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Jacek Bierezin - biography of Łódź oppositionist and poet (1947-1993)

The main aim of the dissertation is to present the biography of the poet Jacek Bierezin who undoubtedly contributed to the development of independent culture in Poland in the 1970's. He was an important member of an oppositional environment in Łódź at the time.

The dissertation answers the following questions. What circumstances and motivations led to Bierezin taking specific actions? How did his choices affect his life? To what degree was he responsible for creating the reality and to what extent was he its product?

The second aim of the thesis is to present the profile of a social collectivity that Bierezin belonged to. The main focus is put on the characteristics of the Generation '68, the poetical formation New Wave and the social group creating the magazine „Puls”. That is why a special form of „pretext biography” was used whose aim is to show the picture of the whole epoch or a certain collectivity through the life of the individual.

The first chapter describes Bierezin's childhood and the period of secondary school, as well as the beginning of his literary and oppositional activity. He took part in a students' protest in March 1968 and this experience affected his later artistic and political choices. It was the beginning of his participation in oppositional activities such as self-learning groups, debating clubs, cooperation with „Culure” in Paris, or joining the underground organization „Ruch”.

The second chapter presents the circumstances of Bierezin's joining the underground organization called „Ruch” in 1968 and the consequences of this decision. For his participation in this organization he was sentenced for 1.5 year in suspension in 1971. From this moment he was constantly kept under surveillance by the secret police in communist Poland.

The third chapter is devoted to the establishment of a poetical group called „Centrum” which contributed to the creation of a poetical formation known as „New Wave”. Moreover, the chapter presents the process of forming Bierezin's attitude to the world as a rebellious poet as well as the consequences he had to take, such as the censorship and eventually banning his works from publishing.

The fourth chapter describes Bierezin's cooperation with Worker's Defence Committee from 1976 which led to intensified repression towards him, since he was under complete surveillance, could not leave Poland, was arrested a few times and expelled from university. That is why this chapter also focuses on the characteristics of repressive methods used by the state power at the time.

The next chapter deals with one of the most important Bierezin's achievements – the literary periodical called „Puls. Nieregularny Kwartalnik Literacki” that he created together with his friends. At that time it was one of the main underground magazines in which Bierezin was responsible for his own literary section where he published his journalistic essays.

The sixth chapter describes Bierezin's actions taken when the Solidarity was being created. This chapter also comprises the period of his internment in the time of Martial Law in Poland (1981-1982). For this reason, his stay in the centre for the interned is presented in detail, as well as the problems he had to face and his motivation to take a decision about leaving Poland in 1982.

The last part of the dissertation (chapter seven) regards Bierezin's life outside Poland. It presents the issues concerning the influence of emigration on his political and artistic approach, as well as his attitude to political changes which happened in Poland after 1989. It also deals with unclear circumstances of the poet's death in 1993.

Apart from Bierezin's literary and political activities the dissertation is aimed at describing his private life as well. It is worth pointing out that Bierezin was an important figure of Łódź opposition environment, and his action contributed to the development of the independent culture. Since 2007 a festival called „Puls Literatury” has been organized in Łódź which refers to the underground magazine edited by Bierezin among others. In the schedule of the festival besides cultural events, concerts, meetings with writers also the results of Jacek Bierezin Polish Nationwide Poetry Contest are announced.

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