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**“The journalism of Leopold Unger in the Parisian KULTURA in the years 1970 – 2000”**

**Summary of the PhD thesis**

The subject of the scientific research for the thesis is the analysis of Leopold Unger's journalism in the Parisian “Kultura” in the years 1970 – 2000 in the context of international issues on the pages of the monthly.

Leopold Unger ( 1922 – 2011 ) belonged to a narrow, elite circle of the international journalists. In 1969 he was forced to leave Poland on the wave of so called March purge and he started the emigrant stage of his life being professionally connected with “Kultura“ (since 1970), “Le Soir“ (1979), the Polish broadcasting station “Radio Wolna Europa“ (since 1970), “International Herald Tribune“ (in the years 1976 – 1986). At the beginning of his journalistic work he had to face some obstacles caused by the fact that , while in Poland, he used to work for “Życie Warszawy“ which was considered as a “regime” newspaper. Gradually Unger managed to overcome some language barriers, the distrust of the journalistic circle and he became an appreciated specialist, an expert – commentator of the eastern Europe's problems at the background of the global politics. His reputability might be evidenced by the fact that he became a lecturer of the prestige think – tank Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington. In 1990, when the political situation had been changed, he started to cooperate with “Gazeta Wyborcza”.

The professional achievements of Leopold Unger are impressive. While staying in Romania at the beginning of the Second World War in 1948 , he became a correspondent for Polish Press Agency for a few months. At the end of that year he came back to Poland and began working for “Życie Warszawy”, starting with writing telegrams but ending at the post of the editorial office secretary. In the years 1962 – 1963 he was staying in Cuba where, as a correspondent of that paper, he related the Cuban crisis. After 19 years, due to Gomułka's anti-Semitic policy, he was dismissed

from the editorial office and he had to leave the country. Leopold Unger and his family settled in Belgium where he had to start his professional life for the second time. In April 1969, overcoming the language barrier, he became a journalist of the Brussels “Le Soir”. Owing to his strong position in “Le Soir”, he was invited to cooperate with one of the most important world newspapers “International Herald Tribune”. That cooperation lasted, with breaks, for 10 years. It is worth mentioning that, while staying in Washington in 1982, Unger published some texts in such newspapers as “Washington Post” and “New York Times”. Simultaneously Leopold Unger started cooperating with Jerzy Giedroyc<sup>1</sup>, the Parisian “Kultura” and with “Radio Wolna Europa”.

He was also the regular correspondent of “Gazeta Wyborcza” since the beginning of its existence in 1989.

For more than 30 years he was a regular cooperator of the monthly “Kultura” running the column “Seen from Brussels”. That collaboration was an immense intellectual adventure for him, not only professional but also a life and moral one, as he stated himself<sup>2</sup>.

The monthly “Kultura” began its activity as a magazine of Literary Institute with Jerzy Giedroyc as the chief editor. He was an experienced journalist; before the war he was the editor of “Dzień Akademicki” – an addition to “Dzień Polski” which was later transformed into a biweekly “Bunt Młodych”. In 1937 the paper changed its name to “Polityka”.

After 1939 he worked for the Publicity and Culture Office at the 2 Polish Corps and he published there the paper “Orzeł Biały”.

After the Second World War Jerzy Giedroyc was considering seriously to organize the centre whose aim would be to take over the propaganda institutions i.e. Polish papers published in the West. Contrary to the majority of the leaders at exile he rightly predicted that the next war was not probable to break out, coming back to the

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<sup>1</sup> In my work I use the name Giedroyc although in many other papers the form Giedroyc is used. Marcei Kosman proves that the Editor used the name Giedroyc till the moment of settling at emigration in 1945, later he gave up using it for practical reasons and he decided to use the spelling acceptable in the western Europe. The genuine spelling of his name might be found in his school ID and other documents from the between the wars period. ( M.Kosman, *Atenaci Jerzego Giedroycia [w:] Kultura Paryska. Twórcy, dzieło, recepcja*, ed.I.Hofman, Lublin 2007, p. 13).

<sup>2</sup> L.Unger, *Intruz*, Warsaw 2002, p. 332.

country would be difficult and emigration would be long – lasting. He rejected London, (which was then the seat of Polish emigration authorities) as the seat of a new institution because he didn't share the opinion of the possibility to represent the country legally in the existing political situation. He also didn't hope for restoration of Polish pre-war borders. His perception of communism differed significantly from the outlook of Polish emigration authorities. He was of the opinion that the idea of communism was not only the tool of USSR but also he noticed how attractive it might be for the societies which were offered quick industrialization and a new form of a class-free nation. That idea unfolded a vision of a life without any crisis for workers, modernization of economy for the technically educated people and for intellectualists it promised work, freedom, peace and great support for the scientific exploration. The intellectual, educated people were to be found among the people of peasant and workers origin.

The curriculum of the Parisian “Kultura” was marked with realism as far as the means on the way to regain Polish independence are concerned and hence it was focused on the country. But both the editors of “Kultura” and all its cooperators who were scattered all over the world understood that independent Poland had to exist in free Europe and the world. So just its freedom was the priority. For all the people connected with “ Kultura” it was clear that Polish history and culture were the part of Europe's history.

The aim of the thesis is to show Leopold Unger's journalism on the pages of Parisian “Kultura” at the background of his rich biography. “Bruxellois“ was one of the most important correspondents occupied with the events at the international political scene.

To do my research I assumed two hypothesis; Leopold Unger's journalism was determined by political events and his journalism was not only in accordance with the policy of the paper but it shaped it as well.

While writing my thesis I asked some research questions. Did Leopold Unger's texts aptly reflect the reality then? Did the author analyze and predict the events rightly? What domain was he interested in? What was his position among the other cooperators of Jerzy Giedroyc? What ideological program emerged from his texts?

What were his journalistic achievements? What were the specific features of his texts? What did the unique cooperation of Leopold Unger and Jerzy Giedroyc rely on? While analyzing Unger's journalism we can wonder how the international correspondent's work looked like in that period of time. Such magazine as "Kultura" didn't have rich budget for journeys and the agency activity. Therefore, looking at Unger's biography, we must consider the influence of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe and its history on the life of an individual person. What were the political, social, cultural and anthropological conditions Leopold Unger functioned in?

The thesis deals with analyzing the content of Leopold Unger's articles in the Parisian "Kultura". To do that I've chosen the most important and representative ones. Leopold Unger took the pen-name "Bruxellois" which referred to Juliusz Mieroszewski's pen-name "Londoner". His regular column of articles was titled "Seen from Brussels". Unger came back to his surname only after Mieroszewski's death. The column appeared, with different frequency, since 1970 till the last issue in 2000. Initially, for the first five years, "Bruxellois" appeared in each issue of the paper (with single exceptions). The vast majority of his texts was written till 1988, so to the moment of the turning-point ( 120 texts ), after 1989 only 51 articles appeared. All together "Seen from Brussels" was released 171 times. We have to add to that number a few letters about "Bruxellois" from the readers, the author's answers and short memories in the column " Those Who Passed Away" by Leopold Unger.

With his texts Leopold Unger filled the gap which he had noticed in the paper. "Seen from Brussels" became the column which was to analyze current events at the international scene. Unger wanted to go away from theoretical considerations, different concepts and variants of change in the world, especially in Poland. In that place he suggested strictly journalistic texts; commentaries connecting articles with reportages (when he participated in the described events himself, quoted heroes). He himself named it "the archeology of politics". It was supposed to be a double look – analyzing it with wide perspective but at the same time looking into its mechanisms. He mainly focused on USSR – USA relations. It resulted from the political situation in the world, especially after the fall of communism, which was replaced by, so called, cold war. It is important that he saw the relations of both world-powers through the

prism of the countries involved in the conflict. His texts present the image of the world ruled by the players who couldn't avoid conflicts between each other. Unger was aware of the fact that Polish readers were cut off the true information from the world. What is more, they were the subject of constant indoctrination and attempts to falsify both Polish and the world's history.

Leopold Unger's journalism in Parisian "Kultura" can be chronologically and logically divided into two stages. The first one – since 1970 to the moment of the turning-point in 1989, and the second one which lasted till the moment of closing the paper after Jerzy Giedroyc's death in 2000.

During the first stage Leopold Unger took up a few thematic spheres. He started with the Polish plot but he quickly gave it up for some international ones. He most frequently wrote about the bilateral relations between the USSR and the USA, in the context of a cold war conflict. Unger described the engagement of other countries in that conflict, their relations with both world-powers. He extensively related the China policy in the years 1971 – 1979. Those texts were extremely appreciated by the Editor who praised them in the letters to Unger<sup>3</sup>. He also followed the global policy of the USSR towards the satellite – countries, especially in the context of the Brezhnev doctrine. He paid a lot of attention to the inner situation in the USSR and he described successive stages of the power struggle. He dealt with the problems of Western Europe; criticized its submissive policy towards Kreml, the lack of sufficient support for the countries taken in by the Brezhnev doctrine, its inner problems. He didn't spare international organizations such as EWG, ONZ, NATO, accusing them of bureaucracy, mock activities, politicization. He was occupied with the Jewish issues as well. Unger was interested in the position of Jews in the contemporary world, Arabic terrorism mainly aimed at Israel citizens, wars in Near East, the situation of Jews for instance in the USSR.

The turning-point in 1989 brought about mainly texts about Poland – political, economic, social changes. The author's interest was evidently caused by the importance of the events in the country, his origin, his language knowledge but also

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<sup>3</sup> Compare the letter of Jerzy Giedroyc to Leopold Unger from the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1973 and the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1973. ( the archives of Leopold Unger )

the possibility (after 20 years) of coming to Poland. Before that Leopold Unger had been on the list of the people endangering the system, who were forbidden to cross Polish borders.

After the change in 1989, the fall of communism in Eastern and Central Europe, the “Bruxellois” wrote not only about Poland. He observed the demolition of Berlin Wall, was a reporter in Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, followed perestroika and then Borys Jelcyn’s rule in Russia. He used to come back to the Jewish issue and the Near East conflict. He didn’t forget about the Western Europe problems.

The thesis consists of six chapters, introduction, conclusion and bibliography. In the first chapter I introduced Leopold Unger and his biography (only partly). Here, some well known facts from his life can be found, described by Unger himself in his biography, by people who know the history of Parisian “Kultura“, by its cooperators, by the investigators of the contemporary Polish journalism. I also presented some unknown facts from the life of the “Bruxellois” which I detected in the PRL Security Service documents. The period at the end of the sixties seems to be extremely interesting because then the Security Service activities towards Unger intensified. While reading these documents the whole situation of the “Bruxellois” struggle with PRL Security Service can be recreated. In that chapter I shortly presented the history and the specificity of the Literary Institute and its monthly “Kultura“; the circumstances of the paper’s origin, forming some assumptions of its program, the editorial’s outlook. Only taking all these things into consideration the position of the “Bruxellois” and his contribution to “Kultura“ journalism can be estimated.

The second chapter of the thesis contains the description of the USSR and the USA relations (more precisely the process of both world-powers colliding) in the works of Leopold Unger. He devoted the most space on the pages of “Kultura“ to analyze the direct and indirect relations of USSR – USA. Nothing unusual, taking into account the political situation in the years 1970 – 2000, especially the period of so called “cold war”. It is difficult to extract the texts in which the author analyzes only double – sided relations between both super powers, their conflict affects other countries as well. The examples of these countries occupy a specific place in Unger’s analysis. He devoted a lot of attention to the events in Cuba, China, Egypt,

Afghanistan, Angola in the seventies and eighties. On the example of that part of my work it is possible to see a wide range of Leopold Unger's interests.

The third chapter is the analysis of "Brusselians", referring to the eastern part of Europe. In this part I have described the journalist's outlook at the Polish history – since so called March events in 1968, through crisis's in the seventies and eighties till the changes of the system in 1989. I have analyzed the source material dealing with the situation in Poland just after the Round Table. In this chapter I have presented how Leopold Unger showed in his texts the way of the USSR from communism to democracy and also the matter of Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia aiming at independence. It is worth mentioning that the author used to write his texts from the distant location cause he wasn't allowed to cross the iron curtain border till the year 1990.

In the fourth chapter I have shown the concept of Europe being united and the analysis of that process in Unger's articles. He was mostly interested in the process of uniting the continent itself and problems, hopes, traps and ideas connected with it. While analyzing the material included in the paper it might be concluded that all his texts about united Europe had Poland in prospect. "Brusselians" were an exception. Unger used to analyze the situation in Central and Eastern Europe from the point of view of a European till the moment when the changes of the system started in 1989. He always referred it to Poland but didn't look at it through the prism of Poland. When communism fell, Unger could finally come back to Poland and he started visiting Poland. His texts then dealt with Poland – Europe relations. At the same time his choice of topics was influenced by the events which made Poland the centre of the uniting process i.e. negotiations on joining Communities. When Unger was writing about the uniting Europe, he focused mainly on crises: enumerated reasons, noticed shortsighted policy of some countries and developing bureaucracy which paralyzed the works of Commonwealth. Thus, he evidently implicated that only powerful and united Europe might counterbalance Russia and the United States. He pointed that only joining the political, economical, cultural and international activities of single countries might result in improving the living standards and safety at the continent.

I have devoted the fifth chapter to present Unger's engagement in Eastern Europe's issues. The author often wondered about the future and the form of

contemporary western world, diagnosed and predicted but not always accurately. At first, he was interested in the problems of German foreign policy and then in the process of GFR and GDR being united. He wasn't the only one to be into it but, as one of very few authors of the monthly, he didn't analyze the German policy and the policy towards Germany only from Polish perspective. He began to be interested in Polish – German relations during the martial law. In this chapter I've been trying to show how the attitude of the West towards communism in Central – Eastern Europe is presented in Unger's journalism. He also criticized the reactions, mainly French ones, to the problems of so called people's democracy countries.

The last, sixth chapter is an attempt to specify the position of Leopold Unger in the Parisian "Kultura". Due to the letters to and from Jerzy Giedroyc, which were kept by the journalist, I've been trying to reconstruct the form and atmosphere of the Editor and the Journalist's cooperation. These letters are an invaluable source of information not only about functioning of the paper but also about the crucial matters and forgotten details connected with those days. In this part of my thesis Leopold Unger's journalistic skill of writing is shown.

Leopold Unger was publishing in the Parisian "Kultura" for 30 years, since 1970 to the last issue of the paper in 2000. The texts of "Bruxellois" were strongly rooted in the program of the paper and appeared to be significant in the paper's history of political thought. Some of them have become, you could say, the manifestation of the political centre which the editorial office of "Kultura" was.