'I live with the issues of the country'. A political profile of Jerzy Giedroyc as seen through his personal archive

Prior to his death, Jerzy Giedroyc (1906–2000) resolved that his so-called personal archive should be put in order by Mr Leonard Unger, who, under the pen-name of ‘Brukselczyk’ had cooperated with “Kultura” monthly from the early 1970s. The archive, comprised of 14 files, contains press cuttings and typescripts of Giedroyc’s speeches, dated between 1965 and 1999 and often unpublished. The materials collected are diverse both from a formal point of view, and by type and topic. The editor of “Kultura” gathered press cuttings from dailies and weeklies published in Poland, such as, for instance, “Polityka”, “Tygodnik Powszechny”, “Przegląd”, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, “Rzeczpospolita”, “Tygodnik Solidarność”, but also, previously, “Żołnierz Wolności”, “Trybuna”, “Perspektywy”; from the Polish expatriate press, for example, “Dziennik Związkowy”, “Głos Poranny”; and from the titles published clandestinely in Poland, inter alia reprints from “Kultura”. A separate source of cuttings was provided by the foreign press, including “Le Figaro”, “Lietuvos Aidas”, “Time”, “Newsweek”, “Literaturnaja Gazieta”, “Die Welt”, “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, “Pravda” and “Dagens Nyheter”. Following the aggregation of the texts, in which I was involved at the invitation of Mr Unger, it transpired that they dealt with the following issues: contemporary history, Polish-German Relations, the USSR, Ukraine, Lithuania, Church-State relations, the reforms of the social and political systems and the costs of the transformation in Poland, the condition of the media, the political elites, the reforms of the defence system and the military, assessments of ‘Solidarnosc’ and the reception of “Kultura”.

We may assume that, on changing to the role of author of the “Editor’s notes” in mid-90s, Giedroyc turned his collecting habit into the duty of searching for source information and regarded the press as a sui generis backdrop for his own comments. Such a thesis may be proven by way of a comparative analysis.

The set of topics described projects Giedroyc in an interesting light, as a politician (the undertaking of this thread in his biography would be a worthwhile exercise) who believed in the impact of the medium which he had created at Maisons-Laffitte.