

**Address by The Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC at the launch of Patryk Pleskot book:**

**Polska – Australia – “Solidarnosc”**

**Poland – Australia – “Solidarity”**

**Seweryn Ozdowski’s biography**

When Sev Ozdowski and his family arrived in Sydney in 1975, he did not even speak any English. Initially, he stayed at a migrant hostel. Despite all the obstacles, he soon earned a doctoral degree in sociology law and continued a career as a public servant. 25 years after his arrival, the federal parliament appointed Sev the Human Rights Commissioner - a position that combines the competences of the Polish ombudsman with the rights exercised by ministers and courts. No other post-war generation emigrant from the People’s Republic of Poland has reached such a high position in the public administration of a Western country.

Such an exceptional career is merely one of the reasons that makes Sev a truly remarkable figure. His résumé blends with the history of both Poland and Australia: from the death of Stalin, through the “Solidarity” era, to the challenges of the contemporary world. The migration path that Sev followed is a valuable source of information about the specific nature of the passport policy pursued by the political and state apparatus of communist Poland. His Australian life, in turn, creates an image of the Antipodes, spanning from the 1970s to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century - an image that is truly exotic for the Polish reader. Sev’s fate is also equivalent to that of an immigrant: an eventful and multidimensional story that may serve as a point of departure for analyzing practical applications of migration theories. In turn, Sev’s political involvement in the life of Australia’s Polish community and his support for “Solidarity” should be of interest to scholars researching the history of the Polish diaspora, as well as the history of the Polish opposition of the 1980s.

But the memories of Sev Ozdowski, presented in the form of nine chronologically and problematically structured chapters, are also simply a fascinating story of a remarkable figure’s life. The book reveals why Seweryn was wearing a bandage during the Poznań revolution of 1956 and why he completed a welder’s course; it shows scientific benefits of a sauna session, takes the reader on a journey in the search of sapphires, offers the opportunity to spend the holiday season with a family of American Mormons and shows how to sell “Solidarity” T-shirts in a shopping mall. Those are only a few of the stories Sev Ozdowski shares with the readers.