

Brusselian from Lvov – Draft for the Portrait of Leopold Unger

KEY WORDS

Leopold Unger, publicist, journalist, essay, Parisian “Kultura”, emigration culture

ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates the significance of Leopold Unger (1922–2011) as a journalist, commentator, columnist and essayist, whose professional activity was rooted in the history of Eastern Europe and the experience of Jews and dissidents subject to Soviet totalitarianism. Beginning with an overview of his life, the author presents the development of Unger’s career from two perspectives. The first is connected with the cities where Unger was active: from his early start in Bucharest, moving later to Warsaw and finally, as a political émigré, in Brussels. The second one focuses on the periodicals in which he worked: “Życie Warszawy”, the Belgian “Le Soir”, the Parisian “Kultura”, “International Herald Tribune” and “Gazeta Wyborcza”. Particular attention is given to the concept of Unger as an intruder (describing the specific relations between Unger and PRL [People’s Republic of Poland] after 1968, but also, in a more general sense, as a journalist investigating uneasy subjects) and a “Brusselian” (author of political essays published in Jerzy Giedroyc’s “Kultura”, considered nearly as important as the journalistic contribution of Juliusz Mieroszewski). The initial conclusions regarding Unger’s output also include remarks on his style and journalistic strategies.

Lvov and Brussels – these two cities bind the biography of Leopold Unger. Lvov as his hometown, childhood and early youth, Brussels as an exile, where everything came to an end, forty-two years after leaving Poland. Born in 1922 in Lvov¹, the author of *Intruz* [Intruder] lived there until World War II and settled in Brussels after antisemitic repressions, suffered by many Polish Jews in 1968. Leaving Lvov in 1939 was Unger's first political refuge, his coming to the Belgian capital on February 2 1969 marked the beginning of the second,

¹ K. Dopierała, *Leopold Unger*, [in:] *Encyklopedia polskiej emigracji i Polonii* [Encyclopedia of Polish Emigration and Polonia] ed. by *idem*, Vol. 5, Toruń 2005, p. 193; I. Hofman, *Księga życia i pasji*, [The Book of Life and Passion], [in:] *Udało mi się mieć ciekawe życie. Leopold Unger. Księga jubileuszowa* [I managed to have an interesting life. Leopold Unger. Anniversary book], ed. by *idem.*, Lublin 2008, p. 11.

necessary emigration. Between these cities were stops in Bucharest (1939-1948), then Warsaw (1948-1969), with a break for a professional trip to Cuba (1962-1963)².

When he was in Romania, Unger's life took its first, dramatic turn: at seventeen, he became an emigrant. His brother Leon, with whom he travelled from Lvov to Bucharest, went further his own way in October 1939, and later died in 1945 in Bologna as a soldier of the II Corpus of the Polish Army. Their parents were murdered in Lvov, most likely in 1941. Some of these events Unger reconstructed only after many years. Then, during his stay in Bucharest, he managed to get a baccalaureate and his first and next two jobs as a journalist, as well as, his first press card, in February 1948, when he became a correspondent for the Polish Press Agency in Romania.

In 1948, Unger came to Warsaw from Bucharest. In his Warsaw period, he worked in “*Życie Warszawy*” for nineteen years, and in 1962 and 1963 as their correspondent in Cuba, reporting on the conflict taking place there (he was praised for his work by Józef Cyrankiewicz³, but also by an employee of the American Department of State).

In 1955 he was accepted to PZPR [Polish United Worker's Party]⁴, and twelve years later he experienced antisemitic repressions, e.g. he could not go to Paris and was fired from work under the excuse that he was a source of ideological decay in the editorial office. He was outwardly followed, and his daughter was suspended in her student rights due to her alleged elevation of Jews. This time, Unger went to Brussels. His ticket abroad was a note, reading: “The holder of this document is not a Polish citizen” (I 191).

Belgium was a big challenge for the author of *Orzeł i reszta* [The eagle and the rest]. He arrived as a forty-seven year old journalist, who has so far worked for a communist newspaper and was fluent in writing only in Polish. Despite that, already in April 1969 “*Le Soir*” published his first, though not signed work. The article had the same title for both parts it was published in, *L'ordre règne en Pologne*, which was: order reigns in Poland. It could already then be suspected, judging by the title of the first text in “*Le Soir*”, that due to his descent and professional experience, Unger will most likely become an expert in issues concerning countries from behind the iron curtain.

² These and the following (unmarked by reference to publications other than *Intruz*) basic biographical information have been taken from Unger's autobiography presented in brackets (Warszawa 2001). Numbers after the heading “I” indicate page numbers.

³ Józef Cyrankiewicz (1911-1989) was Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Poland between 1947-1952, and again between 1954-1970.

⁴ Unger was not forced to join the party, although, as he wrote, his decision was influenced by a certain suggestion from one of his contributors in “*Życie Warszawy*”: “The new order simply seemed irreversible” (I 82, 86).

In that same year, 1969, Unger started corresponding with Jerzy Giedroyc and began cooperating with his Parisian monthly “Kultura”. Thus began his second emigration, which lasted over four decades. During that period, the hero of this article published as “Pol Mathil” or “Brusselian” (as we know, from Lvov).

Intruder as journalist

Apart from the cities he resided in, Unger's biography can be described through magazines and institutions he worked for as a journalist for more than sixty years. There were quite a few of these, but the most important were: the Polish Press Agency (1948)⁵, “Życie Warszawy” (1948–1967), the Belgian “Le Soir” (from 1969 r. to his death), the Parisian “Kultura” (1970–2000), “International Herald Tribune” (from 1978), the Polish Radio Wolna Europa [RWE – Radio Free Europe] (1970–1993)⁶ and “Gazeta Wyborcza” (from 1990 to his death)⁷.

Working for PAP was a good start for Unger, yet it lasted only for a few months and did not include writing longer pieces⁸. In “Życie Warszawy”, he was familiarized in the functioning of the paper's editorial office and polished his journalistic skills, being promoted to higher posts (from dispatcher to editorial office secretary)⁹ and providing for his family (he received an allotment for an apartment and car). The period between 1948 and 1967 was important for Unger's journalistic career, yet his meaningful journalistic work came from later

⁵ Kazimierz Dopierała in *Encyklopedia polskiej emigracji...* (after: *Wielka encyklopedia PWN* [PWN Encyclopedia], Vol. 28, Warsaw 2005, p. 296) mentions 1947-1948 as the years Unger cooperated with PAP. However, in *Intruz* we find information that: Unger received an official nomination for the post of PAP correspondent in February 1948; he worked for PAP a few months, and in September 1948 he left for Warsaw, where he once more tried to find employment in this agency (therefore, it would mean he was no longer their employee). Renata Piasecka-Strzelec similarly writes in the footnote, that Unger was a PAP correspondent between February-September 1948 (*W służbie propagandy. Polska Agencja Prasowa w latach 1944–1972. Wybór dokumentów i biuletynów* [In the service of propaganda. The Polish Press Agency in the years 1944-1972. Selected documents and bulletins], ed. by R. Piasecka-Strzelec, Kielce 2007, p. 80). The year 1948 is also found in the laudation of Włodzimierz Mich (W. Mich, *Laudatio*, [in:] *Leopold Unger. Doktor honoris causa Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej* [Leopold Unger. Doctor honoris causa of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University], ed. by M. Janik, B. Paprocka, Lublin 2009, p. 12). It can therefore be claimed that Unger worked for PAP only in 1948.

⁶ According to the information in *Encyklopedia polskiej emigracji...* Unger worked for RWE between 1978-1990. However, according to Mich, his comments were aired by RWE up to 1993 (see quote below). The year 1978 marking the beginning of his cooperation is also not fully liable, because in *Intruz* (written in 2000), Unger wrote about his twenty-five year cooperation with the radio. All this points to placing the beginning of his work before 1978. Mich similarly wrote about Unger's cooperation with RWE: “from his first, occasional comments when he started printing in »Le Soir«, up to [...] June 13 1993 [...]” (W. Mich, *Laudatio*, p. 12). On the other hand, Unger was not included e.g. in the list of RWE employees between the years 1957-1976 (see J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Polska z oddali* [Poland from a distance] 1956–1976, Londyn 1988).

⁷ K. Dopierała, *Leopold Unger*, p. 194; A. Michnik, „Poldku, żegnaj!” [Goodbye Poldek!], „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2011, No. 297, p. 1; J. Kurski, *Moja pierwsza lekcja* [My first lesson], [in:] *Udało mi się...*, p. 76.

⁸ Earlier, for nearly a year, Unger worked in *Nowiny Polskie*, published by the Polish Institute in Bucharest, which he left in 1947. Next on, he wrote transcribed information posted by the country radio for the Polish Embassy.

⁹ I. Hofman, *Księga życia...*, p. 13.

years and regarding this he wrote: “Never in those years did I imagine that one day I will hold a place (and not a bad one) in the heritage of “Kultura” and Radio Wolna Europa, but today I am under the impression, that this was how [...] I payed my dues” (I 112).

An unexpected change and challenge was working with the Belgian daily “Le Soir”. As an emigrant? journalist, he had to build his professional position from scratch and learn the language and functioning of a free (noncommunist) editorial office. Writing for “Le Soir”, he gained new skills and acquaintances, expanded his professional horizons, and became known outside Poland. Eventually, he gained the status of an expert in Eastern issues, living in the West – he became “Pol Mathil”¹⁰. In 1980 he became a full-time journalist for “Le Soir”, which meant that he made the best of his opportunities and won the battle he started in his, not so young age.

Summarizing his work for “Le Soir”, Unger stated: “My success was decided upon by Poles and Soviets” and also Jews fleeing from the USSR (I 238, 244). Experience gained in post-war Poland, also connected with March 1968, definitely allowed “Mathil” to have good relations with Russian descendents, who were only just beginning their emigration. This helped him not only in writing about their lives, but also in creating general comments to the current situation in the USSR. Departures from communist countries were at times in the aura of a scandal, making these articles interesting for Western readers, also those of the Belgian paper. As Unger says, he became known for his interview with Vladimir Bukovski, in which the writer described the shocking circumstances of his deportation (I 239). Summarizing, living in the West, contact with the Polish opposition, knowledge of Polish and with it, access to Polish broadcasts in RWE or articles in “Kultura” and a decent orientation in the reality of Eastern totalitarian countries enabled “Pol Mathil” to develop his own journalistic specialization¹¹. Along its lines, Unger wrote a report for “Le Soir” about Tomasz Strzyżewski (who “worked for the censorship in Kraków [...]. He managed to travel the Baltic Sea, carrying an enormous number [!] [600 pieces] of documents”), entitled *W gułagu*

¹⁰ Unger wrote that the pseudonym was created thanks to the creativity of one of the “Le Soir” employees and is a combination of part of his name (hence Pol) and his wife's Matylda (Mathil) (I 224).

¹¹ Unger himself mentioned it in *Intruz* (I 252). There is no reason not to agree with him. It seems meaningful that the “Brusselian” is the author of many accurate self-descriptions (see *Intruz*; introductions to selected articles), which are confirmed through the reading of his works. One can risk an idea that one of Unger's strong sides (as a journalist and publicist) was the ability to maintain a distance towards the discussed issues, which allowed him to write valuable, accurate and striving towards objectivity works, and also create accurate comments to his own work. The way Unger presented himself can be perceived as suggestive and convincing, proof of which may be other works in which the publicist was described, referring to his own expressions (see e.g. A. Michnik, *Intruz i orzeł* [Intruder and eagle], [in:] *Udało mi się...* [I did not manage to reach the first print]; R. Kapuściński, *Intruz uwikłany w dramat współczesności* [Intruder entangled in the drama of modern times], [in:] *Udało mi się...*).

klamstwa [In the gulag of lies] (I 248, 249) or the book *Wielki powrót* [The great return]¹² with Christian Jelen, on the Western emigration of Jews.

However, the above mentioned conditions would not suffice to guarantee Unger his position. He had to prove himself as an intelligent and reliable journalist. Only this kind of opinion allowed him to publish in the “International Herald Tribune”. The paper published his first article on July 21 1978. The translation of the title, which was connected with the events in PRL, was “*Man of marble*” from Poland. Though prestigious, the collaboration did not last long¹³. The status of commentator for *IHT* can be seen as the crown achievement of Unger's aspirations, although he himself wanted to be remembered also for other reasons: “But when someone, sometime will ever want to ask: »Who was this Unger, what did he write?« and would hear: It was that guy who wrote “Widziane z Brukseli” [Seen from Brussels] for Giedroyc's “Kultura” - that would for me, ladies and gentlemen, be quite enough” (I 373).

It's not just Unger's affirmative approach to Giedroyc and his magazine that made it possible to distinguish his work for “Kultura”. This will be discussed later on in the article, two more fields of his professional work still need to be described.

Unger began working for RWE after once more leaving Poland. “It began [similarly as in the case of “Kultura”] from exchanging letters” (I 317) with the editor in chief, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański. Weekly comments made by Unger were repeated up to five times in the daily broadcast *Fakty, wydarzenia, opinie* [Facts, events, opinions], the last one aired June 13 1993¹⁴. Unger did not question the importance of this, as he put it, institution-symbol and was glad when someone recognized his voice (known thanks to RWE) (I 315, 317, 331). His cooperation with the Munich station – as with Giedroyc, “Le Soir”, or occasionally with the “New York Times”, “Washington Post”, “New Day” or “Wilson Quarterly” – was part of what he called the “West of the wall” period of his work (I 11).

His columns published in “Gazeta Wyborcza”, were from the period “without the wall” (I 11) while Unger still found the strength to write. His last text published in the daily was “Libia po Kaddafim” [Libia after Kaddafi] from August 2011¹⁵. Most of the articles for “Gazeta Wyborcza” are in-depth analyses of current international events. Apart from that, Unger also published opinions which promoted the work of those he was close with in RWE

¹² See. Ch. Jelen, L. Unger, *Le grand retour*, Paris 1977.

¹³ As Unger reported: his close cooperation with the paper was in the years 1978-1979, when the editor in chief was Murry M. Weiss. When in 1981 Philip Foisie took the post, contact weakened and the number of texts accepted for publication was smaller. This state never improved, although the magazine published a certain number of Unger's articles, mainly occasional (I 296, 299, 308, 311-313): “Two jealous fools [Foisie and his co-worker] ended a passionate episode, which could have lasted years” (I 313).

¹⁴ Hofman, I., *Księga życia...*, pp. 14–15.

¹⁵ Unger, L., “Libia po Kaddafim”, [Libia after Kaddafi], „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2011, No. 201, p. 9.

and (more often) “Kultura”. Notably, this was how the “Brusselian” upheld the memory of the Parisian paper, its contributors and the Editor¹⁶. After Giedroyc's death, it turned out that he saw Unger in a similar role – he picked him as the person who could choose parts of the Editor's own statements for print¹⁷.

This short outline of Unger's journalistic career was described by Unger himself in *Intruz*, his (professional, as he declared; I 10) autobiography published in 2001. It seems that the title of the book, for those interested, became a recognizable slogan associated with the emigrant publicist. There were two important reinterpretations of this self-description (regarding Unger's interpretation). The first was made by Adam Michnik in *Intruz i orzeł* [Intruder and eagle], who wrote that Unger was “an intruder among conformists and praisers of dictatorship; an eagle among political publicists”¹⁸. The author of the second comment was Ryszard Kapuściński, who claimed that an intruder – an unwelcome guest or someone, who asks uncomfortable questions – can be any journalist, it's part of the profession¹⁹. In the case of Unger, being a journalist and an intruder (also in the meaning articulated by Kapuściński) seems inseparable.

“Brusselian” right after the “Londoner”

In 1969, shortly after leaving Poland, Unger began sending letters from Brussels. He needed comfort in this new situation, while searching for work. One of these letters was written to Konstatny Jeleński, who recommended contacting Giedroyc. The Editor suggested he contribute to “Kultura”, and soon after, Unger presented his idea of creating the “Brusselian” (“With all do respect for the »Londoner«”²⁰) (I 336) and that was how in 1970 “Widziane z Brukseli” [Seen from Brussels] was born. The column had information on: the UN, UNESCO, modern terrorism, dictatorship, totalitarianism, the history of Jews, the current situation in Europe and Soviet political strategies (these issues, as pointed out, were a specialty of the author also when he wrote for other magazines).

¹⁶ See Unger's work about „Kultura”: *idem*, “Europejska pieczęć paryskiej »Kultury«” [European seal of the Parisian »Kultura«], „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2011, No. 16, p. 10; *idem*, “Strażnik dziedzictwa »Kultury«” [Guard of »Kultura's« heritage], „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2010, No. 69, p. 11; *idem*, “Polski agent wciąż żywy” [The Polish agent still alive], „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2010, No. 57, p. 12; *idem*, “Profesor Wojciech Skalmowski” [Professor Wojciech Skalmowski], „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2008, No. 169, p. 18; *idem*, “Jak »Kultura« wykuwała Schengen” [How »Kultura« forged Schengen], „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2007, No. 300, p. 10. The text concerning RWE: see *idem*, “Radio drążące komunizm” [The radio irritating communism], „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2009, No. 281, p. 11.

¹⁷ L. Unger, *Dlaczego i po co ta książka?* [Why and what for is this book?], [in] *Teczki Giedroycia*, ed. by I. Hofman, L. Unger, Lublin 2010, p. 10.

¹⁸ A. Michnik, *Intruz...*, p. 91.

¹⁹ R. Kapuściński, *Intruz uwikłany...*, pp. 53–54.

²⁰ “Londoner” is of course Juliusz Mieroszewski – Giedroyc's most important and closest contributor to “Kultura”.

As Unger claimed, he used his pseudonym out of modesty and until Mieroszewski lived and published (I 348). In *Autobiografia na cztery ręce* [Four hand autobiography], Giedroyc wrote about Unger: “He writes as a Brusselian about Polish and International affairs. He did not replace Mieroszewski and never intended to”, yet thanks to him “Kultura” maintained its stand on various issues, which were earlier devised by the “Londoner”²¹. Unger's cooperation with the Parisian magazine lasted 30 years, up to when it was issued, and the “Brusselian's” work can be estimated at 200 articles, filling up nearly 3000 pages of “Kultura”²². Most of his texts were published in the column *Archiwum polityczne*²³ [Political archive], where Michał Heller and Dominik Morawski also published (a wonderful publicist was also Bohdan Osadczuk, who printed in the column *Sąsiedzi* [Neighbors]).

The “Brusselian's” work published in “Kultura” were high-quality publications, ten page essays (unlike short columns written for “Gazeta Wyborcza”), which can be described as, on the one hand, formal²⁴, and on the other, exposing his subjective point of view and expressing the authors concern with his media message²⁵. Part of Unger's work published for “Kultura” can be distinguished from the whole also due to the meaning it had for its writer. The “Brusselian” claimed that he wrote these texts with pleasure and that: “Giedroyc and “Kultura” were his biggest adventure [...] not indifferent morally” (I 10,371)²⁶. Apart from that, “Kultura” not only gave him a possibility to publish in Polish, without excluding most of his subjects or opinions (which was important for many emigres, e.g. Juliusz Mieroszewski, Czesław Miłosz, Witold Gombrowicz, and Polish writers, e.g. Stefan Kisielewski or Stanisław Mackiewicz), but also allowed looking at Poland from a distance and had a cathartic function, which Unger himself wrote about (I 337, 339). He was truly dedicated to “Kultura”: he had the idea for *Anty-Kultura* [Anti-Kultura], a collection of malicious pieces

²¹ J. Giedroyc, *Autobiografia na cztery ręce* [Four-hands autobiography], ed. by K. Pomian, Warszawa 1994, p. 220.

²² H. Giedroyc, *Les beaux esprits se rencontrent*, [in:] *Udało mi się...*, p. 49. Unger's first text printed in “Kultura” was “Widziane z Brukseli. Niech się Pan posunie, Redaktorze” [Seen from Brussels. Move over, Mr Editor], „Kultura” 1970, No. 4, pp. 54–64. The last one was “Widziane z Brukseli (ostatni raz). Remont pudła” [Seen from Brussels (for the last time). Repairing the box], “Kultura” 2000, No. 10, pp. 46–54.

²³ A small number of Unger's texts were published in other sections of the magazine, e.g. *idem*, “Tylko Luter może zbawić Savonarolę” [Only Luther can save Savonarola], “Kultura” 2000, No. 1/2, pp. 3–23 (opening article of the issue); *idem*, “»Lista Sugihary«. Czytane w Brukseli” [“Letters from Sugihar”. Read in Brussels], “Kultura” 2000, No. 4, pp. 147–151 (the *Book* section).

²⁴ Formal essays, presenting the topic in an objective, logical and intellectual manner – see essay typology by J.T. Shipley (W. Ostrowski, *Esej*, [in:] *Słownik rodzajów i gatunków literackich* [Dictionary of literary types and genres], ed by. G. Gazda, S. Tyniecka-Makowska, Kraków 2006, p. 237).

²⁵ See. J. Sławiński, *Esej*, [in:] *Słownik terminów literackich* [Dictionary of literary terms], ed by. *idem*, Wrocław 2010, p. 140.

²⁶ In one of his texts, Unger also wrote: “It's a truly charming argument, writing from abroad for *Kultura*” (*idem*, “Widziane z Brukseli. Największy omlet w historii” [Seen from Brussels. The biggest omelet in history], “Kultura” 1970, No. 7/8, p. 124).

written about the Parisian magazine; he was the one who contacted Giedroyc before his trips to Warsaw from 1990 onward, commissioned by “Le Soir” (I 352). The Editor also valued Unger and praised him more than once: “For us, working with you is an editorial success and a personal pleasure”²⁷.

Moreover, the Literary Institute published the first selection of works by the “Brusselian”, a book entitled *Orzeł i reszta*, and honored Unger twice²⁸. Giedroyc (as previously mentioned) chose him out of many contributors as the editor of his remaining, unknown work left in numerous folders²⁹. This nearly idealistic picture is disturbed or verified by reality, because despite many awards and tokens of gratitude, Unger (as his friend Wojciech Skalmowski) is only briefly recalled by people writing about “Kultura”. His name is overcast by those of Gombrowicz, Miłosz, Sempowski, Herling-Grudziński, Mieroszewski or Jeleński. The “Brusselian” – as he himself pointed out – would not go down in history as the author of a rich correspondence exchanged with Giedroyc, as he wasn't fond of writing letters (I 371). This in no way diminishes the value of Unger's work, it can however point to the high quality of “Kultura's” pieces, since even a very good publicist had to wait his turn in a long line of formidable authors.

To summarize, despite Unger's minor presence in the collection of work in the Parisian “Kultura”³⁰, among the authors of the magazine, he stands after Mieroszewski.

²⁷ Quoted after: H. Giedroyc, *Les beaux esprits...*, p. 49.

²⁸ Unger was first awarded in 1977, and for a second time in 1985. It is worth mentioning that two separate awards – in the field of literature (the Zygmunt Hertz award) and publicistic (the Juliusz Mieroszewski award) – were awarded by “Kultura” since 1979 (from Hertz's death). Unger received two awards from “Kultura”, just one Mieroszewski award, which at times is mistakenly noted (see M. Danilewicz-Zielińska, *Bibliografia. „Kultura”(1974–1980), „Zeszyty Historyczne” (1974–1980), działalność wydawnicza (1974–1980)* [Bibliography. *Kultura* (1974-1980), *Zeszyty Historyczne* (1974-1980), publishing (1974-1980)], Paryż 1981, pp. 32–33; *idem*, *Bibliografia. „Kultura”(1981–1987), „Zeszyty Historyczne” (1981–1987), działalność wydawnicza (1981–1987)* [Bibliography. *Kultura* (19781-1987), *Zeszyty Historyczne* (1981-1987), publishing 1981-1987)], Paryż 1989, p. 39; I. Chruślińska, *Była raz Kultura... Rozmowy z Zofią Hertz* [There once was *Kultura...* Conversations with Zofia Hertz], Warszawa 1994, p. 114).

²⁹ I. Hofman, *Księga życia...*, p. 14; L. Unger, *Dlaczego i po co ta książka?*, p. 9, 10.

³⁰ Unger was often the topic of writing in: I. Hofman, *Zjednoczona Europa w publicystyce paryskiej Kultury* [United Europe in Parisian *Kultura* journalism], Lublin 2001; *idem*, *Szkice o paryskiej »Kulturze«*, Toruń 2004. Once or a few times he was mentioned in, e.g. K. Dybciak, *Dzieje i dorobek Instytutu Literackiego* [The history and heritage of the Literary Institute], [in:] *Zostało tylko słowo... Wybór tekstów o »Kulturze« paryskiej i jej twórcach*, Lublin [1990], pp. 3–20; I. Chruślińska, *Była raz Kultura...*; J. Giedroyc, *Autobiografia...*; »Kultura« i jej krąg, ed. by G. Pomian, Lublin 1995; M. Danilewicz-Zielińska, *Szkice o literaturze emigracyjnej półwiecza 1939–1989* [Sketches on emigration literature after half a century 1939-1989], Wrocław 1999 (pierwsze wydanie: Paryż 1978); A.S. Kowalczyk, *Giedroyc i »Kultura«*, Wrocław 1999; M. Grochowska, *Jerzy Giedroyc. Do Polski ze snu* [Jerzy Giedroyc. To Poland from a dream], Warszawa 2009; L. Szaruga, »Kultura« – księga otwarta [»Kultura« - an open book], Kraków 2011. Similarly in texts concerning RWE, Unger was usually only mentioned, e.g. in: *W służbie propagandy...* [In the service of propaganda]; and sometimes even omitted, e.g. in: J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Polska...*; K. Zamorski, *Pod anteną Radia Wolna Europa* [Under the antenna of Radio Free Europe], Poznań 1995; J. Nowak-Jeziorański, J. Giedroyc, *Listy 1952–1998* [Letters 1952-1998], selected, ed. and introduction by D. Platt, Wrocław 2001; J. Kurski, *Jan Nowak-Jeziorański. Emisariusz wolności* [Jan Nowak-Jeziorański. Emissary of freedom], Warszawa 2005; J. Hajdasz, *Szczekaczka czyli Rozgłośnia Polska*

Similarly with the columns of these two authors, because *Widziane z Brukseli* was published after Mioszowski's pieces and before *Kronika angielska* [The English Chronicle] by the "Londoner"³¹.

Strategies and outcomes

A few times in his life, the Brusselian felt that he did not fit in with the approved model (I 52, 171, 211, 311)³². Fortunately, instead of complying to it, he created his own style and ways of coping. Unger was not a neutral journalist, meaning he did not avoid taking a stand in a given issue, without sacrificing reliability, and he tried to portrait his subjects without pathos, informing and not patronizing, as he himself claimed (I 276, 348)³³. Like in his work *Ziemia niczyja?* [No mans land]³⁴, where he discussed the difficulties in Polish politics after 1989, Unger wrote about important issues, avoiding an overtly serious tone, he did not believe in ignoring awkward subjects (helpful in this was beginning with presenting the problem in the form of a reportage from Poland or using short sentences, which made the impression of showing situations directly in the text, without too many comments). In general, his style is characterized by irony, self-irony and brevity with commonly used stylizations, influencing the reader (to which we will return)³⁵. Among Unger's journalistic strategies were the use of anniversaries, to recall an unknown figure or event, or care to interest the reader in a piece by including anecdotes and presenting contemporary history through the prism of individual, though not entirely anonymous people. Moreover, the Brusselian diversely stylized his works, e.g. using the riddle form. Sometimes he shaped the narration to resemble a sensational novel³⁶. As a publicist, he was perceived as: objective³⁷, sharp, analytical, writing

Radia Wolna Europa [The Barker – the Polish radio station of Radio Free Europe], Poznań 2006; G. Adamczewski, *Radio Wolna Europa w okresach politycznych przełomów* [Radio Free Europe in times of political turnovers], Wrocław 2011 (although *Intruz* is in the bibliographic selection). In certain groups, texts were mentioned in chronological order, regardless of the type of publication they represent.

³¹ This does not concern however the first text of the "Brusselian", under which was the following postscript: "Due to postal troubles in Great Britain and France, *Kronika angielska* [The English chronicle] of the Londoner did not reach us before closing the number. The Editorial Office" ("Kultura" 1970, No. 4, p. 64).

³² L. Unger, *Orzeł i reszta. Widziane z Brukseli*, Paryż 1986, p. 7.

³³ *Idem*, *Wypędzenie szatana* [Banishing satan], Lublin 2005, p. 9.

³⁴ L. Unger, *Ziemia niczyja?* [No-man's land], [in:] *idem*, *Wypędzenie szatana*, pp. 19–30 (originally: "Kultura" 1990, No. 7/8).

³⁵ In terms of: irony, see e.g. Unger's articles in "Kultura" from 1970, No. 5, 7, 12; self-irony, e.g. "Kultura" 1970, No. 5; no tabu, e.g. "Kultura" 1970, No. 4, 5.

³⁶ Examples of these strategies are the following texts by Unger: *idem*, "Widziane z Brukseli i Królewca. Skazy na bursztynie" [Seen from Brussels and Königsberg. Flaws on amber], "Kultura" 1994, No. 1/2, pp. 61–77 (a parallel presentation of the fates of Kant and Wołodia – the driver); *idem*, "Widziane z Brukseli. Soldaty! Dwadzieścia trzy wieki na was patrzą!!!" [Seen from Brussels. Soldiers! Twenty-three centuries are looking at you!!!], "Kultura" 1988, No. 3, pp. 56–65 (stylized as a riddle); *idem*, "Praszczaj Daniłow. Widziane z Brukseli" [Praszczaj Daniłow. Seen from Brussels], „Kultura” 1986, No. 11, pp. 35–50 (stylized as a sensational novel); *idem*, "Widziane z Brukseli. Podróże kształcą" [Seen from Brussels. Travels educate], "Kultura" 1985, No. 1/2,

competently and clearly³⁸; “Precise, brave, impertinent, influential and greatly talented writing”³⁹; “the combination of information, opinion and humour in the publicistic works of the “Brusselian” has adequate proportions and is refreshing and invigorating for the reader”⁴⁰. He himself reminded that apart from being praised, he was accused of sarcasm and malice, sometimes being revengeful (Kisiel). In his own judgement, Unger had a journalistic talent and feeling (I 256-258), “modestly speaking, the reader will notice, that if I was mistaken, then only in the details”⁴¹.

In 2004 Unger wrote: “you have to leave something behind”⁴². What did he leave behind? Where does his work fit? Unger was appreciated, but also ignored. On the one hand, as he himself claimed, he was included in Belgian biographical dictionaries, the “International Herald Tribune” recommended his work, Wałęsa liked him and received with pleasure, Boris Souvarine cited his claims⁴³ (I 274, 289, 296, 307). Underground publishers reprinted his work⁴⁴, Kisielowski gave him a separate entry in *Abecadło Kisiela* [Kisiel's alphabet], and on his eighty-fifth birthday and sixtieth anniversary of his journalistic work, a book was published for Unger, in which Jerzy Buzek, Bronisław Geremek, Leszek Kołakowski and Andrzej Wajda paid their respects to the “Brusselian”⁴⁵. The year 2009 brought him many distinctions, he was given the Polish PEN Club award and the honorary PhD degree from UMCS (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University) in Lublin⁴⁶. On the other hand, a change of editor-in-chief ended his career in the *IHT*, and his name in the “Kultura” circle was overcast by great names in Polish literature. Unger also didn't have much luck concerning his work for

pp. 142–152 (parts of the text are presented in the form of “a description of three journeys of contemporary Sindbads” [p. 144], then current politicians).

³⁷ J. Buzek, *Obiektywny, ale nie neutralny* [Objective but not neutral], [in:] *Udało mi się...*, pp. 33–34.

³⁸ I. Hofman, *Księga życia...*, p. 11, 14.

³⁹ B. Delvaux, *Polemista z zasadami* [Polemist with rules], [in:] *Udało mi się...*, p. 35.

⁴⁰ [W. Skalmowski] M. Broński, “Nagroda publicystyczna im. Juliusza Mieroszewskiego: Leopold Unger” [The Juliusz Mieroszewski journalist award: Leopold Unger], „Kultura” 1985, No. 3, pp. 125–126.

⁴¹ L. Unger, *Z Brukseli*, Warszawa 1991, p. IX.

⁴² *Idem*, *Wypędzenie...*, p. 13.

⁴³ Unger wrote this surname as Suvarin (I 307).

⁴⁴ Underground brochures: L. Unger, *Mój anti-raport o stanie wojennym* [My anti-report on martial law], Warszawa 1983 (publish. “Pershing” and: Warszawa 1983, publish. “Maraton”); *idem*, *UNESCO...?*, Warszawa 1985 (publish. “Unia”). Underground books: *idem*, *UNESCO, Lot No. 007*, Gdańsk 1984; *idem*, *Widziane z Brukseli* [Seen from Brussels], Warszawa 1986 (publish. “Kret”); *idem*, *A jeżeli rzeczywiście to byli Rosjanie. Wybór publicystyki politycznej z paryskiej „Kultury”* [But what if those really were Russians. Selection of political journalism from Parisian *Kultura*], Wrocław 1987 (Oficyna Niepokornych and: Warszawa 1987, publish. “CDN”).

⁴⁵ This book is: *Udało mi się...*; see also: S. Kisielowski, *Abecadło Kisiela* [Kisiel's Alphabet], Warszawa 1997, p. 146.

⁴⁶ The publication commemorating this event is: *Leopold Unger. Doktor...*; see also the text of Unger's speech during the PEN Club ceremony: “Mój prawdziwy paszport” [My true passport], “Gazeta Wyborcza” 2009, No. 134, p. 20.

RWE (Radio Free Europe) or entry in the *Encyclopedia of Polish Emigration...* (which is increasingly visible when compared to the entry of the mentioned Skalmowski)⁴⁷.

Among Unger's achievements are: creating the term tropicanism (the naive faith of Cubans in the loyalty of the Soviet Union and the efficiency of socialism, which was visible during the Cuban Crisis of 1962 [I 144]), creating the Unger law (according to which Russian leaders appear in public either in a perfect state or dead [I 262-263]), explaining to the West the complications of Soviet politics or the meaning of the Chernobyl explosion for Russia and the emergence of "Solidarność" for Poland⁴⁸. Among the most important texts he wrote were: *Mój ostatni samolot* [My last plane] (connected with the situation of Jews in Poland after March 1968) and *Mój anty-raport o stanie wojennym* [My anti-report on martial law] (a protest against the UN report, which belittled declaring martial law in Poland)⁴⁹. Unger published a large number of articles, some of which were published in the form of a book⁵⁰. Moreover, probably more than one person would claim that through his work, Unger popularized a school of journalism, characterized by an approach expressed in claims such as, e.g.: "I believe that journalism is a profession, not a calling or a mission, it should not pertain to fix the world, not make it perfect, especially through force, but provide its understanding and demystification"⁵¹.

⁴⁷ See K. Dopierała, *Leopold Unger*, p. 193–194; and: M.A. Supruniuk, *Wojciech Skalmowski*, [in:] *Encyklopedia polskiej emigracji...*, Vol. 4, pp. 381–382. This difference is easily understood when we look at the authors of the entries – the first was written by Kazimierz Dopierała (historian), the second by Mirosław A. Supruniuk (scholar of emigration culture and founder of the Emigration Archive in Toruń).

⁴⁸ J. Pomianowski, *60 lat ostrego dyżuru* [60 years of E.R.], [in:] *Udało mi się...*, p. 107.

⁴⁹ The mentioned texts are the first and last essays in *Orzeł i reszta...* The bibliographic reference there is wrong because the articles were printed in No. 7/8 (not: 9): L. Unger, "Widziane z Brukseli. Mój ostatni samolot" [Seen from Brussels. My last plane], "Kultura" 1979, No. 7/8, p. 106–127. Whereas *Mój anty-raport... z Orzeł i reszta...* consists of the following articles: *idem*, "Mój anty-raport o stanie wojennym", *Kultura* 1983, No. 6, pp. 52–65; *idem*, "Widziane z Brukseli and wielu innych miejsc" [Seen from Brussels and many other places], *Kultura* 1984, No. 10, pp. 43–48 (the following pages correspond to reprinted parts of the article).

⁵⁰ Unger participated in editing: *Orzeł i reszta...* (articles from "Kultura" published up to 1986). *Z Brukseli* [From Brussels], Warszawa 1991 (contains articles from "Kultura" printed before 1986 and also between 1986 and 1991), *Wypędzenie szatana*, Lublin 2005 (mostly articles printed during the last thirty years in "Kultura", but also selected proposals from "Gazeta Wyborcza"). Selected publications were also published in underground publishers (see footnote 44). Unger's remaining (registered by the National Library) works printed in books published in Poland are: *idem*, *Jalta – Helsinki – Madryt*, [in:] *Archiwum polityczne. „Kultura” paryska – wybór*, Gdańsk 1984 (underground print); *idem*, *Dekalog antykultury* [The Anti-Kultura Decalog], [in:] *Anty-Kultura...*, pp. 7–18; *idem*, *Potrójna misja Pomianowskiego* [Pomianowski's tripple mission], [in:] J. Pomianowski, *Na wschód od Zachodu. Jak być z Rosją?*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 7–16; *idem*, *Postowie*, [in:] M. Nocuń, A. Brzeziecki, *Białoruś. Kartofle i dżinsy* [Belarus. Potatos and jeans], Kraków 2007, p. 217; *idem*, *Dlaczego i po co ta książka*. At current, his radio appearances are prepared – see I. Hofman, "Wspomnienie o Leopoldzie Ungerze" [Remembering Leopold Unger], "Gazeta Wyborcza" (Lublin) 2011, No. 297, p. 2.

⁵¹ L. Unger, *Orzeł i reszta...*, p. 8.

Unger wanted to be perceived as a journalist who respected facts (I 256) and one must admit, he managed to achieve this. In 2001 Ryszard Kapuściński stated: “Today Leopold Unger is a leading commentator of world press”, and placed him alongside Raymond Aron⁵².

Not just a journalist

Throughout his life Unger worked for various magazines, yet he was not just a journalist. Some less known facts about him should be examined, because even in a briefly outlined portrait, the author should have an angle describing his general activity and social life.

In his autobiography entitled *Intruz* he wrote that he was never bored (I 11). There is no reason not to believe him, taking into account the author's professional and personal story, rich in many themes. Unger was a journalist for sixty years and most likely because of this, his first and foremost passion were politics (“Not the active kind, to which I always had an aversion” [I 11]) and contemporary history. Without a doubt, journalism was important for Unger, however he was also an avid bridge player⁵³, skier and tennis player; while still living in Warsaw, he went to the philharmonic on Friday's, and more than once was a guest of Irena Szymańska's, along with Władysław Kopaliński, Erwin Axer or Paweł Hertz. One can assume that when Unger mentioned the dynamics of his life, he did not only mean the journalistic pursue of meaningful historical events. Leopold Unger, “Brusselian”, “Pol Mathil” - should in the history of Polish national and emigration culture remain a superb journalist, essayist and columnist, a role model of the (disappearing) approach to the journalistic profession⁵⁴, a classic among publicists, who in his work (and commentaries) displayed insight and distance, granting his statements a timeless value. He was born on August 12 1922 in Lvov – he died on December 20 2011 in Brussels.

⁵² R. Kapuściński, *Intruz uwikłany...*, p. 54.

⁵³ “The title [*Rumuńskie układy*] [Romanian arrangements] did not originate, contrary to opinions, from politics, but from bridge” (L. Unger, *Widziane z Brukseli. Rumuńskie układy*, “Kultura” 1970, No. 9, p. 60).

⁵⁴ See the earlier quoted part of the introduction to *Orzeł i reszta...*