

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Today we are celebrating the 77th anniversary
of the University of Lodz.**

This 77th anniversary comes in a year that has been marked, marked by war, a terrible war in Ukraine. This dramatic event causes us to talk more often about our past, present and future, looking back at what was and thinking about what will be.

Every year we remember the date of 24 May 1945, and rightly so, but we should also remember that the history of academic life of Lodz goes deeper into the past, and this is thanks to the figure of Professor Teodor Vieweger, who we talk about rarely, perhaps too rarely.

It was thanks to Professor Vieweger – Rector of the Free Polish University (Polish: Wolna Wszechnica Polska), a biologist who had studied at the Universities of Liège and Brussels – that a branch of the Free Polish University was established in Lodz in 1928. It was then that academic life began here, and it has lasted for almost 100 years now. University of Lodz, established just after the World War II, thanks to Professor Viweger continues the tradition of the Free Polish University, which before the war was called „the seventh university” and „the forge of progressive social thought”.

Quoting the historian, Krzysztof Baranowski, „after the end of hostilities, Rector Vieweger headed the Organising Committee of the State University of Lodz and led the creation of the University of Lodz. It is known that even during the occupation, under the supervision of Professor Teodor Vieweger, the Senate of the University worked in conspiracy; members of the Senate, later characterising the underground activities of the University, wrote: „The authorities of the Free Polish University, under the direction of the indefatigable Rector Vieweger, took part in the preparation of the principles of educational reform, drafted a number of memoranda on the organisation of universities (after Poland had regained its longed-for independence). Professor Teodor Vieweger, thanks to whom this academic succession could take place, was not able to become the first rector of the new Polish university. These plans were thwarted by a tragic car accident on 22 May 1945. However, we must not forget that it is also thanks to him that we can meet here today, that the first buildings of the University of Lodz were built, that wonderful scientists from Vilnius, Lvov, Warsaw were brought to Lodz (the organisation of the famous temporary Lodz shelter for scientists in the Monopol Hotel), scientists who started to change the landscape of the voivodeship capital – the scientific, cultural and social one.

We are very fortunate to be able to boast about two great scientists who stood at the dawn of the University of Lodz. We pay tribute to Professor Tadeusz Kotarbinski regularly. We still represent the same values that he used to express in his works, we do good work, we walk hand in hand, we do not apply philosophy of the moment, but a philosophy based on our unchanging values – truth and freedom. I am convinced that Professor Vieweger followed the same set of rules in his life, he worked tirelessly (a tireless rector, modern, with great authority – these are the qualities that are most often mentioned next to his name by historians). In connection with today’s festivities, we wanted you to get familiar with the figure of Professor Vieweger – you can read the text about him on the University of Lodz website.

Now, after all these years, our values (we have indicated them in the new strategy of the

UL), which are courage, commitment, respect and cooperation, have allowed us to rise to the challenge when our eastern neighbours, our brothers and sisters, needed help. As the Rector of the University of Lodz, I was proud to see the enormous commitment of our community in the difficult moments of the pandemic in previous years. Our cooperation and commitment when we had to adapt to new conditions in an extremely short period of time. In the recent months, in turn, we have shown that we put our moral code into practice also in the face of the war in Ukraine, in the face of the barbaric assault by the Russian Federation on a free, sovereign country.

The help that the academic community of the University of Lodz has provided to people fleeing Ukraine is worthy of the highest respect. You – employees, students, doctoral students and university graduates – deserve great thanks for this. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank you sincerely for your work, your dedication and your hearts. Right next door, there are families of Ukrainian students living nearby, in our academic campus. They have found safety and care here. We have had dozens of researchers from Ukraine working with us for a month now, and we have provided them with the same conditions as Polish researchers. New Ukrainian students study with us, for whom we have very quickly created a new study programme. Other guests from Ukraine attend language courses organised by us. And yet this is not our only help. I know that some of you hosted our guests from Ukraine at your homes, supported them, helped them with the formalities, and were simply there when it was most needed. What is more – you are still there because it is needed also now. At this point, I would also like to thank our local authorities (especially the Governor) for their help and support for the University of Lodz in these difficult moments.

Hoping that the war in Ukraine will end as soon as possible, it must be made clear that the University of Lodz community has successfully passed yet another exam, in the humanities – a practical exam.

Yes, we can look back with pride at our past, to the Free Polish University established in Lodz in 1928, at the beginnings of the University, at rectors Viweger and Kotarbinski. We have passed the test in the present.

**However, dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
we can also look to our future with pride.**

Today, with great pleasure and genuine satisfaction, I would like to officially inform you that the University of Lodz has joined the European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC) – one of the alliances of European universities. We will officially receive the nomination in June at a meeting of all members of the alliance at the University of Oulu.

Thanks to its presence in UNIC, the University of Lodz is entering a new era of functioning and conducting research, academic exchange and internationalisation of education. Our students will have a choice – on a daily basis – to participate either in classes in Bohum, Molmö, Cork, Rotterdam, Zagreb, Bilbao, Koč, Oulu or precisely Liège – where Rector Vieweger was educated (history repeats itself). The quality of research and education will reach a new level, which I hope will also translate into our position among classical universities in Europe.

University of Lodz has long sought to become part of a European alliance of universities, and I am happy to be able to announce this today, at a difficult time for European unity, also in view of the ongoing war.

On the occasion of the University of Lodz Day, I wish our academic community all the best, and I wish our Ukrainian brothers and sisters that we could meet as soon as possible in their safe and liberated homeland and open a new chapter in our cooperation.

(Sława Ukrainji) Veritas et Libertas.

Thank you.