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JACEK KOCHANOWICZ – PROFESSOR
OF THE WARSAW UNIVERSITY¹

Throughout the whole of his professional life, Jacek Kochanowicz was associated with the Department of Economic History at the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the University of Warsaw (and as head of the faculty from 2000). But why did he choose to take up an academic career, combining the profession of scholar and academic teacher? He never gave a direct answer to the reasons behind this decision, but from all accounts, he may have been influenced by a meeting he had with Witold Kula when Kochanowicz was studying at the Department of Political Economy (in Polish: Wydział Ekonomii Politycznej or ‘WEP’), which he commenced in October 1965.

WEP was established in 1953 (as a result of the Department of Political Economy being separated from the University of Warsaw’s Department of Law). The intention was that WEP would educate theoreticians specializing in socialist economics, and that its graduates would provide staff for research institutes, secondary schools and tertiary education, as well as economic journals. In the words of Edward Lipiński the students were to have: “a broad education, including philosophy, history, geography, law, etc. [...]. Not all the faculty’s alumni would become independent scholars and authors, but all should acquire the skills and qualifications necessary to do just that”.² October 1956 had a huge impact on the history of WEP and the entire Polish

¹ Compiled on the basis of, among other things, an interview with Jacek Kochanowicz in 2013 (excerpts of this interview were published in: *Księga Jubileuszowa Wydziału Nauk Ekonomicznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 1953–2013*, ed. by C. Leszczyńska, Warsaw, 2013, as well as documentation on employees of the University of Warsaw.

² E. Lipiński, “Zadania Wydziału Ekonomii Politycznej. Sprawozdania i kronika”, *Życie Szkoły Wyższej*, 1954, no. 5, p. 89.

economy. The department's position increased exponentially in this period when the most important economists became associated with it: Oskar Lange, Edward Lipiński and Włodzimierz Brus, who established both the practical and theoretical basis for reform of the post-Stalinist model of economic development.³ In the mid-1960s, when Jacek Kochanowicz began his studies, the ideas put forward in October 1956 were already a thing of the past, and Gomulka's 'mała stabilizacja' (small stabilization) had come into force, nevertheless some of the post-October changes concerning changes in educational content and freedom of academic research had survived.

The faculty of economics was small; in 1965, it had 93 students (and 181 applicants). Students were mainly from Warsaw and its environs, mostly from among the Intelligentsia. The study programme (introduced after 1956) was very broad, apart from the 'primary' subjects (economics, socialism, capitalism, Marxist theory of social development, planning, sector economics) it also covered subjects such as mathematics, econometrics, demographics, economic geography, history of philosophy, sociology, economic history (general and Polish) and a large dose of foreign languages (360 hours of a Western European language and 240 hours of Russian).⁴

March 1968 was an important turning point in the department's history. Following certain incidents which took place at the University, the authorities suspended all studies at WEP on 30 March, as part of the repressions, and the students had to reapply to be accepted on the course. A special committee was appointed to conduct the recruitment process. Classes were recommenced on 9 May. In the meantime three people were dismissed including Professor Włodzimierz Brus, while the dean, Professor Bobrowski, resigned from the post. Three months later the department was dissolved, and as of October, it became part of the Faculty of Social Sciences – as the Institute of Economic Sciences (in Polish: Instytut Nauk Ekonomicznych, or INE).⁵ Ten

³ Oskar Lange worked in WEP from 1956 until his death in 1965; Edward Lipiński from 1953 until his retirement in 1960. Włodzimierz Brus known as a revisionist remained (in 1954 he was a rising star of orthodox Marxist socialist economy); P. Koryś, C. Leszczyńska, "Środowisko ekonomistów Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego po 1945 roku", w: *Tradycje szkolnictwa ekonomicznego w Polsce po 1945 roku*, ed. by W. Morawski, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 132–135.

⁴ C. Leszczyńska, *Księga Jubileuszowa Wydziału Nauk Ekonomicznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 1953–2003*, Warsaw 2003, pp. 43–47.

⁵ Order of the Minister of Education and Higher Education of 27 June 1968, Dz.Urz. MOiSzW 1968, no. A – 10, item 65. WNS included the Institute of Philosophy,

years later, in 1977, the Institute was transformed into the Department of Economic Sciences (in Polish: Wydział Nauk Ekonomicznych, or WNE) by decision of the Minister of Higher Education.

The year 1968 marked an important turning point in the department's history; above all it had a negative impact of interpersonal relations. People's attitude to and assessment of current events varied and in consequence the department's opinions were later divided for many years.

At that time Jacek Kochanowicz was preparing his MA dissertation under the supervision of Professor Kula *Rodzina chłopska jako jednostka gospodarcza w ustroju folwarczno-pańszczyźnianym* (The Peasant Family as an economic unit in the manorial/serf-based system). Economic history had been one of his major interests since the first year of his studies, and more precisely the lectures on this subject conducted by Professor Witold Kula.⁶ What drew his attention was Kula's lack of regard for the boundaries between various disciplines: he drew on the achievements of economics, anthropology and sociology.⁷ Kula was an important figure in the department, and his international standing was of particular importance.⁸ In the 1960s, among other things, Kula analysed the manorial/serf-based economic system and the mechanism which drove the workings of its basic units: the manor farm and peasant farms. Under his supervision, Jacek Kochanowicz carried out a study of peasant farms and the fruits of his labour was a doctoral thesis entitled: "Funkcjonowanie pańszczyźnianego gospodarstwa chłopskiego w Królestwie Polskim w pierwszej połowie XIX w." which he defended in 1976.

In the period under discussion, Jacek Kochanowicz also began working as an academic teacher. He taught general economic history at the INE and the Institute of Sociology, and like all INE staff he also 'provided services' as a teacher of economics in various departments of the University of Warsaw. It should be added that until the end of

the Institute of Sociology, the Institute of Journalism and the Institute of Political Science.

⁶ Professor Kula worked at WEP from 1953, he headed the Department of Economic History. He came to WEP from the Institute of History at the University of Warsaw (UW). While teaching at the UW, he also conducted seminars at Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

⁷ Interview with Jacek Kochanowicz conducted by Piotr Koryś and Maciej Tyimiński in spring 2013. The typescript is in the author's possession.

⁸ In 1965 he was awarded an honoris causa doctorate by the University of Besançon; he helped co-organize international congresses on economic history; in the years 1968–1970 he was President of the International Association of Economic History, and later its honorary chairman.

the 1980s, economics was an obligatory subject at the University and lectures were conducted in various departments and faculties (it was one of the obligatory 'ideological' subjects). Economic historians usually gave classes in the humanities' departments, and therefore Jacek Kochanowicz gave classes, among others, in the Institute of History. This was a particularly difficult task in the 1980s. To begin with, he had to try and overcome the students' reluctance to learn about a subject which was associated with indoctrination. This was easier for economic historians who could introduce the historical context and combine economics with economic history and the history of economic thought. It should be added that at this time there was already a great deal of freedom in lecturing or introducing new, personal content, while any historical 'black marks' remained taboo.⁹

Like many of WNE's other employees, from the end of the 1970s until the end of the 1980s, Jacek Kochanowicz conducted classes in the newly-opened branch of University of Warsaw in Białystok, where he lectured on the late modern period, and also held classes on historical method in the Humanities Department (of the Institute of History).¹⁰ In this branch's Faculty of Economy and Law, he conducted classes in the history of land ownership in agriculture (from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century).¹¹ In the years 1987–1990 he was associated with the Academy of Dramatic Arts [in Polish: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna] (and was briefly employed by the school), where he taught economics.¹²

Jacek Kochanowicz was popular among the students (I know this from personal experience because I attended his classes), and he was also positively assessed by his superiors. In the opinions/comments attached to various assessment of his work by his superiors (heads of departments and deans) they underlined his sense of responsibility as an employee and also his involvement in organizational work.¹³

⁹ Jacek Kochanowicz recalled that there existed a form of bidding among the students, regarding who had read Hayek, Friedman, etc. which were *samizdat* copies of the texts.

¹⁰ There was a certain story connected with classes in methodology. Dr Kochanowicz wanted to examine Karl Popper's criticism of Marxism. It transpired that the students knew nothing about Marxism so a short course in the history of Marxism was necessary for Popper's criticism to be understandable. This story shows that there was a certain freedom in what was taught, the boundaries were marked by issues which concerned political relations: Polish-Russian relations and Soviet domination over Poland.

¹¹ Report of Jacek Kochanowicz for the period 1976–1979 (of 8 January 1980).

¹² Report on Academic Teacher of 18 January 1990.

¹³ Report on Academic Teacher of 27 November 1986; Interim Evaluation Sheet of 12 February 1990.

Fundamental changes occurred in the University at the turn of the 1980s/90s, and, with regard to WNE, already in late 1980. The syllabus began to undergo changes, and the course of studies evolved, little by little, in the direction of modern economics – western economics. Fundamental changes were made in the summer of 1990.

In the 1980s, including in the first period of Solidarity, the internal situation at WNE (Faculty of Economic Sciences) was calm. The faculty's authorities maintained a neutral stance. After Martial Law was declared, none of the staff was interned and a few gave in their party cards. It was a period of vigorous activity on the part of Jacek Kochanowicz as well as the academic milieu. In the years 1980–1981 he was appointed to the University Senate (then again for the 1993/1994–1996/1997 terms of office), in August 1980 by resolution of the Senate he was appointed to the Presidium of the Senate Committee for reviewing discharges from the University [Prezydium Senackiej Komisji ds. Rozpatrzenia zwolnień z UW].¹⁴ He was a member of the Rector's Interdisciplinary Committee (1988–1990), member of the Board of the University Foundation (Zarząd Fundacji UW) (1993–1994), a member of the Senate Committee of UW for Reformation of Teaching GRUDA (1994–1994), and he chaired the Senate Committee for the Award of Decorations.

In 1991 Jacek Kochanowicz defended his post-doctoral thesis – habilitation (*Spór o teorię gospodarki chłopskiej. Gospodarstwo chłopskie w teorii ekonomii i w historii gospodarczej*). On 1 July 1993 he was made Associate Professor at UW and on 31 October 2007 was appointed Professor of Economic Sciences.

In the early 1990s he began working at the Central European University in Budapest where he gave guest lectures (in English) at the Department of Sociology. In 2000 this was transformed into permanent cooperation with Warsaw. He became professor of the Faculty of History (in Budapest) and the Faculty of Sociology (in Warsaw), he led a seminar with doctoral students and from 2001 was director of the PhD study programme at the Faculty of History. His lectures included economics and social history of the later modern period, changes in society under communism, the issue of the legitimacy of the communist regime, and a comparative analysis of systems.

In Warsaw, Professor Kochanowicz taught at the University (at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, and in recent years also at the Collegium

¹⁴ The chairman was Professor Dr. Hab. Klemens Szaniawski. Letter from the Rector of the University of Warsaw, Professor Dr. Hab. Henryk Samsonowicz of 3 November 1980.

Artes Liberales) as well as at the School of Social Sciences of IFiS PAN. He lectured on global economy, conducted seminars on the history of European institutions, at WNE he implemented lectures in English on Economics of Transition, Industrialization and Development. He liked contacts with students; he prepared and handed out materials to them based on the most recent global literature, which was unavailable in Polish libraries. His classes took on a mostly conversational form which is what made them distinctive; they were diligently prepared and he always presented the most recent research results. They were highly valued by the students.¹⁵

In the 2000s Professor Kochanowicz became heavily involved in work on establishing new teaching programmes for economic studies in accordance with the Bologna process. He introduced harmonized teaching programmes and thus the 'vocational orientation' of studies (BA), a 'side' effect of which was eliminating subjects which were not part of the basic syllabus. One of the 'casualties' of these changes was economic history. Professor Kochanowicz endeavoured to convince reformers that restricting the syllabus of higher studies in economics to vocational subjects would, in the long run, have a negative effect on the quality of the students.¹⁶ The outcome of his efforts was fairly restrained and in many universities the subject was removed from the syllabus. At the University of Warsaw, however, it remained part of the syllabus, although its importance decreased.

This led to what was known as the crisis in economic history. Professor Kochanowicz pointed out that in the West, it had already begun to be removed from the economics' syllabuses thirty or forty years ago, because economists were convinced that knowledge of the past economy was of little use to economic theory. There was a clear divergence between the paths followed by economists who made use of formalized language with extensive use of quantitative tools and models based on neoclassical paradigms, and that of historians of economics who favoured narrative. Professor Kochanowicz believed that if economic history was to be useful for economists it should be closer to 'historical economics', and be based more on economics and less on history. This meant the use of quantitative methods in research with neoclassicism being the 'guiding principle'. This also had the

¹⁵ Opinion on the application for appointment to the post of Association Professor, April 1998.

¹⁶ He talked about an exchange of correspondence, opinions, persuading/convincing people delegated by the Ministry to determine the basic syllabus in the field of economics, banking, etc.

advantage of introducing research standards which opened up a wide possibility for comparative research in the longer historical perspective. At the same time Professor Kochanowicz pointed out certain risks that this entailed. By abandoning the traditional approach, economic history began to make use of an increasingly incomprehensible language which was difficult for non-specialists to understand; the use of narrative disappeared and history thus became ‘defunct’. In his opinion, the only way out was a dialogue between the various approaches. He valued borderland in academic research, he wrote that history was only interesting and important if it involved a human angle and social angle.

By teaching classes in Warsaw and Budapest at the same time, Professor Kochanowicz was prompted to compare the organizational processes and ‘quality’ of the listeners in both educational systems. He became more and sceptical of the Polish model of education. He expected the model of study at renowned Polish Universities to be closer to best practices at Western universities: which included extensive reading, individual preparation of essays, papers, etc. In his opinion, Polish students had not been intellectually prepared for this *en masse*; a tangible manifestation of this was the problems encountered with reading and understanding texts and the students’ superficial preparation for classes which necessitated the reading of voluminous texts. He said that when lecturing he had the impression that for some people he was banal/trivial, for others too difficult and that it was difficult to find an appropriate method, the right amount of information, materials, etc. He believed that one of the reasons for this state of affairs was the ‘popularization’ of studies which was ‘counterproductive’ to the quality of learning. This problem was also due to the fact that students treated universities as higher vocational schools, where they were supposed to acquire a specific profession. When the Bologna system was introduced there was no in-depth discussion about the division between BA and MA studies and therefore it was no longer clear what exactly a university degree entailed.

He got more satisfaction out of the classes in Budapest, in an international student milieu consisting of undergraduate and graduate students. The courses were characterized by their interdisciplinary nature: the students’ course work included history, economics sociology and anthropology. Professor Kochanowicz believed that extensive use of comparative analysis enabled a fuller understanding and comparison of the social and economic changes in the whole of the Central European Region. Six doctoral theses were written under the Professor’s

supervision, including three in Poland.¹⁷ His postgraduate students emphasize the individuality of his seminars, and the breadth and openness of discussion. He was a kind reviewer; his comments were meaningful and contained suggestions for possible interpretations. His criticism was 'gentle', almost implying that a more assertive position may offend the other party. He considered that his supervision/guardianship, which 'ended' after a student had been awarded his/her doctoral degree, should be deemed as a form of 'emancipation' and marked the beginning of the student embarking on his/her own fully independent research and teaching career. He did not ask about progress did not exert any pressure. In research work he was an individualist and did not initiate the creation of research teams.

Professor Jacek Kochanowicz was a Polish historian who was very active in the international area. These activities dated back to the 1970s; he recalled that after obtaining his doctoral degree, he travelled abroad almost every year, which he owed, to some extent, to Professor Kula.¹⁸ His activities became more pronounced in the 1990s. He lectured in history at the University of Chicago (1992), international relations at the University of Washington in Seattle (1992), he gave several lectures (a series on August Zaleski) at Harvard University in 1997 and also participated in the International Association of Economic History, and was a member of the executive committee. In the years 1998–2006 he was Vice-President of the latter organization.

His presence and activities on the international area were marked by his participation in conferences, his numerous publications; at certain times he published abroad more than he did in Poland. One could

¹⁷ Maciej Tymiński, *PZPR i przedsiębiorstwo. Nadzór partyjny nad zakładami przemysłowymi 1956–1970*, UW 2000; Piotr Koryś, *Prawicowa modernizacja. Polityka gospodarcza w ideologii Narodowej Demokracji w latach 1918–1926*, UW 2004; Anna Sosnowska, *Ku historycznej socjologii zacofania. Debata wschodnioeuropejska w polskiej historiografii społeczno-gospodarczej 1947–1994*, UW 2002; Teodora Parveva, *The Organized Judiciary In Interwar Bulgaria. The Union of Judges In Defense of the Principle of Judicial Independence*, PhD, CEU, Budapeszt 2004; Maria Krisań, *Tsivilizacionnye izmeneiya rubezha XIX-XX b. v vospriyatii kresty'an Tsarstva Polskogo*, Moscow State University 2004.

¹⁸ He was a scholarship holder of the following universities and research centres: L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, in 1979 and 1987, The University of Messina in 1987 and Siena in 1990, La Maison de Sciences de l'Homme in Paris in 1988, The Institute of Human Sciences, Vienna in 1995 and 2002; in the USA: USIA Visiting Fellow Program in 1981, Corpus Christi College in 1982, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton NJ in the years 1990–1991 and the Overseas Development Council, Washington DC in 1993. In the years 1990–1991 he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

venture to say that Professor Kochanowicz was better known as a Polish economic historian abroad in the last twenty or thirty years. His recognition among Polish historians was less apparent, which may seem surprising in this context. It may have resulted from the need to reconcile his time over the past twenty years between Warsaw and Budapest. The fact that he also practised history which was outside the limits of his field – including in particular institutional, sociological and anthropological elements – may have had some significance. Professor Kochanowicz also believed that such ‘visibility’ in the international arena was the most objective criterion for assessing a person’s research and academic work.

Finally I would like to draw attention to yet another aspect strongly associated with his role as professor and scholar at the university. This relates to his activities in popularizing the subject. Professor Jacek Kochanowicz wrote many excellent essays, popular articles, and took part in many interviews in which he explained the reasons for Poland’s place in the world, its specificity but also similarities to Central Eastern European countries, he showed how other states had overcome their backwardness, and also emphasized the importance of institutions and cultural factors. Each of his texts could be the subject of a separate story about the past. Reading them is however a pure intellectual pleasure.

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Jacek Kochanowicz – Professor of the Warsaw University
(Summary)

The article presents the person of Professor Jacek Kochanowicz, one of the most distinguished Polish economic historians of the past few decades. It discusses the role he played as a scholar, a teacher of generations of students of the Warsaw University and a lecturer at a number of foreign universities, highlighting the way in which he understood economic history – a discipline to which he devoted his scholarly life.

Key words: Jacek Kochanowicz, economic history, university.