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# Stories of a Dollhouse

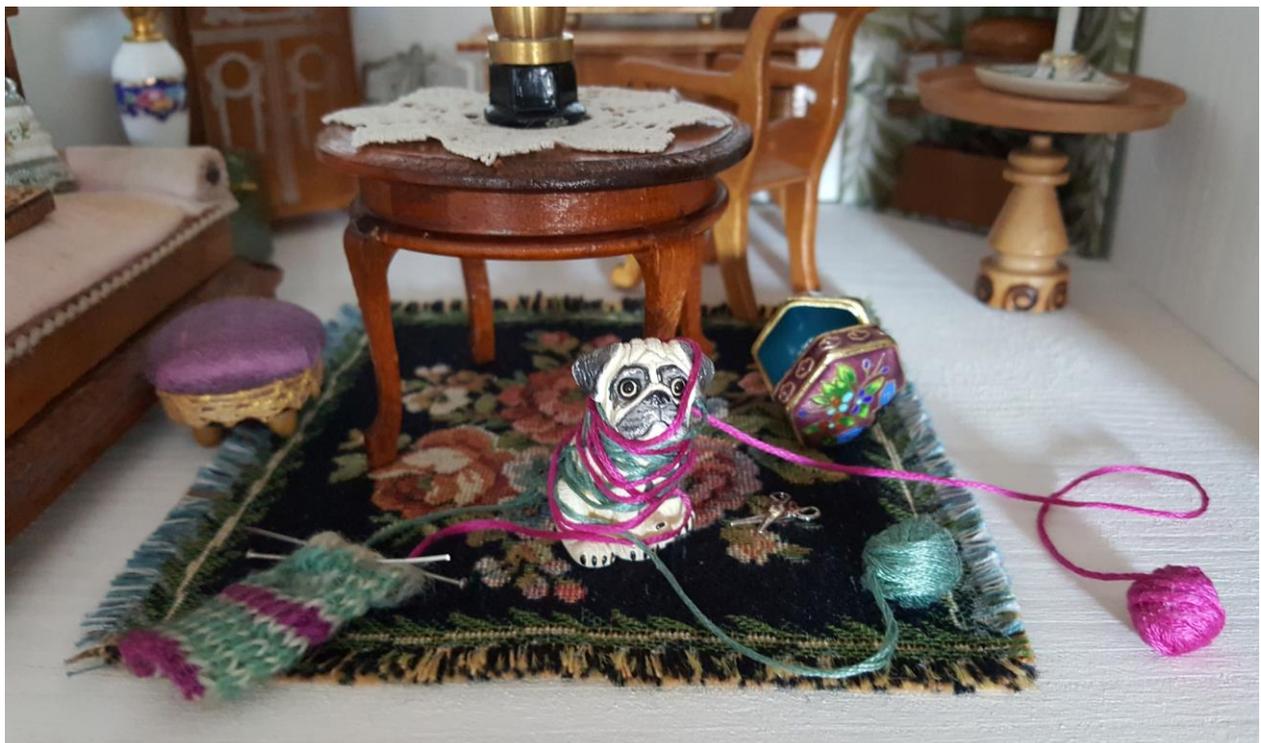
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Exploring our Family  
Memory and Traditions

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## Zag, the Dog

1921



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Never make a promise that can't be kept! This is what Walenty Książyk had in mind when he faced the obligation to deliver to his son. The terms had been agreed when Leon had turned his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If he passed the exam to enter the *gymnasium*, he would get a puppy.

Józefa was not enthusiast with the idea of her husband raising a pet in the centre of Warsaw. She had grown in the countryside and she knew about pet-related constraints. Plus there was a dog tax to pay and whatever health and care costs that might fall.

### ► A Diplomatic Dog

At this time, Walenty was working for the French Embassy and he had connections in many diplomatic circles. A British diplomat couldn't bring his pet back to the UK because of strict local rabies regulations. He had proposed his four-leg friend for adoption, explaining that the dog spoke only English but liked Polish pierogis.

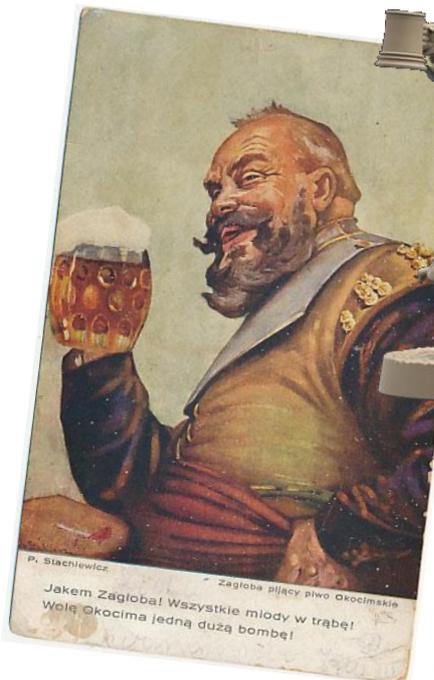
To convince the future owner, the dog was given with a full collection of Joseph Conrad works. The books were published in English, a familiar working language for Walenty. He was a book hoarder and decently, he couldn't refuse such bonanza! He took the books and got the dog as a bonus.

The two Książyk boys aged 10 and 8 wanted a big dog with much hair and a fierce bark. They got a small dog with no hair and a muffled woof. The new dog was an 18-month bulldog puppy.

### ► A Literary Dog

The bulldog puppy was named Zag, a diminutive for Zagłoba – the hero of Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy* books. Zagłoba is a very popular fictional character who appears in movies, gives name to restaurants, sponsors many products and has even some streets named after him. He is a convivial, sincere and loyal fellow. He likes good food, strong beer and pretty women. Zagłoba boasts about his imaginary exploits but he never fails in combat. This uncommon profile is also a vocal patriot and a brilliant strategist.

In all respects, Zag looked like Zagłoba. The puppy had short legs, a protruding belly, a noisy presence, a playful temper, an unsatisfied curiosity and a permanent need of attention. Zag gained an unchallenged reputation for snoring loudly, slobbering everywhere and occasionally farting in the presence of distinguished guests.



## ► A Wild Dog

The boys were delighted. Małgorzata, the older (and unique) sister was a cat lover. She claimed to be allergic to dog hair – certainly a trick to skip the chore of dog walking. Józefa, the lady of the house, had anticipated some troubles. She was not disappointed. In the kitchen, the maid Bożena reported a series of offenses that included serial robberies. She declared many times that she would throw in the towel and leave the house if this *rojber, zynder ejber, frechowny kejter* wasn't stopped (she spoke some kind of unidentified Western dialect).

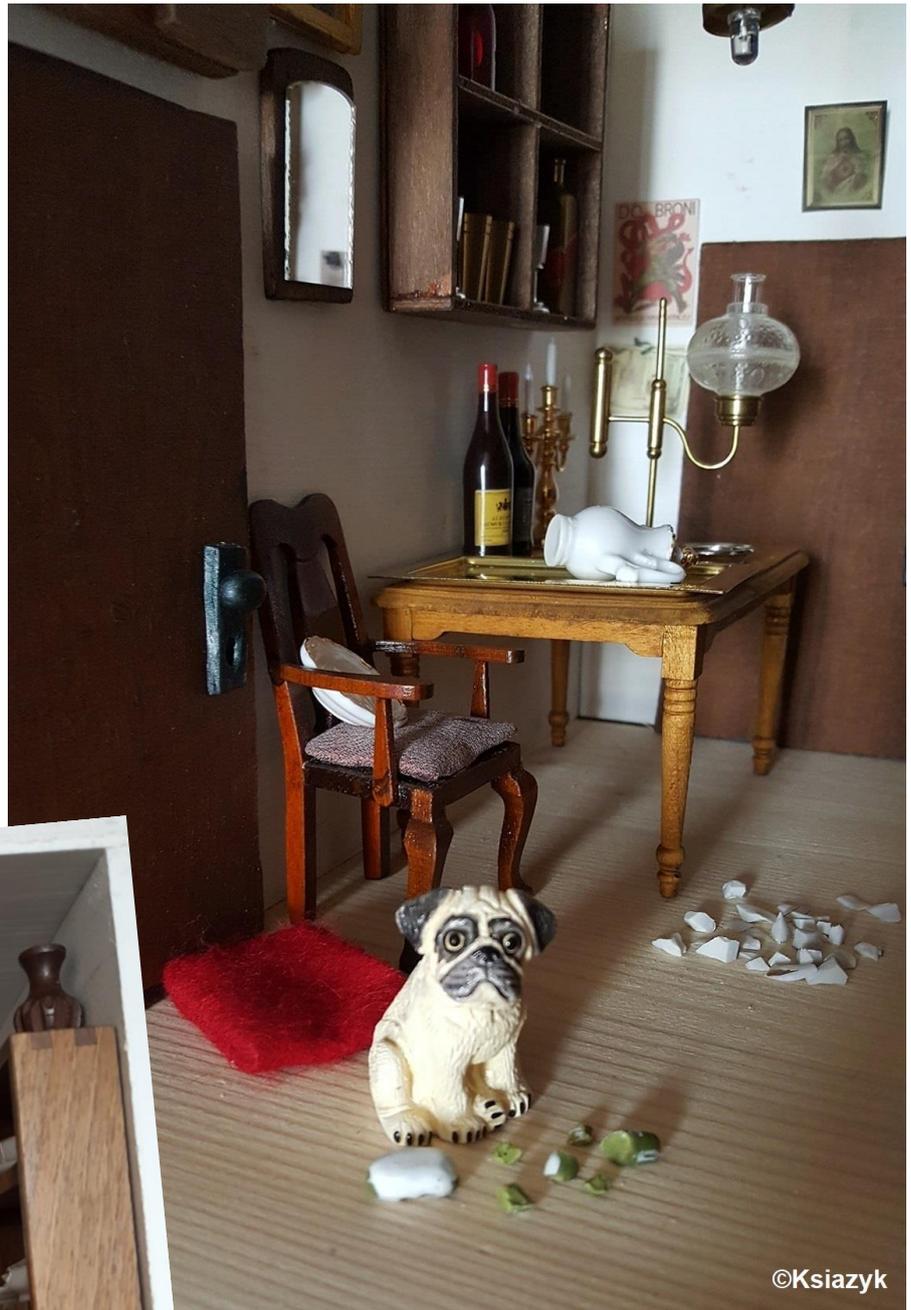
One hundred years later, Zag is remembered for a long list of petty mischiefs. His achievements include unravelling many sweaters, looting the pantry, ruining several shoes and hats, eating an umbrella, wrecking cushions, ransacking the study and getting stuck in a wastepaper basket. There is no doubt that Józefa would add more little disasters. Our Dollhouse pictures some of his most memorable exploits.



Zag remained a wild and adorable puppy all his life. In 1926, the dog followed the family in exile and ended his life in France during the early 1930s. At this time, Leon was already living in the USA. His love for dogs never faded. When I was born in 1962, he had a big dog with much hair and a fierce bark. His German Shepherd spoke American and liked pierogis.



©Ksiazuk



The "butler pantry", before and after a visit of Zag.

## ► A Patriotic Dog

The puppy became a sensation when Walenty told the kids that Zag was actually the most hated dog in Soviet Russia. This point needs an explanation.

The previous year, during the short but intense combats between Poland and Russia, the two countries had waged a propaganda war. A Soviet poster depicted Poland as a bulldog with the *szlachta* attributes of a feudal landlord. This fierce barking dog was wearing the traditional Polish hat of the ancient nobility : a fur bonnet split on the front and adorned with a long feather picked in a precious brooch. This caricature had also the long distinctive moustache of the rural gentry and a collar with a dog tag picturing the crown white Eagle of the Piast Dynasty.

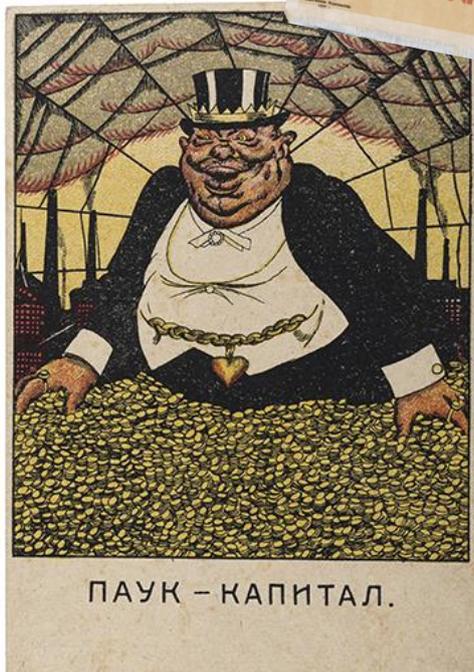
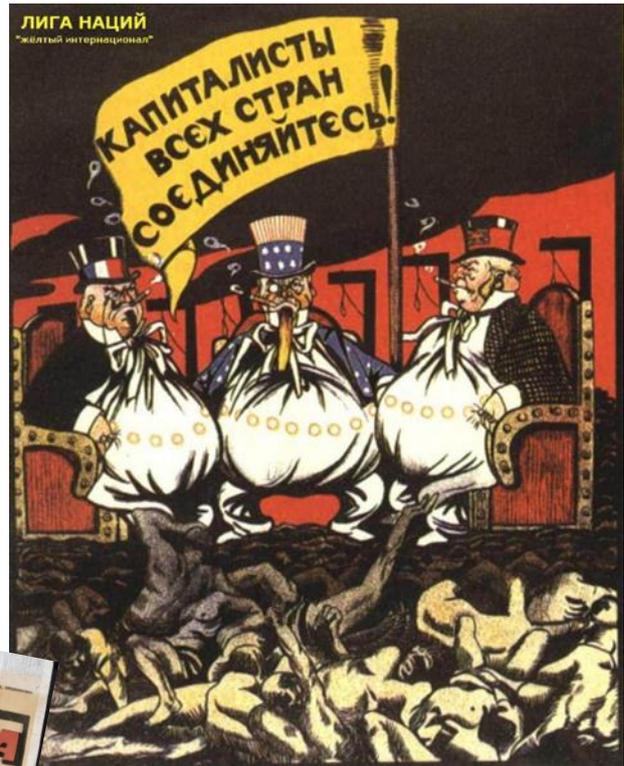


This propaganda poster was created by Artist V.N. Denisov. The text reads about "noble Poland" being "The last dog of the Entente". The comment adds "The Polish gentlemen want to strangle workers' and peasants' Russia! Death to the noble masters! "

Since the bulldog had become a deterring animal for the Russians, the Książek boys jumped on the opportunity to demonstrate a new wave of anti-Russian activities.

To wow their buddies, they built a story about Zag being chased by Soviet spies. At this time, there was indeed a general anxiety about Communist agents present in Warsaw. They were reportedly building a conspiracy to undermine the recent Independence of Poland.

Zag was soon presented as a war hero who had been present in the battlefield to save Warsaw. The boys insisted that the puppy had contributed to repel the Bolshevik invasion. To make it short: the Russians were so scared by Zag that they had made a poster inspired by his fierceness!



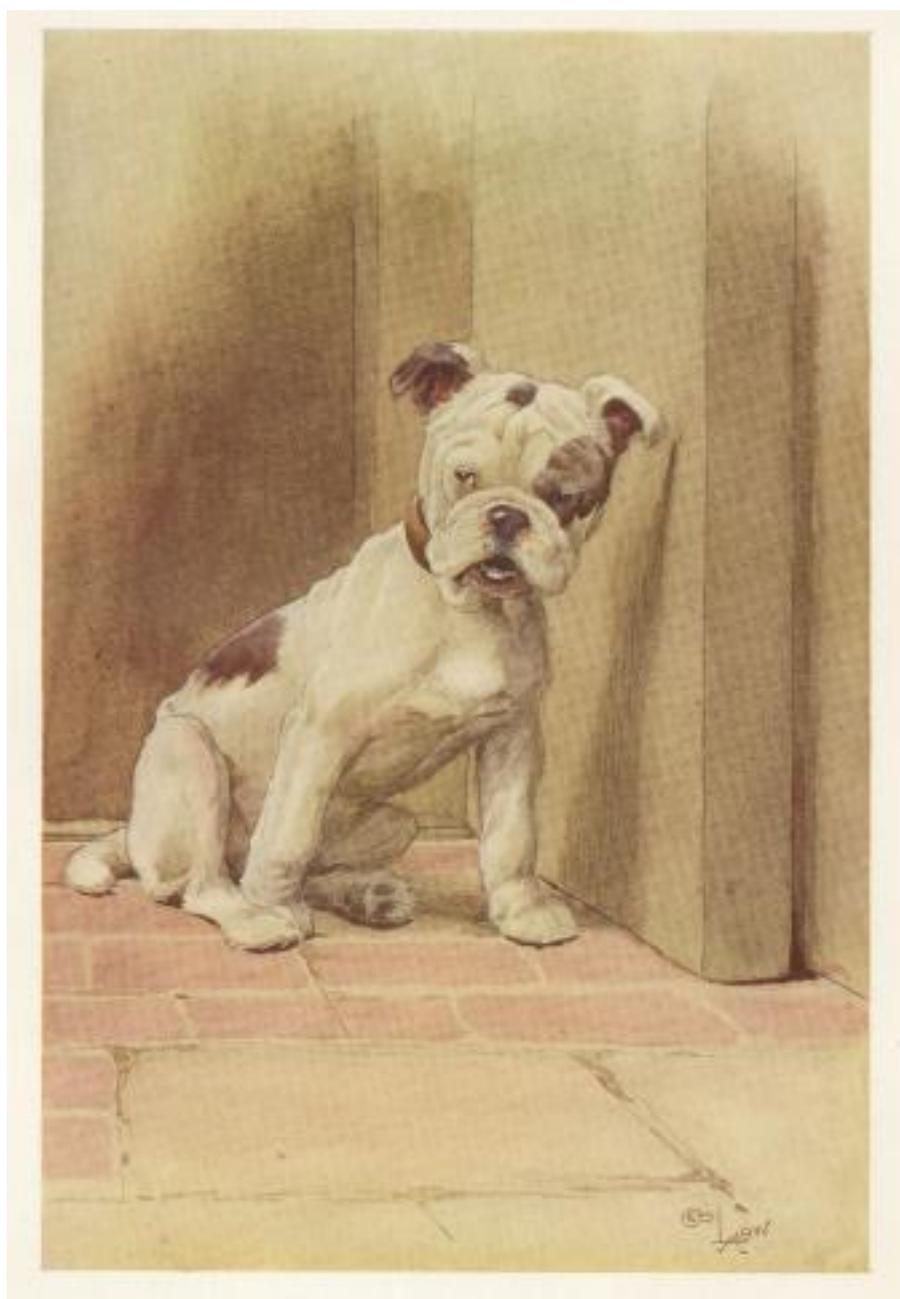
After 1917, the first years of the Soviet regime set the general tone of a new visual aesthetic. In the Communist propaganda, the fat speculator with a bulldog face was a symbol of class enemies against the proletariat.

Between 1918 and 1920, this caricature pictured the collective aspect of the *Entente*, a WWI coalition bringing together France, Britain, Italy, Japan and the United States.

After 1920, the bulldog-face character was used indifferently to mock the Americans, the British, and any other Western countries (including Poland).







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