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REV. DR. BOLESŁAW DOMAŃSKI (1872–1939), A PRIEST WITH THE RODŁO EMBLEM



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On the 100th anniversary of Poland regaining independence, one may recall those people who, thanks to their social and educational activities conducted in their local environment, and sometimes even activities of much wider scope, joined the battle which was aimed to preserve Polish identity and national consciousness. One of them was Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański, a Polish Catholic priest, the parish priest of St. Mary Magdalene Church in Zakrzewo (Krajna) between 1903–1939, an activist of the Union of Poles in Germany, president of the Union from February 9, 1933, to his death on April 21, 1939.

He was born on January 14, 1872, in Przytarnia in Kaszuby, near Chojnice. His father, Franciszek Domański (born in 1846), came from Sępólno Krajeńskie, a small town next to Tuchola. He graduated from the Teachers' Seminar in Grudziądz. He worked in Czyczkowy near Burs, subsequently in Przytarnia, Kiełp and Bielchów in the Grudziądz county. Since 1869 he was a teacher in the Prussian folk school in Przytarnia. His mother, Ewa Domańska (1844–1916), née Perszyk, was the model of a Polish mother.

She gave birth to seven children¹, took care of them, and instilled Christian, patriotic values, and a love of learning and social activities in them. She taught them diligence and persistence in pursuing objectives. She read a lot, was interested in history, spoke languages – Kashubian, Polish and German. She was the first teacher of her children, taught them history, geography and literature. The family environment and the values conveyed by them shaped the personality of the future activist and defender of Polish identity in the Polish-German border region.

Bolesław Domański attended the Prussian folk school in Kiełp, where his father was a teacher. Here he realized that he was destined for the clergy. At the age of nine, he left his family home, and started his education at the Collegium Marianum in Pelplin, called a small theological seminary – the only secondary school in the Pomerania, where the Polish language was still included in the teaching curriculum and was the language of communication for students. The teachers in this school were famous in this region Polish priests who contributed a lot to maintaining the Polish identity of the Pomerania, including Rev. Franciszek Rąbka (1835–1904), Rev. Stanisław Kujot (1845–1914) and Rev. Dr. Romuald Frydrychowicz (1850–1932)². In particular, Rev. Stanisław Kujot, who attended school in Pelplin for seven years, affected the spiritual formation of Bolesław Domański to a great extent. As a fifteen-year-old young man, he left school, claiming that he would serve the Lord and people as a priest in the future. He continued his education at the gymnasium in Chełmno³, a strong center of the Polish national life. Poles constituted a third of all students in this educational institution. In 1890 he received a high school diploma⁴, according to which he was one of the best students. He was a member

¹ The oldest son was Franciszek Bronisław (1869–?). There is no detailed information about him. Next children: Bolesław Andrzej Julian (1874–1941), Konstanty Konrad (1879–1885), Melania Wincenta (1882–1959), Maria Anna (1885–1949), since 1912 the wife of Juliusz Zieliński, a teacher, and Ignacy (1889–?). Prof. Henryk Zieliński, a historian, the son of Maria Anna. Her grandson: Prof. Rev. Andrzej Szostek (the son of the oldest daughter of Irena Zielińska and Ryszard Szostek, her husband), since 1997 a profesor of philosophy, between 1992–1998 vice-rector of John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, from 1998 to 2002 rector. The second grandson, the son of Henryk, is Prof. Krzysztof Zieliński, MD, Ph.D.. Melania Wincenta did not get married. She was living with her brother, Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański at the presbytery (the clergy house) in Zakrzewo and was his closest associate, providing advice and guidance. She was also the manager of the People's Bank in Zakrzewo. See: J. Borzyszkowski, *Lud polski się nie da. Ks. Bolesław Domański. Patron Polaków w Niemczech* [The Polish people do not give in. Rev. Bolesław Domański. A Patron of Poles in Germany], Gdańsk, Kuria Biskupia in Gdańsk–Oliwa, 1989; E. Osmańczyk, *Niezlomny proboszcz z Zakrzewa. Rzecz o księdzu patronie Bolesławie Domańskim* [A steadfast priest from Zakrzewo. A few words about Bolesław Domański, a priest patron], Warszawa, Czytelnik, 1989; Z. Strómski, *Pamięci godni: chojnicki słownik biograficzny (1275–1980)* [Those worth commemorating. The biographical dictionary of Chojnice (1275–1980)], Bydgoszcz 1986.

² Z. Krauze, *Ksiądz Patron Domański* [Rev. Domański, a patron], Gorzów Wielkopolski, Niższe Seminarium Duchowne 1948, p. 7–8.

³ In the junior high school (gymnasium) in Chełmno, Rev. Konstantyn Dominik (1870–1942), a bishop, was a school-friend of Bolesław Domański. The brothers, Franciszek and Julian attended the same school as well.

⁴ J. Borzyszkowski, *Lud polski...*, p. 19.

of scientific self-educational circles, which referred to the Vilnius tradition of the secret Philomath Society, guided by such slogans as *science, homeland, virtue*⁵. Having graduated from the gymnasium in Chełmno, he returned to Pelplin and began studying philosophy and theology at the Higher Theological Seminary under the direction of such masters as: Rev. Prof. Romuald Frydrychowicz, Ph.D., Rev. Prof. Stanisław Kujot, Ph.D., Rev. Prof. Feliks Morawski, Ph.D., Rev. Prof. Ignacy Ograbiszewski, who were not only excellent scholars, but were also famous for their deep patriotism which they instilled in their students⁶. It was the most important period in the life of Bolesław Domański. He formed there lasting friendships, which were so useful in his later activities. In that place his priesthood started. He was ordained to the subdeacon on October 15, 1893⁷. The superiors and professors of the Higher Theological Seminary in Pelplin appreciated the abilities and diligence of Deacon B. Domański and allowed him to go for studying to Münster (he received a scholarship from the secularization fund), where on April 24, 1894, he began his three-year education (1894–1897) at the Royal Prussian Theological and Philosophical Academy in Münster⁸, one of the best Prussian universities at that time. He wanted to prepare for the priesthood there in the best way. In Münster he also collected important experience, which he subsequently put into practice as the parish priest in Zakrzewo. He established contact with emigrants of Polish origin who had escaped from Poland to the territories of Westphalia and Rhineland, mainly for economic purposes. They never lost their national consciousness and did not separate from their Polish roots. These friendships turned out to be valuable and fruitful in the future, when he became a stout social and educational activist fighting to preserve the Polish identity in the Złotów land.

In 1895 at the St. Katherine's church he was ordained by Rev. Dr. Herman Dingelstad to the priesthood. He celebrated his first holy mass in Starogard, and then returned to Münster to work on a doctoral thesis entitled *Die Lehre des Nemesis über das Wesen der Seele (Science of Nemesis on the essence of soul)*, the preparation of which took him two years. He defended his thesis on August 9, 1897, in the assembly hall of the Royal Prussian Theological and

⁵ E. Osmańczyk, *Niezlomny proboszcz...*, p. 12.

⁶ See: Ibid., p. 13; J. Borzyszkowski, *Kaszubsko-pomorscy duszpasterze – współtwórcy dziejów regionu [Priests from Kaszuby and Pomerania – the co-founders of the region's history]*, Gdańsk–Pelplin, Instytut Kaszubski in Gdańsk, 2002.

⁷ According to the canon law, a priest could be ordained to the subdeaconate at the age of 23 years old. Bolesław Domański was ordained at the age of 21. See: J. Borzyszkowski, *Kaszubsko-pomorscy duszpasterze...*, p. 19.

⁸ Münster, the capital of Westphalia (in 1816 the city was raised to the status of the capital of the new Prussian province, Westphalia) was a Catholic city. It was known as one of the centres of Catholic resistance against Kulturkampf, i.e. a fight to weaken the political influence of the Catholic church and to introduce the state supervision over the influence of the Church on society.. See: E. Osmańczyk, *Niezlomny proboszcz...*, p. 14.

Philosophical Academy in Münster⁹. He got the best score possible – *Summa cum Laude*¹⁰. Shortly thereafter, he returned to his family region to start his pastoral work. He became a vicar in Lubawa at the Bernardine church, where he helped the parish priest in performing his daily duties. After a year, in July 1898, by the decision of bishop Leon Redner, he was appointed as the administrative and economic manager in Collegium Marianum, and then took up the post of professor at the Theological Seminary in Pelplin for three years. In 1902 he gave up his job and left. It is not clear why he made such a decision¹¹. He received his first independent parish in Złotów located on the Polish-German border. Despite the fact that he stayed there for a short time, he demonstrated his organizational talent and a passion for social work. He renovated the historic cemetery chapel from the 18th century and assisted in building the St. Roch church, at present a separate parish. At that time it was not acceptable for the Prussian authorities, as they realized that this priest would not obey their decisions.

In Złotów he was also engaged in creating the People's Bank, which was established on the initiative of fifteen merchants and craftsmen. The bank acted as a loan cooperative with unlimited liability, and played an important role in the struggle of the Polish population for returning to their homeland. The People's Bank was the most active in 1914, when it had 598 members, and savings deposits amounted to 640,000 German marks¹². The loans were mainly granted for the purchase of land, animals, seeds, fertilizations, and agricultural machinery. The bank quickly won the trust, especially of the owners of small farms whose income was too little to focus on larger investments. It developed quickly and became an important center of economic life for Poles living in the Złotów land. The bank provided a sense of security and made it possible to derive greater income from farms. The bank found-

⁹ J. Borzyszkowski, *Lud polski...*, p. 20; see also: A. Wojtkowski, *Domański Bolesław (1872–1939)*, in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny [The Polish biographical dictionary]*, Vol. 5, Kraków 1946, p. 300.

¹⁰ The memories by Irena Szostek, niece of Rev. Bolesław Domański. See: I. Szostek, *Patron Polaków ksiądz doktor Bolesław Domański [Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański, a patron of Poles]*. A letter by Irena Szostek to an unknown editor dated November 26, 1979, written in Wrocław. Typescript. A copy thereof held by the author.

¹¹ Z. Krauze wrote that it was a result of poor health condition. See: Z. Krauze, *Ksiądz Patron Domański...*, p. 8. E. Osmańczyk thinks that *the dramatic decision made by Rev. Prof. Bolesław Domański, Ph.D., was a natural reaction to the universality of anti-Polonism, and thus, the inevitability of future clashes with the church authorities, and in terms of the Roman discipline, the inability to oppose requirements imposed by them. At the same time, the only way to keep the vow of obedience and preserve his Polish identity was to follow the example of Rev. Dr. Juliusz Półlocki. [...] Parish priest were chosen for their entire lives, and scientific chairs were dependent on bishops, archbishops, and cardinals.* See: E. Osmańczyk, *Nieśłomny proboszcz...*, p. 29. J. Borzyszkowski noticed another reason: *The decision to leave the seminary was associated with a desire to provide his loved ones and family with better living conditions, as well as to secure his own financial independence. It was about the independence not only in terms of his pastoral work in the parish. [...] Hence, it might be claimed that, by his own choice and with the consent and approval of the episcopal power, Rev. Domański left the seminary and returned to his pastoral work in the parish, which he had valued from the earliest youth.* See: J. Borzyszkowski, *Lud polski...*, p. 24.

¹² J. Kocik, *60 lat Banku Ludowego w Złotowie [The 60th anniversary of the People's Bank in Złotów]*, Warszawa, Zakład Wydawniczy CRS, 1962, p. 12.

ers appreciated the skills and efforts of the young parish priest. They continued their cooperation also after the priest had taken over the parish in Zakrzewo. In 1904, Rev. Domański became president of the People's Bank in Złotów and held this position until 1935. He was the youngest person in the Wielkopolska region who was appointed to such an important post¹³. It was because of him that the residents of Zakrzewo could also use the services provided by the bank until, thanks to the effort made by Rev. Domański, they had their own one.

The Prussian authorities did not accept the pro-Polish activity of Rev. Domański in Złotów, so when in 1903 the parish priest in Zakrzewo died, his candidacy was not taken into account at all. However, Rev. Bolesław Domański did not give up and, against all odds and adversities, using all possible means, made an effort to be granted the parish in Zakrzewo¹⁴. In 1903, despite a number of difficulties, Fryderyk Leopold Hohenzollern appointed Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański as the parish priest in Zakrzewo, a village located ten kilometers from Złotów.

St. Mary Magdalene Church in Zakrzewo was an unknown place for a new parish priest, sent away from his friends and family. He knew that he needed to help his parishioners in their struggle to preserve their national identity, which required work at the grass roots. His first sermon delivered in Zakrzewo contained words which became a signal of actions taken by him in the future: *This House of God will resound only with Polish words. As long as I am alive, and as long as my strength allows me to. Poland is a temple on the Polish soil and for the Polish people*¹⁵. He encouraged the residents to act and raised hopes for changing the difficult situation of Poles living in the Prussian partition. His dream was that Zakrzewo would become a model village in all aspects of life of its inhabitants, from their spiritual life to their economic situation. He worked beyond his strength. Sr. Irena Szostek, his niece, recalls the first days of his pastoral service in Zakrzewo: *With all his zeal, [...] Rev. Domański got to his pastoral work in a neglected and extensive parish which included two affiliated churches – in Głomsk and Polska Wiśniewka. The first priority was to revive the religious spirit. He did not have a permanent vicar, it was impossible to be given a Pole, and he did not want a German. Therefore, every Sunday he celebrated at least two Holy Masses and delivered a sermon, also in the affiliated churches. Because of the strict Eucharistic fast, at midday when the household members sat at the table for*

¹³ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁴ See: K. Czerwiński, *Jak ksiądz Domański okpił pruskiego księcia [How Rev. Domański tricked the Prussian prince]*. On the 100th anniversary of the birth of this great patriot. Typescript. The memorial room of the Polish House in Zakrzewo.

¹⁵ M. Manikowska, *Setna rocznica objęcia parafii zakrzewskiej przez księdza doktora Bolesława Andrzeja Domańskiego (1872–1939) [The 100th anniversary of taking charge of the parish in Zakrzewo by Rev. Dr. Bolesław Andrzej Domański (1872–1939)]*. Typescript. The archive of the parish in Zakrzewo; idem, *Działalność ks. dr Bolesława Domańskiego jako wychowawcy [The activity of Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański as an educator]*. Typescript. The church archive in Zakrzewo; L. Bończa-Bystrzycki, *Parafia Katolicka św. Marii Magdaleny w Zakrzewie (1821–1945) [St. Mary Magdalene Catholic parish in Zakrzewo]*, Koszalin 2005.

dinner, the parish priest was eating his first meal – breakfast. He taught catechism and literacy in Polish to children in the parish church and in the affiliated churches located 5–6 kilometers away, where he went on foot. Obviously, there were also normal duties in the parish such as weddings, funerals, church services, confraternity work, confession, etc. The effects of such exploitation were soon to be seen. At the end of 1904, at the age of 32, he had a heart condition and could not perform pastoral duties for several months, and after he recovered, at the doctor's request, he had to resign from teaching catechism in the affiliated churches.

This compulsory inactivity, however, was not fruitless. At that time, he thought over and planned far-reaching projects for subsequent years, with regard to both his pastoral, and social and construction activities. After his recovery, he gradually implemented them and put them into practice¹⁶.

Thanks to diligence and persistence, the priest managed to accomplish these goals. In the interwar period, Zakrzewo became the center of economic and cultural life. It was known to all Poles in Germany and those who had returned to Poland. Zakrzewo was called by everyone as “Little Warsaw”, a conventional capital of the Polish people living in Germany. The parish priest was a Pole, that is why the inhabitants of Zakrzewo finally felt safe. He wanted to raise the national awareness of his parishioners, and therefore, a love for their homeland and faith in regaining independence. He let them understand that they, jointly and individually, were responsible for their country and must make some effort as only thanks to their struggle, it would be possible to return home. He promoted the idea of organic work and work at grass roots which in consequence built in self-esteem of Poles and convinced them that their farms could operate just as well or even better than their German counterparts. They became really engaged in their work, worked with full commitment, and every little success motivated them even more. Soon the presbytery (the clergy house) in Zakrzewo became a meeting place for Poles who read the Polish literature, prayed in Polish, made plans for the future and discussed the current political situation. The German colonists also positively assessed the Polish priest who did not discriminate against them, spoke German well and was ready to assist when they needed him. Because of the prudent attitude of Rev. Bolesław Domański, relations between Poles and Germans in Zakrzewo were friendly. There were no quarrels and disputes, everyone respected their parish priest (many native Germans who were resettled to the Złotów land during germanization became Catholics). Inspired by his attitude, they learned to live in friendship and to help each other.

The Agricultural Circle was the first organization founded in 1908 on the initiative of Rev. Domański in Zakrzewo. Rev. J. Rogalski became its president and when he left, he was succeeded by Rev. Domański, who held this office until his death. As early as in 1910, 124 residents of Zakrzewo belonged to this circle. The

¹⁶ I. Szostek, *Patron Polaków...*, p. 3–4.

main purpose of its activity was to raise their agricultural knowledge by reading newspapers ("Kłosy") specially published for them. Zakrzewo with 40 subscribers to this magazine became the largest subscription point in the entire county¹⁷. In addition to popularizing modern agricultural knowledge and improving the quality of crops, this organization had also an additional task: thanks to meetings, discussions and exchange of experiences, it was possible to improve the Polish language and get familiar with the Polish tradition. During the meetings, participants also exchanged their political views and discussed the current political situation in the region of Złotów. Rev. Domański encouraged farmers to become independent from the partitioning powers by all means. When the Prussian authorities learned about this organization, they demanded a list of members. However, this demand was rejected. Rev. Bolesław Domański was fined 10 German marks for this disobedience with the possibility to exchange this penalty for a two-day detention. "Kłosy" was recognized as a political magazine. Despite persecution by the partitioning powers, the Agricultural Circle was also established in other villages of the Złotów county. In 1914, these organizations consisted of 643 people, 127 of whom subscribed to "Kłosy"¹⁸.

During his stay in Zakrzewo, Rev. Domański continued his cooperation with the People's Bank in Złotów, and until 1905 he was president of the management board. When repressions from the partitioning powers intensified, in order to prevent Polish farmers from losing their land, in 1909 the Parcel Bank was established in Złotów, i.e. a limited liability cooperative created on the model already operating in the Wielkopolska region, which became an important center of economic activity and independence. Farmers, merchants and entrepreneurs who exchanged their experiences and opinions, met there. The residents of Zakrzewo were mastering the Polish language and increasing their knowledge of economic and financial issues. The bank provided services related to purchasing land from Germans. By 1915, they managed to buy approximately 3,880 ha, which was a great success of its activists and members¹⁹. The purchased land was leased or sold to Polish farmers. The bank granted as well loans for purchasing land. It was a basis for founding the People's Bank in Zakrzewo, managed by the sister of Rev. Domański, Melania Domańska, who held this position until 1939. Later she was expelled from Zakrzewo to the other side of the Odra River and returned to Poland in 1946. Her last days were spent in Zakrzewo (she died in 1959) in the Polish Home, founded also on the initiative of Rev. Domański.

The outbreak of World War I raised hopes for the rebirth of the Polish state. When Zakrzewo learnt about it, Rev. Domański delivered a sermon, which was an anti-German manifesto. At the end, the faithful sang *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego (Poland Is Not Yet Lost)*, [the national anthem of Poland], the lyrics of which

¹⁷ B. Popielas-Szultka, Z. Szultka, *Dzieje Zakrzewa [The history of Zakrzewo]*, Koszalin 1974, p. 27.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁹ J. Kocik, *60 lat Banku Ludowego...*, p. 17.

were known to all residents of the village²⁰. The priest was arrested and tried. Wacław Frankowski, a resident of adjacent Krajenka, was the defence counsel of the parish priest. After a few days, Rev. Domański returned to Zakrzewo, and was greeted as a hero²¹. He did not lose hope that he would live in the liberated Poland. During the war, he contacted the headquarters of the independence movement in Poznań and passed on the obtained information to his parishioners and co-workers. He also comforted the women who had lost their husbands and sons during the war, and persuaded them that their sacrifice and death were not in vain. He celebrated masses for the souls of those who had died in the war, and repeatedly stated that they had made a sacrifice in the pursuit of independence. The victory of the allied forces in November 1918 in the Złotów land was broadly welcomed with joy, which did not last long. On June 27, 1919, "Flatower Zeitung" published an article which informed that the region of Złotów remained within the German borders. The correctness of this information was soon confirmed by the peace treaties²².

Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański believed that solidarity of all Poles in Germany was necessary so that they could successfully return to Złotów (Poland). He knew that it would not be easy to coordinate the actions led by the Polish population from Masuria, Varmia, Powiśle, Kashubia, the Złotów and Lubusz land, Upper and Lower Silesia, Berlin, Westphalia and Rhineland. In all Polish territories incorporated into the Reich there were various Polish organizations, the founders and leaders of which Rev. Domański maintained contacts with. The National Committee in Berlin was the most active. However, in order to increase effectiveness of this organization, it was crucial to join forces with other and smaller units operating all over the area attached to Germany, and thus, create a common organization associating all Poles. During the debates conducted by the National Committee in Berlin, which Polish activists in Germany were invited to, the idea of creating a union of Poles in Germany was born²³. One of its initiators and creators was Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański. On July 26, 1922, there was a meeting of the National Committee, during which a decision was made to organize a founding convention which took place on August 27, 1922. It was agreed that the union would not be an organization, but would rely on the principles of individual membership. Any person who attained the age of eighteen years old could become a member and pay a membership fee. The statute was prepared on the basis of the previous statutory provisions of the National Committee²⁴. The main purpose of the Union of Poles in Germany was *to gain the rights of the national minority for*

²⁰ B. Popielas-Szultka, Z. Szultka, *Dzieje Zakrzewa...*, p. 30.

²¹ See: E. Osmańczyk, *Niezlomny proboszcz...*, p. 51.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²³ W. Wrzesiński, *Polski Ruch Narodowy w Niemczech 1922–1939 [The Polish National Movement in Germany 1922–1939]*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1970, p. 62.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

*the Polish population in Germany and to protect their interests in all aspects*²⁵. The Union was registered on December 3, 1922²⁶. During the first congress of the Union of Poles in Germany, the central authorities of this organization were elected. Stanisław Sierakowski from Waplewo became its president. However, the Union continued to develop its organizational network and methods of operation until 1926. The scope of its activities was to include four districts: 1) Upper Silesia (the headquarter in Opole); 2) Berlin, Saxony, Brandenburg, Hamburg, Lower Silesia, Western Pomerania, the border region – including the Złotów land (the headquarter in Berlin); 3) Westphalia, Rhineland, Baden, Palatinate (the headquarter in Bochum); 4) Varmia, Masuria, Powiśle (the headquarter in Olsztyn)²⁷. Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański did not consider this division as precise and accurate. He believed that Berlin was too far from the Złotów land, so that the situation and problems of the Poles living there would be important for the local activists. He undertook efforts to set up another district with its headquarter in Złotów, which were completed successfully. The Chief Council of the Union of Poles in Germany created the fifth District for the border region of Poznań and Pomerania with its headquarter in Złotów in October 1923. The administrative districts of Wrocław and Legnica were attached to the second District²⁸. Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański became president of the fifth district and Jan Maćkiewicz was its secretary. It was a great achievement of the priest from Zakrzewo. They started to create local branches of the union in all villages, with the largest association in Zakrzewo with 288 members in 1925²⁹. Since then, Rev. Domański became one of the most popular activists of this association. He was invited to important celebrations to all districts. He enabled the inhabitants of the Złotów land to learn and participate in the cultural life of Poles in Germany. The parish priest was appointed vice-president of this organization which was a special reward for the contribution he had made to the Union of Poles in Germany. In 1931 he became its president held this post until his death in 1939³⁰.

The crowning achievement of the long-term activity of Rev. Domański in the Union of Poles in Germany was the congress of the Union of Poles in Germany held on March 6, 1938, which took place in Berlin at the Theater des Volges. It was a great festival for all Poles living in exile. The congress was preceded with Sejmik gatherings of each district during which people were encouraged to participate in the congress. The slogans that guided Sejmik gatherings were recognized as five truths of Poles:

Truth No. 1: We are Poles!

²⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁸ W. Wrzesiński, *Polski Ruch Narodowy...*, p. 76.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 76.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

Truth No. 2: The faith of our fathers if the faith of our children!

Truth No. 3: Poles are brothers to each other!

Truth No. 4: Poles serve their nation every day!

*Truth No. 5: Poland is our mother and one cannot speak evil about it!*³¹

According to the memories of the participants³², the Congress was organized with great solemnity, with Rev. Maksymilian Kolbe as the guest of honor. The Rodło's emblem was placed in the central place of the room, scouts were distributing souvenir postcards with congress stamps and flags in the corridor. Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański started the session by chanting *Pieśń Rodła (the Rodło hymn)*:

*For centuries we have had the habit of sacrificing everything,
For centuries we have had the habit of starting the struggle once again every day,*

*For some lawfulness, Polish "I believe in God",
For the Polish soul, each Polish word,
We go with strength which stems from validity,
This battle is our fortitude, and perservance is our strength,
And we swear on our fathers' bones,
That we will not stop fighting for the cause,
We are Poles!*

*And no power will change it,
God is with us, the cause is with us,
God will ignite our hearts with the faith,
We have the Royal Rodło!!
We are Poles!*³³

During the congress, Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański delivered one of the most important speeches in his life: [...] *Maybe there were many people who had doubts, if such a congress would ever succeed. Could it succeed? Will any Pole be willing to offer their comfort, time, and above all their money for such a purpose? As we are so poor! Everyday work is our daily bread, heavy and often seasoned with bitterness. Such a congress is something for great men and ladies [...]. And today, with joy in our hearts and eyes, and in our souls we see with our own eyes not hundreds, but thousands of our compatriots gathered in this room, such a spacious room. We see you when happiness can be read from thousands of your*

³¹ See: J. Kęcińska, *Ksiądz Patron Bolesław Domański (1872–1939) a tradycje Związku Polaków w Niemczech na Krajnie [Rev. Bolesław Domański (1872–1939), a patron, and the traditions of the Union of Poles in Germany in Krajno]*, Gdańsk 2004, p. 57.

³² See: e.g. H. Jaroszyk, *Ze wspomnień działacza kulturalno-oświatowego na Pograniczu i Kaszubach (Dzielnica V ZPwN) [From the memories of a cultural and educational activist in the border region and Kaszuby (The 5th District of the Union of Poles in Germany)]*, „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1979, No. 3, p. 430–439.

³³ Cited after: E. Osmańczyk, *Niezłomny proboszcz...*, p. 237.

eyes! When thousands of your hearts beat joyfully showing your love and attachment to Polishness! When we look at each other face to face!

Today, each prejudiced person is forced to admit that despite all of those dark prophecies, this congress was successful. Even though we are poor, we do not have large estates and palaces, cars, chauffeurs, valets, and influential men, we undertook this effort and organized a great and wonderful congress, and gathered thousands of Poles in this building.

Despite the fact that we did not promise you any great shows, comforts, lavish and extravagant feasts, although famous men, great lords, maybe bishops, maybe cardinals will not attend our congress, you have come from distant places at your own expense [...]. You have arrived here from everywhere to jointly document that you are Polish, aware of your rights, duties and goals. [...]

We are revitalized by the spirit of Polishness. It is the spirit to whom we owe this effort made today. We have one great, powerful, enormous love in our hearts. And we have to thank this love for this today's congress. Our fraternal love joined with unity.

We are not and we do not want to be a state within a state. But we fulfill our duties as citizens of the German state conscientiously, and we want to and we will fulfill them in such a way. Because our Catholic and Polish conscience tells us to do so [...].

But they say: What is the greatest achievement of your Union? So many ineffective and unsuccessful interventions, so much effort, so much work, so much strength, so many meetings, so many offices, so many trustees, so many tours, so many officials, so much paper, so many magazines, newspapers, prints, books, so many trips, trips, and pilgrimages! And almost no effects! What a wrong sentence! This battle for our holy rights is not one huge battle! It is a battle consisting of thousands of skirmishes, defeats, and victories.

Even though we are moving very slowly, we are moving ahead! [...]

This Polishness is our teacher. It taught me to speak, pray, sing, write, read in your presumably most beautiful language in the world. [...]

This Polishness is the bride of our soul [...] the joy of my heart, comfort and solace.

and our Polishness is our guardian angel. Under its wings I am safe, and I feel safe. The Polishness protects me from being abandoned, losing my nationality, my faith, from meanness and disgrace, from validity, venality, from trading my nationality. [...]

and our Polishness is infinite gunmetal, it is a powerful fortress, a fortress of Polish hearts.

and our Polishness is above all my mother, a tender, wise and caring mother. [...]

Polishness is a gift from heaven from God given to me. And what if I wanted to despise such a precious gift? Why? For what? And if anyone wanted to bribe you, offer something else for your gold of Polishness? Take a look, is it something

better? And even if it was even a hundred times better! It is not yours! It is not part of your being, your Polish soul! [...]

Polishness is your own mother! If you lose it, you will lose your mother! Nobody and nothing will replace her, and nobody and nothing can replace her! [...]

Polishness is my hope that our cause will win, that this morning star will shine, the sun for exercising our rights in Germany freely! [...]

Polishness is our love. Born out of love, and leading towards love. [...]

So this Polishness is the essence, the life of your soul. When you lose or abandon Polishness, you lose, give up the essence of your soul, and by giving something away from your Polishness, you halve your soul. [...]

Oh Polishness, my teacher, guardian, bride, fortress, faith, hope, love, my dear mother, my dearest treasure, could I disown you?

Could I abandon you? Could I sell you for money, honours, profits? [...]

United in Christ we are sure about our victory under the sign of the Cross! We are protected by the most powerful Mother of God – Mother of Joy – the Patroness of us, Poles in Germany. [...]

Meanwhile, on this fertile soil of Polishness, among the old stand of old Poles, a young forest of our Polish youth is developing. Cutters sent by God come and cut down already decayed or decaying trees so that the younger forest can grow better in their place. These young trees of our Polish young men and girls and children. And in place of one old tree, a few young trees grow on the soil of our Polishness, develop and, if God allows, will give abundant fruits to God and the Polish nation. Our dearest youth, you are our future and our hope. [...]

Our future is in the hands of Almighty God! He gave us our rights! We demand their enforcement on his behalf! [...]

Next to the cross, we are guided by our Royal Rodło, our Polishness and we promise it our loyalty. Let us promise that we will be faithful members of our Union of Poles in Germany, the father of all of us! [...]

And thus, let us all publicly appeal from the bottom of our hearts: “We promise that we will never give away our Polishness”. So help us God, so help us the Mother of joy³⁴.

Rev. Domański was the parish priest in Zakrzewo until 1939. He did not leave the parish and his parishioners in 1919, when under the Treaty of Versailles, the Złotów land was not included in Poland. At that time the majority of well-educated people left these areas. As a result of the intensifying emigration to Poland, he uttered this famous sentence: *National treason is committed by these people who leave the land inherited by their fathers and hand it over to Germans*³⁵.

³⁴ Rev. Dr. B. Domański, *Polskość istota duszy Polaka. Przemówienie programowe Prezesa Związku Polaków w Niemczech na Kongresie Polaków w Niemczech 6 marca 1938 roku w Berlinie* [Polishness as the essence of the Polish soul. A keynote speech by President of the Union of Poles in Germany at the Congress of Poles in Germany on March 6, 1938 in Berlin], „Polak w Niemczech” 1938, No. 4.

³⁵ See: J. Borzyszkowski, *Lud polski...*, p. 33.

He repeatedly stated in this difficult time that: *God did not leave us on this earth without any reason*³⁶. And reminded: *I stayed here to pray with you and defend this land until it is connected to Poland*³⁷.

In his last letter to the governing bodies of the Union of Poles in Germany, Rev. Domański wrote: *Our life is the Way of the Cross overspread with failures, skirmishes, disappointment and hurdles. Let's be brave and carry those crosses fearlessly going further*³⁸.

In 1933, B. Domański took up the post of the Curator of the Union of Polish School Societies in Germany³⁹, and the presbytery (the clergy house) in Zakrzewo became a meeting place for Poles, where Polish books and newspapers were read, and the greatest works of Polish literature were discussed. Here, the parishioners felt safe. The priest organized for them and other Poles from Germany the first pilgrimage to Rome on November 11–23, 1933. Pope Pius XI welcomed them in an audience⁴⁰.

One of the most important achievements of Rev. Domanski was the Polish House (Dom Polski) in Zakrzewo. The priest obtained the funds for its construction, and supervised it. The house consisted of two buildings. The first one included a bank and classrooms, and the second – a large concert hall and a smaller room, where meetings of Polish organizations and associations were held. Between the buildings there was a yard where children spent their spare time between lessons. Janina Kłopocka, an author of the symbol of the Union of Poles in Germany – the Rodło emblem, which presented the Vistula river with Cracow marked as the cradle of the Polish identity and the image of Our Lady of Joy, at the request of Rev. Domański decorated the walls of the concert hall with 16 folk and sacral paintings entitled jointly: *Polski Rok Obrzędowy (the Polish Calendar of Traditional Customs and Rituals)*. The topics of particular paintings were as follows: *Matka Boska Radosna (Our Lady of Joy)*, *Procesja Bożego Ciała (Corpus Christi procession)*, *Święcenie ziół (Blessing of herbs)*, *Siewy (Sowing)*, *Zaduszki (All Souls' Day)*, *Wigilijna wieczerza (Christmas Eve)*, *Szopka (Nativity Scene)*, *Chłopcy z gwiazdą (Boys with a star)*, *Przebierańcy z kozą (People in costumes with a goat)*, *Dożynki (Dozhinki)*, *Pszczeli ul (Beehive)*, *Święcenie krów (Blessing of cows)*, *Puszczanie wianków (Floating*

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Cited after: A. Jasiek, *Ks. dr Bolesław Domański, proboszcz w Zakrzewie od 15.IX.1903 do 21.IV.1939 r. [Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański, a parish priest in Zakrzewo from 15.09.1903 to 21.04.1939]*, The memorial room of the Polish House in Zakrzewo.

³⁹ The Association of Polish School Societies in Germany was established on August 27, 1922 in Berlin. It was a Polish organization engaged in educational and national activities. In theory it was meant to supervise the activities conducted by Polish school organizations and coordinate the development of Polish public and private education. Its operation was banned by the Nazi authorities in 1939. See: B. Koziello-Poklewski, *Szkolnictwo polskie na Warmii, Mazurach i Powiślu w latach 1919–1939 [The Polish education in Varmia, Masuria and Powiśle between 1919–1939]*, Olsztyn, Pojezierze, 1980.

⁴⁰ See: I. Szostek, *Patron Polaków...*, p. 14.

wreaths), *Dziewczęta z gaikiem (Girls and Gaik)*, *Baranek wielkanocny (Easter lamb)*, *Procesja w dzień Matki Boskiej gromnicznej (Procession on Candlemas)*. Janina Kłopočka finished her work in 1937. The room was called Sala Rodła (the Rodło's Hall). The frescoes survived World War II and now they can be admired in the concert hall of the Polish House in Zakrzewo.

The opening ceremony of the Polish House was held on June 30, 1935 in the presence of activists of the Polish movement from Berlin: Jan Kaczmarek, Ph.D., Stefan Szczepaniak, Michał Wesołowski and the representatives of all districts of the Union of Poles in Germany⁴¹. Approximately two thousand Poles attended the ceremony, during which Rev. Domański delivered the following speech: *I have been waiting for 30 years for this moment to celebrate this opening ceremony today. I can greet you today in our own house. This house is not meant to be a house of hatred, but a place of harmony and unity. We did not build it to spite someone, but only because it was our dream for many years. Today, this 30-year-old dream has come true and become a reality. They keep asking me who built this house. I have only one answer: "The Polish people have built it!" Without you, the Polish people, this house would be a lifeless formation. You are the life of this house. This house belongs to our people and I give it to them for safekeeping. Let your children find protection and entertainment here. When I started my attempts to build this house, I was told that it was not worth the trouble. In this foreign sea, everything will die. 14 years have passed since then and we are still here, and we have not died*⁴².

The words uttered on the day of the opening ceremony of the Polish Home, which served Polish people not only in Zakrzewo, but in the entire Złotów county, proved to be true. There were meetings i.a. with Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna, Jerzy Zawiejski, Józef Kisielewski, Edmund Osmańczyk, and Maria Zientara. Theatre performances were arranged in the concert hall, e.g. the play of Stanisław Ligonia entitled *Wesele na Górnym Śląsku (Wedding in the Upper Silesia)* was staged. Zakrzewo at that time became one of the most important centers of Polish life in the border region and Kashubia⁴³.

Aware of the fact that the future is won by the one who is supported by young people, the parish priest from Zakrzewo devoted a lot of attention to their upbringing, the more so as they were at risk because of the ongoing process of germanization. Polish youth organizations were supposed to raise patriotic feelings in young people and the desire to fight for freedom of their homeland. At the beginning of the 1920's, the Youth Society concentrating on educational,

⁴¹ L. Horst, *Polskie szkolnictwo prywatne na Ziemi Złotowskiej w okresie dwudziestolecia międzywojennego ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem szkoły w Zakrzewie [Polish private education in the Złotów land in the interwar period, with special reference to the school in Zakrzewo]*, „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1979, No. 3(83), p. 364–365.

⁴² W. Schmidt, *An der Kurmark Grenze*, Berlin 1935, p. 60. See also: J. Borzyszkowski, *Lud polski...*, p. 39.

⁴³ Compare: L. Horst, *Polskie szkolnictwo...*, p. 364.

sports and cultural activities was founded. There was also a Catholic Youth Association, which already from the first year of its activity, started organizing “Youth Festivals” in Zakrzewo⁴⁴. During the meeting of the management board of the fifth District of the Union of Poles in Germany in September 1927, the Polish-Catholic Association of Youth Societies was established, with Rev. Domanski as its founder and president. In 1931 this organization was composed of 2,000 members⁴⁵.

Physical fitness of young parishioners was very important for Rev. Domanski as well. In 1926, he set up a sports club in Zakrzewo, and later in Głomsko, Stara Wiśniewka and Święta. Eventually, 14 sports clubs were created in the border region, and 11 of them in the Złotów county. Yards or meadows made available by Polish farmers served as fields for volleyball and football matches. Rev. Domański provided for free land where a football pitch was created, and finally, matches and competitions could be organized. Its construction took two years, and all residents from the village participated in it⁴⁶. The parish priest from Zakrzewo encouraged as well his parishioners to sing, learn and popularize Polish songs. In 1922 he founded a male choir, which in 1930 merged with the female choir which had operated in Zakrzewo since the beginning of the twentieth century. After the merger, the choir was composed of ninety people and represented a high artistic level. On June 29, 1931, Rev. Domański organized a Song Festival in Zakrzewo during which 16 choirs from adjacent towns took part⁴⁷. The priest also contributed to establishing an orphanage in Zakrzewo, run by the Nuns of St. Elisabeth who in 1930 were taking care of thirty children⁴⁸. He was engaged in creating scouting which was established in Zakrzewo in 1935 in collaboration with Marta Przybył and Józef Horst⁴⁹, in promoting readership, setting up libraries and educational organizations, including the Polish school in Zakrzewo with 134 students⁵⁰. For older teenagers, he established a training school. He should be given

⁴⁴ See: B. Popielas-Szutka, Z. Szutka, *Dzieje Zakrzewa...*, p. 44.

⁴⁵ See: Z. Dworecki, *Działalność narodowa ludności polskiej w Rejencji Piłskiej 1920–1932 [National activity of the Polish population in Pilsko Regierungsbezirk 1920–1932]*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1969, p. 155.

⁴⁶ M. Kuczyńska, *Moje wspomnienia [My memories]*. Typescript, p. 4. The memorial room of the Polish House in Zakrzewo.

⁴⁷ J. Jaster, *Chór „Tęcza” w Zakrzewie, ognisko kultury polskiej [„Tęcza” (Rainbow) Choir in Zakrzewo, the centre of Polish culture]*, Bydgoszcz, Regionalna Pracownia Krajoznawcza in Bydgoszcz, 1987, p. 4.

⁴⁸ See: W. Wrzesiński, *Powiat złotowski w latach 1920–1939 [The Złotów county between 1920–1939]*, in: *Ziemia Złotowska [The Złotów land]*, a collective work, Gdańsk, Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1969, p. 169.

⁴⁹ M. Massel, *Działalność społeczna i oświatowa księdza doktora Bolesława Domańskiego [The social and educational activity of Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański]*, Warszawa 2006, p. 80; M. Manikowska, *Działalność księdza doktora Bolesława Domańskiego jako wychowawcy [The activity of Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański as an educator]*. Typescript, p. 6. The memorial room of the Polish House in Zakrzewo; *Józef Horst (1914–1943)*, in: *Sylwetki nauczycieli spod znaku „Rodła” (z obszaru Dzielnic V Związku Polaków w Niemczech) [The profiles of teachers with the Rodło emblem (from the 5th District of the Union of Poles in Germany)]*, edited by: J. Oleksiński, „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1979, No. 3, p. 386–388.

⁵⁰ M. Kuczyńska, *Moje wspomnienia...*, p. 25; H. Zieliński, *Polacy i polskość Ziemi Złotowskiej w latach*

credit as well for struggling to provide Polish people in Germany with access to secondary and higher education. He contributed to the creation of three university campuses in Wrocław, Berlin and Królewiec.

Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański put much faith in the strength of his nation, trusted people and respected their dignity. He repeatedly highlighted it: *The soul of the Polish nation is ready for great deeds. Well, would hundreds of schools, the bravest headmasters and professors of our gymnasiums have helped, if our people had been really idle, insensitive, and with folded arms, had wrung their hands and stayed in Germany? The Polish nation, with these modest means that were left, despite the fact that they did not have any financial benefits, had to sacrifice a lot, raised up with the feeling of their hidden strength*⁵¹. He lifted the spirits and raised hope: *They can fight with you, but they will not eradicate you! They can try to defeat you, but they will not be able to do so! God above us and God with us*⁵².

Rev. Domański prepared the inhabitants of the Złotów land well for a great test, i.e. the outbreak of World War II, and for the joy of returning to their homeland. Unfortunately, he did not live to experience the latter. He died on April 21, 1939, at the clinic of St. Joseph in Berlin. The funeral took place on April 26, 1939, in Zakrzewo, where he was buried on the church square. The funeral ceremony began in Berlin in the St. Hedwig's Cathedral, and later the funeral procession of almost seven kilometers⁵³ went to Zakrzewo. The Poles living in Germany were waiting on the route, saying goodbye to this tireless advocate of the Polish identity and their spiritual guide. Rev. Bolesław Domański was accompanied in his last journey with 242 banners. One of them, with the Rodło's emblem, rested on his coffin. The holy mass was celebrated by the bishop of Chełmno, Constantine Dominik, a school-friend of the deceased. After the funeral, a two-week mourning was announced. In accordance with the Ordinance April 25, 1939⁵⁴, Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański was posthumously awarded the Golden Academic Laurel *for spreading the passion for Polish literature, and promoting*

1918–1939 [Poles and Polishness in the Złotów land between 1918–1939], Poznań, Instytut Zachodni, 1949; J. Rozeński, W. Brzeziński, *Szkoła polska na Ziemi Złotowskiej w latach 1929–1959 [The Polish school in the Złotów land between 1929–1959]*, in: *Szkolnictwo polskie na Ziemi Złotowskiej w okresie międzywojennym [The Polish education in the Złotów land in the interwar period]*, Koszalin, Zarząd Obwodu TRZZ Złotów, 1959, p. 20; id., *O niektórych aspektach szkolnictwa polskiego spod znaku Rodła w Złotowskim [About some aspects of the Polish education with the Rodło emblem in the region of Złotów]*, „Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy” 1979, No. 3, p. 311–333; L. Horst, *Polskie szkolnictwo prywatne na Ziemi Złotowskiej...*, p. 352–376; H. Szczepański, *Szkolnictwo polskie na Ziemi Złotowskiej do roku 1939 [The Polish education in the Złotów land until 1939]*, Bydgoszcz, Regionalna Pracownia Krajoznawcza, 1987, p. 10.

⁵¹ Cited after: E. Osmańczyk, *Niezlomny proboszcz...*, p. 216.

⁵² Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański. The patron of the former Union of Poles in Germany, *Wspomnienia [Memories]*. Typescript, Izba Pamięci Domu Polskiego in Zakrzewo (the Memorial Room of the Polish House in Zakrzewo).

⁵³ See: J. Borzyszkowski, *Lud polski...*; Z. Stronski, *Wybitni Polacy przewodzili ludowi polskiemu w Niemczech. Pamięci ks. Bolesława Domańskiego [Prominent Poles led the Polish people in Germany. To the memory of Rev. Bolesław Domański]*, „W Rodzinie”, June 5, 2003.

⁵⁴ Ordinance No. BP – 9693/39.

readership among the Poles in Germany⁵⁵. The words uttered by Rev. Domański on his deathbed: *The Polish people will not surrender* became a testament for his descendants.

Rev. Domański is a patron of many streets today, i.a. in Zakrzewo, Złotów and in many other places. His name was also given to the elementary school in Zakrzewo. In 1989 in Wielu in Kaszuby, Marian Okazka, the bishop, blessed a plaque commemorating Rev. Bolesław Domański, which was funded by the Kashubian and Pomeranian Association and the parish in Wiele. The tireless priest from Zakrzewo is also alive and present in the awareness of current inhabitants, including the young generation, of the Złotów land⁵⁶.

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Union of Poles in Germany, on July 20, 1982, Poczta Polska (Polish Post) introduced a commemorative stamp with a nominal value of PLN 4.50, presenting the symbol of Rodło (white colour on a red background), introduced in 1932 by the Union of Poles in Germany, i.e. a symbol of connection of Nadodrze, Varmia, Masuria and Powiśle, with the cradle of the Polish nation and the Polish culture, and the image of two prominent presidents and activists – Stanisław Sierakowski and Rev. Bolesław Domański.

Since 1983, Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański has been a patron of the award, the aim of which is to emphasize the role and importance of social work that accentuates the Christian attitude as an appropriate addition to the patriotic attitude.

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⁵⁵ Monitor Polski 1939, No. 96, item 219.

⁵⁶ Małgorzata Massel from Zakrzewo, a former student at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences SGGW, the Faculty of Economics and Agriculture in Warsaw wrote: *It is enough just to enter Zakrzewo and go along the way which still remembers those days, and observe a series of neat and tidy houses with gardens full of colorful flowers, it is enough to look at the Polish House operating successfully to date [2006 – T. Z.], a well-kept church with its field altar renewed by the present parish priest and the refurbished prebystery. It is enough to visit the headquarters of Bank Spółdzielczy (the Cooperative Bank) and the Municipal Cooperative “Samopomoc Chłopska”, which thanks to frugality of its employees, survived the difficult times of change, and has been operating to date. Just look at those clean streets, a number of small family businesses and companies that allow people to work and earn money. This is the lesson we learnt from i.a. Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański, Marta Przybył, Józef Horst, Stanisław Sierakowski and many others. The tradition has survived and thanks to it, with its appearance and lifestyle, Zakrzewo at present differs so much from the majority of Polish villages. See: M. Massel, *Działalność społeczno-oświatowa...*, p. 44–45.*

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Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański (1872–1939) – a priest with the Rodło emblem

Summary

The article discusses the activities of Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański, a priest of St. Mary Magdalene Catholic parish in Zakrzewo between 1903–1939. It presents his achievements in the struggle to preserve the Polish identity on Polish territories incorporated into Germany after the end of World War I. It also discusses social and educational activities of the priest and the influence of his steadfast attitude on the increase of national awareness of Poles, who bravely fought to preserve the Polish identity in the region of Złotów and bring the region back to homeland.

Keywords: Rev. Dr. Bolesław Domański, the Union of Poles in Germany, Rodło emblem, the Złotów land.