

### *Open Letter*

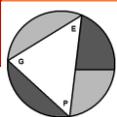
# The Fate of the Journal *Folia Orientalia* and the Worrying State of Classic Oriental Studies in Poland

Tomasz Polański

Dear Members of the Editorial Board and Advisory Board,  
Dear Contributors, Reviewers, and Proofreaders of *Folia Orientalia* (*FOr*)

I have just resigned from the post of Editor of the Journal and Head of the Orientalist Commission after a prolonged struggle for the edition of Volume 57, 2020. I have failed to publish it. Two years ago, the authorities of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw changed the legal regulations regarding the property rights of journals sponsored by the Academy. The Orientalist Commission was deprived of the journal's ownership rights. In this way I lost control over the editorial process. The Academy authorities in Warsaw also dismissed the professional pre-press company and employed a new one.

To say that the new company is incompetent would be a compliment to them. They are illiterate. The economic crisis is escalating. Many private desktop publishers are going bankrupt. One of them has been sheltered under the wings of the Academy in Warsaw. The newly employed pre-press company has been occupied only with publishing Polish-language commercial newspapers and magazines. They have never published in foreign languages. *FOr* is a demanding task. They have proved unable to

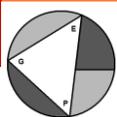


prepare the journal for print.

There are professional desktop publishers at hand. I know some. They would do the work in a fortnight. I have written a whole volume of letters to President of the Academy Jerzy Duszyński, and Vice President Stanisław Filipowicz, and to the successive ministers for higher education Jarosław Gowin and Przemysław Czarnek, and others who could have been helpful. I have received either no answer or only rude answers. I have failed to convince anyone just to let me change the pre-press company. In this way the edition of the latest volume of *Folia Orientalia*, 57, was blocked by the Academy.

You may not be aware that in such situations in the past Professor Andrzej Zaborski used to pay for *FO*'s editions out of his own pocket, or found private donors. One of the volumes was sponsored by the late Professor Jadwiga Muszyńska, my Dean at the University of Kielce. It was possible, because Zaborski, President of the Orientalist Commission was also the proprietor of the journal. For the past two years I have not held these rights. Some Polish Members of the Editorial Board are now making efforts to save the journal by moving it to the Jagiellonian University of Kraków. I wish them luck!

Thank you for your cooperation, your friendship, your sympathy. I would like to express my gratitude to those of you who have helped me with the editorial work, and most of all to our English consultants Teresa Bahuk-Ulewiczowa and Wilfred Watson, to the Members of the Editorial Board, Professors Joachim Śliwa, Anna Krasnowolska, Seymour Gitin, Wilfred Watson, Sergio Baldi, Michael Knüppel, Manfred Kropp, Dr Arkadiusz Płonka, the secretary of the Orientalist Commission and to

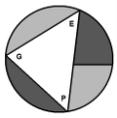


members of the Orientalist Commission who have always been of great assistance to me, Professor Tomasz Marszewski, Dr Barbara Mękarska, Dr Zdzisław Kapera.

It was a great honour and a real pleasure to read your papers, exchange letters, meet you in person, all of you, old friends and students of Andrzej Zaborski, and my friends and collaborators, excellent scholars from different academic circles all over the world and from different fields of Oriental Studies.

To conclude I am quoting two passages from the introduction to Volume 57, 2020, which will never come out, one of the best volumes Andrzej Zaborski and I ever edited. An ancient poet said that his poetry was just like a crumb compared to Homer's feast. My scholarship is a crumb from the great linguistic and intellectual feast hosted by Andrzej Zaborski, my teacher of ancient Semitic and African languages.

"I have decided to dedicate this volume to a good friend of ours, a Member of the Orientalist Commission in Kraków, Dr Czesław Szrednicki, who died in May this year (1927-2020). He was a true gentleman, of impeccable manners, a representative of the Polish educated class of old, which was almost entirely wiped out from the intellectual map of Europe by the totalitarian systems of 1939-1956. Dr Szrednicki did not surrender his intellectual culture and his way of life inherited from the *belle époque* and his noble family circle; he did not surrender to the demands of the rising aggressive popular ideologies. He survived and became a model to follow for the younger generations of Orientalist scholars and students. *Et lux aeterna luceat Ei.*

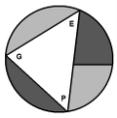


Many years ago, I stopped my motor car somewhere in the enchanting landscape of Central Turkey the east of Ankara. The sun was just rising. Looking out into the distance of the endless horizon, I noticed a small point far away to the west. A long time passed until I recognised it was a man on a donkey. They were moving slowly, no hurry, no tension. When he came up closer, I saw an old bearded Muslim cleric with a green cap of the Prophet on his head. I greeted him in the way the Muslims do and he smiled wisely and answered my salute. They passed by me as if they were figures from a tranquil and peaceful dream. It took a long time before they disappeared in the mountains towering against the rays of the early morning sun. I realised that they would be returning home the same way against the unsurpassable Anatolian glory of the setting sun. For me the wise old man is still one of the most memorable metaphors of the Orient, a metaphor of a different time, so very different from ours. In our nervous and chaotic European times, I wish all of you the experience of that different time which you may still find in a wise old man on a donkey somewhere on the never-ending horizons of the high plains of Central Anatolia.”

My warmest thanks to all of you and God bless!

*Tomasz Polański, Editor-in-Chief of Folia Orientalia, 2014-2021  
Suchowola, Poland, December 2021*

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**Postscript** Three young scholars are now making efforts to continue the edition of the journal *FOr*. In fact a number of contributors have already withdrawn their papers. They are good scholars, they can publish anywhere else. They have been contributing to the journal because they have been friends and collaborators of Andrzej Zaborski, who was a man of high reputation in the international academic circles. They have accepted me, because I was appointed as secretary of the Orientalist Commission by him.

The new editors have just sent me the newly re-edited volume 57. It consists of four papers, out of twenty, which I collected. To the extent I know, five authors have already decided to withdraw their papers; I was one of them (the Warsaw men were simply unable to print Greek, Coptic and Syriac in my English paper).

Academics are human beings. They have their idiosyncratic sympathies. They were inclined to contribute to Zaborski's journal. Andrzej Zaborski is still a trademark in the Oriental studies. He died in 2014. I have managed to keep them together—until now. Let us see what those those young people can do, who believe they will stick to the high standards established by Zaborski. Let them publish their volume 57. Without my name. Incidentally Zaborski came from a Jewish family who converted to the Catholic faith. At the Hebrew University in Jerusalem I was once introduced as Dr Polanski, Andrzej's student. I was only pleased to hear it.