydgoszcz requested that three witnesses be examined under oath through judicial assistance. They were to testify on several circumstances, including, among others, “whether the witnesses are aware of any will that Ignacy Paderewski may have drawn up; when the will was drawn up; where the witnesses obtained information about the will.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/415, Letter from the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York to S. Gr. in Bydgoszcz dated 12 February 1948, card. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/415, Letter from the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York, card. 64; *ibid.*, 1373/416, Letter from Judge S. Gr. to the President of the Court of Appeal in Bydgoszcz dated 11 August 1949, card. 142-144.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1373/415, Letter from S. Gr. in Bydgoszcz to the Prosecutor of the Swiss Republic in Bern dated 31 March 1948, card. 121ff.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., card. 122.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1373/416, Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw to S. Gr. in Bydgoszcz dated 4 December 1948 regarding requisitioning, card. 43-44 *secret*; *ibid.*, Letter from the

Unfortunately, the files do not provide answers to these important questions. It is also unclear whether the appropriate court in Switzerland was found to deal with the Polish court's requisition order.

The will drawn up in 1929 during a serious illness, in haste, probably did not satisfy Paderewski and required additions and changes. It is therefore not surprising that by mid-1930 another will was ready, which Paderewski signed himself and personally deposited on September 30 of that year at Morgan Bank in Paris [distinction – J.K.]. The fact that this was another will is evidenced by a new amended provision concerning Paderewski's estate in Riond-Bosson. In 1929, the testator bequeathed this estate, I repeat, to the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Krakow. In 1930, in accordance with Paderewski's last will, this estate, his long-time residence in Switzerland, which was, however, consuming "enormous amounts of money," "had to be liquidated as soon as possible" [emphasis added by J.K.]. At the same time, Paderewski requested that the movable property located in Riond-Bosson, i.e., furniture, silverware, sculptures, paintings, Chinese art artifacts, and the cellar (wine) not be sold, because "all these movable properties have a different purpose."<sup>10</sup>

In light of the above, it must be concluded that Ignacy J. Paderewski drew up two separate wills: one in 1929 and another in 1930. M. Perkowska-Waszek approached this issue differently, assuming that I. Paderewski deposited the will written in 1929 at Morgan Bank in Paris in 1930, where it was "found" in 1949. However, she did not explain where the completely different entries in these two documents concerning the property in Riond-Bosson came from. "It is, of course, irrelevant," she concludes, "whether the document drawn up in 1929 was the same document that was deposited in Paris in 1930, as each subsequent will was to cancel all previous ones..." However, for the Municipal Court in Bydgoszcz, the 1929 will was not a matter of no consequence, and it searched for it intensively, appealing to the Swiss courts [Perkowska-Waszek 1994a].

After Ignacy J. Paderewski's death on September 29, 1941, in New York, the issue of the artist and politician's inheritance became relevant. There was speculation as to whether he had made a will and where he had deposited it. Antonina Wilkońska, the natural heir to her brother Ignacy's estate, stated that she had not found his will. She testified in court that her brother had left behind neither a wife nor any half-siblings. According to her, Józef, Ignacy Paderewski's half-brother, and Maria, his half-sister, had died [Giron de Pourtales 1996, 190] more on this below. Sylwin Strakacz (1892-1973),

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw to S. Gr. in Bydgoszcz, secret, urgent, card. 103-104; *ibid.*, "Proclamation on the execution of requisitioning", card. 46.

<sup>10</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/416, I.J. Paderewski's will, photocopy, p. VII.



the artist's personal secretary from 1919, Polish delegate to the League of Nations during World War II, and Polish consul general in Geneva and then in New York, was probably aware of the will. This is confirmed by Paderewski's handwritten note in French on the envelope containing his will from 1930, found in 1949. The testator wrote:<sup>11</sup>

*Valid will belonging to Ignacy Jan Paderewski. In the event of the depositary's death, please hand it over to Mr. Sylwin Strakacz, who will come forward to collect it.*

I. J. Paderewski  
September 30, 1930

In a *postscript*, Paderewski added:

*If Mr. Sylwin Strakacz is unable to collect this document within two months of Paderewski's death, the envelope should be returned to the depositary's heirs: Mrs. Helena Paderewska, his wife, or his sister Antonina Wilkońska; both residing in Riond-Bosson sur Morges, Switzerland.*<sup>12</sup>

I.J.P.

By virtue of the will, which will be discussed later, Paderewski "established and appointed" Sylwin Strakacz as "the principal executor of my last will and testament"<sup>13</sup> [emphasis added – J.K.]. The principal executor of the will must have known beyond any doubt where Paderewski had deposited the document and been familiar with its contents. It followed from this that the testator had appointed as his heirs: Helena Paderewska (1856-1934), his wife, or Antonina Wilkowska (1858-1941), his sister.

In the event of the death of my beloved wife, I hereby appoint and designate my sister Antonina Wilkowska, née Paderewska, as my sole heir – Paderewski stated – subject to and conditional upon respecting and fulfilling my last will in full.<sup>14</sup>

The question arises as to whether she actually fulfilled her brother's last will. It should be noted here that Paderewski's wife Helena died in 1934, and Antonina, his sister, was an 83-year-old woman who was completely under Strakacz's influence. In this situation, the main executor of the testator's last will, a "strange man," had ample opportunity to take action aimed at seizing Ignacy J. Paderewski's inheritance. According to Joseph Blum, Paderewski's New York legal advisor, Strakacz had been acting according

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<sup>11</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/417, photocopy of the envelope containing the will.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 1373/416, I.J. Paderewski's will, photocopy, p. XII.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. IX.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. XIX.

to a clear plan for a long time, deliberately seeking to seize the entire estate of the late Ignacy Jan Paderewski for himself [Giron de Pourtales 1996, 293]. Years ago, M. Perkowska-Waszek came to Strakacz's defense, seeing him as a defender of Paderewski's legacy [Perkowska-Waszek 1994a].

It is significant that Strakacz remained silent for a number of years, effectively concealing the existence of the will and its location. It was not until November 1948, when testifying in the New York Surrogate Court (a court dealing with inheritance matters), that he confessed that the will, in which he was appointed as its executor, had been kept at Morgan Bank in Paris since 1930 [Giron de Pourtales 1996, 141]. A little earlier, in October of that year, the Bank confirmed in a letter to American lawyer J. Paderewski Wolter J. Bayer, following a telegram from Strakacz, that since June 29, 1941, it had a large sealed envelope in its safe, which had been deposited on September 30, 1930, under number 3966. During the war, this sealed envelope was not opened by the German occupation authorities [ibid., 141-42].

## 2. THE TESTATOR'S HALF-SIBLINGS AND THE ATTEMPTS AT CONCEALING THEIR EXISTENCE

It is characteristic that some of Paderewski's household members, especially A. Wilkońska and S. Strakacz, who arrived with him in New York in the fall of 1940, remained silent or tried to hide the existence of his half-siblings. This matter requires further clarification, especially since some of the facts differ from reality. First, however, a word about the Paderewski family tree, prepared by I. Paderewski in 1947 for the probate court in Bydgoszcz. Jan Paderewski, a professional farmer and tenant of estates, was born "around 1836-1840" and died in 1894 in Zhytomyr. He was married twice. From his first marriage to Poliksena Nowicka, he had children: Antonina Paderewska, married name Wilkowska, born in 1858. She died childless in October 1941 in America. Her husband died before World War II. The Wilkońskis had one son, who died several decades ago as a student at the gymnasium in Nezhin in the Chernihiv Governorate. One third of Wilkońska's estate was claimed by Sylwin Strakacz, Ignacy Jan Paderewski's former personal secretary, who informed Józef Paderewski that Wilkońska had bequeathed her share of the estate to him in her will and that the American judicial authorities had already recognized him as the heir. Ignacy Jan Paderewski was born in 1860 in Kuryłówka, Podolia Province, to this couple. He died on June 29, 1941, in New York. In 1880, he married Antonina Korsak, who died a year after the wedding. They had one son, Alfred, who died in Switzerland at the age of 20. Ignacy Jan Paderewski married for the second time in 1899



to Helena Baroness Rozen. She died in 1934. There were no children from this marriage.<sup>15</sup>

Jan Paderewski's second marriage to Anna Tańkowska, who died in 1897 in Zhytomyr, produced the following offspring: 1) Józef Paderewski, born on April 1, 1871, according to the Gregorian calendar, in Sudyłków in the Volhynia Governorate, retired secondary school teacher, residing in Bydgoszcz at 23 Kościuszki Street; 2) Stanisław Paderewski, born in Sudyłków, Volhynia, in 1873, mining engineer, single, who died as a Polish legionnaire at Krzywopłoty in 1914; 3) Maria Paderewska, born in 1876 in Sudyłków, unmarried, private teacher, residing in Zhytomyr in the USSR.<sup>16</sup>

Józef, Paderewski's half-brother, had been presumed dead in Riond-Boson since 1939. The news of his death came from Poland from an unknown source. It was confirmed by money transfers sent to Józef by Wilkowska via a Swiss bank, as well as returned letters with a note that the addressee had left and did not leave an address [Perkowska-Waszek 1994b, 28]. In fact, after occupying Bydgoszcz in September 1939, the Germans evicted Józef Paderewski, along with many other Polish residents of Bydgoszcz, from his apartment on Paderewski Street. He found new, extremely modest accommodation at 23 Kościuszki Street, where he lived until the end of World War II and in the early post-war years with his cousin Stanisława Tańkowska, whom he married in 1957.<sup>17</sup> It is surprising that I. J. Paderewski, A. Wilkońska, and S. Strakacz, based on dubious, unverified information, declared Józef dead without waiting for official confirmation. What is more, in 1948, already in the United States of America, they ordered and participated in a memorial mass in his intention [Perkowska-Waszek 1994b, 28]. It is worth noting the artist's completely different reaction to the death of his other half-brother Stanisław, a mining engineer who, I repeat, died as a Polish legionnaire at Krzywopłoty in 1914. He believed that the news of his brother's death in battle might be false. According to Perkowska-Waszek, the artist even left a bequest for him in his will of 1930 [Perkowska-Waszek 1994a]. I did not find this entry in the document because it simply was not there. It is also important to note that immediately after the war, Strakacz, the main executor of Paderewski's will, did not attempt to determine what really happened to Józef Paderewski, whether he actually died or was killed in 1939, and what his fate was thereafter. Meanwhile, as early as 1945, it was possible to establish without much difficulty that Józef

<sup>15</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/415, Letter from Józef Paderewski to the Municipal Court in Łódź dated 30 January 1947, card. 2-4: See also Protocol submitted on 16 June 1948 by I. Paderewski in S. Gr. concerning the ancestry of the Paderewski family, 1373/415, card. 32-35.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Dziennik Bydgoski", no 26-27 from May 2022, p. 12-14.

Paderewski was alive, that he had survived the war and German occupation in Bydgoszcz, and that he lived in that city at 23 Kościuszki Street. All it took was a single letter to the mayor of Bydgoszcz or to the education or population registry departments under his authority to obtain reliable information. It was also possible to contact the editorial office of *Ziemia Pomorska*, the first post-war newspaper published in “free” Bydgoszcz, on this matter.<sup>18</sup> I believe that Strakacz deliberately refrained from making any effort to obtain accurate information about Józef Paderewski, as this could have complicated his plans regarding Ignacy Paderewski’s inheritance. It is also worth mentioning that the residents of Bydgoszcz knew Ignacy J. Paderewski not only by name. The news of the artist’s death in New York in 1941 quickly reached them, and probably Józef Paderewski as well.

### 3. JÓZEF PADEREWSKI AND THE TRIAL CONCERNING HIS VINDICATION

The fact that Józef Paderewski was alive and living with his relative Stanisława Tańkowska in Bydgoszcz was clearly confirmed by their application to the Municipal Court in Bydgoszcz in August 1945 for rehabilitation. All Poles who, during the German occupation of Polish territory, were incorporated into the first or second group of the German national list [Romaniuk 1993]<sup>19</sup> (*Deutsche Volksliste DVL*) had to undergo this process. In March 1946, proceedings were initiated to rehabilitate J. Paderewski and S. Tańkowska, and on May 23 of that year, a hearing was held before the Municipal Court in Bydgoszcz. During this hearing, J. Paderewski testified that in 1943, threatened with deportation to a concentration camp, or at best to the General Government, which posed a threat to his life, he declared his affiliation with the Ukrainian nationality, which was privileged by the occupier, that is, with the organization “Ukrainian Community.” As a result, he received a “Ukrainian list,” which meant that he was effectively incorporated into the second group of the DVL. Therefore, after the end of World War II, he had to undergo a rehabilitation process. He also testified that in 1943 he was arrested by the Gestapo and placed in former Polish barracks on Gdańska Street in Bydgoszcz, where he waited for transport to the camp. Miraculously, as he said, he managed to escape from there. Living under constant pressure of losing his life, he registered as a member of the aforementioned

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<sup>18</sup> APB, Records of the City of Bydgoszcz, 484, Announcement in *Ziemia Pomorska*, the Municipal Court building, regarding the initiation of rehabilitation proceedings for J. Paderewski, March 1946, card. 19.

<sup>19</sup> APB, Records of the City of Bydgoszcz, 484, Minutes from the rehabilitation hearing of 23 May 1946, card. 18-22.

Ukrainian nationality.<sup>20</sup> However, he remained Polish, as numerous witnesses emphasized during the trial. These included Wanda Rolbieska, director of the Municipal Girls' Humanities Gymnasium in Bydgoszcz, where Józef Paderewski taught mathematics from 1926 to 1938, Irena Schmidtowa, a pharmacist and former student of Paderewski, Olgierd Gintyło, a local government official, and others. All the witnesses emphasized that Józef Paderewski and Stanisława Tańkowska were "100% Polish" and "highly valued Poles." They unanimously testified that during the occupation, Paderewski secretly taught Poles mathematics and physics, often free of charge.<sup>21</sup>

After hearing the case on May 23, 1946, the Municipal Court in Bydgoszcz ruled that the applicants, Józef Paderewski and Stanisława Tańkowska, were "rehabilitated and possessed full civil rights, and ordered the release of their property from seizure, supervision, and administration" [emphasis added – J.K.]. In its justification, the Municipal Court stated: "Taking into account the advanced age of the applicants and their exemplary behavior during the occupation, the Court has come to the conclusion that the applicants deserve full rehabilitation and therefore ruled as stated in the operative part of the decision"<sup>22</sup> [emphasis added – J.K.]. The news of the rehabilitation of J. Paderewski and S. Tańkowska appeared the very next day, on May 24, 1946, in *Ziemia Pomorska*.<sup>23</sup> In mid-June 1946, the news also appeared in the French Polish community newspaper *Narodowiec*. Helena Lübke, Helena Paderewska's former secretary, who was living in France between 1945 and 1948, read the news and immediately passed it on to S. Strakacz and Andrzej Moszczyński, Ignacy J. Paderewski's former plenipotentiary. She asked him to find Józef Paderewski's address in Poland and provide him with financial support. "She also asked Moszczyński to sell her ring, which she had left in Warsaw, for this purpose" [Perkowska-Waszek 1994a; Idem 1994b, 29]. It turned out that simply determining Paderewski's address in Bydgoszcz required extraordinary efforts on the part of Strakacz and his associates. However, more important is the content of *Narodowiec* and how it was later interpreted by Perkowska-Waszek. The author uncritically accepted the findings of the Polish-American newspaper and came to the following conclusion: "In fact, [Józef Paderewski] was arrested by the Gestapo, sent to a camp, escaped from transport, and went into hiding" [emphasis added – J.K.].<sup>24</sup> In light of what has been said above about Józef Paderewski during the occupation, this conclusion must be rejected outright.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., card. 19-20.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., card. 22-23.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., card. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Ignacy Paderewski's brother rehabilitated by the Court in Bydgoszcz. A well-known professor of physics took in a Ukrainian ethnic group living in poverty, "Pomeranian Land", no. 139 from 24 May 1946, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

There remains the matter of Maria Paderewska, Józef Paderewski's sister and Ignacy J. Paderewski's half-sister. Her existence, like that of J. Paderewski, was ignored by Wilkońska and Strakacz, who even claimed that she was "definitely dead." Meanwhile, she lived in Zhytomyr at 24 Podolska Street (USSR) in a house that Ignacy J. Paderewski had bought for her. There is no doubt that Ignacy was keenly interested in the fate of his half-sister, who remained in the Soviet Union. He did not have to search for her, but he appealed to Minister Maxim Litvinov, without success, to allow Maria Paderewska to leave the USSR and return to Poland [Jędruszczak 1974, 72; Perkowska-Waszek 1994b, 29].

This raises questions about family relations and the relationship between the Paderewski siblings. According to Perkowska-Waszek, these relations "were not easy," and Ignacy "harbored certain childhood resentments toward his half-siblings." This is evidenced by his private letters, and it is particularly telling that he left them only one-off monetary bequests in his will [Jędruszczak 1974, 72; Perkowska-Waszek 1994b, 29]. It is a pity that the author did not treat these letters more extensively and did not deal with these "resentments" in greater detail. In any case, the Paderewski brothers, Ignacy and Józef, met in Poland and often wrote letters to each other. Józef Paderewski burned their large collection after the outbreak of World War II, fearing that they would fall into German hands during a search.<sup>25</sup> A letter from Ignacy to his "Dear Józio" dated January 3, 1934, has been preserved. Ignacy was concerned about Józef's poor health. In addition, he was 'outraged' by the announcement of "the repayment of some debt that I do not want to know about." "If you want me to have no hard feelings towards you," wrote Ignacy, "try to forget about this trifle and do not write to me about any debt" [emphasis added by J.K.]. The letter ends with the warmest wishes from Ignacy and Antonina and a "warm brotherly handshake."<sup>26</sup> Ignacy Paderewski undoubtedly remained in constant contact with his half-siblings and supported them financially. I believe that they shared a strong emotional bond.

#### 4. ANTONINA WILKOŃSKA OF THE PADEREWSKIS AS THE ONLY INHERITOR OF THE WILL?

On July 30, 1941, Wilkońska, Ignacy J. Paderewski's sister, recognized by the Court of Peace in Morges, without providing legal grounds, as the sole heir to her brother's estate [Giron de Pourtales 1996], signed in the

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<sup>25</sup> Memorial Plaques Programme, "Bydgoszcz Daily", no. 26-27, February-May 2022, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Leon Wyczółkowski Regional Museum in Bydgoszcz, MOB HIA-2109, Letter from I.J. Paderewski to his brother Józef dated 3 January 1934.

presence of a lawyer and notary T. Bayer, a request to the Probate Court to appoint Strakacz as the administrator of her brother's estate. At the same time, she swore an oath that she had conducted a thorough search for the deceased's will, but had found no trace of it and had no information regarding the existence of a will. She also stated that her brother had left no other relatives. At the same time, in a short application to the Court, also signed in the presence of Bayer, Wilkońska waived her appointment as administrator of the estate and requested that Strakacz be appointed as administrator of the estate without providing security. On the same day, Strakacz made a solemn promise in advance as the administrator of the estate. On August 23, 1941, Wilkońska again swore to Bayer that she was the only surviving relative and repeated her request to appoint Strakacz as the administrator of the estate in her place. At the same time, Wilkońska confirmed the contents of her will of July 30, 1941. Strakacz filed the will and codicil with the Westchester County Probate Court in White Plains, stating that Wilkońska had her permanent residence in Riond-Bosson, Switzerland, and that her estate did not exceed \$20,000. In this way, he obtained confirmation of the will by this court, which was not familiar with the inheritance files of Ignacy Paderewski. A few days later, Strakacz submitted a provisional account of the estate's debts under oath, amounting to \$4,782.09, and stated that the deceased owned property in San Luis, California, in the United States, approximately 2,544 acres, valued for tax purposes in 1940 at \$26,725. He did not mention the existence of real estate in Switzerland and Brazil. On August 28, 1941, the Probate Court appointed Strakacz as the administrator of the estate. However, it required him to provide security.<sup>27</sup> Strakacz managed the estate until mid-November 1948. His seven years of activity in this area and various machinations related to the estate deserve a separate study. On September 24, 1941, Wilkońska signed and submitted a letter to the Probate Court, in which she provided details about Ignacy J. Paderewski's family. According to her, Józef Paderewski, a mathematics teacher in Bydgoszcz, died in that city in September 1939, unmarried. Maria Paderewska, on the other hand, lived unmarried in Zhytomyr before the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Neither she nor Józef Paderewski, "despite intensive searches, could find her, nor did they receive any news from her. They therefore became convinced that M. Paderewska was dead" [Giron de Pourtales 1996].

It is significant that, at the same time as signing the application to appoint Strakacz as administrator of the estate, Wilkońska also signed her will, typed in English, in the presence of Bayer. This will, probably drafted by Strakacz rather than the 82-year-old Wilkońska, stated that Strakacz had "worked closely" with Ignacy J. Paderewski and A. Wilkońska for over

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<sup>27</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/416, Memo from the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York, sent on 7 October 1948 to attorney L. Wirski (copy), card. 28-29.

twenty years and had given “countless proofs” of his devotion and attachment. Strakacz was considered, it was written, not only a member of the household, but a member of the family. Wilkońska expressed in her will her decision to adopt Strakacz and stated that she had instructed her lawyer, Bayer, to initiate the appropriate proceedings for this purpose [ibid.].<sup>28</sup> Importantly, the following was written in the will: “Fifth: All remnants, remains, and leftovers of my immovable and personal property that I will possess or to which I will be entitled in any way or over which I will have power of disposal at the time of my death, I give, bequeath, and transfer to Sylwin Strakacz” [Kukliński 1957b] [emphasis added – J.K.].

An analysis of Wilkońska’s will leads to the conclusion that, in the event of her death, Strakacz became the sole heir. The testator died on October 6, 1941, in Pelham Manor near New York, a few months after the death of Ignacy J. Paderewski. Shortly thereafter, without going into legal details, Strakacz came into possession of a large estate, estimated at over half a million dollars [Kukliński 1957a].

The news that Józef and Maria Paderewski, Ignacy’s half-siblings and natural heirs, were alive was of groundbreaking significance for the case of Ignacy J. Paderewski’s estate. As I have shown, Wilkońska and Strakacz had kept silent about the existence of Józef and Maria Paderewski since 1939, not to say that they had concealed it. The former, a former secondary school teacher in Bydgoszcz, survived the war and German occupation, as mentioned above, with the support of many Bydgoszcz residents. His sister Maria lived in Zhytomyr in the Soviet Union. In 1945, J. Paderewski applied to the Municipal Court in Bydgoszcz for rehabilitation, and in January 1947 for confirmation of Józef and Maria Paderewski’s rights to the inheritance of their half-brother Ignacy Jan Paderewski. At the end of 1946, Strakacz contacted Józef Paderewski to inform him about the status of the inheritance and his intentions and plans. He also informed him about the possibility of receiving money from the inheritance through the courts after submitting the necessary documents. He invited him to come to the United States and collaborate on projects. One of these projects was the creation of the Ignacy J. Paderewski Foundation using the assets left behind by Paderewski. However, Józef Paderewski refused [Perkowska-Waszek 1994a; Giron de Pourtales 1996; Kledzik 2020, 124]. Further correspondence with Strakacz was conducted by Paderewski’s attorney, Wirski. He assured Strakacz that, as the curator of the estate, he would “seek, through the Polish consular authorities and the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to settle the estate as quickly as possible by selling the movable and immovable property and transferring all capital and funds remaining after the deceased to the probate court in Bydgoszcz” [Kledzik 1991a,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., k. 28-30.



7]. As Kledzik rightly points out, Wirski's intention was clear – the post-war authorities in Poland wanted to quickly take over the inheritance [ibid.].

On January 30, 1947, Józef Paderewski requested the Municipal Court in Łódź, as the competent authority pursuant to the decree on inheritance proceedings of November 8, 1946<sup>29</sup> to conduct inheritance proceedings after his half-brother Ignacy Jan, who died on June 29, 1941, in New York, to appoint the Municipal Court in Bydgoszcz to conduct the inheritance proceedings. In the justification for his request, he emphasized that the deceased had left no will and no relatives in the descending or ascending line. He stated that only the siblings of the deceased, i.e. himself and his sister Maria, who lived in Zhytomyr in the Soviet Union, were entitled to the inheritance. Józef Paderewski substantiated his entitlement to the inheritance with his family tree, which I have already quoted above.<sup>30</sup> In the justification for his request, he also pointed out that he was an elderly person (over 75 years old), in poor health, and that he had to travel to Łódź to submit the relevant requests and declarations and to communicate with the court. He also wanted the competent court to appoint a long-time friend of the family, attorney Ludwik Wirski, residing in Bydgoszcz, as the curator of the estate, “in whom I have complete trust,” he wrote. The inheritance was to be reclaimed through the Ministry of Justice via the Polish Consulate General in Bern or the Polish Embassy in the United States of America.<sup>31</sup> On April 15, 1947, after reviewing J. Paderewski's application, the District Court in Łódź, taking into account the fact that the competent court for conducting inheritance proceedings is the Municipal Court in Łódź, where the Supreme Court is located<sup>32</sup> and taking into account the advanced age of the petitioner and the difficulty of contacting Łódź, decided to appoint the Municipal Court (since 1951, the District Court) in Bydgoszcz to conduct the inheritance proceedings after the deceased.<sup>33</sup> In this court, the presiding judge was the experienced Kazimierz Smierchalski, and Józef Paderewski's representative and curator of the estate of the late Ignacy J. Paderewski was appointed by the court, in accordance with J. Paderewski's request, as attorney L. Wirski (1872-1961) as the attorney for Józef Paderewski and also as the curator of the estate of the late Ignacy [Kutta 2021, 15-61]. The case was complicated, and there was a danger that dishonest estate administrators: Strakacz in the United States of America and Henry Vallotton in Switzerland, could use legal machinations to seize the

<sup>29</sup> Journal of Laws No. 63.

<sup>30</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/456, Paderewski's letter to the Municipal Court in Łódź dated 30 January 1947, card. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., card. 2-4.

<sup>32</sup> Article 2 of the Decree of November 8, 1946, on inheritance proceedings, Journal of Laws, item 346.

<sup>33</sup> APB, 1373/415, Decision of the District Court in Łódź, 15 April 1947.

estate or seriously deplete it.<sup>34</sup> There was also a legitimate concern that some properties, for example in Brazil, would be lost due to the statute of limitations. In this situation, the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, especially the Legal and Treaty Department headed by international law specialist Manfred Lachs (1914-1993), became indispensable. He considered caring for Paderewski's estate to be "a patriotic duty." Everything had to be done to carry out the will of the Great Pole. According to Lachs, the inheritance matters "were in the wrong hands and in too many hands: the incompetent embassy in Bern, the office in New York that did not recognize any control, and lawyers who decided to maximize profits and drag out the proceedings. According to Lachs, the value of the inheritance was "significantly lower than in 1930, when Paderewski drew up his will." He made no secret of the fact that the inheritance matter "could have been settled more quickly and efficiently had it not been for the harmful activities of lawyers and uncontrolled institutions, and had everything in Warsaw at that time gone according to plan" [Lachs 1992].

Unfortunately, Prof. Lachs's concise commentary does not provide answers to the questions that arise. The issue of the "harmful activities" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, its departments, especially the Legal and Treaty Department, and its offices in New York and Bern, requires a more in-depth response. It would be worth knowing "what did not go according to plan" for the director of this department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## 5. THE 'DISCOVERY' OF PADEREWSKI'S TESTAMENT IN MORGAN BANK IN PARIS

The end of 1948 brought a final resolution to the question of the existence of Paderewski's will. In October of that year, Morgan Bank in Paris confirmed that it had a large sealed envelope in its vault, deposited at the bank on September 30, 1930, as I have already noted, under number 39661 [Giron de Pourtales 1996, 141]. In turn, Strakacz, testifying on November 7, 1948, in the Probate Court in New York, said that the will in which he was appointed as its executor had been held at Morgan Bank in Paris since September 30, 1930 [ibid.]. This envelope probably contained Paderewski's will, which had been sought for years. Strakacz's testimony clearly indicated that he knew the contents of this document. By not revealing the existence of the will and its location, he created opportunities for legal manipulation and actions aimed at taking over the great pianist's inheritance or reducing its value. This is evidenced by the actions of Strakacz and Vallotton.

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<sup>34</sup> For more information on these estate administrators and their legal machinations, see: Giron de Pourtales 1996.

In March 1949, the envelope was opened at Morgan Bank's headquarters in Paris. It turned out that it contained another envelope of similar size, bearing the inscriptions mentioned above.<sup>35</sup> After fulfilling the conditions specified by law, the envelope was opened on April 1, 1949, at the Palais de Justice on Place Vendôme in Paris. It contained a twenty-page handwritten will bearing Paderewski's own, certified signature.<sup>36</sup> After the traditional introduction, the testator carefully calculated his assets and included detailed provisions.<sup>37</sup> Without going into the details of these provisions and regulations, it should be emphasized that Paderewski requested that all the money realized, which after paying taxes and costs should amount to US\$650,000, be placed in certain 5% securities or foreign municipal bonds, American ones if possible, drawing on the income for life annuities and administrative costs, travel, and expenses, so that the executors of the will would not incur any losses. "I consider this money to be the property of the Nation, and therefore I ask," wrote Paderewski, "that it be transferred to Jagiellonian University" [J.K.]. The testator specified in detail how the University was to allocate these funds.<sup>38</sup>

## 6. SYLWIN STRAKACZ'S BATTLE FOR THE INHERITANCE WITH COMMUNIST WARSAW

Of course, the discovery and disclosure of Paderewski's will in 1949 paved the way for the Municipal Court, which became the District Court in Bydgoszcz in 1951, to quickly conclude the inheritance proceedings. However, as it turned out, it took another three years. During this time, there was a battle over Paderewski's estate between Strakacz, who, according to the will, was the executor of his last will and testament, and "then" communist Warsaw. Naturally, the latter dominated this battle, having the power of the state and its institutions at its disposal. It should be emphasized that the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the majority

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<sup>35</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/416, Minutes from the opening of the envelope (in French) dated 5 May 1949, card. 204-207; *ibid.*, Letter from the Ministry of Justice. Department of Judicial Supervision to S.Gr. in Bydgoszcz dated 6 April 1950, card. 177; A report on the opening ceremony of the envelope stored on 1 April 1949 was published in "Przekrój", no. 213, 8 V 1949.

<sup>36</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/416, The original will of Ignacy Jan Paderewski and the envelope containing this will were entrusted to Robert Paweł Chardon, lawyer and notary public from Paris. The court in Bydgoszcz received photocopies of the will – 20 pages (I-XX) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 4 March 1952, which also confirmed that these photocopies were consistent with the photocopy in its possession and certified as consistent with the original by notary R. P. Chardon.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, card. XVff.

of Paderewski's estate was located outside Poland) interfered in the inheritance proceedings from the very beginning and exerted undue legal pressure on the Bydgoszcz court. This is evidenced, among other things, by a multi-page "top secret" memo from Professor Manfred Lachs, Director of the Legal and Treaty Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Minister Stanisław Skrzyszewski, dated May 15, 1952. In this memo, Lachs reported: "1) In the situation that has arisen, Judge Smierzchalski will be removed from the case in question, 2) another judge has been appointed to hear the case, who will issue a decision in accordance with the agreed arrangements. The decision will be issued around May 23 [emphasis added – J. K.]. 3) Due to the fact that Judge Smierzchalski issued a decision contrary to the agreed guidelines [...] and due to the fact that Judge Smierzchalski is likely to be acting in bad faith, as well as under outside influence, Director Czajkowski (1906-1980) referred Smierzchalski's case to the security authorities with a suggestion to place Smierzchalski under close observation" [Sidorkiewicz 1991].<sup>39</sup>

According to this "top secret" memo, Judge Smierzchalski was removed from the case. He was replaced by Józef Majorowicz (1916-2005), a judge at the Provincial Court in Bydgoszcz. Judge Smierzchalski was removed because he refused to issue a ruling previously agreed upon by the authorities. What is more, according to Lachs' memo, he had already issued a ruling contrary to the agreed guidelines. I have not found Judge Smierzchalski's rulings on the inheritance case in the available materials. In any case, he remained in the Non-Contentious Division of the District Court in Bydgoszcz, where he held the position of chairman. It can be assumed that, according to Judge Czajkowski's report, he was under surveillance by Security Service officers.

Some senior officials from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not only resorted to unlawful legal pressure, but also personally removed documents from court files that were inconvenient for the case in question. For example, Kazimierz Czajkowski, deputy director of the Judicial Supervision Department of the Ministry of Justice, tore several pages from the files and threw them into the trash in the presence of Judge Józef Majorowicz. The following documents stored in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the aforementioned note and its copy dated May 15, 1952, also disappeared.<sup>40</sup>

Sylwin Strakacz, subjected to various kinds of pressure, renounced his rights to the inheritance of Antonina Wilkońska [Giron de Pourtales 1996; Perkowska-Waszek 1994a] on July 7, 1950, and thus also to that of Ignacy J. Paderewski.

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<sup>39</sup> Regional Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation – Institute of National Remembrance in Bydgoszcz, ref. no. IPN Bg 949/8. Motion to issue a decision refusing to initiate an investigation in case Ko 381/91, pp. 1-2 (copy dated 9 February 1995).

<sup>40</sup> OKBZ p NP – IPN in Bydgoszcz, ref. no. IPN By 949/8, card. 4.

## 7. LEGAL DECISION OF THE DISTRICT COURT IN BYDGOSZCZ CONCERNING THE INHERITANCE AND ITS EXECUTION

On May 23, 1952, the District Court in Bydgoszcz decided in an open session chaired by Judge Józef Majorowicz that: 1) The inheritance rights of Ignacy Jan Paderewski, who died on June 29, 1941, passed to his sister Antonina Wilkowska, née Paderewska; 2) The inheritance rights of Antonina Wilkońska, who died on October 6, 1941, in Pelham Manor, New York, passed to her brother Józef Paderewski.

In his justification of the decision, Judge Józef Majorowicz emphasized that, based on the wills known to the Court, it had to be concluded that after the death of Ignacy J. Paderewski, the inheritance rights passed to his sister Antonina Wilkowska, and after her death, due to the fact that Sylwin Strakacz had transferred his inheritance rights to Józef Paderewski on the basis of a settlement, the inheritance rights passed to Józef Paderewski [Giron de Pourtales 1996].<sup>41</sup> In the following years, the Bydgoszcz District Court dealt with the implementation of the provisions of Ignacy Jan Paderewski's will of 1930.

The final decision of the District Court in Bydgoszcz regarding the estate of Ignacy Jan Paderewski did not bring the matter to a definitive conclusion. On January 11, 1957, five years later, the case files were once again submitted to the Non-Contentious Division of the District Court in Bydgoszcz. Referring to this fact, the head of the division, Smierchalski, stated to the editors of *Ilustrowany Kurier Polski* [Kuliński 1957b, 3]:

“Apart from the fact that once the decision confirming the inheritance rights, issued by the judge of the Provincial Court in Bydgoszcz, becomes final, Majorowicz, the role of the court effectively ends, I must say with full responsibility that I absolutely disagree with its content, as it constitutes a clear violation of the principles of the rule of law. I believe that the case is unclear and obscure. For these reasons, bearing in mind judicial independence and the preservation of the rule of law, I would not like to get involved in such a case. The decision I mentioned above is incompatible with both the law and my judicial conscience.”

The author was unable to publish part of an article from the series “On the downward chessboard,” which was intended to clarify the ambiguities and understatements of this murky and obscure matter.

The case of Ignacy J. Paderewski's estate returned to the press once again in 1991. Historian Kledzik, who had been working on this case for a number of years, submitted a report to the GKBZ p NP on November 19, 1991 – IPN in Warsaw, reporting the disappearance from the archives of the Ministry

<sup>41</sup> APB, District Court in Bydgoszcz, 1373/456, Decision of the District Court in Bydgoszcz of 23 May 1952.

of Foreign Affairs of important documents dated May 15, 1952, related to the takeover by the State Treasury of the estate bequeathed by Paderewski to the Polish Nation (a memo and a copy of Lachs's "top secret" document for Minister Skrzyszewski).<sup>42</sup> In connection with this report, the Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation – IPN instructed OKBZ p NP -IPN in Bydgoszcz in a letter dated November 22, 1991<sup>43</sup> to "consider whether, in the light of the available materials, it can be concluded the distribution of Ignacy Paderewski's estate meets the criteria for a crime under Article 2b of the Act of April 6, 1984," as amended by the Act of April 4, 1991, on the Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation – IPN (case Ko 381/91). Without going into the legal details of the case, it was established on the basis of documentation collected by the OKBZ p NP and the District Court in Bydgoszcz that it does not appear that the manner in which the estate was distributed by the authorities during the Stalinist period bore the hallmarks of a crime within the meaning of the Act on the GKBZ p NP – IPN. Although it was established that not all the provisions and instructions contained in Ignacy Paderewski's will were carried out, there is no evidence that the inheritance in question was criminally squandered.<sup>44</sup> A motion was adopted to transfer case Ko 381/91 to the Provincial Prosecutor in Bydgoszcz, together with "a motion to issue a decision refusing to initiate preparatory proceedings."<sup>45</sup> During my research, I was unable to obtain the materials of the Provincial Prosecutor and his findings in the above case. I also did not find the decision of the GKBZ p NP on Kledzik's report. In any case, Kledzik maintained his thesis concerning "communist manipulations, which ended in the squandering and plundering of the property of a great Pole – pianist, composer, and politician." [Kledzik 2020, 123].

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Although much has been written about Ignacy J. Paderewski's will and inheritance, there is still no monograph revealing the whole truth on this matter. The following issues undoubtedly require further research:

1. The value of Paderewski's estate and the value of the estate actually transferred to the Polish Nation, as requested by the testator;
2. The actions of the estate administrators: Sylwin Strakacz, Paderewski's long-time secretary, and Henry Vallotton, a lawyer in Lausanne and administrator of Paderewski's Swiss estate;

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<sup>42</sup> OKBZ p NP – IPN in Bydgoszcz, ref. no. IPN By 949/8, Application for a decision refusing to initiate an investigation dated 9 February 1995 (copy), card. 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., card. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



3. The protection of Paderewski's legacy by the Polish government-in-exile;
4. The actions of the communist authorities in Poland aimed at taking over Paderewski's estate.

These research questions should be addressed by historians, especially legal historians.

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