

THE EMERALD GUIDE TO
ZYGMENT BAUMAN

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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BAUMAN: LIFE, CAREER AND POLITICS

As a general sociologist and social theorist, Zygmunt Bauman's published work is wide-ranging including discussions of social class, socialism, neoliberalism, hermeneutics, critical theory, the Holocaust, modernity, postmodernity, consumerism, globalisation, surveillance, ethics and sexuality. He was a prolific commentator on contemporary life, but for a few of his readers, his ideas and arguments were not always systematic. Bauman is a cultured person and often draws explicitly on literature he refers to Kafka, Musil, Kundera, Borge, Cervantes and many others. In addition, Bauman tends to define things merely by outlining and explaining what they not, and he makes frequent use of metaphor in his work. These tendencies can detract from the clarity of his work and the quality of his explanation building. Also, Bauman's style of writing is marked by a high degree of self-referentiality. Commentators have noted that Bauman often engages in self-plagiarising material, cutting and pasting sections of texts from earlier texts in his work. This means that in Bauman's work, the underpinning themes and some of the central arguments are repeated across his work, with new material added

in each text. Bauman's habit of repetition is reflected in the chapters of this book.

Young Zygmunt Bauman lived with his mother Zofia, his father Maurycy and his older sister Tauba. In 1921, like many other Polish Jews the Bauman's moved from Słupca to Poznań, where Zygmunt was born in 1925. Zofia was described by Zygmunt as an excellent cook and said that this was the reason why he was overweight as a child. As part of the dowry, Maurycy Bauman was given a fabric shop that quickly went bankrupt, due to his lack of business expertise and competence. In 1931, Maurycy took what money the family had left and moved to Paris to find work. Zofia, Taubaa and Zygmunt remained in Poznań at the family home at number 17 Jeżyce at Prusa. They were one of the few Jewish families in a relatively affluent district. On 3 September 1939, a week before the Germans entered Poznań, the Bauman family managed to board a train for Inowrocław, leave Poland and start a life in the Soviet Union. Whilst gentile Poles saw little difference between the Nazis and the Soviets, both were invading forces. For the Jewish population, the Soviet forces offered the only protection available from death at the hands of the Nazis. Consequently, Polish Jews came to be seen disloyal to the Polish cause. In 1943, Zygmunt joined the Polish division of the Red Army. He was wounded in the battle for Kohlberg but was fit to take part in the battle for Berlin.

In 1948, Zygmunt married Janina Lewinson. In 1939, Janina was a teenager from an affluent Jewish family in Warsaw. Janina Lewinson's family owned a car and lived in a seven-room apartment in Sienna in Warsaw, and her grandfather built a beautiful villa in Konstancin, which was used by the whole family in spring and summer. They had no connection with the communists, nor with religious Jews or Zionists. The Lewinson family were completely assimilated Jewish people, neither parents nor grandparents, nor even great grandparents

spoke Hebrew. They did not consider emigrating to Palestine and regarded Poland as their homeland. Janina's parents had ambitions that she would also become a doctor like her father Szymon and grandfather Aleksander Fryszman. In April 1946, Janina became seriously ill. For the last few months of war she had suffered from tuberculosis. During her convalescence, she moved to Śródborów and became a teacher. After a year, she returned to her family home and worked at the Central Committee of Polish Jews. In 1947, she applied to read journalism at the Warsaw Academy of Political and Social Science, where she met her future husband, Zygmunt by chance at the cinema. Janina and Zygmunt were married for 62 years, and Janina Bauman died in 2009.

In 1948, Janina began working at Film Polski under the direction of Ruta Radkiewiczowa, wife of General Stanisław Radkiewicz, Minister of Public Safety and a senior figure in the Bierut Government. In 1949, their first child Anna was born. In 1950, Zygmunt became one of the youngest majors in the Polish People's Army. In the early 1950s, the Baumans were the model socialist family. They believed in communism and the direction of the Polish state without question, and the state rewarded them with success and recognition.

Janina's book *Winter in the Morning* is a harrowing autobiographical account of her wartime experiences and that of her family and friends under Nazi occupation. She gives a first-hand account of life in the Warsaw ghetto, where she lived for 26 months, her survival in the ghetto before her escape with her mother and younger sister and their life in hiding. Janina's second book outlines her first meeting with and relationship with Zygmunt, their domestic life in Warsaw, post-war reconstruction and communism in Poland, the disillusionment with communism after the death of Stalin, the emergence of a police state in Poland and their forced leaving for Israel and adjusting to life in Leeds.

Janina's father, Szymon Lewinson, was a urologist and Polish Army officer murdered in the Katyń Forest Massacre in 1940. The Katyń Forest Massacre was a series of mass executions of an estimated 22,000 Polish military officers and intellectuals carried out by the Soviet forces and NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, the Soviet secret police) in April and May 1940. Whilst in hiding Janina found herself in the kitchen of a family that were providing her with shelter. The kitchen was described as thoroughly clean, with a freshly scrubbed floor that was covered with old newspapers. As Janina looked at the papers, she had a flash of recognition as she saw her father's name printed in a long column of other names. Janina seized the paper from the floor and desperately tried to make sense of meaning of the list. There were pages and pages of names with dates of birth and military rank. The brief introductory note said that the names were a list of Polish officers murdered by the Soviets and buried in mass graves near the Katyń Forest. The list included both her father and her uncle Jozef. These people were not killed because of any crime or misdemeanour that they had committed but because they were part of category of people that the Soviet occupiers had decided should not be allowed to live. Commentators have suggested that even many years after the war, when it had become widely known who were perpetrators of the Forest massacre, Janina held on to the belief that the Germans had murdered her father.

In an interview published in 1993, Janina explained that she was brought up to think of herself as Polish, she was not brought up as a Jew. Her family were not practising Jews and not particularly religious. It was the Nazis who made her a Jew in the ghetto.

The idea of 'categorical murder' was central to understanding Janina's wartime experiences and was also central to Zygmunt Bauman's argument in *Modernity and the*

Holocaust, which he openly acknowledges in the preface. Bauman's understanding of exclusion in both solid and liquid modernity was that it is based upon an impulse to reduce difference to a simple set of binary categories, with 'outsiders' to be removed or destroyed. In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Bauman was very critical of the ways bureaucracies keep society under control through ruthless and uncompromising forms of categorisation that define sections of the of the population as Other and not fully human.

In the latter part of his life, Bauman was caught up the process of lustration. Lustration was part of the process of truth and reconciliation in Poland following the end of Communist rule (1944–1990). Official records of former communists and members of secret police were publicly identified, and their records were made available to the public. The lustration process impacted on Bauman both professionally and personally following the release of official state documents about his career in the military from 1945 to 1953.

In 1951, Bauman joined the Polish United Workers' Party (the Communist Party). In 1954, whilst studying for his master's degree, Bauman encountered Humanistic Marxists Julian Hochfeld and Adam Schaff, both of whom were to influence his thinking on the nature of socialism. In 1956, he completed his PhD, which was published in Poland under the title: *British Socialism: Sources, Philosophy, Political Doctrine*. Sociology teaching had been re-established in the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Warsaw in 1957, and Bauman had a central role in the development of the department. In 1962, he became the Chair of General Sociology at the University of Warsaw. However, Bauman was not always forthcoming about his activities in Poland before 1953. In January 1968, he formally resigned his membership of the Polish United Workers' Party.

In 2006, the Polish magazine *Biuletyn* published an account of Bauman's activities from the end of the Second World War until his departure from the army in 1953. Drawing upon previously secret files that had been made available by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, the article explained that Bauman had had a successful career in the Korpusu Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego (KBW), the Polish secret service. Bauman was recruited into the security services by Anatol Fejgin who in 1945 became the commander of secret police in the Polish Ministry of Public Security. Like Bauman, Fejgin had escaped the Nazi invasion of Poland by fleeing to the Soviet Union, and in May 1943, he joined the Soviet-sponsored Polish 1st Tadeusz Kosciuszko Infantry Division. At the end of the Stalinist period, he was put on trial for human right abuses and sentenced to 12 years in prison.

The KBW was modelled on the Soviet secret police and was given the task of managing internal and foreign intelligence, engaging in counterintelligence, monitoring governmental and civilian communications and keeping in check all anti-state activity. The KBW also had a role to play in border control and the management of prisons and concentration camps for political prisoners and opponents of the state. The KBW was part of the Ministry of Public Security and its role was to suppress the anti-communist resistance in Poland including the remaining members of the *Armia Krajowa* or Polish Home Army who were the main armed resistance to the occupying Nazi forces during the war. The Polish Home Army organised the 1944 Warsaw Uprising and other attacks against German forces, sabotaging German road and rail transport, assassinated well-known Nazi collaborators and Gestapo officials and supplied intelligence to the Allies. After the war, the Home Army remained loyal to the Polish Government-in-Exile and refused to hand over their weapons to the newly formed Communist regime. Stalin viewed the Polish Home Army as

an obstacle to the successful Soviet takeover of Poland. It is estimated that between 1946 and 1948, 32,477 people were arrested for ‘crimes against the state’, and in 1945–1946, 8,000 death sentences were passed.

The article *Biuletyn* listed the post that Bauman held over the period of his employment in the service:

- Chief instructor in political and education for the Forces Homeland Security.
- Senior Lecturer in political education.
- Reserve Personnel Branch officer.
- Senior instructor in political and educational training for the Department of Political Management Training.
- Head of Department in the Department Political Propaganda Management Training.
- Deputy Chief of Division II of the Department of Political Management Education.
- Head of Department of Propaganda and Agitation Political Board.

The wedding of a KBW officer was not a simple matter. The fiancé had to undergo a detailed medical examination to test for venereal disease and obtain two certificates of ‘morality’ from people whom the army regarded as reliable. In May 1948, the state of Israel was created. For Janina, the creation of the state of Israel offered the possibility of building a distinctively Jewish formed socialism. However, Zygmunt who was still a serving KBW officer rejected this reasoning and did not want to leave Poland.

Bauman had been promoted several times until his dismissal from the service following the 1952 Doctors’ Plot. On 13 January 1952, *Pravda* announced the uncovering of

the Doctors' Plot to murder Stalin and other senior Kremlin leaders. Essentially, the Doctors' Plot was a purge on the medical profession and an anti-Semitic show trial. Initially, Stalin accused nine doctors, six of them Jews; however, the number of arrested grew to 37 through 1952, of whom 28 were doctors and the others family members.

Although there is no record of Bauman's day-to-day activities in the posts listed above, there is a clear historical record of the role of the internal security service during this period. In an interview with Aida Edemariam for *The Guardian* Bauman responded to the points made by historian Bogdan Musial about his activities from 1945 to 1953, without denying the facts. Bauman argued that he became a member of the internal army because the Fourth Division was co-opted of 'suppressing terrorism' inside the country – the equivalent of what today would be called 'the war against terrorism'. Bauman described his role as a form of 'counter-espionage' that every 'good citizen' should be involved in. Specifically, Bauman said that his role was writing political pamphlets for soldiers and he described his role as 'very dull'.

What attracted Bauman to the Communist Party was that Poland was a backward and impoverished country in the early twentieth century and this was aggravated by the Nazi occupation. The Stalinist project in Poland offered vision of a Poland free from poverty and hatred. Post-war Poland had a range of economic and social problems to be dealt, with and in Bauman's view, the Communist Party offered the best solution. The political programme of the Party was the most fitting for the issues which Poland faced. As Bauman explained at the outbreak of the Second World War, Poland was a multi-ethnic society containing a mixture of religious faiths, languages and customs. At the end of the war, the Polish government attempted to unify the nation through a process of Polinisation, the forced assimilation and conversion of