

The life of Jerzy ("Jurek" = diminutive of Jerzy) Lewi (*22/04/1949 Warsaw †30/10/1972 Lund - according to Gaige) belongs to the era of the so-called socialism in Poland (1944-1989) which now and then went through very critical periods (June 1956 – Poznan; Dec. 1970 – Baltic coast; March 1968 ...). Lewi's childhood and early youth - like that of Tomasz Lissowski's - belong to the "era" of Władysław Gomułka, First Secretary of the Party 1956-1970.

Things became also critical in March 1968 owing to the outbreak of the student revolt and an anti-Semitic (specially anti-Jewish) movement which was instigated and controlled by a part of the Communist Party, leading to an extensive purge at first in the party and army, later on in the civilian population (enterprises, high schools) as well. After March 1968 about 30,000 Jewish citizens left Poland, 2-3,000 emigrants felt drawn to Sweden, as our coauthor Feliks Przysuski in summer 1970. The majority had to abandon their Polish citizenship and had no prospects to return to Poland.

Jerzy Lewi was a victim of March 1968 too. Lewi's mother, an ordinary worker in a Warsaw restaurant, after hard wartime experiences, emigrated to Israel in 1968. Jerzy who since his early youth had grown up without a father obtained his school-leaving exam at the same gymnasium as Tomasz Lissowski, only 4 years earlier. He was not a high-flier at school and he didn't pass the exams for the Warsaw university (chemistry).

But he had a grant for sports and he was useful in his club "Maraton" Warsaw [which was supported by the PAX organization, a grouping of "officially tolerated" Catholics who at the same time supported the party]. At least the chess life of those days in Poland was dreamlike. Furthermore "Maraton" was in good contact with the chess club in Lund (with Calle Erlandsson as a key figure!).

Maybe this as well as the general political climate in the country drove Jerzy not to return to Poland after the zonal tournament in Athens 1969, in the end he landed in Sweden. After this "criminal" act Jerzy was naturally declared an unperson in Poland.

Unfortunately Lewi's career in Sweden collapsed. He failed to study mathematics, he started to drink and possibly to take drugs (there are contradictory statements on that). He turned weaker and weaker in chess and suffered from depression. As Calle said: "The external world was quite uninteresting for him." Somebody else claimed: "He was as near to suicide as anyone could be."

Nobody knows what happened in November 1972. One night Jerzy probably walked along the motorway near Lund and was killed by a car. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Malmö.

According to the general opinion he was a super talent in chess. Four times junior champion, once senior champion, and winner of the Lublin tournament. At the same time a very difficult character, without close friends, without any idea what to do with his life outside chess.