



“We try to be active where we can best help
the society and our country”

Interview with the President

**of the University of Information Technology
and Management in Rzeszów
- for the 25th anniversary of the University**

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WYŻSZA SZKOŁA
INFORMATYKI I ZARZĄDZANIA
z siedzibą w Rzeszowie



Interview with the President, prof. Tadeusz Pomianek was conducted by prof. Andrzej Rozmus, Vice-Rector for Teaching

ANDRZEJ ROZMUS [AR]: Would you believe, Professor, that 15 years have passed since our first jubilee interview?!

TADEUSZ POMIANEK [TP]: It is hard to believe. We are clearly working hard since time passes so quickly.

AR: You haven't changed at all, Professor.

TP: Thank you. I would like to believe it.

AR: Professor, 15 years ago you were the university rector, and I was an assistant professor, head of the Department of Higher Education Research. Now you are the President and I am the Vice-Rector for Teaching, which means that both of us got promoted.

TP: Yes, you can see that the University supports talented people and tries to use their skills for the common good.

AR: In other words, what a good interview can do, right? This is also proof of that.

TP: (laugh) Yes.

AR: By the way, I encourage everyone to read that interview with you, Professor, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the University. One can learn from it, among other things, that our University could have had a different name – because several were considered at that time – namely: Wyższa Szkoła Galicyjska (Galician College). Shorter abbreviation: WSG. However, we stayed with ours. Probably good.

The interview at that time was focused on the origins of the University, it concerned the historical context and the economic and social conditions in which our University was born. Today I will try to devote more time to the present and the future in our conversation. Of course, some threads from the previous interview will most likely appear. Probably already with the answer to my first question.

Mr. President, the 25-year history of UITM is a series of successive events, from my perspective thoughtful and logical. Rzeszów School of Managers, Association for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship, Business Support Centres, and finally our University. Could you, Professor, tell us a little more about this specific microcosm that led to the establishment of the University of Information Technology and Management? Because evidently, in order to stick to cosmological poetics, the establishment of our University was not the result of a sudden Big Bang.

TP: No, it was just a moment's need. I try to be pragmatic in life. On the other hand, it was a difficult choice for me, because – it seems to me – I was doing quite well in the world of science. I had a lot of publications, mainly in Japan. It was quite a novel method of predicting properties of metal alloys. Although I did not convince the Americans, there were some proposals for further international cooperation. Well, but I moved from Gliwice to Rzeszów because I was afraid for my son's health. At that time, Gliwice was full of aromatic hydrocarbons. Especially at night, when the Gliwice-Sońnice coking plants opened their batteries, it was hard to survive. Quite a lot of children had meningitis. Although I had everything organized at the Institute of Non-Ferrous Metals and I had a good financial position, I decided that the child's health was the most important thing and I moved. Here, in turn, I finished my post-doctoral dissertation and also, if WSK [from 2015 Pratt & Whitney Rzeszów – AR's insertion] had not been ruled by Russians in the 1980s, it could have turned out differently. Since I started to get into the secrets of the production technology of the most important part of the plane – i.e. aircraft engines – and I had ambitions to develop in this area, and I also had a lot of ideas, I received comprehensive help from the manager of the Precision Foundry, late Stanisław Harpula M.Sc. eng., and from the head of the Laboratory, late Ryszard Podkański M.Sc. eng., in post-doctoral and technological research. However, all technological innovations had to be approved by Russians.

And „the new Poland broke out” [of course, we are talking about the beginnings of the system and political transformation in Poland after the end of the 1980s – AR's insertion], And I had already been involved in this process of Poland's return to normalcy. I was the deputy head of Solidarity at the Rzeszów University of Technology when the Senator of the Republic of Poland, Professor Józef Fleszar, said: „Man, someone has to educate people for the market economy because we do not have them.” I was also encouraged to this challenge by the then head of Solidarity of the Rzeszów University of Technology, late Dr. Wojciech Siemaszko. So that was the primary inspiration. I thought to myself that maybe this is indeed a good target for tomorrow. And that's how it started.

AR: So it started with the Rzeszów School of Managers?

TP: With the Rzeszów School of Managers at the Military Department of the Rzeszów University of Technology, which was in liquidation. And after 5 years, in 1996, we already had over 12 thousand graduates, human resources and some material resources. There were grounds to go one step further. So our continuous actions had a certain logical sequence of events. We tried to do what would be the most important for the local community, but also, more broadly, for our country. There was no staff, so we educated staff for business. We created the largest network of Business Support Centres in Poland (7 cities), which in turn developed advisory activities, so I believe that we did a lot at the beginning of the emergence of the market economy. Then, when – let's face it – there were already some managerial staff, we decided that it was necessary to educate specialists, especially in areas where public universities were not very active, because the management itself would do nothing if there were no appropriate specialists. So a university with the appropriate fields of study appeared.

The keynote from that first period of establishing the Rzeszów School of Managers survived – to be useful for the local community and the country. Therefore, we are currently trying to implement new projects, not only in the field of staff education, but also in conducting research and cooperation with the university environment.

AR: Professor, the year 1996 is really important. I have been working at the University since 1998 and I had the opportunity to observe you changing the fields of your professional activity. In the years 1998 and 1999, I remember that you spent several days a week at the seat of the Association for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship in Rzeszów, at Słowackiego Street. Later, sometime at the beginning of the 21st century, you began to avoid Słowackiego Street, and definitely more often you visited Sucharskiego Street, which is the present UITM headquarters. Did you understand then, in those initial years, that it was the University that would be the main field of our actions and activities in the coming years?

TP: It was also like a logical sequence of events. At the beginning, the Association for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship played a very important role. Not only did it donate its resources, including human resources, but also with its experience and contacts it helped to build the University and then develop it accordingly. At that time, let me remind you, exactly in 1997, we established the School of Management and Administration in Zamość. It was another challenge, both for the Association for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and UITM. At the time when both universities were somehow organized, the role of the Association for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship was automatically minimized and I was not needed there.

AR: I omit the fact that it was easier to park in Sucharskiego Street than in Słowackiego Street.

TP: (laugh) Oh yes.

AR: So, as you said, Professor, building and running an institution such as a university is a project involving many institutions and people.

TP: Yes, many people over the 25 years made a significant contribution to the development of the University and the multiplication of its achievements. We talk about it a lot in other information materials prepared for the jubilee. All the time I could count on the involvement and help of the President Founder of UITM, i.e. The Association for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship – Innovations II, Dr. Olgierd Łunarski. For about 20 years I was supported by Dr. Jan Andreasik, especially in the creation and development of the Rzeszów School of Managers, the Association for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and the Higher School of Management and Administration in Zamość. It is hard not to remember the merits of the late: the first Rector – Prof. Stanisław Paszczyński Ph.D. Eng., Vice-Rector for Science – Prof. Jerzy Chłopecki Ph.D., Chancellor – Stanisław Harpula MSc., Vice-Rector for Foreign Cooperation – Andrzej Szelc Ph.D. Eng.

After all, at least once every 25 years I must stress the merits of my wife Ursula. She was the main designer, she took care of investment supervision, economy and quality of subsequent infrastructure investments. One should mention the renovation and expansion of the campus at ul. Sucharski in Rzeszów, construction of the entire campus in Kielnarowa. Also the renovation and construction of infrastructure for the „daughter” universities, i.e. the Higher School of Management and Administration in Zamość, and the Rev. Tischner Higher European School in Krakow. This is her work. Of course, other people helped her, such as Mrs. Lida Mach, Mrs. Ewa Kopycińska, or the designer of the Centre for International Education, my daughter Maria.

As for today, in these chaotic and unpredictable times, the University Board has a difficult role to play. I am satisfied with

the cooperation with them and this is good news for today and tomorrow for our University. It is time to mention that the Head of the Board is Rector Magnificus Dr. Wergiliusz Gołąbek, Vice-Rector for Science is Prof. Agata Jurkowska-Gołuńska Ph.D., Vice-Rector for Teaching is Prof. Andrzej Rozmus Ph.D., and my son Bartek is the Finance and Development Director. Many other people should be mentioned who constitute the competitive advantage of our school. We do not forget about them and we prove it during the jubilee celebrations.

AR: Oh, thank you for being mentioned in such a noble group. It is undoubtedly a privilege. However, Professor, I would like to return for a moment to our historical summaries. And in connection with the 25-year history of UITM, some numbers: 46 permissions to conduct education on Polish and English-speaking paths, 60,000 students, graduates and postgraduate students, over 100,000 certificates issued with an international scope, 450 contracts signed with foreign partners, 126 degrees and titles obtained by UITM employees, 150 completed projects with EU funding with a total value of over PLN 170 million, PLN 170 million invested in the development of the research and educational base.

Really impressive data, considering the fact that the University was established without any state support. By the way, does this lack of state support for this type of initiative hurt, Mr. President?

TP: Yes, it does hurt. This is unfortunately a wider problem. A lot of very good ideas were not and still are not supported by our state. It is simply a social loss and one of the most disastrous examples of the lack of a political class at the proper level. Let us look at it this way: if the legislator agreed to the establishment of non-public universities, then at the same time it was necessary to answer the question: how – at the state level – will we use this emerging non-public segment of educational activity? What is the most important? The most important thing is quality. Quality of education, quality of research, etc. What breeds quality? Competition. However, only competition which is based on sound principles. These sound principles are easy to define. Money follows quality. It does not matter who the founder of the university is. It is important who is better. If that had been said from the start, we would be in a completely different place. Unfortunately, it was turned upside down. So public universities have all subsidies, we have none. So public universities do not have to strive for the quality of education and for the student, and we the other way round. At the same time we have to save at every step. And that only breeds pathologies. By the way, a lot of pathologies have arisen in both sectors. And it's hard to find Polish universities at the forefront of various international rankings. It is difficult to find any great achievements of Polish scientists on a global scale. It is also difficult to find examples of business achievements at the international level. It is a simple consequence of this lack of imagination and a bit of communist thinking on the part of the political elite – if the word „elite” is not redundant here.

AR: Such state policy may clip your wings and discourage ambitious ventures.

TP: Of course. And if you look objectively, what has the state gained thanks to us? The numbers that you mentioned earlier say a lot. However, it is also necessary to add how much the state budget saved due to the fact that we took over the burden of conducting studies, and our students cover the costs of that. Taking into account only full-time studies, the budget saved over PLN 1 billion without any contribution! Not to mention taxes, or the fact that we have implemented many projects for the benefit of the university environment. What's more, we have created over a thousand workplaces at the University of Information Technology and Management and at "daughter" universities in Krakow and Zamość. Our history shows that if the authorities of this region, this province, had any problems, they usually knocked on our door. Regardless of whether we are talking about one or another development strategy, or the previous Rzeszów Province or the present Podkarpackie Province, or the development strategy of individual cities or communes – our share is dominant. It is us, and long, long time it would take to find other universities that are so deeply involved in these problems. So we proved that people who work here are extremely active, open to challenges and determined to do something for the so-

cio-economic environment. After all, it is easy to calculate one more thing, that while a few years ago the cost of studying at a public university was twice as high as that at a non-public university, I repeat, TWICE AS HIGH, today it is three times higher. And if we look at the fate of our graduates, we can be satisfied. Especially in the context that not only diamonds come to us. Usually, young people who come to us are similar or even slightly weaker than those who come to public universities. So the greater our merit is that they simply do so well in their professional lives. Authorities that do not see it are not fit for authority. After all, our state is between Russia and Germany. It has been clear for centuries that we will either be a strong country standing on its own feet or simply not exist.

AR: ...and the saddest thing is that we are not using the potential we have.

TP: That's what it's all about. We do not have God-knows-what riches – because hard coal is a problem rather than wealth – so the politicians' task is to make good use of the potential that exists. They waste. WASTE! Therefore, I have a grudge against the political class that has not grown up to the challenges. What is happening in Poland does not concern the basic challenges of Poland, Europe or the world. This is a tribal fight. Fight with each other, who whom. No imagination, no high competences. Usually people who have not succeeded anywhere go into politics, and it should be exactly the opposite. However, this is not just a problem of the political class, because someone has chosen them, right. So this is a problem of education, of the skill of critical and independent thinking, also on the side of a large part of our society.

AR: In addition, there is also the problem of our perception of those who have achieved success.

TP: Yes, this is a problem of selfless envy. So not only do we have too few resources, but we also fight each other the easiest way instead of supporting each other. Let us, for example, look at the Jews, what a small community, and how much it means on a global scale, not only in the financial sphere. How they do support each other! And what our support looks like – it's enough to look at it. If someone just puts his head out, a thousand hands will immediately pull him to the proverbial Polish cauldron. To see how this cooperation looks, it is enough to go to the United States where we supposedly have a Polish community of 10 million. This is a caricature! I had such a silly idea – at the beginning of the University's existence – to involve the Polish American Congress in the development of the school due to the fact that many people left for the United States from here. It was just wasted time. What I heard there only convinced me that they can only divide and quarrel. We are the fourth most prosperous nation in the United States. Where are their investments in Poland? Ireland is one of the richest countries in the European Union per capita. However, their wealth was built by their American counterparts who at one time were responsible for up to 60% of domestic investments. Our Polish people, however, do not work like that. There are practically no investments in our country. Every two years we have a Song Festival – and I don't know what – ... a waltz? And what, we sing, dance, reminisce and nothing else comes of it. Caricature!

AR: Yes, and the support of such a broad diaspora would certainly be very useful in our country. Coming back, Professor, to the figures I have presented earlier regarding the development of our University, which of them are you most satisfied with, maybe even proud of? In other words, what, in your opinion, is the greatest achievement of our University in this 25-year perspective?

TP: It is a difficult question. It depends on what point of view. For example, international certificates – we have issued over 100,000 of them. They were also received by young people from other universities around the world. This is a very important achievement of our University. The more so that they are diverse. They are language and IT ones. We have certificates from the world's leading IT companies, we have certificates in the area of logistics and management. All of them strengthen our students and graduates on the labour market. They are a kind of proof of professional identity for employers who have an easier task in recruitment processes. They know what a given candidate knows and can do. Hence our slogan:

we educate practically.

AR: So from this I conclude that you are the most satisfied with the UITM practical approach to teaching?

TP: The fact that we have such an approach that is aimed at developing appropriate practical skills results in the fact that our graduates adapt to work quite quickly and, above all, find a job quite quickly. The philosophy of being utilitarian for the social and economic environment is also expressed in our revenue structure.

AR: As far as I remember, UITM derives about 50% of its revenues from non-teaching activities.

TP: Even over 50%. At the same time, when it comes to other Polish universities, over 90% of them have non-teaching income below 10%. This is a civilization difference – dare I say it. However, what does it mean that scientific, design or commercial activities have a large share in the revenue structure? This means that the staff must be able to solve specific problems. In this way, one prepares for practical education, and solving problems also forces you to update your knowledge, so this is a system that supports each other: education, science and cooperation with the environment.

AR: Are there any numbers that make you unsatisfied Professor? Probably the number of Nobel laureates coming from the UITM.

TP: (laugh)

AR: Returning, however, to the essence of the question, in what areas of our University's activity – in this 25-year perspective, can you feel unsatisfied?

TP: First of all, quite mature projects were created here, how to reform the system of higher education and science. Moreover, these projects were basically commissioned by two successive Ministers of Science and Higher Education. The aforementioned ladies received ready-made documents from us. In the case of the first lady, even the then Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, organized a team to which he directed all his government leaders – including the then minister of finance. And what turned out? That they were playing against time. How did we act? We prepared necessary statutory changes and ready regulations. At the final meeting, when asked if they had any other comments, they said no, and that it was difficult to have any comments on this document. So I say that we have reached agreement and we are implementing it, and I hear from the Minister, unfortunately NO because there is no political will. This is just one example of how the political class functions.

AR: They can't use good ideas.

TP: Even more so today they cannot. It is such a short-sighted game for public opinion polls, so that a competitor will not use something. Without courage, without imagination. Again, I say that this is the effect of too many random people going to politics. This is also the effect of our selfless envy. When we look at Western civilization, we see that many people go to politics there who have already achieved a lot in business. They have already had enough stress and, on the other hand, they think that they can convey something to society, that is why they go to politics. They are well prepared, they have proved that they can do something and they are financially independent.

AR: So they do not think about earning money on politics.

TP: Of course. And with us? In our country, if someone is rich and has achieved something in his professional life and wants to enter politics, he will, unfortunately, lose every election.

AR: Professor, our University, compared to other, more than 300 private universities in Poland, adopted a rather peculiar model of operation, in which scientific and research and development activities play a fundamental role. Proof: The University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów received almost a million zlotys in 2020 from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education subsidies for maintaining research potential and scientific development. This puts us in third place among non-public universities in Poland, after the SWPS University and the Kozminski University – that is, let's add, after two Warsaw universities. Very few non-public universities in Poland were covered by this „scientific” subsidy. As I checked, during these 25 years, nearly a thousand scientific publications were created with the affiliation of the UITM in the renowned international scientific database Scopus.

Professor, where does this scientific-research zeal come from? Why – I will reveal this to the readers – each Rector's Council with the participation of the President begins with scientific matters? Which, of course, as vice-rector for teaching, I envy my colleague in charge of science, Professor Agata Jurkowska-Gomułka.

TP: To some extent it may be due to what I did previously. Because at the Institute of Non-ferrous Metals in Gliwice, I was involved in research and implementation. And these were serious problems concerning, for example, the largest copper smelter in Poland – Głogów II. Above all, however, I believe that science is the foundation. If there is staff who can do something scientifically, then there is something to build on. If it is not there, then it is like – unfortunately in many private universities – that the staff comes to classes and they are not there after classes. So it's hard to say that it is a real university. If I have excellent associates, scientists and implementers around me, that is, I have someone with whom I can build such an ambitious project as a university. Again, a solid foundation is the scientific foundation. Of course, I also feel unsatisfied. The third place, the amounts are still small, but on the other hand, it looks at least good in the scale of private universities. Moreover, we have the most pro-engineering profile among non-public universities. Moreover, if there is such a diversified income portfolio, it is also easy to create new ventures because there are contacts, because there is staff and because it is known that they can do a lot. If there was a different financing system, of course, both us and other private universities would be much further on this path. Let me just give you one example: in the years 2006-2016, PLN 25 billion was invested in Polish laboratories. In the investments there basically were no non-public universities – UITM and two other universities, for quite modest amounts. It was the state policy. This was the decision made during the first PiS rule [2005-2007 – AR's insertion] and later it was just the realization of the project. This was imposed in advance. Neither co-financing nor admission to large investment grants. It is difficult to do science as long as you do not have it. We can feel like heroes to the extent that we have achieved a lot and we continue to do it with determination. I repeat: SCIENCE – and only on this you can build good teaching and services for the environment.

AR: So, in your opinion, Professor, our University is based on the power of three fields: science – practice – teaching. This is how you can understand it?

TP: Absolutely. And I was pushing for the same in the project that I gave 'as a gift' to the ladies-Ministers, how it should be done. The much greater potential of Polish universities should have been – and still should be – transferred to cooperation with the environment and science. And how is it? The vast majority of universities in Poland over 90% of their activities focus on teaching.

AR: I would like to touch on the topic of internationalization, which is important from the point of view of our University's operation. Currently, 1500 foreigners from over 50 countries of the world are educated at UITM. We are one of the

most internationalized institutions of higher education in Poland. Of course, while looking for personal reasons for the implementation of this specific strategy, one can point to your numerous journeys. You were, among others, in China, India, Israel, USA – I could mention here for a long time. This, of course, builds individual experiences and can reveal the advantages of multiculturalism in many dimensions. After all, it seems to me that the activities and, more broadly, the strategy of our university are based on deeper premises. In an interview for Gazeta Wyborcza in March this year (2020) you wrote: „At these very unpredictable times it is, among others, universities that have a great duty and challenge to build a conscious and open society”. Is this internationalization strategy, consistently implemented by UITM for years, a response to the aim of a modern university, formulated by you in Gazeta Wyborcza?

TP: Among others. Largely. Unfortunately, after difficult, dramatic historical events, we are a monoculture society. And if you look at where the greatest innovative achievements are in the world, then you find them, where there is great cultural diversity. This is the starting point. Great freedom, also moral. It is absolutely proven that in such an environment new and unconventional ideas are born. And it is no coincidence that Poland has average innovative achievements – precisely for this reason. This hermetic, slightly rotten hull needs to be torn apart. It is especially visible in Podkarpacie. We need to give our young people a chance to contact other nations and other cultural zones. Let these different cultures interact, let different people talk to each other, and let them broaden their mental horizons so as to see what civilization looks like today. This is absolutely necessary for our tomorrow to be better. When we lock ourselves in our own home, we know what will happen. We've already started to fight and if someone doesn't separate us, the end is certain. On the other hand, who was the most successful in the 20th century? The USA. Why? Because 20% of the students are former foreigners, it was and is a diverse society. „Brain drain” is the thought that haunts me. We have elites decimated by history, and that is our problem – too thin elites. So all the more – BRAIN DRAIN. Strengthening the intellectual potential of a country gives some chance for tomorrow in international competition, it gives a chance for correct problem solving. Why we, having several hundred universities, cannot, like the USA, attract talented people from all over the world. If we love America so much, let us follow its example. It is in our best interest. So for the sake of these young people and for the sake of this country – it's ugly to call it „brain drain”, but just to know what I'm talking about – it is extremely important to strengthen the country's potential. And I do not understand why the entire visa or migration policy is subordinated to this. I am, of course, against accepting all those who want to come to us. This is not the way. Problems of cultural differences occurring on a large scale may be unmanageable, especially when we are dealing with the lower intellectual level of newcomers. However, wise people who want to study and then work here should be invited to join us. It is in our best interest.

AR: We should also remember that some of the youth from these different countries of the world come back to their countries. So this is already educated youth, knowing European standards ...

TP: ...they are our ambassadors, they are business partners for our companies...

AR: ...that's it. So everyone benefits from such an action strategy.

Professor, in a sense, we raised a topic related to values and the mission of the University with its essence. And here we agree that a responsible university should offer much more than the so-called compulsory program – which already resulted from the first part of our conversation. Therefore, it should respond to many social needs. In fact, UITM, apart from the standard curriculum within a given field of study, offers our students a number of additional opportunities for development, education and improvement. I wish we could talk about one. Well, on your initiative, Professor, students of our University, regardless of the field they study, additionally have three special subjects: „Poland and the world”, „Contemporary information culture” and „Health education in civilization diseases” (the last one will start in the nearest summer semester).

Could you explain to us the reasons for including these subjects in the curricula– which in principle do not have to be in the curriculum?

TP: Exactly, because it must be added that we offer these subjects to every student, regardless of the mode and field of study. However, it is our sense of responsibility for the student. If today information technologies change our way of functioning so quickly, if electronic media have such a serious position, then we must teach our youth not only to use them, but above all to use them wisely. There is the problem of fake news, there is the problem of finding information that is objectively correct and consistent with the achievements of science. This is extremely important, because apart from the positive effects that the current digital civilization has, there are also negative ones. This is a very serious challenge and the consequences are already serious. This success of populisms results from something. We not only put emphasis on information technologies, but also on strengthening the mathematical skills of students. In short, we prefer logical thinking. It is obvious to me that if society does not have the ability to think critically, democracy will lose to populists ALWAYS and everywhere. So if we are serious about democracy, then let's prepare society so that it can function in this reality. Therefore, I regret that in our primary and secondary schools, encyclopaedic knowledge and frequent tests dominate instead of the ability to think logically, solve problems, cooperate in a group or accept other opinions. It is not the teachers' fault, but the lack of wise reforms. Instead, we have a „deformity“ today.

AR: Probably for this reason you are one of the co-lecturers of the lecture „Poland and the world“. Is history your „hobby“?

TP: Yes. Absolutely. Here he helped me – and he also conducts this subject –I mean, Professor Aleksander Hall. I observe how young people are prepared and what historical knowledge they receive at an earlier stage of their education – I wring my hands. This is the worst inheritance we can leave to the younger generation. It's a deception, not history science. What do young people find out? – that we are the bravest, most honest nation in the world, those numerous uprisings, battles, rebellions ...

AR: ...we can die beautifully.

TP: Just as you died beautifully and quickly – you are a hero, and if you worked as hard as you could for your own good and your motherland, you are usually nothing. You've always exposed yourself to someone and someone is trying to cook you in a Polish cauldron.

AR: I saw the program „Poland and the world“. There is a distinct change of emphasis on this subject. You very skilfully select these positive moments from the history of Poland, examples of entrepreneurial, creative and ingenious Poles.

TP: This is what it is all about. Current teaching of history only deepens our national complexes. If we are so brave, so great, why did we have such a nasty history?...

AR: ...we were under partitions for over 100 years...

TP: That's it. Why did the invaders abolish serfdom, and not our landowners? How could this happen? It is – I repeat again – building ever larger complexes, not an attempt to understand each other. Meanwhile, in our history there were objectively beautiful cards and great achievements, so let's also tell young people about where the partitions came from. After all, we contributed the most to them. The venality of the nobility in the 18th century was catastrophic. Moscow's envoy Nikolai Repnin could do with them whatever he wanted. It was a terrifying demoralization, starting with the then Primate

of Poland and Lithuania, Gabriel Podoski, who died with his mistress in Marseille due to food poisoning. It was Repnin who convinced the Vatican with ducats to him. Bishop Józef Kossakowski received 4,000 gold ducats from Russians for coaxing 60 deputies. Therefore, it was no coincidence that several priests were hanged on the gallows. There were many great patriots, but they were in the minority and they lost.

So we would also have to, on the one hand, try to tell young people why this happened, and on the other hand, show what was and still is strong in us. You know what my thesis is that Casimir the Great was the last king who understood how to organize Polish society. A society that would also care for the lower classes. The higher classes were 8 to 12%. Later, the Lords of Małopolska forced an alliance with Lithuania. A civilization from the east with a clear authoritarian foundation was thrown into a civilization built according to Western models. So, it is no wonder that the Jagiellonians based their authorities on cooperation with rich clergy, magnates and rich nobility. This is how the social division in Poland began which continues to this day. And later, when challenges came, such as wars and the struggle for independence, the people, that is, the peasants, the poorest classes were hardly there. The people felt alienated. It wasn't their country. The landlords, as they had great prosperity in the golden age, instead of using the accumulated huge wealth for the development of crafts and urban development they pressed the peasant who fled to the Ukraine and later strengthened Khmelnytsky. So this history is different than it seems to us and different from the one presented in increasingly worse – history textbooks. On the other hand – entrepreneurship. These are great achievements. With such historical errors, we would not have the right to exist were it not for our entrepreneurship, our ability to find ourselves in changing circumstances. We were able to perfectly rebuild ourselves from the ruins after the Napoleonic Wars. 10 years was actually enough for us to be the most powerful province in the entire Russian Empire.

AR: Therefore, an appropriate historical narrative, obviously consistent with the facts, is important.

TP: For me it is obvious – the binder of a solid foundation for a strong and permanent statehood of our country is an honest story about its history. Its martyrdom version is the deepening of complexes in the next generations. It's time to admit that many of our armed uprisings were based on emotions and not on cold calculations. Their effects include not only material losses, but most of all the elimination of the most valuable sons and daughters of this nation. If we survived as a nation despite historical errors, it is because we belong to more intelligent nations. We were especially distinguished and we are still distinguished by entrepreneurship and the ability to adapt in various conditions. What we need to learn more effectively is respect for other people, the ability to work in a group and learn from the better. This should be the basis of the message about us to the next generations.

Professor, you started talking about great achievements of science which also happened despite such poor state infrastructure. Today, for example, we cannot take advantage of this. For 28 years, international competition has been going on when it comes to IT specialists. We are second only to China there. Where are the international IT companies? Asseco is not enough. This is just one example of the way Polish education and science are organized in such a way that we do not develop talents. Not only do we have modest elites, but we are not yet able to develop talents, pick out leaders and prepare them for serious social roles. All this is not happening. Please look at the personnel policy of the current government. The substantive criterion was immediately abandoned. Especially now you can clearly see the effects of "destruction gene" of our species. Self-confidence grows as intellectual potential and competences decline.

AR: These examples of additional subjects implemented at UITM which procured this extremely interesting mini-historical lecture, are – one could say – such a minimum civilization package.

TP: Yes, you can put it that way.

AR: But also for the environment of our University, UITM has an interesting offer – just to mention a series of excellent and extremely popular lectures open to the inhabitants of Rzeszów and the surrounding area: „In the labyrinth of the world” and „Great Questions in Science”, initiated by our Rector, Dr. Wergiliusz Gołąbek . They are held either at the Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre or at the Podkarpacie Philharmonic.

Is this, Professor, an example of the implementation of the so-called III mission of the University?

TP: This, in my opinion, is our duty. Absolutely. The university must radiate to its surroundings. The more so because we do not have the entire infrastructure organized so that a normal person can have access to authentic knowledge, satisfy his interests, and, above all, multiply the knowledge he needs in this dynamically changing world – we do not have it. So the University, as much as it can, does it. It is a pity that we are alone here, but on the other hand it's good that we do it.

You mentioned this „Preventive health” – this is another example of political thoughtlessness. With such health problems, we spend a fraction of a percent of the budget on health policy. This is a disgrace. Therefore, again within our own abilities, without any subsidy – although we should be strewn here with money – we implement the necessary educational programs. This is a great way to solve many problems through health education. After all, prevention is better than cure.

AR: Yes of course. And that it is needed, we have evidence in every undertaking of this type. When we invite, for example, Rev. Professor Michał Heller to the Subcarpathian Philharmonic, there are 1,200 spectators and a large proportion of people still do not get to the lecture.

TP: Yes. And there are many young people – which makes us very happy – from various parts of the province. This makes us really happy.

AR: Professor, a slightly different topic, but somewhat related to the fulfilment of the needs of the social environment and the wider University environment. For many years you were the President of the Polish Association of Private Employers of Education of the Lewiatan Confederation, you were also an expert of the team that advised previous ministers, prime ministers in the field of the development of higher education...

TP: ...rather tried to convince them to undertake certain reforms.

AR... and recently, together with Professor Wojciech Misiąg, you have developed a document called Polish Challenges. This – one could say additional –activity of yours shows a great desire to change or even repair reality. We already know that probably the motives are also in the analysis of history, of what we failed to do and what we should do. Except – as I analyse your achievements in this area –you were first concentrating your efforts on reforms within higher education. Your most famous articles, among others, from Rzeczpospolita, Gazeta Wyborcza or the Academic Forum, were aimed precisely at the area of education and science. Now, however, you are clearly entering the meta-level and proposing changes regarding various areas of our state's activity. Does this result from the fact that in order to make a repair in the sphere of education, other spheres of state functioning should also work well? But is education still the focus?

TP: No, no, your first statement is correct, Professor. It is absolutely impossible to do good higher education in the desert. This is a communicating vessel complex. However, the current state of reality was the main inspiration for me or for Professor Wojciech Misiąg. The actions of the rulers lead us to serious social and economic problems. Please read the programs of the opposition parties. There are a lot of legitimate slogans, but together it's downright obnoxious gibberish. There is no idea for Poland there. Regardless of whether we are talking about new movements or old political parties,

it is simply sad. So, with determination, I set about answering the question: how to prepare this foundation of our country so that something strong and long-distance could grow out of it? And it is not a discovery when I emphasize in this study the TRIADA, that is: education, science, culture. This is the right foundation! If we do not educate the young generation well, if this generation is not sensitive and also does not need some more advanced cultural offer, then with whom do we want to build a strong state? This triad provides the basis for educating the elite, to prepare leaders for important social roles, and to provide citizens with a chance to live in a progressive state. These are the three issues which – if we solve them correctly – we are able to recover from every misfortune. HR and HR again! If we have staff, we'll deal with everything, and if we don't have staff, the best ideas will fall into ruin. It's not everything. After all, we know what the climate and environmental challenges are. We know what foodstuffs we eat. I am particularly sensitive here. Apparently I have such an internal system and I can easily identify which is just unnatural. However, this is unacceptable. On the one hand, no matter who is the minister of agriculture, he boasts that we have the best food in the world, and I am speaking hard – we eat just anything! This is an industrial food. Scandal! 250 billion zlotys – since joining the European Union – has gone to the Polish countryside, to Polish agriculture. In return, we should have tasty, healthy food that is produced in harmony and symbiosis with the natural environment. We don't have anything like that. These monstrous farms for tens of thousands of heads, no matter what, where fattening is accelerated by antibiotics and the lack of movement of animals. I won't mention what they feed them. And it has to be healthy and tasty?!

AR: And organic or BIO food is still quite exotic, one shelf in the store.

TP: That's it. Just take a look at one thing. In Poland, the acreage that is intended for organic farming, is 3% and it is decreasing. In the Czech Republic it is 14%, in Estonia 18%, in Austria 25%. Where are we here?! And we have great conditions because in the times of real socialism this chemicalization of the earth was not carried out on such a large scale as, for example, in the Czech Republic.

AR: But farmers have good PR because we often hear „it's good, because it's Polish”. And we add „and healthy”.

TP: Yes of course. The worst thing is that this huge stream of money – on average 200,000 zloty per farm since 2004 – turned into an ordinary „social”. The rulers, but also the European Union, have implemented such a policy of distributing these funds that it is simply a financial allowance to survive, not to have a profitable farm that produces healthy food.

AR: Such a lazy accessory.

TP: Social transfers always make you lazy. Later, the new (current) government added another 500+ to that. I have absolutely no grudge against the Polish countryside or the people who live there. It was the rulers who led to the fact that instead of giving them a fishing rod, they gave them a fish.

AR: Yes, because it is the government that creates the conditions for farming.

TP: That's what it's all about. And now we are in a situation where many active youth left the so-called provinces. We have subsidies not for the development of ambitious projects or support for producers of healthy food, but for social pensions. What's more, we also subsidize these huge farms that produce industrial food. Of course, we destroy the natural environment. For what?! What are the health effects of this?! So this next segment in our Polish challenges is just showing how everything is related to each other. The way food production is organized, the state of the environment and the health of citizens. Cause and Effect. Professor, I live in the countryside. Living in the countryside at this time is courage. Great courage. The stench is unbelievable! The neighbours are burning I don't know what! Is it some waste, is it some plastic,

rubber...? We poison ourselves twice: when we inhale exhaust fumes, and then when we eat food from soil contaminated by these fumes. It just needs to change immediately!

AR: The saddest thing is that those who burn these may already be aware that it is harmful, but they burn on.

TP: I don't know if they realize that they are hurting their loved ones in the first place. On the other hand – I am saying it again – it is not the fault of these people. After all, it is possible to organize a rational policy that will make life in the countryside as it should be. There are many people who live in big cities, are fed up with the noise and want to escape. If they had decent conditions where they could organize ecological production in harmony with the environment and enjoy this environment ...

AR: ...everyone gains.

TP: Everyone gains. Why not help them? Why? However, this is a complete, different path of civilization development. Nevertheless, we described it in the aforementioned document. We also showed that it is not a question of lack of money. It is a question of how we use this money. For example, I would like to point out that one hundred and several dozen billion zlotys go to the public sector through the so-called subsidy algorithms. Regardless of whether we are talking about healthcare, education, higher education and other public services. These are irrational and wrongly constructed algorithms. It's not about anything. Neither to achieve any specific goals, nor to concern the quality of life, quality of health, etc. It seems that this money has to be distributed somehow. There are enormous savings in the mechanisms governing the algorithms if you look at the expenditure effect in a completely different way. So this state unfortunately has to be reorganized. We will not do it without wise people who are in Poland, but nobody wants to listen to them.

AR: Optimistic in reading of this document, Challenges for Poland– because I had the pleasure to read it – is that firstly, we still have time, secondly (from what you said), you don't need a lot of money for it, and thirdly, maybe there will be people and politicians who will want to use this document to make the necessary changes. Although in this matter I have the least hopes.

TP: Me too. Honestly, I only believe in young people and women. If they do not have overly revolutionary and erratic expectations, they nevertheless represent a potential that may allow people of a different calibre to enter the political scene, who will feel and know that they are going there because it is their mission. They want to do something for this country and have competences for that. I repeat once again –there are such people! Poland can be a model in the European Union and I believe that it takes a dozen or so years at most.

AR: Yes. I also have hope in the young generation. I am pleased to conduct classes at our University with many very active and conscious students. May their time come soon.

Professor, now I would now like to move on to the topics directly related to you at the end of our interview, one could say, only a bit of a stretch – we will move on to questions in the area of personalistic pedagogy. When I interviewed you on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of UITM I naively asked you if you were fed up with all this. Constant pressure, the need to make decisions important for many people, reducing free time for yourself and the family. Now 15 consecutive years have passed, and you–I know what I am saying – are still working extremely intensively and efficiently. The numbers showing the current status of our University prove it. You are a very demanding boss – I am sorry for this colloquialism – but I have the impression that you still demand the most from yourself. So instead of asking nonsense about when you will have enough, because I know it will never happen, I will ask: where do you get so much professional and life energy from?

TP: I would also like to know the answer to this question (laughs). My wife says that I am „over-responsible” and this is the engine that drives me. Of course, the way I function is not a recipe for the comfort of life, quite the opposite. On the other hand, nature has constructed me so much that I cannot calmly walk past something I can see that it can be done differently or better. And it is like a source of energy. Besides, it’s not that there is no bitterness in me. There is. And I am convinced that this bitterness grows over the years and I think that our conversation also proves it somehow. We got a great opportunity, and why is it wasted – to put it mildly – by random people? Why do we not see crooks, political cynics who disorganize this country for their own ends or for low reasons? Why? And should we give up or do our thing nevertheless? It’s not that I only have my drive. Perhaps I have some talent in choosing people, because the staff of people who work hard here on a daily basis are numerous and still determined. It is that we have a certain mental community and a certain common approach to challenges. It makes us inspire each other and it makes it go round. I hope that our numerous proposals, not necessarily related to the functioning of the University, will finally work for the benefit of Polish society. It also drives me in some way.

AR: Professor, guru of performance management at work – David Allen in his best-selling book Getting Things Done, wrote: „Our challenge is to combine a high, idealistic view with the prose of everyday activities.” This is of course a reference to multi-level results management. What is more important for you today? Ongoing management of the organization or creating ideas? I know how many e-mails you receive every day, how many meetings are planned and how much time a person can spend on the so-called information rush. On the other hand, your position even requires that you spread your vision, create a broader perspective or – to put it bluntly – idealize. How do you reconcile these two perspectives?

TP: I would definitely like to spend much less time on current problems. For sure. However, in our unpredictable, unorganized statehood it is very difficult to do it and I say that maybe this is my “over-responsibility”, but there are situations when I think that I have to help the University Authorities with my advice. And it takes time. However, the worse it is in the country, the more it determines me to look for system solutions. Look for overall and structural solutions. I am not a politician, so I am not involved in current politics. However, I hope that wise people will come to power soon, so that I can offer them something thoughtful. So what I do in the world of ideas is largely related to the Polish state. On the other hand, some solutions there will give completely different possibilities and perspectives for this University as well. Here the relation is and will be.

AR: Development is a meeting with another person. Therefore, we are a specific product of many social interactions, we are shaped by experiences and people we meet on our way. At the same time, it can be a direct contact or –let’s say – „mediated” by literature, film, art. I would like to ask you about the figures important to you. Who is an authority for you on the path of professional development, and who is a moral and ethical model for you?

TP: And here are a lot of names and it’s hard for me to put it in order. I have been lucky enough to meet many wonderful people and every conversation with them was inspiring to me. Soon before his death, Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki visited our University. Conversation there in the lower part of the Tavern [in Kielnarowa – AR] – almost two hours long – was extremely inspiring for me and made me realize how one functions at this high prime minister’s level and what challenges this wonderful man – whom Tadeusz Mazowiecki was undoubtedly – faced. Adam Michnik was also with us. It was a completely different relational experience, but also extremely valuable to me. I also had a brief but equally uplifting meeting with President Lech Walesa. By the way, I regret that he is treated like this now. Yes, he has a difficult personality, but this is no reason why a man who has accomplished so much should be treated in this way in Poland. How do we encourage young people to act with determination for their motherland when they see that good people are simply being abused. This is particularly nasty. It does not matter who does it. The worst part is that you don’t get the

resistance you deserve. On the other hand, the University has been inviting a lot of people over the years – and they were never random people. These were people who were close to us or we were curious about their personality and wanted to learn from them. So there are and were many meetings. Each meeting with Rev. Prof. Michał Heller is extremely important to me, it opens imagination and soul. This is a man of great class. Both scientific and moral. Unfortunately, I have many grudges against the Polish church hierarchy – I am even outraged by their many actions – yes, but on the other hand, I am glad that we are cooperating with the aforementioned Rev. Prof. Michał Heller. And we also cooperate with the Catholic Tygodnik Powszechny and many honourable people of this milieu. With Father Ludwik Wiśniewski, Rev. Prof. Alfred Wierzbicki, with the former rector of the Catholic University of Lublin – Rev. Prof. Andrzej Szostek. And they are wonderful representatives of the Polish Church. It is a pity that they are in the minority. On the other hand, we support each other in some way because they also have a difficult role.

AR: And let us add that our University was the main sponsor of an excellent film about Rev. Adam Boniecki– xABo: Father Boniecki, who was shown in cinemas all over Poland.

TP: Of course. And it was not accidental. It comes from our sense of responsibility that since these great, wonderful people are either forgotten or disrespected, then as far as we can, we will support them. On the other hand, I repeat once again, every contact with them is a benefit for me, both spiritual and substantive, but I think that for my co-workers also, so we build each other this way.

AR: You can learn a lot from people of this format.

Professor, I go back to the aforementioned David Allen who wrote: „Your ability to create is directly proportional to your ability to relax.” So I have to ask you how do you de-stress? Where do you find relaxation and rest?

TP: Grandchildren, yes, definitely. Undoubtedly now contact with grandchildren, that is with Ola, Hela, Alik and Karol. Being with them is a salutary relaxation for me. It is also a challenge for me, because I think that if, for example, I was doing well with mathematics and the logical foundation is important, I care as much as I can for my granddaughters and grandsons to feel the passion for the queen of science. Besides, their direct view of the world, without any complexities, sincere to the point of pain is also de-stressing and gives a fresh perspective on what affects me. With my grandchildren, I quickly distance myself and the world.

AR: I know that you teach them to play chess.

TP: All four. I teach all four, although I am an average chess player but it's enough to chase them a little. However, from the mathematical point of view, I have the strongest contact with Alik. However, everyone likes logical challenges. I invent some different games, or buy them things that require patience, thinking, because today's kids are very distracted. It is very difficult for them to focus, so all kinds of LEGO forces them to be precise, patient and consistent. I try to make them build it within themselves, because the whole world around them rather disorganizes them in this area. Of course, I also have my own interests when it comes to literature or nature. I rarely go to the forest, but I like to de-stress in the bosom of nature. I also come up with new recipes for my tinctures. This is also a challenge.

AR: Speaking of tinctures, I know that one of your newest recipes is lemon balm tincture. Lemon balm because we have such troubled times that we need to save ourselves somehow?

TP: That's it. Lemon balm is de-stressing, calming, and improves sleep. It has many other advantages. I am surprised that

I figured it out so late, because it was only this summer that I started producing tinctures from this plant. And, of course, I started with the recipe that is available on the Internet. My current recipe is nothing like it. In nothing!!

AR: Apparently, the production of tinctures is a hobby, but you are very serious: First, you have a national patent for one of them – made of celery, and secondly, I know that they are tested in specialized laboratories.

TP: Yes of course. For example, each tincture is tested for its antioxidant potential. Does it neutralize free radicals? And it is known that this is some anti-cancer effect. So yeah. Let me remind you that my education comes from the field of materials science, i.e. physicochemistry. So in order to deal with this kind of recipes, I have some substantive preparation.

AR: I suspect a good income could be made from this.

TP: It's an alternative for a rainy day (laughs). Well, if I started the production of liqueurs, I would have a much more comfortable life and probably more income, but there are more serious challenges, and let that one remain a hobby. And here, especially if I have someone to work with, I think we will manage to do a lot more.

AR: Last question Mr. President. Due to the fact that our interviews take place in 15-year intervals, and I want to prepare myself for the next interview, of course, my last question must be extrapolative. UITM IN the next 15 years. Mr. President, what kind of university will it be?

TP: As I said before it strongly depends on what will continue to happen with this country. Because we are a well-organized university that does many things well, but some projects are waiting for another Poland. They are simply waiting for a different Poland and must be implemented on a much larger scale. For now, despite everything, we are trying to develop an international flank, because I believe that this is one of the well-built pillars that will also drive the development of the University. At the same time, the above-mentioned Polish challenges also determine where we want to go. After all, there is already quite an advanced program on how to change Polish agriculture, how to change small towns and villages. This is a concrete civilization project. What's more, we do research all the time from our own resources. We are not asking anyone for help, always hoping that there will be someone to talk to about it. This is also a challenge for the University. We do not have an agricultural profile, so we will invite specialists and technologists to cooperate. However, we have specialists in the area of organization, finance, health and the use of EU funds. That is why we are preparing a development program for the so-called province and this is also an area where I would like the University to develop, because there is a lot to do there. We are determined because if we do not save the environment, we, as Poland, and more broadly – the world, what will happen to our children and grandchildren? Fear to think.

So again what motivates us to act? The most serious challenges for Poland and the world. Let us remember that in order to fully use both the ideas and potential of this University, Poland must be wiser and more honest. And it will be like this if we want to learn from the better and choose the wise and not our own.

AR: And with this appeal, filled with hope, let us end our interview. Thank you, Mr. President.

TP: Thank you.