

I Doubt That Professor Zygmunt Bauman Would Be Delighted with Izabela Wagner's *Bauman. A Biography*

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“**B**orn in 1942 in a rural area, Kwaśniewski was also a non-Jewish Pole” – this is how Dr. hab. Izabela Wagner, professor at Collegium Civitas, Warsaw, describes me in her book entitled *Bauman. A Biography* published in June 2020 by Polity Press.

Already in the publishing information of this book there is a great deal of dishonesty; Collegium Civitas announces that it is “the first comprehensive biography of the life and work of Zygmunt Bauman”, while the first comprehensive biography of Bauman known to me was published on October 30, 2019 by Dariusz Rosiak in the Mando Publishing House, entitled *Bauman* (p. 256). In my opinion, in Bauman’s biography by Rosiak we find more extensive sources and documentation than in the book by Izabela Wagner.

Izabela Wagner recognized that an important episode in the biography of Zygmunt Bauman was my e-mail to members of the Senate, the community of

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the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences and the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Warsaw regarding the planned celebration of the so-called renewal of Zygmunt Bauman's doctorate. Since Izabela Wagner violates all principles of research integrity, gives the content of this e-mail in an abbreviated and distorted version, below I cite its original version, sent by me on September 7, 2006, as well as e-mails omitted by Wagner; my second letter to Senate Members of September 11, 2006 and a letter to Professor Zygmunt Bauman of September 12, 2006.

Your Magnificence, Dear Members of the Senate, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In view of the recently disclosed information that Prof. Zygmunt Bauman was an officer and an agent of the communist security services, I am opposed to the request of the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology and the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences and Resocialisation for the solemn renewal of Zygmunt Bauman's doctorate by the University of Warsaw. At the same time, I request that the Councils of the above-mentioned Departments reassume voting of resolutions on this matter, after the members of the Faculty Councils have read the materials of the Institute of National Remembrance on the activities of Z. Bauman in the communist secret services.

Yours faithfully

Jerzy Kwaśniewski, professor at WSNSiR UW

Following this letter, I sent the second letter to complete my application:

Your Magnificence, Dear Members of the Senate, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following my letter – opposition to the initiative of the solemn renewal of the doctorate of Prof. Zygmunt Bauman, in connection with the disclosure by the Institute of National Remembrance that he was an officer and agent of the communist security services, I kindly inform you that data on this subject was published in the “IPN Bulletin” No. 6 06 of 2006 and in the “Ozon” magazine of June 8–14 this year. Collective information on this subject is also available on the Internet at <http://k.com.pl/index.php/content/view/713/40/> (the link is not active now).

With best regards

Jerzy Kwaśniewski, professor at WSNSiR UW

My letter to Her Magnificence Rector et al. was also sent to Prof. Zygmunt Bauman on September 12, 2006 at 13:51:

Dear Professor,

Below, I enclose the content of the letter to the Professor that I wrote to the authorities and the environment of the University of Warsaw after hearing the facts disclosed by the Institute of National Remembrance about your activity in the communist security services during the Stalinist period. As your student (you taught me Sociology, and you did not avoid moral reflection I remember), as a participant in protests against the relegation of, *inter alia*, the Professor from the University of Warsaw, as a citizen and just an ordinary person, I am shocked by the facts that I have learned and outraged by the conduct of the Professor.

Yours sincerely

Jerzy Kwaśniewski

A similar letter to the authorities of the University of Warsaw was sent by Professor Maria Łoś from the University of Ottawa on September 24, 2006, which is discussed by Wagner in her book:

Her 24 September letter to the rector also called for withholding the honor to Bauman ‘until he explains his former role in the apparatus of repression. There is no doubt to me, that Professor Bauman has significant scientific achievements and has significantly influenced the shaping of social and ethical thought in the last twenty years.’ However, ‘a calm investigation and explanation’ were required because of the IPN disclosures of ‘*previously unknown information* that Zygmunt Bauman was an officer of the communist security authorities in 1945–1953, as well as a secret military information agent, and that he actively participated in eliminating the resistance of the underground guerrilla.’

Izabela Wagner – breaking the generally accepted rules and standards of the researcher’s ethics – publishes her own English translations of quotes from our Polish-language letters, without mentioning that these are translations not authorized by us. In this way, it creates the erroneous impression that the stylistic and terminological awkwardness in their English translations are the fault of us, the authors of these letters.

Let us quote a beautiful letter of Professor Maria Łoś, without distortions from Izabela Wagner:

Her Magnificence Rector of the University of Warsaw
Prof. dr hab. Katarzyna Chałasińska-Macukow
Your Magnificence, Dear Members of the Senate,

My letter is a vote in favor of suspending the application for the solemn confirmation of Professor Zygmunt Bauman's doctorate until his former role in the repression apparatus is clarified. I have no doubts that Professor Bauman has significant scientific achievements and has significantly influenced the shaping of social and ethical thought over the last twenty years. Nevertheless, in view of the previously unknown information published by the Institute of National Remembrance that Zygmunt Bauman was in the years 1945–53 a communist security officer and a secret agent of Military Information, and that he actively participated in the liquidation of the resistance of the partisan underground, I believe that these issues require calm exploration and explanation.

This, in my opinion, necessary delay in making a decision regarding the renewal of Professor Bauman's doctorate may become an occasion for a wise and worthy discussion on the importance of this type of currently disclosed information for:

- possible future decisions regarding special scientific distinctions for the achievements and attitudes of the whole life;
- a decision regarding – in this particular situation when the distinction is to be awarded to a scholar whose contribution to science focuses on the issue of moral responsibility and honesty – the disappearance of ethical judgment and other aspects of the moral condition of modern man and the world.

In my opinion, the university is particularly responsible for educating the young generation and therefore the question of the role models promoted by it is very important. Difficult issues of responsibility for one's own past, responsibility towards victims, the essence of betrayal and civil courage, the problems of scientific honesty and its relationship with ideological choices and their consequences – all these issues and their exposure have an impact on the attitudes and values of the young generation. The opportunistic assumption that talking about someone's past role in the repression apparatus is morally more reprehensible than this participation itself contributes to confusion, the loss of civil courage and the reluctance of the academic community to undertake difficult but educational discussions.

Thanks in advance for paying attention to my letter.

Yours faithfully

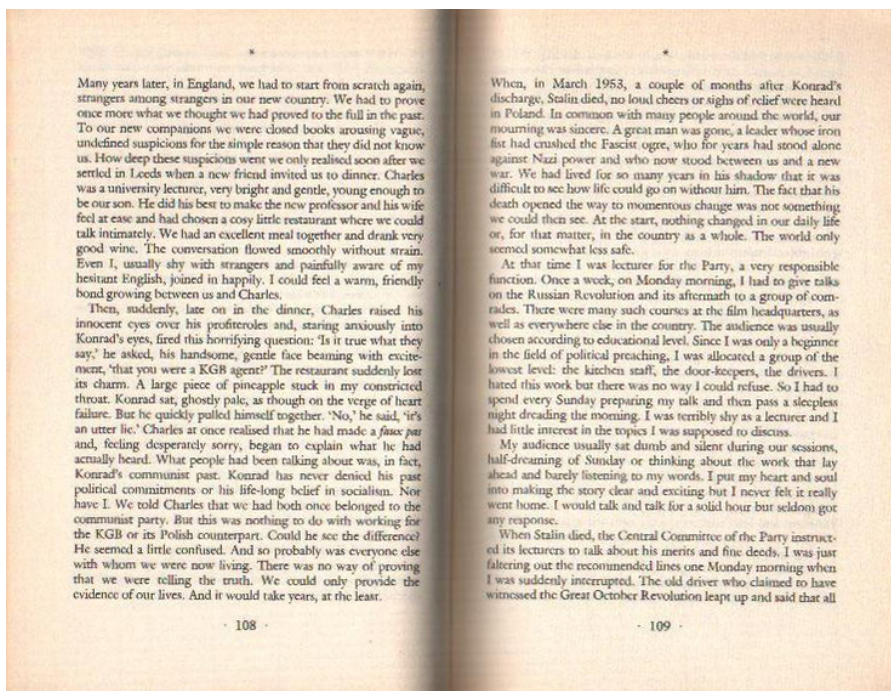
Maria Łoś

A graduate and former employee of the University of Warsaw
Professor, University of Ottawa (Department of Criminology)
Attn: University of Warsaw Senate
Rector's Committee for Honorary Titles

Izabela Wagner attacks, accuses us of ignorance and of raising matters commonly known and not hidden.

There had never been any secret about Bauman being a KBW officer when he began his master's at Warsaw University. He came to campus in his military uniform, having had no time to change it (like many others in the same situation), and continued to wear the uniform after leaving the KBW because he had no money for other clothes.

It is interesting how Wagner would explain Bauman's resolute denial of facts from that period of his life in a conversation with an English professor in Leeds. This conversation is quoted by his wife in her diary (Bauman, J., 1988, p. 108; see the photo of the book below).

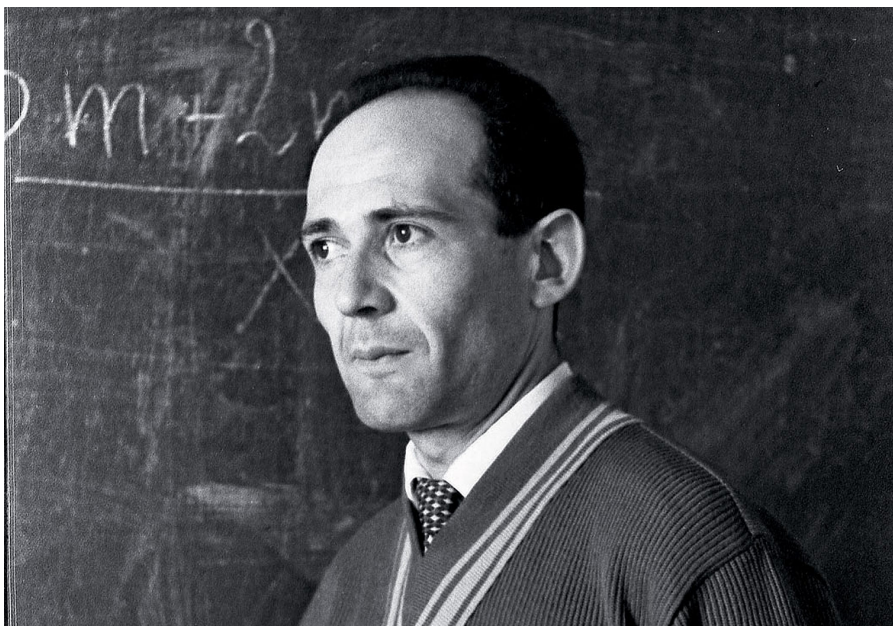


Source: Bauman, J., 1988, p. 108.

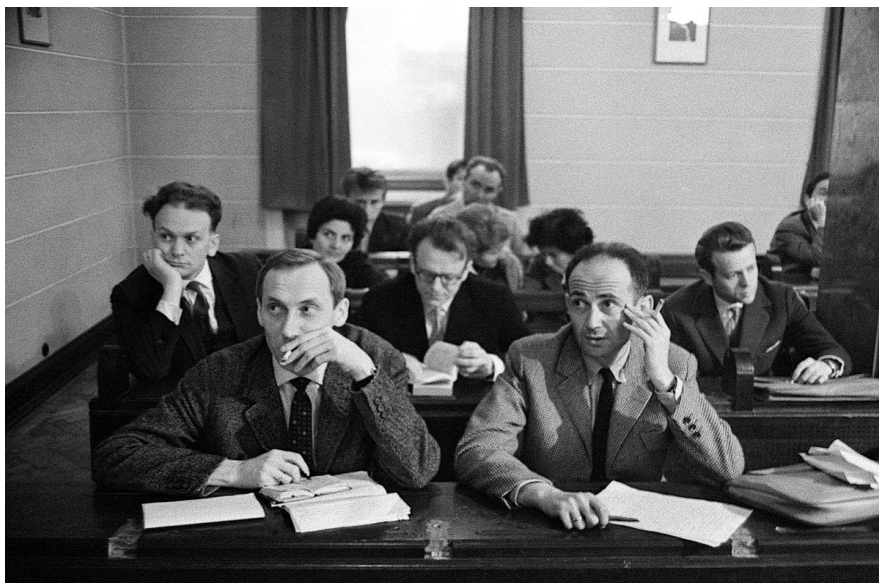
After sending the above-mentioned e-mails about Zygmunt Bauman's inglorious past, many of his friends and supporters accused me of informing – even though talking about something that is commonly known is not informing.

It is funny that Izabela Wagner claims that Zygmunt Bauman lectured at the University in the uniform of a KBW officer because he had no money for other clothes. Meanwhile, he had both money and other clothes. My wife, Kazimiera, met him dressed in an elegant suit at Associate Professor Szymon Chodak's

house in 1960. I also had the opportunity to admire his civil and military wardrobe during lectures or exams (see fotos below).



Source: <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/historia/1775434,1,zygmunt-bauman--zycie-w-oparach-antysemityzmu.read>



Source: <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75410,21222333,zygmunt-bauman-od-komunizmu-przez-wygnanie-do-ponowoczesnosci.html>

Izabela Wagner seems to ascribe to our letters the role of the factor that prevented the University of Warsaw from awarding Bauman with the renewal of his doctorate. If Wagner had kept a minimum of research reliability, she would have easily determined in the Rector's Office of the University of Warsaw that they probably did not matter much. The Senate Honorary Titles Committee and the Rector made a negative decision in this matter earlier and it was rather unrelated to our e-mails.

On the pages of her work, Izabela Wagner spins insightful, revealing, funny reflections on the backstage of sending these e-mails and their impact on the rejection by the University of Warsaw authorities of applications for honors for Zygmunt Bauman.

The backdrop to the story of those letters is important to understanding the context of Bauman's shunning by the university. First, Kwaśniewski led a third sociological institute at the University of Warsaw that was in competition with the two institutes that were urging the honoring of Bauman. No other discipline at this university is organized in this way, and it reflects the complex relationships among networks that have developed over several generations. Łoś, by contrast, was a longtime emigrant and thus a 'foreign expert' whose letter from abroad weighed more than one signed by a scholar working in Poland. As a peripheral post-Soviet country, Poland and many of its citizens looked with absolute idolatry towards 'the West'.

Finally, she comes to the conclusion-discovery that Professor Adam Podgórecki (who died in 1998), with whom M. Łoś and J. Kwaśniewski were related, is responsible for everything. According to Wagner, they all represented the fields and sociological concepts that Bauman criticized!

Izabela Wagner writes nonsense, instead of taking a few bus stops to me and the Rector of the University of Warsaw, in line with the elementary duties of a researcher, to find out what it really was like in the matter of refusing the renewal of Zygmunt Bauman's doctorate.

And also, in accordance with other elementary responsibilities of a researcher, she should simply read about it in the 2019 book-biography of Bauman by Dariusz Rosiak (pp. 189–191).

So let us do it for her:

The Scientific Council of the Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw is not aware of Bauman's cooperation with Military Information, when in December 2005 it submits a request to the rector to solemnly renew his doctorate on the 50th anniversary of Zygmunt Bauman's defense.

In practice, the University of Warsaw renewing the doctorate of a university student is equivalent to an honorary doctorate. In 2005, the UW authorities renewed Leszek Kołakowski's doctorate, it seems that a similar recognition for

Bauman will be a natural gesture towards another outstanding scientist expelled from the university after March.

In July, the sister Institute of Applied Social Sciences joins the Institute of Sociology. One of the participants of the meeting at which the application for the renewal of the doctorate for Bauman was submitted was the sociologist, Jerzy Kwaśniewski:

- There was no discussion at all, only I took the floor. I remembered that I was a student of Bauman, and in March I protested against his expulsion from the university. I was positive and voted in favor. There was no discussion because colleagues from the ISNS had discussed it before. We unanimously supported the request.

The matter seems obvious – Bauman is an outstanding scientist, winner of international awards and then nine honorary doctorates from various universities around the world. Nevertheless, after reading the materials published in the “IPN Bulletin”, Kwaśniewski writes a letter to his colleagues from the faculty with a motion for reassumption of the vote on the renewal of Bauman’s doctorate.

- In my opinion, what he did in the Directorate of Information of KBW disqualified him from being a candidate for doctorate renewal. I did not blame him for being a communist, even fanatical. In my opinion, this was not what disqualified him, but the fact that he concealed information about his cooperation with the services.

At the Institute of Applied Social Sciences and the Institute of Sociology there are voices of protest against Kwaśniewski’s initiative, employees are divided into supporters of Bauman regardless of his past and those for whom the professor’s past burns an indelible mark on his biography.

The Rector’s Committee for Academic Titles, a body composed of a dozen or so experienced university professors, decides to reject the application in October.

Katarzyna Chafasińska-Macukow was the then rector of the University of Warsaw:

- Nobody doubted that the scientific achievements of Professor Bauman were enormous, he was an outstanding scientist. But we are talking about the renewal of the doctorate from 1956, from the difficult period of Polish history. After the discussions in the Committee, there was no doubt that we should not include him. The decision was taken unanimously, such matters cannot be subject to a vote. All the members of the committee had a specific view on this matter, which was in line with mine.

I ask about the influence of the publications of the Institute of National Remembrance on the Committee’s decision.

- These documents appeared in parallel with our work, but the decision not to renew Professor Bauman’s doctorate was made earlier. We have never treated the findings of the researchers from the Institute of National Remembrance as evidence conclusive in the case. We relied on the documents from the personal file of Zygmunt Bauman. After all, he did not hide his past in the KBW. He wrote his biography himself.

Officially, the Committee explains that the “nature of the candidate’s academic and teaching achievements” determined the negative decision. The initiators of the action to honor Bauman want to know what exactly it means. At the beginning of November, Professor Aldona Jawłowska (chairman of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences) and Professor Mirosława Marody (chairman of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Sociology) ask the rector to explain the actual reasons for the refusal. Professor Chałasińska-Macukow answers them:

“[...] the post-war activity of the Professor as a political officer of the KBW and his ideological involvement, among others, at the University of Warsaw and at the Higher School of Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party, raises serious reservations and may be the subject of acute controversy.

The doctorate renewal ceremony promotes not only scientific achievements, but also examples of civic attitude. This has a significant didactic and educational significance [...]”.

Critics of the Commission’s decision point out that applying these criteria, Leszek Kołakowski’s doctorate should not have been renewed, as he defended his thesis in 1953 at the height of Stalinism and, as a fanatical communist, also did harm to people. There are also accusations against Professor Chałasińska: the whole thing is to be a revenge on Bauman for his criticism of her father, Józef Chałasiński, in 1956.

- Professors Jawłowska and Marody claimed that I was taking revenge for my father. It seemed funny to me. I was raised in a home where there was no failure, and we did not perceive Bauman’s articles from the 1950s as something that hurt my father. I do not have and have never had any emotional relationship with Zygmunt Bauman.

- How do you judge it now? Was it a good decision?

- Yes. It was a good decision. Additionally, Zygmunt Bauman basically did not cooperate with us. Kołakowski attended the University of Warsaw at least once a year. Bauman hardly visited us.

And after that, he got quite offended.

Izabela Wagner commits a lot of further dishonesty. For example, it is not true that my Institute was in some rivalry with the Institute of Sociology or the Institute of Applied Social Sciences, which influenced my attitude towards Zygmunt Bauman. Why would they affect? At the meeting of the Council of the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, I spoke very positively (as the only one) about Professor Bauman and supported the application to be honored with the renewal of his doctorate. I have always worked closely and fruitfully with the Institute of Sociology.

It is not true that: “Kwaśniewski had taken his place at the university when Podgórecki left”. Professor Adam Podgórecki left Poland in 1977, and already in

mid-1969, Prof. Podgórecki, with whom I studied the sociology of law and collaborated in the research of his Department, as a fourth-year student of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw, offered me a job at the University of Warsaw with his friend, Assoc. Prof. Czesław Czapów in the Team for Rehabilitation Problems at the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology of the University of Warsaw, headed by Stanisław Jedlewski. Although I had a very interesting job at the time as a research and scientific assistant at the Intercollegiate Institute for Higher Education Research, where I was finishing my doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Jan Szczepański, I eagerly took advantage of this proposal and from October 1969, I worked as an assistant in the Team of Prof. Jedlewski and Prof. Czapów.

Contrary to the disgusting suggestion of Izabela Wagner, I was not employed at the University of Warsaw because “the anti-Semitic purge opened up new places”.

It is not true that Maria Łoś “had received her master’s degree in 1966 [...] at the Institute of Sociology, [...] Kwaśniewski also graduated from the Institute”.

Neither Maria Łoś nor I graduated from the Institute of Sociology. The Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw was established only in 1968 – a fact which Wagner, the former deputy director of this Institute, should be well aware of. In 1966, we simply studied at the Faculty of Philosophy. As for me, I never “graduated from” the Institute of Sociology.

The investigative arguments of Izabela Wagner are supplemented with an original suggestion, clumsily veiled, intended to explain our alleged hostility towards Zygmunt Bauman: She writes (reveals) a sensation!: “Adam Podgórecki was a well-regarded Catholic anti-communist who originated in the Polish gentry. Born [...] in a rural area, Kwaśniewski was also a non-Jewish Pole”. If Izabela Wagner had known that Maria Łoś was, in turn, a Polish Catholic countess, her suspicions would have been crowned and her suggestion would have turned into certainty: “I discovered a conspiracy of non-Jewish, rural-noble Poles!”

The photo below shows the three of these conspirators, non-Jewish Poles: Prof. Adam Podgórecki (Carleton University), Prof. Maria Łoś (Ottawa University) and Prof. Jerzy Kwaśniewski (Warsaw University), who met in June 1998 during the last visit of Prof. Podgórecki in Poland, in his Warsaw residence, to plot a conspiracy against the renewal of Prof. Zygmunt Bauman’s doctorate, which in 2020 was detected and revealed by Prof. Izabela Wagner. We were photographed by Prof. Andrzej Kojder, President of the Polish Sociological Society, which puts the entire Society in a negative light, especially since it is a POLISH Society!



Source: Author's personal collection.

Etc., etc., one could multiply the examples of research misconduct and nonsense written by Izabela Wagner. I actually found them in her book on every page I looked at.

I do not think Professor Bauman would be delighted with her work. And what is the opinion of the Bauman Institute, Collegium Civitas, POLITY and other scientific institutions in Poland and in the world?

References

Bauman, J. 1988. *A Dream of Belonging: My Years in Postwar Poland*. Trafalgar Square Publishing.