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The judiciary in the Mogilno Land in the past and today

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Summary: This article is the first attempt at outlining the history of the judiciary in the Mogilno Land. The issues addressed refer to the judicial institutions in Mogilno, Trzemeszno and Strzelno, with a particular emphasis on Mogilno, as this is the only town where such institutions have been operating since the beginnings of the Polish statehood till the present day, with only a short interval during the partition period.

Key words: Judiciary, Mogilno land, history.

Sądownictwo ziemi mogileńskiej w przeszłości i współcześnie

Streszczenie: Artykuł niniejszy jest pierwszą próbą nakreślenia dziejów sądownictwa na ziemi mogileńskiej. Opisywane zagadnienia dotyczą instytucji sądowych w Mogilnie, Trzemesznie oraz Strzelnie, ze szczególnym naciskiem na Mogilno, gdyż tylko w tym mieście takie instytucje działały i działają od początków polskiej państwowości do czasów nam współczesnych, z niewielką przerwą w okresie zaborów.

Słowa kluczowe: sądownictwo, ziemia mogileńska, historia.

The issue of the judiciary in the Mogilno Land has not been elaborated on properly so far, meaning a monograph or at least an article, as an occasional article in the regional weekly “Pałuki i ziemia mogileńska”, which, having a form characteristic of such magazines and being based on universally available information, was published before the 130th anniversary of court establishment in Mogilno, cannot be regarded as such².

The basic sources of information used when writing this article were only references to the judiciary in monographs about three towns in the Mogilno Land,

¹ Mieczysław Oliwa – Prezes Sądu Okręgowego w Bydgoszczy.

² M. Lachowicz, *Za rok mogileński sąd będzie obchodzić rocznicę 130-lecia*, “Pałuki i Ziemia Mogileńska”, No. 876 (48/2008), p. 14.

where courts operated in different periods, sometimes with intervals, i.e. Mogilno³, Strzelno⁴ and Trzemeszno⁵. Very helpful were also the recollections of people related to the courts in Mogilno or their family members, which were in the author's possession.

To begin with, the territorial scope of the area known as the "Mogilno Land" should be defined. In the broad sense, it comprises the areas of the following communes: Mogilno, Dąbrowa, Strzelno, Jeziora Wielkie, Trzemeszno, Pakość and Orchowo. The major town, and in a way the capital of this land, has always been Mogilno.

It should be pointed out that Mogilno was one of the oldest settlements in the borderland of Greater Poland and Kuyavia, that is, in the region which became the cradle of Polish statehood in the 10th century. The archaeological excavations prove that an early medieval settlement with a palisade and abatis existed on the peninsula surrounded by the waters of Mogilno Lake and marshes between the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries and the 10th century. In the 10th century, this early medieval settlement was replaced with a stronghold, which was connected to land with two bridges. A very important event, which had an impact on the further history of the stronghold, and subsequently the town, was bringing the Benedictines in the 2nd half of the 11th century, probably by Bolesław the Bold.

In the period of patrimonialism and limited monarchy, the judicial functions were performed by people performing them because of their origin, the office held or personal connections at the court. Legal knowledge was of no importance at that time. The profession of the judge, as defined today, developed only in the 19th century, in the period of partitions and great codifications.

Thanks to the Benedictines, Mogilno became a monastic town, and, therefore, superior authority over the town was exercised by each and every of the monastery abbots. At the request of one of these abbots, on 17 May 1398, King Władysław Jagiełło, granted the stronghold an urban charter, which was subsequently confirmed in 1548 by King Sigismund I the Old, and also by King John II Casimir on 20 December 1666. The fact of granting an urban charter was not the foundation of a new town, but rather a new stage in the life of the settlements beyond the walls of the stronghold which existed here long before this date. Pursuant to the document granted by Władysław Jagiełło, Mogilno received its urban charter under the Magdeburg law, which was referred to as the Teutonic law in the monastery chronicles. This is of importance for the issue addressed in this study, as the said document defined the municipal government and judicial authorities. Moreover, according to the charter, the town's owner, i.e. the monastery, was represented by the town head (*wójt*) together with the judicial tribunal, to whom the monastery's abbot assigned a substantial part of his judicial powers.

According to the charter, the residents of Mogilno could be tried only by their town head, and the town head by the monastery's abbot or the king himself. In addition, under the judicial immunity granted to the monastery in Mogilno in 1285,

³ Cz. Łuczak (ed.), *Studia z dziejów ziemi mogileńskiej*, Poznań 1978.

⁴ J. Kozłowski, *Strzelno pod pruskimi rządami (1815-1918)*, Strzelno 2005.

⁵ Cz. Łuczak (ed.), *Dzieje Trzemeszna*, Poznań 2002.

the town head chaired the judicial tribunal, which adjudicated criminal (including death penalty) and civil cases. Over time, the town head's powers were taken over, with the monastery having a deciding vote, by the town council, which was a limited municipal government authority, with the mayor being its head. In 1414, the town council was composed of Mayor Wojciech and four councillors: Jakub Bara, Bartłomiej, Paweł Kopica and shoemaker Jan. In the documents referring to the year 1414, one can find three names or surnames of the then lay judges, i.e. Michał Krupka, Mikołaj Mucha and shoemaker Piotr. From 1609, town councillors and lay judges were appointed for life. The mayor and the town head exercised judicial power in the first instance, whereby the representatives of the town's owner, i.e. the monastery, participated in some proceedings. The court of lay judges was helped by clerks, who received monetary remuneration and free accommodation for their work.

With the passing of time, the permanent control of the Mogilno monastery over the town's affairs became the reason for establishing the office of the assistant abbot for the town's affairs. This office was usually held by a nobleman, who was conferred the title of a burgrave, i.e. the governor of a non-castellan town. It was referred to for the first time in 1612. The burgrave's basic duties included, inter alia, chairing the court of appeal instance and serving on the bench of lower level, which investigated penal acts committed by the town's residents.

According to "Studia z dziejów ziemi mogileńskiej" by Marian Grycz, *'the second half of the 18th century was under the banner of disputes between the inhabitants of the Mogilno Land and the feudal owners of the towns'*⁶. Thus, as early as in the beginning of the said century, the residents of Mogilno rebelled against the abbot imposing additional charges and preventing them from freely choosing the council members. Particularly strong were the protests against the corporal punishment applied by the monastery authorities. In 1750, this dispute was not settled yet. Having failed to receive compensation in the municipal court in Gniezno, the residents of Mogilno appealed, but to no effect, to the assessorial court in Warsaw and the papal court in Rome. The case in the assessorial court was still not settled in 1767, as this is when King Stanisław August wrote a letter to the authorities of Mogilno, in which he ordered them to be obedient to the monastery until the final settlement of the case in Warsaw. This dispute seems to have been going on till as late as the partition period.

In the pre-partition period, Mogilno was at first within the Gniezno County and the Kalisz Voivodeship. In connection with the division of the Kalisz Voivodeship in 1768 and establishment of the Gniezno Voivodeship, Mogilno became a part of the latter.

Below, the judiciary in the pre-partition period in another important judicial centre of the Mogilno Land, i.e. Strzelno, shall be discussed. The history of courts in Strzelno goes back to the beginnings of the town's history. The functioning of the then judiciary based on the municipal judicial tribunal and the town head was governed (similarly to Mogilno) by the Magdeburg law. For the first time, the names

⁶ *Studia z dziejów ziemi mogileńskiej*, op. cit., p. 311.

of officials exercising judicial power were referred to in the documents dating back to the 15th century. In 1405, the name *Joannes advocatus Strelnensis*, i.e. Jan, the head of Strzelno, was recorded. In towns, the office of the town head coexisted with the office of the mayor. The town head chaired the court of lay judges. Any offences committed within the town and the monastery property, irrespective of the social status of the defendant and the place of his origin, were judged by the head of Strzelno, pursuant to the Magdeburg law and the monastery privileges (the town was owned by the Norbertines). When the town head's authority proved to be insufficient, it was the mayor and the town council that were responsible for enforcing punishments. In 1436, the office of the mayor of Strzelno was held by Stanisław Łącki. The rights and duties of the burghers of Strzelno established by the said mayor on 21 August 1436 became the foundation for the town's functioning and proved to be so durable that they were valid until as late as 1765.

In January 1772, a treaty of partition was signed between Prussia and Russia. However, the Mogilno Land did not become a part of the Kingdom of Prussia straightaway. The Polish territories were seized gradually, and, in defiance of the borders marked in the beginning, King of Prussia, Frederick II seized a larger area than it was provided in the treaty.

In March 1774, upon the third enlargement of the Prussian territory, the following towns were incorporated into Prussia: Ślesin, Kleczew, Kazimierz, Słupca, Trzemeszno, Mielżyn, Powidz, Witkowo, Wylatowo and Mogilno. Thus, it was only then that most of the Mogilno Land was under Prussian rule. Right after homage was rendered, the Prussians began to organise administrative authority and the judiciary in the new Prussian province, which was named West Prussia (*Westpreussen*). The takeover of power by German officials meant that all the Polish people holding their offices so far were dismissed. And the invaders had a good pretext for that, i.e. the alleged lack of knowledge of the German language. The town council and the judicial tribunal were also affected, and they were dissolved.

At the same time, the monastery abbot was degraded, as, being deprived of his authority over the town, he lost his right to participate in the election of the municipal council and the mayor as well as in the exercise of judicial power, and in imposing financial liabilities and other obligations on the town. Finally, after 1793, i.e. after the Second Partition of Poland, the monastery in Mogilno lost its properties which were part of the Polish territory beforehand.

After Napoleon's victories over the Prussian army, in 1807, the Duchy of Warsaw was established. The administrative division of the Duchy basically did not differ from the Prussian one, i.e. it was still divided into departments and counties, but the towns were no longer separate units and they were parts of the counties. Just like in the Prussian times, Mogilno remained in the Bydgoszcz Department, and it belonged to the Inowrocław County. There is no information about the form of the judiciary in Mogilno during the short existence of the Duchy of Warsaw. It can be presumed that the judiciary in this town did not differ from the solutions introduced in other regions of this substitute of the Polish state.

The Congress of Vienna held in 1814-1815 marked the end of the Duchy of

Warsaw. After its division, from 1815, the Mogilno Land was again under Prussian rule, and this did not change for over 100 years. Formally, the Mogilno Land was a part of the region of Bydgoszcz, which, together with the region of Posen, constituted two administrative districts of the Grand Duchy of Posen, which was an integral part of the Kingdom of Prussia.

The location of the majority of the county authorities in Mogilno had a clear city-forming impact on it. These authorities included the county office (*Landratsamt*), the district police station, as well as the cadastral, construction supervision and education offices, and from 1879 also the county court. In 1819, Inquisitoriat, i.e. the local court, was established in Mogilno. However, a year later, it was moved to Trzemeszno for unknown reasons. The judicial authority will return to Mogilno after over sixty years. The further development of the judiciary in Mogilno was undoubtedly influenced by the dynamic development of the town in connection with the construction of a railroad (1871) leading from Poznań, through Mogilno, to Inowrocław, Bydgoszcz and Toruń.

In 1879, the red brick building of the County Court (*Kreisgericht*) moved here from Trzemeszno was built in the Gothic style, which was subordinate to the Regional Court in Gniezno in organisational terms. It was a municipal court, which operated as the hierarchically lowest authority of the German judiciary until as late as the end of the partition period. This was the result of the law as of 1877, which introduced a new organisation of courts in the German state. In counties, municipal courts were established. Such a court, including a judge sitting alone, investigated civil cases and minor criminal cases. The courts of final instance for cases adjudicated by municipal courts were regional (land) courts. At the same time, they were the courts of first instance for other civil and criminal cases.

Next to the court in Mogilno, there was a prison surrounded with a high red brick wall. At the same time, a court villa, including utility buildings and a garden, was built in Kościuszki Street, which was being constructed at that time and which was the most elegant street in the town. The villa was built, above all, for the court managers. However, only 15 years later, in 1894, Sądowa Street, which was a dirt road before, was paved with stones.

And what was the situation of the courts in Strzelno in the partition period? Because of the First Partition of Poland in 1772, the status of this town changed in 1773, and it became the property of the Kings of Prussia. In 1773, the town head with judicial authority over the burghers was Andrzej Naskrętny. In the period of the Duchy of Warsaw, i.e. 1807-1815, judicial power was exercised based on the Napoleonic Code.

Based on the decision of the Congress of Vienna, Strzelno returned to Prussia. It was situated in the eastern border region of this state. At a distance of 15 km from the town, in Wójcin, there was a border crossing between Prussia and the Kingdom of Poland, which was subordinate to Russia. In administrative terms, Strzelno remained a part of the Inowrocław County, which had the largest area in the Grand Duchy of Posen. The whole county was divided into six districts, and the Strzelno district was one of them. According to the study "Strzelno pod pruskimi

rządami” by Jerzy Kozłowski, Strzelno was the seat of the district commissar, but the town itself managed by the mayor was still directly subordinate to the Landrat (county governor) in Inowrocław. This is how the commune self-government was abolished. This was an intentional action of the Prussian authorities, as the local government was influenced by the Polish nobility, who, as a general rule, decided who was appointed to the town head office⁷.

The judiciary was separated from general administration. On 1 March 1817, the General State Laws for the Prussian States were issued, which did not abolish straightaway the magistrates’ courts, which existed from the times of the Duchy of Warsaw. These courts could still adjudicate minor cases. The court of proper jurisdiction for Strzelno was the magistrates’ court in Inowrocław. In 1834, the judiciary received a new structure. The abolished magistrates’ courts were replaced with land and municipal courts, which were established in each county as courts of first instance. The next change regarding the judiciary was introduced in 1878. This was when the court of first instance was established in Strzelno, the decisions of which could be appealed against to the Regional Court in Bydgoszcz. As Strzelno became the seat of the Strzelno County authorities in 1886, the county court also was seated here. It was situated in Lipowa Street, in the seat of the municipal authorities and the police.

The Strzelno County covered the southern part of western Kuyavia with Lake Gopło and the towns of Strzelno and Kruszwica. Moreover, it covered the areas of the present-day Commune of Jeziora Wielkie and the village of Ludzisko, which currently belongs to the Commune of Janikowo. Officially, the Strzelno County was established on 1 July 1886 as a result of separating this area from the Inowrocław County. The Strzelno County had an area of 614 km², and it had a population of around 30 thousand. In the opinion of Tadeusz Busza, the Mayor of Strzelno in the interwar period, the establishment of the county with its seat in Strzelno was the most important event for the town in the partition period⁸.

In the partition period, the Mogilno and Strzelno Counties were parts of the Prussian province, where the German laws were in force. As a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles signed on 28 June 1919, the area of the former Prussian province returned to Poland. In this situation, it was possible to organise the Polish judicial system. However, according to Małgorzata Materniak-Pawłowska, in the territory of the former Prussian province, which area is of interest to us, the former German regulations were still in force for a long time until the full unification of the judicial system⁹.

On 1 August 1919, the act on temporary organisation of government in the former Prussian Province was issued. On 31 January 1920, the Minister of the former Prussian Province, Władysław Seyda, Ph. D., having his office in Poznań, issued a regulation, pursuant to which the judiciary was to be gradually returned to Poles

⁷ J. Kozłowski, op. cit., p.15.

⁸ R. Budny, *Jak rodził się powiat strzeleński*, “Pałuki i Ziemia Mogileńska” 2012, No. 1083 /46, p. 18.

⁹ M. Materniak-Pawłowska, *Zawód sędziego w Polsce w latach 1918-1939*, “Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne” 2011, T. LXIII, z. 1, p. 69.

as the Polish army was seizing these territories. It was agreed that the exercise of the judicial power was to begin on 15 February 1920 in the territories within the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal in Poznań, and on 1 March of this year in the area within the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal in Toruń.

In the Prussian period, the then county courts in Mogilno, Strzelno and Trzemeszno used to operate, along with the penal institutions and prisons administered by the court managers. These courts were turned into county courts by the Polish authorities. The County Court in Strzelno was subordinate to the Regional Court in Bydgoszcz, and the County Courts in Mogilno and Trzemeszno to the Regional Court in Gniezno. All of these courts were within the Poznań Voivodeship. On 1 April 1938, a territorial division took place. The Strzelno County was incorporated into the Pomeranian Voivodeship, with its seat in Toruń. The first court managers after regaining independence were Stanisław Gawęda in Mogilno, Leopold Krzyżanowski in Strzelno, and Linus Hoppe in Trzemeszno. In the case of Linus Hoppe, it may be surprising that his first name and surname seem to be of German origin. This is explained by Urszula Cynalewska in the monograph about Trzemeszno¹⁰. According to her, during the first year following Poland regaining independence, three Poles and three Germans worked in the town hall in Trzemeszno. Only as late as at the end of 1920, there were only Polish people working there. In the author's opinion, Trzemeszno was not an exception in this respect, as the difficulties with replacing the German staff with Polish personnel were common¹¹. The list of administrative positions in Trzemeszno as of the early 1920s also includes the surname of Sędziński (with no first name given), who was the county court enforcement officer¹².

The postwar period was characterised by quite a high personnel fluctuation in small court units. It was similar in the region of Mogilno. Stanisław Gawęda was the court manager for a short period of time. Between 1 August 1921 and 12 May 1926, the judge functions were performed by Zygmunt Buchelt, who was then the director of the Regional Court in Chojnice. This was where Jan Gałęzowski worked in 1932-1937, who subsequently moved to Poznań. Others who worked here for short periods of time were Jan Borowicz, Franciszek Zakrzewski and Paweł Jankiewicz. Shortly before the war, Józef Bieliński moved to Gdynia.

The County Court in Strzelno was represented by one judge. For that reason, until 30 January 1920, criminal cases from the territory of the Strzelno County were considered by the Criminal Chamber at the County Court in Inowrocław. Leopold Krzyżanowski retired on 30 April 1926, and his duties were taken over by the assessor Franciszek Dzik, who was appointed a judge on 14 June 1928. In 1932, there were two judge vacancies. According to the historical record by Przemysław Majcherkiewicz, his uncle, Stanisław Majcherkiewicz was a judge at the Municipal Court in Strzelno between 12 June 1935 and 1938. He was also the President of this court. On 4 May 1938, he was awarded the Bronze Medal for Long Service. From Strzelno he was moved to the Regional Court in Gniezno. In the meantime, on 15 November 1937,

¹⁰ *Dzieje Trzemeszna*, op. cit.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Kazimierz Drzewiecki was appointed a judge at the Municipal Court in Strzelno, and he replaced the judge Jan Kłumiński, who died on 19 April 1937.

In 1933, the seat of the Municipal Court in Strzelno was moved from Lipowa Street to the building of the former Faculty School. Today, it houses a kindergarten at 1 Michelson Street.

The County Court in Trzemeszno was represented by two judges. The first manager of this court moved to Gniezno on 12 June 1927, where he became the Director of the Regional Court. In later years, the judges in Trzemeszno were also Zygmunt Jesionowski, Witold Repczyński and Feliks Minicki. In 1936, Maksymilian Chełmiński came here from Poznań. At the end of 1938, Julian Kuczkowski left his office. It should be noticed that county courts operated until the end of 1928. On 20 January 1929, pursuant to the new Statute on Structure of Common Courts of Law (the President's Ordinance as of 6 February 1928), the county courts along with the courts of lay judges and magistrates' courts were turned into municipal courts.

Thus, in the Mogilno County there were the Municipal Courts in Mogilno and Trzemeszno, which were subordinate to the Regional Court in Gniezno. The Municipal Court in Strzelno was still subordinate to the Regional Court in Bydgoszcz. In 1919, in Mogilno, the County Court began to operate, and, in 1928, it was turned into the Municipal Court, which was still subordinate to the Regional Court in Gniezno. According to Czesław Łuczak, the County Court in Mogilno kept its German name *Kreisgericht* (County Court) for several months, which was translated into Polish only at the beginning of 1920¹³. After 1918, for a few more years, the office of the justice of the peace was honourably maintained at the County Courts, separately for criminal and civil cases. In 1920-1926, the office of the justice of the peace in Mogilno was held by Władysław Barczak, Stanisław Bożyński, Franciszek Lepkowicz, Piotr Płoszyński and Stefan Szumlański. During the first decade after Poland regaining independence, the County Court in Mogilno was among the courts overburdened with duties of judicial authorities of this level. In 1928, it considered as many as 1,743 cases.

In the interwar period, the magistrates' courts also had their role to play. Pursuant to the Regulation of the Minister of the former Prussian Province as of 15 December 1919 on the organisation of magistrates' courts, the institution of the justice of the peace was introduced for examination of minor civil and criminal cases. The justices of the peace adjudicated cases from the territory of a given commune or the area within the jurisdiction of the county court. Their judgments could be appealed against to the county courts. In the beginning, the justices of the peace were appointed by the Minister of Justice. As early as in 1920, the following justices of the peace were appointed: Władysław Taczanowski for Mogilno, Mikołaj Kowalski for Trzemeszno and Paweł Bandel, Ph.D. for Strzelno. The last of them became a notary public in Strzelno in 1921. In later years, the following justices of the peace were appointed for Mogilno: Stanisław Sożyński, Ph.D., Kazimierz Górski, Piotr Płoszyński and Franciszek Lepkowicz. In Strzelno, they were Sylwester Radomski,

¹³ Cz. Łuczak, op. cit., p. 147.

Władysław Pętkowski and Władysław Mlicki, and in Trzemeszno they were Klemens Kruger, Władysław Siuda and Antoni Tułodziecki. Later on, Klemens Kruger was appointed a county judge in Trzemeszno.

The institution of the justice of the peace was maintained in the Statute on Structure of Common Courts of Law as of 1928. The justices of the peace were elected by the commune residents for a term of 5 years. Any person aged at least 30 and residing in a commune for at least a year, and holding full civil and public rights, could be elected a justice of the peace. A justice of the peace could also have legal qualifications. The magistrates' courts were abolished under the law as of 9 April 1938. Pursuant to a decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation of 15 August 1944, the said law was repealed, but, in practice, these courts were not organised.

After the German aggression in September 1939, *Amstgericht* (Municipal Court) was again established for consideration of minor cases, whereby more serious ones were examined by the Special Court (*Sondergericht*) in Inowrocław. Occasionally, cases were referred to the Higher State Court (*Oberlandesgericht*) in Poznań. It was the Municipal Court that had the highest numbers of cases to consider. Czesław Łuczak refers to 112 residents of Mogilno, who were charged with participation in the town defense, conspiratorial activities, hostility towards Germans and economic offences, which resulted in several death sentences¹⁴.

Upon the liberation from the Nazi occupation, common courts of law also began to operate. As early as in 1944, 100 courts began to operate in Poland, including 3 courts of appeal, 8 regional ones and 92 municipal ones, as well as 3 special criminal courts. In 1946, the judicial network covered the whole country. At that time, there were 57 regional courts and 407 municipal courts, including also the courts in Mogilno, Strzelno and Trzemeszno. In the beginning, the courts operated pursuant to the prewar laws, which were adjusted to the current circumstances. Their organisational structure and the guidelines for their operation remained the same. After liberating the county from the Nazi occupation in January 1945, the Municipal Court returned to Mogilno, and its first manager (head) was the prewar judge, Feliks Małecki, who worked as a tram driver during the war to hide from the Gestapo in Poznań. After the war, he was appointed the manager of the Municipal Court. Each president of the Municipal Court had at his disposal a court villa situated in Mogilno in Kościuszki Street. The last judge who lived there was Feliks Małecki.

This was the situation until the reform of the judiciary in 1950, as a result of which, as of 1 January 1951, the abolished Municipal Courts in Mogilno, Strzelno and Trzemeszno were replaced with the County Court in Mogilno.

Fundamental changes in the structure of courts were introduced under the Act of 20 July 1949 amending the Statute on Structure of Common Courts of Law. This act was to adjust the structure of courts to the tasks of a socialist state and the territorial division of the country. The municipal courts were abolished and replaced with county courts, with only court in a given county having its seat in the county capital town or city. Thus, the courts in Strzelno and Trzemeszno ceased to operate.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 258.

Instead, the County Court in Mogilno began to operate. However, this court did not resist the subsequent organisational changes. It operated as the County Court until the moment of county abolition, i.e. 1 June 1975. As of this date, the then President Andrzej Lewandowski in short order moved the judicial activity to the District Court in Inowrocław. What remained in Mogilno was only the State Notary Office, the court enforcement office and the barrister's office.

The abolition of the County Court in Mogilno was not accepted by the local authorities and the society. The building of the abolished court was maintained in good condition with the needs of the judiciary in mind. As a result of adequate cooperation with the then President of the Voivodeship Court in Bydgoszcz, Marian Szabela, this court was restored.

Hence, on 8 January 1982, the District Court in Mogilno resumed its operation, with Bożena Tyborska as its President. The court building also housed the State Notary Office. For many years, it was ran by Urszula Streńsk-Szczygłowska, and then by a notary Janusz Radomski. After the reform of the judiciary and establishment of the courts of appeal, the judge Bożena Tyborska was promoted to the position of a judge at the Court of Appeal in Gdańsk. Subsequently, the office of the President was held by the judges Henryka Dykas and Mieczysław Oliwa. Currently, this function is performed by the judge Jarosław Opasiński. Within the territorial jurisdiction of the District Court in Mogilno there are currently the Communes of Mogilno, Strzelno, Dąbrowa and Jeziora Wielkie. At present, the court is represented by five judges.

Outstanding figures of the judiciary in the Mogilno Land

In the interwar period, a considerable role in the history of the Mogilno Land was also played by the community of lawyers, which was made up of judges, attorneys, notaries and prosecutors. Many of them were involved in the struggle for independence before. Some of them were members of local government authorities. Among them, there were also social activists and heroic defenders of their homeland during World War II.

Undeniably, a person who deserves particular underscoring is the judge Stanisław Majcherkiewicz, who was moved to the position of a judge at the Municipal Court in Strzelno on 12 June 1935 under the decision of the Minister of Justice, and, then, in summer 1938, was moved to the Regional Court in Gniezno. On 4 May 1938, Stanisław Majcherkiewicz, as a judge at the Municipal Court in Strzelno, was awarded with the Bronze Medal for Long Service.

In August 1939, Stanisław Majcherkiewicz was on holiday in Zakopane. And this is where he received a telegram requiring him to immediately return to Gniezno in order to evacuate the most important documents and court stamps to the eastern frontiers of Poland. He went back together with his friend, the judge Eugeniusz Sekulowicz, at the beginning of September. They both reached Berezhany near Lviv. After the attack of the Soviet Union on the eastern territories of Poland, Stanisław Majcherkiewicz endeavoured to get to Western Europe. At the end of November,

when trying to cross the Polish-Romanian border, he was arrested together with the judge Eugeniusz Sekułowicz by the Soviet services. He was kept prisoner by the NKVD in Stanyslaviv, Rivne and Chortkiv in Volhynia.

The judge Stanisław Majcherkiewicz, aged 42, was one of the victims of the Katyn massacre in 1940. His name is included in the so-called Ukrainian Katyn List under no. 1811, with a note referring to the list no. 42/358, and the symbolic grave with a plaque is at the Polish cemetery of the victims of Stalinism in Bykivnia near Kiev. The name of the judge Majcherkiewicz is also included in the plaques of Katyn monuments in Mogilno, Strzelno and his home town of Koźmin Wielkopolski, and on the wall of the Katyn Chapel of the Field Cathedral of the Polish Army in Warsaw. For his patriotic conduct, the reserve second lieutenant, the judge Stanisław Majcherkiewicz was awarded, inter alia, with the Medal for the War of 1918-1921, posthumously with the Medal for the Participation in the Defensive War of 1939 (on 23 April 1996 by the President of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski) and with the Commemorative Decoration "Cross of the September Campaign of 1939", which was awarded by the Government of the Republic of Poland in exile in London.

One of the most prominent judges in the postwar period in the Mogilno Land was Seweryn Feliks Majcherkiewicz, the brother of Stanisław Majcherkiewicz. The legal studies, which he undertook in Poznań being persuaded by his brother, were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. As a reserve second lieutenant, he took part in the battle of Modlin, where he was seriously wounded. For his valiant conduct, he was awarded with the Cross of Valour. He spent five years in Oflag Murnau near Munich. He returned to Poland in 1946, and completed his legal studies in Poznań. From the moment of the postwar reorganisation of the judiciary to 30 June 1957, he was a judge at the County Court in Mogilno. However, the independence of the judiciary, which was a fiction in the Stalinist times, weighed heavily on him. He decided to leave the judiciary and become a member of the Bar. He worked virtually till the last days of his life. The day before he died, he was to be tried at the court in Toruń. He died on 27 June 1976 in Mogilno, and was buried at the local cemetery.

In the postwar period, there was a very active association at the District Court in Mogilno, i.e. the Association of Polish Lawyers, which was established by the President of the Court, Bożena Tyborska. Its members included Antoni Wesołowski, a well-known social activist, who devoted his life to the development of the Mogilno Land, and a Sejm deputy from the United People's Party (ZSL). He was the Honorary Citizen of the Town of Mogilno. He cooperated with Prof. Czesław Łuczak, and this cooperation resulted in publication of "Studia Ziemi Mogileńskiej" in 1970, and also with Czesław Pilichowski, who came from Rządkwini in the Commune of Strzelno and who was the Director of the Chief Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes. His persistent activities conducted nationally resulted in the reactivation of the District Court in Mogilno in 1982.

To sum up, it should be noticed that the history of the judiciary in the Mogilno Land has been closely connected with the history of this region, which, in turn, has been a derivative of the difficult history of Poland, particularly in the last two centuries. The existence of judicial institutions in Mogilno, Trzemeszno and Strzelno

has always, even in the partition period, been the proof of these towns' importance for the region. The members of the broadly defined judiciary were far from confining themselves to the performance of their official duties. Many of them were outstanding social activists and patriots. All this lets us ascertain that the judiciary in the Mogilno Land played an important role in the development of this region

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