

**Thaddäus Zielinski, *Mein Lebenslauf – Erstausgabe des deutschen Originals – und Tagebuch 1939–1944***, herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Jerzy Axer, Alexander Gavrilov und Michael von Albrecht. Unter Mitwirkung von Hanna Geremek, Piotr Mitzner, Elżbieta Olechowska und Anatolij Ruban, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012 (Studien zur klassischen Philologie 167), 283 pp., ISBN 978-3-631-63163-8, € 56.95.

This is a book which is extraordinary in at least several ways. Extraordinary above all for its author, who, at the same time, is the protagonist of these personal accounts. This double role is performed here by Tadeusz ZIELIŃSKI (henceforth Z.; 1859–1944), a brilliant intellectual, an expert in antique and European cultures, a visionary, a philosopher and a specialist in religious studies, and, to some extent, also a psychologist and a sociologist; a man of letters with excellent philological skills and a talented orator, a powerful personality, shaped by the personal tragedy of becoming an orphan at an early age and tried by the plight of two World Wars and the Russian revolution; a scholar of substantial prominence and immense achievements, distinguished by so many honours, and yet so titanically lonely throughout his lifetime, even if loved and admired, not to say adored, by so many, but also hurt on so many occasions by misunderstanding, envy or even the small-minded resentfulness of some people and certain circles.

It is also a book which is extraordinary for the nature of the accounts it provides, which are, indeed, so different from one another. On one hand, it includes an autobiography (*Mein Lebenslauf*; as we well know, he was not the only classicist to secure a projection of his past). A product of cogitation, though, of course, based on authentic experience and events; it was dictated by Z. to his daughter Weronika in 1924, in a way concluding the Russo-German chapter of his life up to that point in time (the resulting text being, in a sense, authorised through corrections in his own hand). On the other hand, there is a diary (*Tagebuch*), this time written *privatissime*, for his own eyes only, from 1939 to 1944; it is an account not uniform in its nature, though so poignant in its authenticity, an account dictated to Z. by life itself and under extreme conditions. Whereas the *Autobiography* was penned in German, the *Diary* is a work in Polish. Both were written in Schondorf, Bavaria, which in the final chord of Z.'s actual biography also turned out to be his final resting place.

Both manuscripts were saved from oblivion by Dr Hanna GEREMEK († 2004), who obtained the autobiography from Japan in 1996 and found the diary in St. Petersburg in the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where it had been placed together with the remaining legacy and family heirlooms of Z. by his son Feliks (1886–1970). Unfortunately, H. GEREMEK did not live to see the Polish edition of both these pieces of writing (Warsaw 2005); she only managed to edit a portion of the *Diary*, but did not see the final draft of the Polish translation of the *Autobiography*. After H. GEREMEK's death, the editorial duties were taken over by Piotr MITZNER, who carried the Polish edition of the *Zielinskiana* to a successful end, and supplemented parts of it with a synthetic commentary.

There is no doubt that an in-depth and well-thought out essay on Z. and his *Diary* left by the late Hanna GEREMEK is a model study. Fortunately, it too has been translated into German (pp. 169–191) and still serves as an introduction to Z.'s unique wartime accounts. One may even venture an argument that it is the best of all the contributions accompanying this edition of the *Autobiography* and the *Diary*. Beyond doubt, another of its advantages is the *editio princeps* of the German original of the *Autobiography* (it would be fruitless to ask why the original text was not printed in the Polish edition of 2005; the translation from German by T. KACHLAK, reviewed and corrected by W. LIPNIK, shows that the text must have been determined at that time).

The German volume of the *Zielinskiana* commences with an introductory note by the editor of the series (a full bibliographical description of the publication mentioned at the end of the note could still be wished for), followed by three *Würdigungen* (not a very felicitous term), these being

three essays by J. AXER (*Tadeusz Zieliński unter Fremden*, pp. 11–23), A.K. GAVRILOV (*Thaddäus Zielinski im Kontext der russischen Kultur*, pp. 25–40) and M. VON ALBRECHT (*Brückenschlag zwischen Kulturen und Nationen: Der Philologe Thaddäus Zielinski*, pp. 41–48); the latter also reprints his contribution in Latin entitled *Thaddaei Zielinski monumentum Schondorfiense* (pp. 49 f.; this *carmen* in Alcaic stanzas was also published in the Polish edition of the *Zielinskiana* in 2005). The texts proper come in the second part of the book (“Texte und Erläuterungen”), with *Mein Lebenslauf* on pages 51–146 (a commentary to this *Autobiography* co-written by A. RUBAN and V. ZELCENKO is presented on pages 147–168), and *Tagebuch 1939–1944* (together with notes provided by the translator, O. MATHEI-SOCHA, and the editor of the series) on pages 197–277. Further, on pages 193–195, there is an *Editorische Notiz* by P. MITZNER (originally in the Polish 2005 edition, also translated by O. MATHEI-SOCHA), and the book concludes with a *Register der Personennamen*, pp. 279–283.

The work’s title page (v.s.) is somewhat pretentious, or even misleading. On the whole, the general concept of the book’s layout seems to be a kind of a *hysteron proteron*. Fortunately, in his editorial *Vorwort*, M. VON ALBRECHT provides additional explanations on who participated in the preparation of this work, and gives credit *suum cuique*, though apparently without complete consistency.

The *Würdigungen* mentioned above make interesting reading, even if to various degree for readers in Germany, Russia or Poland etc. For obvious reasons, closer attention should be paid to A.K. GAVRILOV’s essay, which clarifies in detail certain important elements of the Russian background of Z.’s life and work which might not have been fully known so far to Western European or even to Polish readership. The essays by J. AXER and M. VON ALBRECHT are, in turn, of a partly personal nature, which at times gives them a very individual tone. Indeed, while talking about Z., the authors tell quite a lot about themselves, and not necessarily *expressis verbis*. This seems to be a matter of specific style, which does not require further discussion here. Let me only fulfill the reviewer’s duty by mentioning the fact that while in his short introduction to the Polish publication of 2005 J. AXER described Z. as “Poland’s greatest classicist”, in the present one he, contrarily, distances himself from this description by stating that: “In Polen wird gerne über Tadeusz Zieliński als ‘den grössten polnischen klassischen Philologen’ geschrieben. Diese Formulierung ist sowohl wahr als auch vom Grunde aus falsch” (p. 12). Again, there is a clear anachronism in his statement that: “In Polen war Zieliński seit 1922 Professor an der Józef-Piłsudski-Universität in Warschau” (p. 18), given that the University of Warsaw did not have this patron until 1935. Likewise, it is hard to disregard the strange footnote numbered 16 (p. 21); not only does it provide another incorrect piece of information (the incriminated books, i.e. the last two volumes, V and VI, of Z.’s *Religionen der antiken Welt* were in fact not published in 1989), but, because of the background against which a reference to the city of Toruń is provided, it might suggest that Toruń-based classicists are the ones to blame for what J. AXER believes to be an outrageous publication, upon which he succinctly comments that: “Beide Bände erschienen 1989 im Druck in einer sehr unvollkommenen Form (Verlag Adam Marszałek in Toruń) mit einem grossen Zahl von Fehlern und ohne wissenschaftliche Bearbeitung”. In fact, the edition of those two of Z.’s works (i.e. *Religia Cesarstwa Rzymskiego* and *Chrześcijaństwo antyczne*) was prepared in 1999 by Professor A. PIŚKOZUB and his team of the Chair of Civilisation Studies, which existed at that time at the University of Gdańsk, these works being in fact conducted, as he states in the preface to volume V, “in contact and cooperation with Professor Plezia” (*ibid.*, p. 9). So much by way of necessary explanation.

In the introduction to the book under review, M. VON ALBRECHT mentions that “Eine russische Übersetzung der Autobiographie zusammen mit dem Kommentar von A. Ruban erscheint gleichzeitig in St. Petersburg” (p. 9). Hence we might say that, thanks to the earlier Polish publication and the present German and Russian ones, trilingual completion is found by these three spiritual *partes* of Z.’s individuality, about all of which he was perfectly aware and which are also emphasized by the authors of the contributions quoted, who perceive this excellent classicist as an embodiment of an ideal European, as if tailored for the needs of the present day. And while one has

to agree with what Z.'s former Russian student Salomon LURIA wrote as early as 1959 (a quotation about which we were rightly reminded by Hanna GEREMEK, originally from an article in the Polish journal "Meander", of which the entirety of issue 8–9 of that year's volume was dedicated to Z.) – that Z. was "Polish by birth, German by education, Russian by culture, but his actual homeland was the Hellas of the classical era" (p. 187; the German translation of this sentence, too, leaves a bit to be desired) – it is only right that we quote in this context a very characteristic statement by Z. himself. In a letter to S. SREBRNY, his closest student (dated 25 February in St. Petersburg and sent on 30 March 1921), he wrote explicitly that "for me, *extra Poloniam non est vita*" (see T. ZIELIŃSKI, *Listy do Stefana Srebrnego*, ed. by G. GOLIK-SZARAWARSKA, Warszawa 1997, pp. 29 f.). Thus, paradoxically, the twists and turns of life faced by the protagonist of *Mein Lebenslauf* and *Tagebuch 1939–1944*, of which we may also learn in a unique way through this publication, confirmed that his confession had been right.

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