



THE BLACK BOX TREASURES (#25)

There is an interesting term called the “black box theory”. It speaks about an object which can be analyzed in terms of its input and output, but there is no knowledge of its internal workings. Many of us probably don’t know that in our Archives here in Rome we have more than 200 black boxes. Some of those treasures have seen the light of day in many publications, but there are still others waiting to be seen...

(There will be a great fortune! #25)

The life of Br. Casimir Zeglen was certainly fascinating, but at the same time plagued with

continuous struggles and fights for his invention. Almost all of his letters, which we have in the Archives, contain a different episode from his life and analyzing it would take dozens of editions of the BBT. After the first public presentation of the bulletproof vest Br. Casimir began his journey: first to New York and then to Europe looking for funds and sponsors who might be interested in his invention. Unfortunately, it seems that all those efforts did not yield the hoped for results. Moreover, because of his incompetent way of dealing with another inventor from Poland, Zeglen signed a contract which favoured more the man who was asked just to build a machine for mass production of the vest. It is true that this inventor, who was called the “Polish Edison”, did a great job in creating a proper machine, but we know that he also, some time later, attributed the invention of the bulletproof vest itself as his own. So Br. Casimir had to fight for the rights to ownership. At the same time he was traveling across Europe looking for potential investors.

It seemed that finally a breakthrough came from Russia in 1905. The government was interested in purchasing the vest. Zeglen went to Saint Petersburg to meet with Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich. Even though they signed a contract so desired by Zeglen, because of the war in Russia at the time, the production of the vest never was started. Unfortunately, also in 1905 Br. Zeglen received notice of his removal from the Congregation. In the letter written in St. Petersburg on May 29, 1905, he asked the General: “Is it true that I was really erased from the list of the members of the Congregation? I have no intention to leave the Congregation and all the religious duties I will begin to fulfill once I finish the case involving the invention” (ACRR 38814).

Today I would like to share with you the last letter of Zeglen which we have in our archives. From it we can learn that Casimir was still fighting... The last sentence written by him to Fr. Paul Smolikowski is this one.... “Great fortune will be had and the Congregation will get enough” (ACRR 38819). It seems that the fortune from the bulletproof vest never came. It is more probable that some “fortune” came from another of Zeglen’s invention: bulletproof tires and the company “Zeglen Tires & Rubber Co.”, however we don’t have any letters from that time. (The picture above presents the tires invented by Casimir Zeglen; from *Dziennik Chicagoski*, November 29, 1919).

(Casimir Zeglen., C.R., Letter to Paul Smolikowski, C.R., dated November 28, 1913, ACRR 38819)

Manchester, November 28, 1913

My Dear Father,

I'm writing to you to report that I'm still alive and I have been fighting for my inventions. Without any doubt, I have a great thing in my hands and I will try to make it even better.

I have dealings with the largest companies in the world and access to the great people who welcome me with respect.

I do not want to boast; I'm just exhausted by life and of fighting!

I am and I feel to be the son of Tobias, who sent me into the world from Lviv in 1890. My most dearest Father, you are this Tobias!

I assure you that I have not lost faith or respect for religion, but faith helps to me live. I'm crying and fighting!

Your humble son,

C. Zeglen

*Great fortune will be had and the Congregation will get enough.



MOSLEY HOTEL, MANCHESTER.

TELEPHONES:-

HOTEL { 4986.
3263. } CITY
MANAGER 2167.

Piccadilly.

Manchester Nov. 28th 1913

Najprzewielebniejszy

Gjrec.

P. Smolts

Donoszę że ryję
i walczę o obywatelstwo
dla swych pomysłów.

Bez wątpienia ić mam
nieco doświadczenia w reku, i
takowż w ciągu udoskonalam

ku mojemu a durnieniu.

Stawunki ~~prawdy~~ a naj
mam a najwiękzymi
firmami w świecie,
dostęp mam do najwy
szych osób które przy
mija mię a szacunkiem.

Nie chciej się chwalić,
jestem żywi i niekany
życiemi i walką!

~~Wszystko~~ i czuje się
Tobiaszem kłosem
pnieć mię w świat
ze Włocława 1890.

~~Wszystko~~ Tobiaszem jesteś
ty mojej najukochańszej
Ajcie!

Zapewniam Ajca
i ani wiary ani
szacunku dla religi
nie stracitem, awsum
ta mi porażka do
życia - placze a walce!

Pokorny syn C. Żegleu