

NOVENSIA 32

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Studia i materiały
pod redakcją naukową

Piotra Dyczka

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Mateusz Żmudziński

LUDWIKA PRESS IN THE LIGHT OF DOCUMENTS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW

Abstract: The archives of the University of Wrocław preserve documents confirming Ludwika Press's graduation with very good results in her studies in Classical Philology and Classical Archaeology, also showing the beginnings of her professional career. Initially, she worked as a clerk, and later as an assistant. In addition, there are preserved documents confirming her various activities and opinions about her, including an excellent one written by prof. E. Bulanda.

Keywords: history of archaeology, University of Wrocław, archives, Ludwika Press

The archives of the University of Wrocław hold many documents which today, years later, shed a significant light not only on the life of the university, but also on the people who once worked there. Ludwika Press [Fig. 1] was one of those figures who studied and worked at the University shortly after the Second World War. She was soon noticed as a person with a bright academic future, and indeed, she would later move to Warsaw where she would write a doctoral thesis. At the University of Warsaw, she climbed the ladder of her academic career, eventually obtaining the title of professor. The documents preserved in Wrocław show us a young woman full of enthusiasm who, in the difficult times of the post-war period, in the face of adversity, persevered in the pursuit of her goals. She also managed not to compromise herself in anything that might later tarnish her beautiful life story. According to Piotr Dyczek, the Wrocław period was particularly important to her.¹ It was in Wrocław that she studied English philology and later, classical archaeology. As deportation to Kazakhstan had interrupted her studies in Lwów, it was in Wrocław that she pursued her ambitious plans a few years later. While having to work for a living and care for her sick mother, she was able to complete her two courses of study with very good results. Documents related to Ludwika Press can be found in her personal file (138/Press), but some scattered documents of a lesser importance have also been collected in the file of Professor Edmund Bulanda and in the file devoted to the department of classical archaeology. Ludwika Press's personal file contains a folder with a set of documents from 1949–1952 and another from 1983.

At that time, she could not write about her dramatic war experiences, i.e., the loss of her father, a military doctor murdered by the Soviets, or the exile. In her biography, Ludwika Press euphemistically wrote: "From 1940, I stayed with my mother in the Soviet Union, where we quietly went through the turmoil of war" (49/138/Press). During her exile in Kazakhstan, she worked in

¹ DYCZEK 2005, pp. 6–7.



Fig. 1. Academic staff ID of Ludwika Press, from document no. 3/138/Press, 1950 (photo by M. Żmudziński)

a sewing shop and in a Polish school. After the war, Ludwika Press returned from exile, first to Szczecin and, a month later, to Wrocław. On 25 May 1950 (1–2/138/Press²), she filled in a personal application questionnaire for a position as a junior assistant at the Chair of Classical Archaeology. At that time she lived in Wrocław at 33, Grunwaldzka Street, first in flat no. 1, and later, from 1952, in flat no. 2. Her application contains an opinion by Professor Bulanda. He wrote: “I request the appointment of MA L. Pressówna as a junior assistant at the Chair of Classical Archaeology. Her work and exam results to date are the best evidence of the candidate’s talents”. Document no. 3/138/Press is a personnel master record issued by the personnel department of the University of Wrocław. It shows that in the years 1944–1948, she worked in the youth department of the National Council. From 1949 to 1950, she was employed by the Examination Commission. As her place of residence, she declared Lwów until 1 September 1939, and for the occupation period, the Soviet Union. During the war, she was a member of the Union of Polish Patriots. References to her employment were given by Prof. J. Krzyżanowski and I. Golonka. Document no. 5–12/138/Press is her personal questionnaire. It includes information on her place and date of birth: 8.07.1922, in Prużana, Poland, in a family of intellectual workers. She describes herself as a classical archaeologist and mentions English, Russian and German as the languages she knows. But it is almost certain that she also knew ancient languages, and it is very likely that, although she did not mention them, she also learned other languages at a communicative level during her deportation, which was quite common in those circumstances. During her stay in the USSR, i.e., from 1940 to 1946, she was a member of the ZPP (Union of Polish Patriots). About her father, she writes that he was a doctor and that he died, followed by a question mark. Her mother worked as a secretary in the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics after the war. Ludwika Press was exiled to Kazakhstan, in Ajagur, in the region of Semipalatinsk. In 1946 she joined the ZPP, and in 1949, the Polish Teachers’ Union and the Women’s Council. In 1950, she became a member of the Club of Democratic Academic Workers of the Universities. The same kind of information can be found in the next personal questionnaire she was required to complete (13–20/138/Press). Document no. 22/138/Press is her application letter dated 4.10.1949. In it, she explains that her sources of income are teaching (probably English), hosting radio programmes and writing articles

² Archival documents are numbered by page ranges, showing the number of pages in a given document.

for newspapers. In Kazakhstan, she worked as a knitter (i.e., seamstress) until 1945, and from 1945 to 1946, as a Polish teacher in a Polish school. From 1944 to 1948, she worked in the youth department of the National Council. Document no. 28/138/Press is a statement by her mother confirming her daughter's identity. At the time, due to the shortage of identity cards, wartime unrest and repatriation, such practices were common. Document no. 30/138/Press is a certificate issued by the Master's Examination Commission of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Wrocław. It is dated 14.12.1949. It mentions that "The Master's Examination Commission certifies that Ludwika Pressówna passed the final examination in English philology on 18 November and was awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy". The document is signed by the chairman of the board, Professor E. Bulanda. It informs us that she passed the final examination in English philology, and it is interesting to note that the professor who signed it, E. Bulanda, was a classical archaeologist who would later have a significant influence on the development of Ludwika Press's professional career. At that time indeed, he was chairman of the Master's Examination Commission of the Faculty of Humanities. Document no. 31–32/138/Press is Ludwika Press's Master's degree in English Philology [Figs. 2 and 3]. Here, she appears exceptionally under the name Blanka Ludwika Press. The document informs that she passed the final exam with distinction. Documents nos. 33/138/Press and 34/138/Press are copies of the same Master's diploma. Document no. 35/138/Press is of particular interest to us: it is a copy of Ludwika Press's diploma in

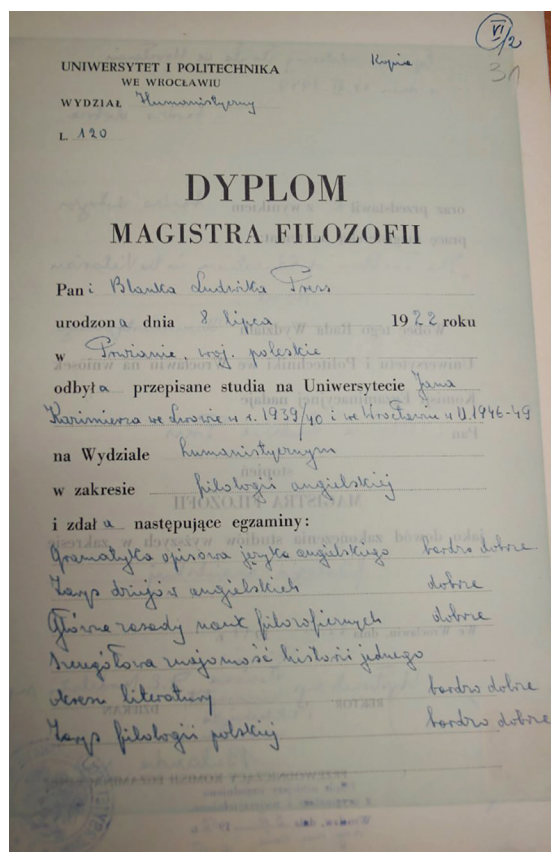


Fig. 2. Master's degree in English philology, *recto* (31/138/Press) (photo by M. Żmudziński)

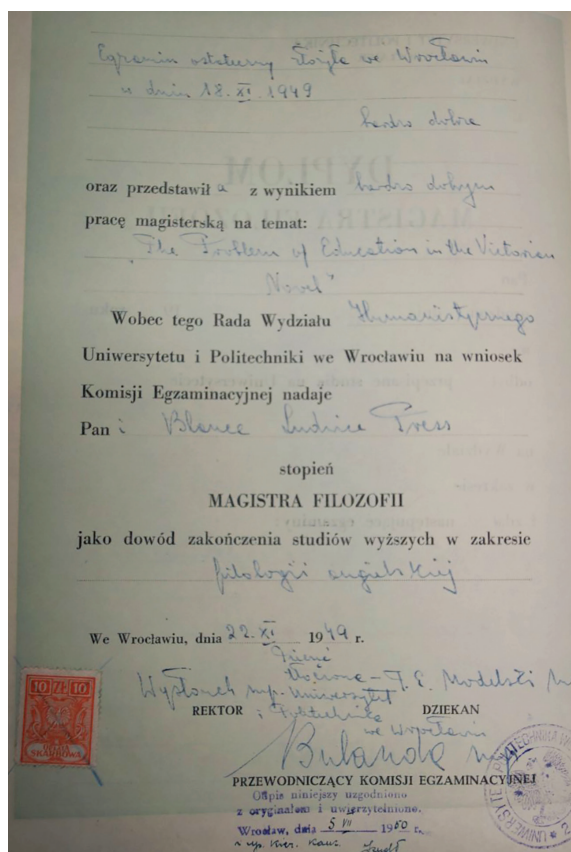


Fig. 3. Master's degree in English philology, *verso* (32/138/Press) (photo by M. Żmudziński)

classical archaeology [Fig. 4]. According to the information presented, she did her postgraduate studies in classical archaeology at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Wrocław between 1947 and 1951 and obtained a Master of Philosophy degree. The document, dated 4 February 1952, was signed by the Vice-Rector J. Mydlarski and Dean M. Lutmanowa. Document no. 36/138/Press is a copy of the latter document. Document no. 37/138/Press, her work certificate, informs us that during her studies, she was an editor of *Mały Ślązak*, a youth supplement to the daily newspaper *Naprzód Dolnośląski*, as well as *Mały Wędrowiec*, a children's supplement to the *Wrocławski Kurier Ilustrowany*. She worked there from 16.07.1947 to 30.07.1948. In an opinion about her, we read that “she has distinguished herself by her texts. They have been edited in a sympathetic and engaging way, both in prose and verse”. Document no. 38–39/138/Press shows an employment contract of 16.10.1949 concerning the employment of Ludwika Press in the administration of the University of Wrocław, where she worked in the examination commission. Document no. 40/138/Press is signed by the administrative director of the University of Wrocław. According to this document, she was employed to teach from 16 October 1949 to 31 December 1949. She is mentioned as a trainee employee acting as a clerk in the Examination Commission of the Faculty of Humanities. Document no. 41/138/Press is an extension of this employment contract. These documents show that Ludwika Press sought to work legally, honestly and in a stable way. She worked during her studies so as not to be dependent on her mother and, later, probably even to support her. She also supplemented her income by giving private lessons. Considering that this is the story of a woman who was simultaneously following two completely different study programmes full-time, under the post-war regime where attendance was strictly controlled, we can see what an organised and hard-working person she was. Document no. 42/138/Press [Fig. 5] is worth noting. It is Professor Bulanda's excellent opinion of Ludwika Press. As early as 24 May 1950, the eminent classical archaeologist who, before the war, had been rector of the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów, wrote about her: “She is an extraordinarily gifted person, extremely conscientious, which guarantees that not only will she perform her duties properly, but that, after

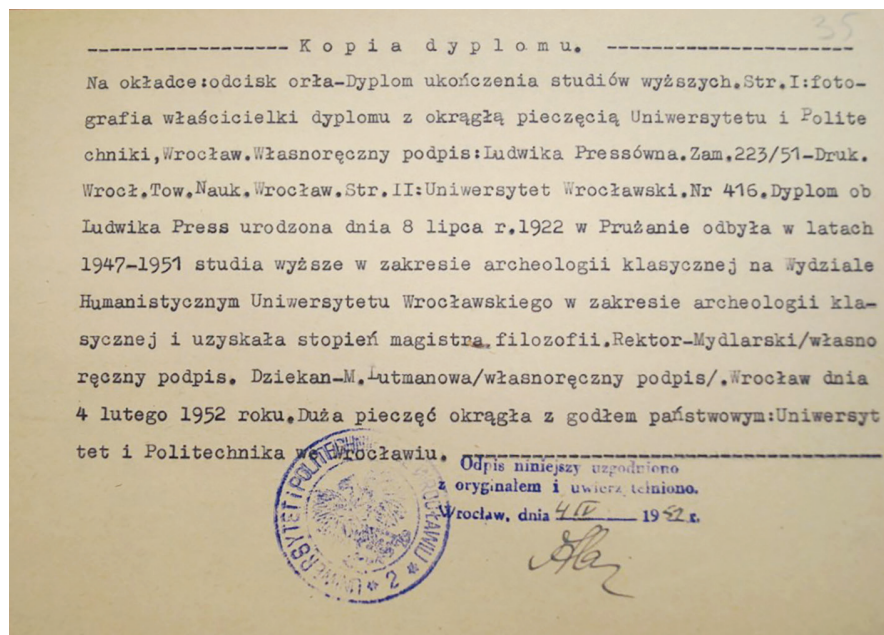


Fig. 4. Master's degree in Archaeology, copy (35/138/Press)
(photo by M. Żmudziński)

completing her present studies, she will write a doctoral thesis". The following information found about her is a natural consequence of this opinion. It appears in the minutes of the meeting of the Council of the Faculty of Humanities (43/138/Press) of 28.06.1950 [Fig. 6]. The document is a request from the head of the Department of Classical Archaeology to appoint her as a junior assistant at the Chair of Classical Archaeology from 1.08.1950 to 31.08.1951, charging her with 30 hours of teaching per week. The employment request was passed unanimously. The document was signed by Dean T. Modelski. The next document in this collection (44/138/Press) is the

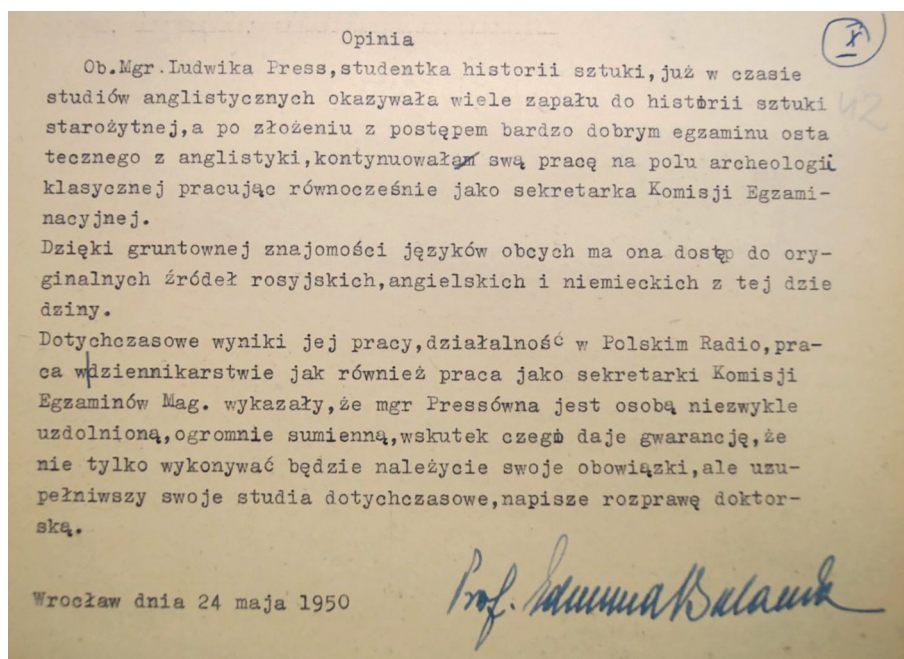


Fig. 5. Opinion by Professor E. Bulanda (42/138/Press)
(photo by M. Żmudziński)

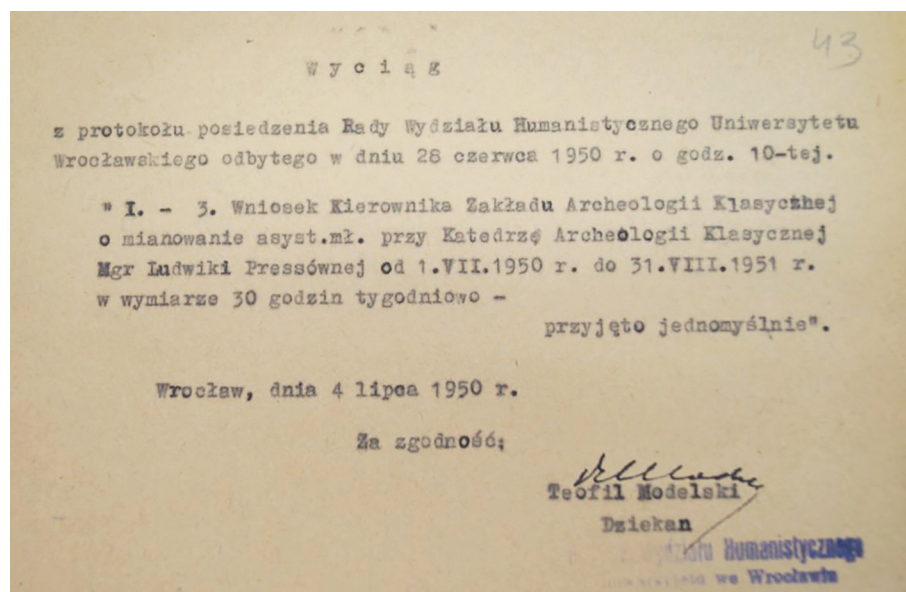


Fig. 6. Extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Faculty of Humanities Council
(43/138/Press) (photo by M. Żmudziński)

Appointment of Ludwika Press to work at the University and Polytechnic in Wrocław from 1 July 1950 as a young assistant at the Chair of Classical Archaeology [Fig. 7]. This document was signed by the rector. The next document (45/138/Press), is a copy of the latter. Document no. 46/138/Press is her appointment, with her consent, to work at the University and the Polytechnic from 1 September 1950 to 31 August 1951. At that time, the two academic institutions formed a single organisational unit. Then comes her oath. The formula, standard at the time, might seem embarrassing today: it was written in the masculine, as if it were taken by a man. The person who took the oath pledged to serve the professor to whom he or she reported in the field of scientific and pedagogical work, and to follow his or her official instructions. Document no. 48/138/Press is a letter from Prof. K. Majewski, dated 17.05.1951, to the Ministry of Higher Education and Science with a request to employ Ludwika Press as an assistant from 1.09.1951. In his opinion about her, he wrote: "She is a competent and hard-working person whom I intend to turn into a researcher. She is writing her master's thesis under my direction". Document no. 49/138/Press is another curriculum vitae, and document no. 50/138/Press is a description of Ludwika Press's course of study in classical archaeology.

In a letter dated 28.08.1951 (51/138/Press), we find a resolution of the Council of the Faculty of Humanities dated 27.06.1951 to assign her the duties of deputy assistant at the Chair of Classical Archaeology for 36 hours per week from 1.09.1951. A letter dated 18.12.1951 (52/138/Press) attests her appointment from 1.09.1951 as a contract employee in the Chair of Classical Archaeology with the obligation to work 22 hours per week. The next document (53/138/Press) is also an appoint-

Fig. 7. Appointment (employment) of Ludwika Press to work at the University of Wrocław (44/138/Press) (photo by M. Żmudziński)

ment of Ludwika Press to the Chair of Classical Archaeology of the Faculty of Philosophy and History of the University of Wrocław. The next document (54/138/Press) is a copy of a letter dated 25.01.1952 from the Ministry of Higher Education and Science to the Rector of the University of Wrocław, in which the Ministry gives its approval for the employment of Ludwika Press from 1.09.1951 as an assistant at the Chair of Classical Archaeology. With the approval of the Ministry, the Rector could employ her in the requested position. In a letter of 2 February 1952 (55/138/Press), we find information that on 1 September 1952, the rector appointed Ludwika Press to the position of deputy assistant at the Chair of Classical Archaeology. The functions of the employee were specified in a letter of 2 February 1952 (56/138/Press). Her duties included 6 hours of teaching, 8 hours of work related to the organisation of teaching, and at least 8 hours of research per week. The following document (57/138/Press), of 22 February 1952, confirms that she was appointed with the obligation to work 22 hours per week. The following document (58/138/Press) is an interesting one. It shows the brutal changes that took place in the structure of universities during Stalinism. Like in the Soviet academic system, Archaeology was replaced by Material Culture, and the chairs of archaeology were linked to other institutions. In this document dated 4.04.1952, the head of the Group of Chairs of History of Material Culture of the Bolesław Bierut University of Wrocław, prof. W. Hołubowicz asks the Rectorate to assign Citizen Press Ludwika, assistant at the Department of Classical Archeology, from the 8th to the 7th job category from March 1, 1952 after obtaining her master's degree in classical archeology. The following document directly related to Ludwika Press is a much later one: it is her application, dated 22 February 1983, for a certificate in order to obtain a jubilee reward at the University of Warsaw. In it, she writes: "I graduated from the University of Wrocław and started working here in the Master's Examination Commission (1949–1950), then as a junior assistant in the Chair of Classical Archeology headed by profesor E. Bulanda. In 1952, I started postgraduate studies (doctoral studies) at the University of Warsaw". In response, she received a work certificate (60/138/Press). On 3 March 1983, the head of the archives of the University of Wrocław confirmed that Ludwika Press had been employed from 16.10.1949 to 31.08.1952, lately as an assistant. The contract was terminated upon expiry of the period for which it had been concluded [Fig. 8].

UNIwersytet WROCLAWSKI
im. BOLESŁAWA BIERUTA
50-137 Wrocław, Pl. Uniwersytecki 1

Wrocław, dnia 3. marca 1983 r.

Nr AA-151/83

ŚWIADECTWO PRACY

Stwierdza się, że Ob. Ludwika P r e s s
(nazwisko i imiona)

urodzony(a) 8. lipca 1929 roku syn/córka Donata
(dzień miesiąc rok)

był(a) zatrudniony(a) w Uniwersytecie Wrocławskim od dnia 16. października 1949 r.
do dnia 31. sierpnia 1952 r.

Ostatnio pracował(a) na stanowisku zastępcy asystenta. Rozwiązanie umowy
o pracę nastąpiło z upływem czasu, na jaki umowa została zawarta.
JD/MS

m. p.

Kierownik Archiwum
Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego
dr Józef Drożdż

ZOUW.

Fig. 8. Work certificate of Ludwika Press
at the University of Wrocław
(photo by M. Żmudziński)

Mentions of Ludwika Press and her signatures can also be found on certain documents concerning various types of works carried out at the university. These are, among others, minutes of examinations where she was involved in the examination board, an application for permission to travel to England, minutes of various meetings and a library inventory (for example W II-52-131 of 30.06.1951). They testify to her commitment and conscientious work of organisation as well as her participation in the cataloguing work. As can be seen, she treated her oath of fair work under the supervision of a professor very responsibly.

An image of Ludwika Press emerges from the documents presented above, firstly as a young student, then a graduate. We see her successively obtain a master's degree in English philology, then in classical archaeology. All the time, she also does odd jobs for a living. Over time, she manages to find a stable employment as an assistant at the Chair of Classical Archaeology. She continues her education and spreads her wings under the supervision of prof. E. Bulanda, K. Majewski and W. Hołubowicz. The first two were classical archaeologists, the third was specialised in the Polish Middle Ages. Each of them could teach her in a different perspective, following different working methods. They were also completely different personalities, with different political views. Fortunately, in Wrocław, after years of exile in Kazakhstan, Ludwika Press could find the opportunity to develop, thrive and become an assistant at a Polish university. She was not broken by exile, hunger, poverty, hard work in the steppes of Kazakhstan, the loss of her father or Stalinism. It would be unfair not to mention these circumstances, as they command respect. Ludwika Press continued her career at the University of Warsaw, where she received the title of professor. As can be seen from the archival documents presented above, such a development of events was planned many years earlier, in Wrocław. She had to show extraordinary courage to survive exile, not to give up on her dreams and realise them, first in Wrocław, then in Warsaw, in the fields of ruins that both cities were after the war. The documents presented above show that despite her dramatic biography, Ludwika Press pursued her planned goals, followed the path of knowledge, and loved archaeology, which she placed in the centre of her life. Unfortunately, the official documents presented above do not show her from a private point of view, as the good, helpful, kind and cultivated person who was to be remembered.

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DYCZEK 2005

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