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JACEK SZPOTAŃSKI (1927-2019) - ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

JACEK SZPOTAŃSKI (1927-2019) – INŻYNIER ELEKTRYK

Summary: *Jacek Szpotański was electric engineer and Master of science in economy. For many years he had been employed in commercial energetic plants and then, in the central organs of Polish commercial energetic sector. He acted actively, on a social basis, in many associations dealing with the problems of electricity and related domains. He had been the President of Polish Electricians Association (SEP) for 12 years.*

Keywords: *Jacek Szpotański, electrician, Association of Polish Electricians (SEP)*

Streszczenie: *Jacek Szpotański – inżynier elektryk i magister ekonomii. Przez wiele lat pracował w zakładach energetyki zawodowej, a następnie w instytucjach centralnych polskiej energetyki zawodowej. Społecznie działał w wielu stowarzyszeniach zajmujących się zagadnieniami elektryczności i dziedzin pokrewnych. Przez 12 lat był prezesem Stowarzyszenia Elektryków Polskich (SEP).*

Słowa kluczowe: *Jacek Szpotański, elektryk, Stowarzyszenie Elektryków Polskich (SEP)*

He derived from noble descent of Dunin, with heraldic arms: Łabędź (Swan). The mentioned family included numerous figures, enrolled in the history of Poland throughout the centuries – knights, senior clergymen, court officials, land managers, urban clerks, industrialists, writers and poets. In the 14th century, the two-part names of the members of the discussed family originated. The second part of the family name means the name of the estate or a characteristic feature of a person. For example, club foot of horse, hence the name Dunin Szpot (Szpotański). Zygmunt Dunin Szpot, who lived at the turn of the 17th century in Szpotawa Wola in Radom Governorate, was the first person who gave up the first part of the family name and began to call himself "Szpotański". The contemporary Dunins are associated in the Association of the Dunin Family Members with heraldic arms Łabędź. The mentioned association has pre-war traditions but it stopped acting during the war period. It was reactivated as late as in 1992 in Lublin during the First Post-War Convention of the Members of Dunin Family.

Jacek Szpotański was born in August 17, 1927 in Warsaw. His father was electric engineer, Kazimierz Szpotański who built Polish factory of electrical devices, being the highest one in the inter-war period, universally known as "Factory of Electric Devices Kazimierz Szpotański and Co., having its trademark "FAE". The mentioned factory was situated at Kamionek in Praga District of Warsaw and had its affiliate department in Międzyzlesie, being presently situated in Warsaw - Wawer District. The factory was taken over by the State as early as in October, 20, 1944 and, officially nationalized in 1945.

The wish of father was that his son Jacek could be able to manage the big, constantly developing factory in the future. When Jacek was still a pupil of primary school, his father showed him the whole factory and ordered his foremen to take care of him when performing simple assembly operations;

Fig. 1. Jacek Szpotański



Source: www.sep.com.pl

then, he received the so-called "pocket money". During the war period, when having graduated primary school, Jacek continued learning at the Konarski vocational school, in class with electrical specialization. According to the program of school, he performed vocational practices in different factories, producing electrical equipment. They included, inter alia, BRABORK, belonging to Borkowski brothers, Perkun and Perun. The most difficult practice was however conducted in the factory of his father as he did not have any special treatment; on the contrary, they required more from him. After graduation of school in June 1944, he received a title of apprentice, and as early as in July, his father employed him in his factory.

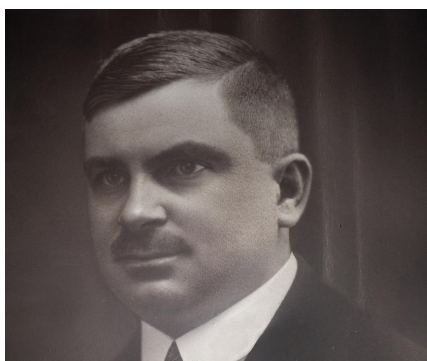
Fig. 2. Heraldic arms: Łabędź (Swan)



Source: www.wikipedia.pl

In August, 1, 1944, Warsaw Uprising was commenced in the left-side part of the Capital City. Factory of Kazimierz Szpotański was situated on the right side of the Vistula River where the direct activity of the insurgents was not carried on. Jacek wanted to take part in the uprising but he had to swim the Vistula River as to reach the left side part of Warsaw. Together with his friend, he tried three times to do it, but each time he returned to the right side of the river as the German patrol boats were approaching. Then the boys decided to swim the Vistula River in the site remote from Warsaw. When going in the chosen direction, they did not pay attention to the fact that they entered the line of front near Otwock. They were arrested by the patrol of German soldiers and transported to filtration camp of NKVD (Peoples' Commissariat for Internal Affairs) in Majdanek near Lublin. Jacek escaped from the camp after several days. He travelled on foot and by the occasional transport and reached Praga District which was already liberated by the Soviet Army. He lived alone in his family house as his parents and sister were evacuated by Germans in the 1st September and came back as late as in January 1945 when a left-side part of Warsaw was liberated. The buildings of the factory were destroyed but the family house, being situated at the territory of the factory remained unchanged. Jacek was 17 years old at this moment and felt as a host of the place. He repaired the fence as the territory of the factory

Fig. 3. Kazimierz Szpotański - father of Jacek Szpotański



Source: <https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,24200031,kazimierz-szpotanski-nasz-elon-musk-z-z-kamionka.html>

was constantly plundered by the thieves. He asked the army for giving him a police station for protection of the factory from plundering and he received such protection. In October 1944, when the factory was taken over by the State Management, he was again employed there.

He continued learning in a form of evening studies at the Reytan secondary school. He graduated in 1946 (certificate of maturity) and then, he was directed by his employer to the full-time studies in the Wawelberg and Rotwand Engineering School. It is interesting to mention that in July 1949, he performed a summer practice in the State Factory of Counters and Clocks in Świdnica, that is, in the factory where – after the war – the manufacture of electrical counters was commenced and, at the same time, such production was stopped in the factory, founded by his father. Simultaneously, he undertook the work at the Polish Institute of Electrical Engineering in Międzyzlesie as an assistant in the Department of Electrical Measurements. He graduated his studies in June, 29, 1951; however he received a diploma as late as in February 2, 1952 and it was issued by Warsaw University of Technology as in 1951 a fusion of Engineering School and Warsaw University of Technology has place.

After completing his studies, Jacek Szpotański, as graduate of higher education institution, had to performed the so-called compulsory work which was appointed by the Minister of Higher Education and Science. At the beginning, it was a job in Coal Mine "Kleofas" in Katowice – Załęże since

Fig. 3. Kazimierz Szpotański Factory



Source: www.warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,40543,14602262,Historyczna_fabryka_Szpotanskiego_ozyje_na_dwa_weekendy.html

July 1951, at the post of electrical foreman. The work in the coal mine was however inconsistent with the direction of his studies and specialization (operation of electro-energetic networks of high voltage. The command of work in the coal mine and not in the power plant was the successive case of applying the repressions in relation to the pre-war owners and co-owners of factories and land estates, carried on by the contemporary authorities. Earlier, Kazimierz Szpotański was deprived of the possibility of earning and living means and then, his son was compulsorily directed to work in the coal mine. The fates of both gentlemen were changes in 1951. The contemporary authorities applied for compensation for explosion of the factory by Germans in September 1944. Such application required plenipotentiary, signed by one of the shareholders. After a long persuasion, Kazimierz Szpotański gave such powers. In consequence, he received a work at the Central Management of Design Offices of Industrial Building Constructions at the post of electricity specialist. He was employed there until his retirement in 1960. On the other hand, in October 4, 1951, Jacek applied to the Minister of Higher Education and

Science for the change of his work place in the system of compulsory work and the Minister agreed to his request. He issued another work command, this time at the Office of Studies and Design of Typical Industrial Building Constructions in Warsaw in the period of 1.11. 1951- until 30.06. 1951 at the post of designer; since January 1, 1952, Jacek Szpotański was transferred to Warsaw Design Office of Industrial Constructions. The new job, however did not meet his expectations and after 3 months, he submitted a termination notice. It was considered positively for him in spite of the obligatory work command valid until 1954. This decision allowed him commencing the work in commercial power industry.

At the beginning, since 1st of May 1952, he worked in technical section in the management of Power Industry of the Central District (ZEOC). In 1954, he was transferred to Design-Constructional Office of ZEOC at the post of designer of power stations. He was quickly promoted to the successive higher posts: senior designer, head of the team and the chief designer.

Apart from professional work, he developed expertises in the field of operation of electrical devices and machines, inter alia, for Heating Network Plant, State Enterprise Polcargo, and Polish Academy of Sciences – Bureau of Studies for the Electrification of Poland.

Since 1st of October 1957 he took over a post of the head of Design-Constructional Office in ZEOC. He managed the teams, developing the conceptions and plans of developing the dispatching networks 220 and 110 kV and distributive network systems 110 kV and 15 kV at the territory of the Central District and, first of all, Warsaw and Łódź agglomerations.

In 1964, he commenced the studies in the field of economy at the Łódź University in the program "Evening economic stadium for engineers"; he completed it in 1966. He received a diploma of graduating the stadium and not the studies; therefore, he decided to continue further learning in the years 1968 – 69. He finished his MSc thesis in 1969 and obtained a title of M.Sc. in economy.

Since 1st of August 1966 he took over the post of director for investment affairs in Power Plant Warsaw outside Territory. After almost one year he returned to work at ZEOC at the post of the main specialist for organizational matters.

After few months he was directed to technical practice in France (4.07 1967 until 20.5 1968), organized by French Governmental Agency ASTEF.

Fig. 5. Jacek Szpotański during the XXII General Assembly of SEP Delegates (1981) in Wrocław



Source: www.sep.com.pl/aktualnosci/90-lecie-urodzin-jacka-szpotanskiego.html

Fig. 6. Jacek Szpotański during the XXII General Assembly of SEP Delegates (1981) in Wrocław



Source: www.sep.com.pl/aktualnosci/90-lecie-urodzin-jacka-szpotanskiego.html

Within the frames of the practice program, he had the opportunity to get familiarized with the French producers of electrical devices. After completion of the practice, he received a diploma with distinction and received the invitation to the so-called après stage – that is, work after the practice which he had as late as in 1973 for three months.

Since 1 January 1968, Jacek Szpotański became the Main Specialist for dispatching and distribution of energy in the Central Management of Energy Generation and then, since 1st January 1973 he took over the post of the Chief Engineer – Deputy Director for Electrical Networks. At the same time, in the years 1972 – 1975 he was the member of Scientific Economic-Technical Council of the Warsaw Voivode. The mentioned Council was dissolved in 1975 due to the changes in administrative system of Poland.

Since 1st January 1976, after liquidation of the Central Management of Energy Generation he was nominated on the post of the deputy director of the Department for Planning and Development in the new Ministry of Power Engineering and Atomic Energy (MEiEA). On 21st November he was nominated to the post of director of Department for Exploitation and Renovations of MEiEA.

When working at MEiEA he coordinated the work connected with the development of conception and then, implementation of electro-energetic networks of the highest voltage at the territory of the whole country. He was the co-organizer of the first course for electricians, performing the repairing and conservation work under the high voltage lines – Dzierżno 1976.

He cooperated with many outstanding Polish specialists in the field of power engineering. He was an active member of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Power Engineering. He was the opinion-giver of the Conception for Development of Highest Voltage Networks, being developed at the Department for Development of Electro-energetic System of the Institute. He was interested not only in the defined planning solutions but also consulted the choice of calculating instruments, generated in the Institute of power Engineering as well as of those ones adapted on the grounds of foreign licences. He was the co-initiator of creating the IT Centre for Power Engineering and Atomic Energy. The mentioned enterprise gave a high contribution

Fig. 7. 1970s - development of electricity networks - Bełchatów CHP plant



Source: www.energetyka-polska.pl

to computerization of many branches of power engineering sector which include automation of service of the customers (ZBYT), automation of the processes connected with the prognoses of demand on power and energy at the territory of the whole Poland, the economic distribution of loadings on generating sources for coverage of varying demand on electricity, optimization of propagation of power and shaping the levels of voltages in the national network, management of renovation of generating sources and dispatch network and also, distributional network at the territory of the whole country.

In relation to the employees, he was a demanding boss but at the same time, he was able to appreciate their vocational achievements. He was capable to organize the people around him who were friendly each other and could cooperate mutually. He participated in many scientific-technical conferences, inter alia, in Kołobrzeg (15 – 16 May, 1980) where he submitted a general lecture on the current problems in exploitation of transformers in the highest voltage networks.

The year 1981 came. It was the year of social tensions in Poland, completed with the introduction of the state of war (13th of December, 1981 – 22nd July 1983). It was also a special year in life of Jacek Szpotański. The 22nd General Convention of SEP Delegates had place in Wrocław in the period of 26 - 28 June. During the mentioned Convention he was elected as the President of SEP; it was a social function without remuneration. In July there was liquidation of the Ministry of Power Engineering and Atomic Energy and in connection with this fact, Jacek Szpotański was transferred to a new ministry at the post of vice-director of department but he was not obliged to perform the work as on the 1st of December was retired.

Being already a retired person, he was the consultant at the Institute of Power Engineering in Międzyzlesie (1985 – 1987). Besides it, he was the member of the Supervising Council in some companies, such as, inter alia, Elektromontaż Eksport S.A., SELPOL S.A., ZWAR S.A.

Jacek Szpotański joined SEP in 1953. He was the active member of the association. In 1959, he participated in the Jubilee Convention of SEP Delegates on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of SEP foundation. In the years 1971 and 1977, he was the co-organizer of the 'Days of French Electricity in Poland', organized by the Chief Board of SEP. In the years 1974

– 76, he was the member of the Central Collegial Body of Power Engineering Section of SEP and in the period of 1976-81 he was the member of the Central Commission for Electricity Regulations of SEP. In 1979 he was the co-organizer of ceremony of celebrating 60 years of SEP establishment.

In cadences of 1975 – 1980 he played a function of Vice-president of Warsaw Department and in the period of 1977/1978, he performed also the duties of the President of Warsaw Department.

He played the function of the President of SEP in the following cadences: 198 – 1984, 1984 – 1987 and 1990 – 1994; in the years 1994 – 2003, he was the member of the Chief Board.

In the publication: "History of SEP 1919 – 1999", the period of playing the function of the President of SEP by Jacek Szpotański was described as it follows:

"Undoubtedly, in the period difficult for the country and for the society, it was successful to run the activity of the association possibly without

Fig. 8. The Presidium of the SEP Main Board with the participation of the Minister of Communications Władysław Majewski (1987)



Source: www.sep.com.pl/aktualnosci/90-lecie-urodzin-jacka-szpotanskiego.html

Fig. 9. Plenary meeting at the Electrotechnical Institute (1987)



Source: www.sep.com.pl/aktualnosci/90-lecie-urodzin-jacka-szpotanskiego.html

special shocks. It was possible to protect the Association from the attempts to involve it into the political activity. It was also successful to maintain the consolidation of the environments of electrical engineers and counteract the disintegration tendencies e.g. in a form of the undertaken attempts to create the new associations. During the discussed period, there were implemented the principles of friendly cooperation and a high level of social harmony, inter alia, by propagation of the idea "SEP – the Association of Friends". Owing to this fact, a specific climate of friendship and reliance was developed in the Association".

Jacek Szpotański had his vision of Polish power engineering and a role which should SEP association possess. As far as the problems of commercial energetic sector are concerned, he had big limitations, resulting from the contemporary political and economic situation of the country. In relation to SEP, such limitations occurred to a much lesser extent. During the period when he was the President of SEP, numerous opinions, expertises, conceptions and reports in the field of electricity were developed in the association. The mentioned elaborations were addressed first of all to the Government, Parliament and Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN).

He inspired the cooperation of SEP with the associations of electrical engineers in other countries, first of all in France, Germany, Hungary and Italy. He continued organizing, alternatively, the Days of Polish Electricity in the mentioned countries and in Poland – the Days of French, German and Hungarian Electricity. He was the initiator of establishing the Day of Electricity – 10th of June, in the anniversary of birthday of A. Ampère, the ceremony organized only by SEP. After few years, Polish Day of Electricity was undertaken by the associations in other countries and adopted the name of "International Day of Electricity".

His important achievements include animation of the activity of Research Office for SEP Quality (BBJ) and then, location of its particular units in one site, at the territory of the Institute of Power Engineering in Międzyzlesie, with its branch in Lublin.

As the head of the association, he inspired the activity of the particular Departments of SEP. He often participated in working meetings of the managements of the mentioned departments. He was also present in majority of important meetings and ceremonies, organized at the territory

of the particular departments. He was a recognizable person in the whole environment of electricians, even those being not associated in SEP. He was also initiator of cooperation with the associations, being not the members of Polish Federation of Engineering Associations – NOT, such as SARP, or PTE.

He was the member of many technical, economic and social organizations, including inter alia: Conseil International des Grands Réseaux Electriques (CIGRE), International Union of producers and Distributors of Electrical Energy (UNIPEDE), Polish Committee of the World Energy Council, Polish Society of Dispatch and Distribution of Electric Energy (PTPiREE), Engineering Academy (since 1993), Polish Nucleonic Society, Association of Members of the Dunin Family (since 1995). He was the co-founder of the Association of Polish Industrialists (1990).

He was also "The Member of Polish Committee of Great Electrical Networks (PKWSE), the association, affiliated at CIGRE. He was awarded with the distinction "Distinguished Member of CIGRE" for his activity in favour of CIGRE.

Jacek Szpotański was long-time member and the chairman of Programme Council of "Power Engineering" and "Around Power Engineering". Since 1995, he was a founder of the annual Kazimierz Szpotański reward, awarded during the Fair ENERGETAB held in Bielsko-Biała, for the product, manufactured by Polish company and having the properties of a high quality, economics, aesthetics and modernity. At first it was a cup and since 2001, it has been a statuette made of bronze, presenting a lion. Every year, it has a different silhouette. A new name of award was also adopted – "Golden Lion". On the grounds of the agreement of 18 November 2018, the organizer of the Fair "ZIAD Bielsko-Biała" S.A. took over the function of founder of the award.

For his work and activity in professional work and in the association, Jacek Szpotański was honoured with numerous distinctions given by the following bodies:

Fig. 10. Jacek Szpotański with the Diamond Honorary Diploma of A. M. Ampere



Source: www.sep.com.pl/aktualnosci/90-lecie-urodzin-jacka-szpotanskiego.html

- State: Silver Cross of Merits (1957), Order of Polonia Restituta Fifth Class (the Knight's Cross) and Order of Polonia Restituta Third Class (the Commander's Cross);
- Professional branch: The Meritorious Employee of Power Engineering Plant Łódź; Voivodeship (1972), Honorary distinction: the Meritorious Worker of ZWAR (the Resolution of the Conference of Self-Governing Workers' Organization), the Man of Merits for Power Engineering (1977), the Meritorious Employee of Communication (1983), the Meritorious worker of Power Engineering Plant in Lublin (1977), The Meritorious Employee of Elektromontaż (1978), distinction of the 50 years of railway electrification in Poland (Minister of Transport, 1986), the award on the occasion of 50 years of railway electrification in Poland (Minister of Transport, 1986);
- Self-governing organizations: Golden Honorary Distinction – "Warszawska Syrenka" (Emblem of Warsaw) (1979), Meritorious for Warmia and Mazury Region" (1980), For merits in development of the Koszalin Voivodeship (1980);
- Associations: Silver, Golden (1984) and Diamond Honorary Distinction of NOT; Silver (1975), Golden (1979) and Sapphire (206) Honorary Distinction of SEP, Medals of SEP of the following names: Prof. M. Pożaryski, J. Groszkowski, A. Hoffman, J. Obrąpalski, K. Szpotański, S. Fryze, S. Bieliński (Cracow Department), K. Idaszewski (Wrocław Department), Stanisław Szpor, Z. Białkiewicz (Department of Coal Basin), E. Jezierski (Łódź Department), Jan Nowacki (Warsaw Department), the Gabriel Narutowicz medal (Engineering Academy 2005), Bronze Distinction of Polish Horse Riding Association (1977).

In 1985 he was honoured with the French Ampère Prize. In 1987, the 24th General Meeting of Delegates conferred him a dignity of Honourable Member of SEP.

His family life was as it follows: he was married in December 4, 1953 (ceremony in church; 14 April 1954). His wife was Irena Lebert (1929 – 2002),

Fig. 11. Jacek Szpotański - founder of the Kazimierz Szpotański Golden Lion award



Source: www.sep.com.pl/aktualnosci/90-lecie-urodzin-jacka-szpotanskiego.html

Fig. 12. Jacek Szpotański member of Presidium of the First Congress of Polish Electrical Engineering (2009)



Source: www.sep.com.pl/aktualnosci/90-lecie-urodzin-jacka-szpotanskiego.html

medical internist. He had two children: Piotr (born in 1956) and Beata (born in 1961).

Since 2010, due to a trauma, he was very much limited in moving, he left his house very seldom. He participated however actively in everyday life of SEP. He invited his friends whom he had met during his professional and association life almost every day. In the period of 2010 – 2018, he worked – together with the team – upon the publication of Biography of his father, Kazimierz Szpotański. The first edition of the mentioned work appeared in 2012. The second one – as being considerably developed and more comprehensive – was published in 2018 as number 1 of the editorial series of SEP under the motto: "Books for 100th anniversary of SEP". In his professional and social life, Jacek Szpotański gave many interviews to press, broadcasting and TV. He appeared as the main narrator in historical film "Child of His Life" in which he presented interestingly many details from life of his father, Kazimierz Szpotański and his factory "Factory of Electrical devices K. Szpotański and Co."

Jacek Szpotański had many features of decisive man in his activity. In the preserved documents, we may often find the strong words, addressed to his superiors and offices of all levels, pointing out a lack of action or the activity inconsistent with the obligatory rules. He defended individual persons as well as institutions. It may be supposed that it was a reason for his earlier retirement.

He was respected very much and first of all, the people from the environment of electricians liked him very much. It may be supported by the fact that about 500 his friends from the whole Poland arrived at the occasion of solemn celebration of his 90th anniversary.

Jacek Szpotański died on 3 January 2019. He was buried in a family grave at Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw (quarter 53/VI/20). The elaboration of the paper: Zbigniew Filingier and Ryszard Frydrychowski Sources:

The documents stored at the house of the Szpotański family. In connection with this fact, in certain cases, the change in dates had place in relation to the dates, given in the so-far earlier publications.

Article reviewed

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