The parish church and hall founded by nineteenth century Polish settlers in Karnes County, Texas. Courtesy of the Rev. Wojciech Reisch.
From the Editor

Two themes dominate this issue. The first is the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival in Texas of Polish Silesians to whom many Texans of Polish background trace their ancestry. Our editorial opinion is that while the celebration was largely successful and it brought much joy to the participants, the long-range goals of this and other such celebrations have not yet been attained. Foremost among these goals is a place at the table in the American dialogue, the place which Americans of Polish background secure. The second topic forced itself on the editors’ attention, as it were. In recent years we noted an increasing number of published texts dealing with the Polish role in the Second World War. This material was suppressed in Soviet-occupied Poland. The texts deal with the 1939–1941 deportations of Poles to the Gulag, and also with the deportations, unlawful imprisonments, and executions in Soviet-occupied Poland in 1945–1956. These events are described in the memoirs, reminiscences, and poetry written by survivors. Sarmatian Review has received quite a few submissions in this category. We are pleased to note an increasing number of scholarly books on these topics.

We publish a poignant review by Professor Raymond Gawronski of Lynne Olson and Stanley Cloud’s book, a review of Wesley Adamczyk’s book by Professor Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, and Sally Boss’s short review of Lilka Trzcniska-Croydom Auschwitz memoir. Professor Halina Ablamowicz put together important translations of primary materials related to the deportations. Professor Kevin Christianson offers us a welcome respite from these topics in his subtle reading of Adam Czerniawski’s translation of Cyprian Norwid’s poetry.

Obviously the Gulag survivors have felt the urge to pour forth the suppressed memories and thus contribute to future corrections. It will still take time for these primary materials to influence scholarly publications and thus contribute to the official academic history of the Second World War as taught at American universities. It should be remembered that “jedna jaskółka nie czyni wiosny” [a single swallow does not yet bring in spring]. A large body of writing is necessary to make the corrections and to begin to change discourse. Within the body of discourse that now prevails in academia it is virtually impossible to introduce either the points of view or the facts of history that express in depth Polish concern and historical memory. To change the tenor and direction of intellectual discourse cannot be accomplished by a book or two, not even by a dozen books.

Professor Edward Rozek is well aware of these matters. In his review of Yearbook of the Polish Foreign Policy 2003 he argues that the Polish state is not yet a player in the international arena. Polish diplomacy cannot boast of a Talleyrand who defended the interests of the defeated France at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and who scored spectacularly even though he played a weak hand. However, a hope for a Polish Talleyrand should not be abandoned.
The Sarmatian Review Index

The press in Europe in 1903
Number of serial publications in Polish in 1903: over 600, of which 570 are known by title.
Number of serial publications in German in 1903: about 9,000.
Number of serial publications in French, English, and Czech, respectively, in 1903: under 7,000; about 30,000; 914.
Source: Jan Kucharzewski, Czasopiśmiennictwo polskie wieku XIX w Królestwie, na Litwie i Rusi oraz na emigracji (Warsaw-Kraków: Gebethner and Wolff, 1911), pp. 120–21.

Readership of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s journal in Russia of his day
Number of subscriptions to Dostoevsky’s serial Diary of a Writer in the 1870s: 900.

Higher education in contemporary Poland
Number of freshman students admitted to the public and private institutions of higher learning in Poland in Fall 2004: 315,000 and 220,000, respectively, for a total of 535,000.
Percentage increase in admissions in private institutions: 130 percent as compared to 2003.

Ut unum sint
Percentage of Russians who do not favor reuniting the Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church: 69 percent.
Percentage of those who favor reunification: 17 percent (the poll did not say how the remaining 14 percent voted).
Categories of people most opposed to reunification: women, those with above average incomes, and those with higher education.
Source: ROMIR poll of 2,000 Russians, as reported by UPI, 15 July 2004.

Dangers of the Ukrainian coal mines
Number of miners killed in accidents in the Ukrainian coal mines each year: 300 to 400.
Number of coal mines in Ukraine: 220.
World Bank recommendations concerning 50 percent of these mines: it would be cheaper for Ukraine to close them down and import coal than to keep them in operation without overhauling the inadequate Soviet-style worker security systems.

Polish deaths in Iraq
Number of Polish soldiers and nonmilitary personnel killed in Iraq between 1 January and 13 September 2004: 17.

Biometric passports a wave of the future?
Date when the Swiss government will make available to its citizens, on an optional basis, the new biometric passports containing digital fingerprints and a digital picture: end of 2005.
Date when the United States will require biometric identifiers for U.S. entry without a visa: after 2005.
Number of Swiss citizens who travel to the United States each year: 200,000 (out of the total population of 7.4 million).
Source: Swiss news agency Swissworld, as reported by UPI, 15 September 2004.

Russian poll on civil liberties
Percentage of Russians who favor more random identity checks by police to fight terrorism: 82 percent.
Source: A national poll reported by the Novosti news agency on 9 November 2004, as reported by UPI on the same day.

The world’s coldest cities with more than one million people in 2001
Novosibirsk, Omsk, Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Perm, Samara, Ufa, Kazan, Nizhnii Novgorod, Ottawa (nine out of ten are in Russia).
Economic consequences of this situation: all except Ottawa, Canada, are a drain on the economy and are unsustainable in the market economy in the long run.
Clothing companies and the Polish question
Expiration date of an international agreement on apparel quotas: 31 December 2004.
Anticipated consequences for the clothing industry in smaller countries such as Poland: an intensification of international competition and a necessity to invent new strategies to maintain contracts with international clothing companies.
Strategies already adopted by countries such as China to prepare for the change: “supply-side cities,” or vast industrial campuses that include factory, dormitories for thousands of workers, hotels, coffee shops, gyms, and other facilities.


World trade figures
Leading exporters in world merchandise in 2002, in descending order: EU (19 percent share of world merchandise exports), US (14 percent), Japan (8.4 percent), China (6.6 percent), Canada (5.1 percent).
Leading importers in world merchandise trade in 2002: US (23.2 percent of world imports), EU (18 percent), Japan (6.5 percent), China (5.7 percent), Canada (4.4 percent).
The fastest-growing product group in world trade: manufactured goods, with agricultural and mining products trailing behind.
WTO accords reached in July-August 2004: rich countries will eliminate all agricultural export subsidies by a date to be fixed. They will also gradually reduce aid to farmers.

Source: Guy de Jonquieres, “Trade deal marks end to talks about talks but the real negotiations lie ahead,” Financial Times, 2 August 2004.

Polish losses in the 1863 uprising
Number of Polish insurgents executed by the Russians after the uprising failed: 669.
Number of Polish insurgents exiled to Siberia to forced labor: 38,000.
Number of Polish insurgents sentenced to serve in the ranks of Russian punitive regiments: 7,000.


Polish farmers and the European Union
Percentage of Polish farmers who approve of Poland’s accession to the European Union: 51 percent.
Percentage of Polish farmers who believe that they personally profited from joining the EU: 25 percent.
Percentage of those who deny that the admission to EU has already proved advantageous to them personally: 68 percent.
Intended spending of farm subsidies to which some farmers are now entitled: investment in the means of production (49 percent), investment in buildings and renovation of buildings (20 percent), investment in machinery (20 percent).


Catholic monasteries and convents in Poland
Number of men and women religious in Poland in 2001: 39,000, of whom 25,000 are women.


Standard of living in Poland in 2004 and 1989
In 1989: four times lower than in Germany.
In 2004: two times lower than in Germany.
Poland’s greatest economic problem: only slightly over 50 percent of people in productive years are wage-earning employees, while 13 percent of people in productive years receive disability payments.

Source: EBRD analysis, as reported by Lena Białkowska in Donosy, no. 3857, 15 November 2004.

Brother, can you spare a trillion?
Net worth of Jeffrey Greenberg, his father Maurice Greenberg, and brother Evan Greenberg: more than 700 billion dollars.
Companies which the three Greenbergs control: insurance giant Marsh & McLennan Cos; American International Group (the largest U.S. insurer); and ACE, the Bermuda-based insurer.
Reason why this family got into the news spotlight: New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer’s probe into price fixing and kickbacks in the insurance industry, a lawsuit in which the three Greenbergs are implicated.

The Significance of Panna Maria, Texas

In October 2004, three Texas cities commemorated the 150th anniversary of the Polish settlement in Karnes County, Texas. In December 1854, a group of Polish Silesians arrived in Galveston and traveled toward San Antonio on foot and by oxcart. They bought land and established an agricultural community near San Antonio that soon began to thrive. The subsequent groups also arrived in Galveston and then moved inland as far as Hidalgo County in the south and Deer County in the north. These early settlements are detailed in T. Lindsey Baker’s *The First Polish Americans: Silesian Settlements in Texas* (1979). Additionally, *Polish Footprints*, a quarterly of the Polish Genealogical Society of Texas, has published information on these early Texans and their descendants.

These early settlers contributed mightily to the transformation of the Texas wilderness into a place where people could build homes and cities, where they could farm and develop cultural institutions. It is said that those who first came to Galveston on the Weser steamboat were dropped by their guides under a large oak tree in the flat countryside between Houston and San Antonio. There they lived shelterless during the entire winter of 1854/55, using the local caves to escape rain and cold. The immigrants had hardly any tools and the land, though plentiful, did not provide enough timber to build even modest cabins. Yet within one generation the entire community began to thrive, as witnessed by the local newspaper accounts reprinted in *Polish Footprints* in Spring 2003.

The title of Baker’s fine book is unfortunately inaccurate. The Silesian farmers were not the first Polish Americans, and the Karnes County colony was not the first Polish group settlement in the United States. The first Poles in America were the Jamestown glass blowers who arrived on this continent with Captain Christopher Newport in early October 1608. The names of some of these Poles are Stanislaus Sadowski, Jur Mata, Zbigniew Stefański, Michał Łowicki, Karol Zranica, and Jan Bogdan. So far as we know, no research has been done on their fate. We do know, however, that in the seventeenth century Poland and England maintained vigorous trade relations, hence the presence of Poles in England from where they traveled to the New World. In 1848 a group of Poles settled in Parisville, Michigan: this was probably the first group Polish settlement. The immigrants from Poland trickled in throughout the eighteenth century, and the trickle intensified during the partitions of Poland. Thaddeus Kosciuszko and Casimir Pulaski came to America at that time.

Among the books written in recent years about these two one should mention Col. Francis Casimir Kajencki’s *Thaddeus Kosciuszko* (1998) and *Count Casimir Pulaski* (2005). Kajencki also wrote *Poles in the Nineteenth Century Southwest* (1990) which details the story of an enterprising Pole named Alexander Grzelachowski who helped to stake out the Texas-Mexico border. Among books dealing with the Polish American identity as it was formed in the periods of mass immigration at the turn of the nineteenth century and around the Great War are Karen Majewski’s * traitors and True Poles: Narrating a Polish-American Identity, 1880–1939* (2003) which records the story of Polish publications in the late nineteenth-century Midwest. One should also mention John Radzilowski’s *Out on the Wind: Poles and Danes in Lincoln County, Minnesota, 1880–1905* (1992) and *Polish Immigrants, 1890–1920* (2002) by the same author.

The above-mentioned books deal with fractional histories. Over the last twenty years the American Polish historians have not produced a single broad history of the Polish immigration to America. John Bukowczyk’s *And My Children Did Not Know Me: A History of the Polish Americans* came out in 1986, and is the only modern history of Polish Americans in existence; works such as Waclaw Kruszka’s *History of the Poles in America to 1908* can be regarded as historical sources at best. Bukowczyk’s book is excellent, but it cannot substitute for a body of discourse that should have accumulated around the sizable Polish immigration to America. While American scholars of Polish background have thus failed Polonia, it has to be said that the atmosphere of the nonacademic Polish communities in this country has not been conducive to the production of serious scholarship. Yet it is from such scholarship that the recognition of an ethnic minority usually springs.

The celebrations of the Panna Maria settlement should be seen in this context. While these Silesians were not “the first Polish Americans,” they generated a large community of descendants for whom Panna Maria is the foundational event. In that they were assisted by the thousands of more recent immigrants...
from Poland and/or their descendants, for whom Panna Maria continues to serve as one of the defining moments in Polish American history. In October 2004 these various communities assembled together to honor the Polish pioneers. It remains to be seen whether this ample presence of Poles in Texas will translate into intellectual achievement recognized by American society at large.

The first step has been made in Panna Maria. Hopefully, the rituals and celebrations of this important “place of memory” will lead Polish Americans toward articulation of other symbols of the Polish presence in America in ways that are more permanent than speeches and picnics and dances and get-togethers. What makes ethnic presence in America visible are books, periodicals, institutions, foundations, and “places of memory” marked off and maintained by an ethnic group. Places of memory affix ethnic identities in space and time. Books and periodicals, however skimply read, remain the prime sources of historical authority. It is through such authority that an ethnic celebration changes from a ghetto event to one noticed by the mainstream culture.

The history of any human group consists of such self-generated artifacts. Joining someone else’s bandwagon will not generate a history of Polish Americans. Becoming a groupie for the neocons, conservatives, liberals, the feminist movement, or the Chicago Bears will not make anyone move over to make a place for Polish Americans. One wonders how many Polish American leaders are mindful of these commonplace truths.

The Poles did not come on the Mayflower. They came on the Weser, a steamship originating in Bremen, Germany, and named after the river that flows through that city. (Perhaps Poles should team up with the Germans and contribute to the upkeep of the monument in Bremen dedicated to the Auswanderer, the monument featured on the cover of the January 2000 issue of the Sarmatian Review.) They did not gather at Plymouth Rock. They gathered under an oak tree in Karnes County, and celebrated a Catholic Mass there in gratitude to God for a safe passage. Places like Panna Maria endow Polish Americans with a sense of pioneering, an attribute other locations have given to Americans of other backgrounds. They also illustrate the sustaining force of Catholicism to which these early settlers adhered and which remained part of their heritage. Each “museum of memory” has to be a springboard for a new creative effort. Panna Maria offers a possibility of a further meaningful journey for those who celebrated its 150th anniversary.

NOTES

1. Here is a partial record of the festivities on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the first Polish group settlement in Texas. On 22 October 2004, the Polish Ambassador to the United States, Przemyslaw Grudzinski, spoke at Rice University. His address was sponsored by Professor Marek Kimmel (Rice) and Dr. Waldemar Priebe (M.D. Anderson Cancer Center). Other speakers at Rice on that day included Dr. Thaddeus Radzilowski (PIAST Center, Detroit, MI), Dr. John Radzilowski (University of Minnesota), Professor Z. Anthony Kruszewski (University of Texas-El Paso), Professor Aleksander Wolszczan (Penn State University), Dr. Christopher Michejda (NIH Bethesda, MD), and Professor Thomas Napierkowski (University of Colorado). The Hon. Krystyna Tokarska-Biernacik, Polish Consul General in Los Angeles, was also present. The evening of 22 October saw a concert of the Academic Symphony Orchestra with conductor Mariusz Smolij and soloist Adam Golka. The music of Frederic Chopin, Wojciech Kilar, Robert Schumann, and Aaron Copland was on the program. An additional attraction was the appearance of Lech Wałęsa and his Texas host, Professor Witold Lukaszewski of Sam Houston State University. The concert took place in the Wortham Center in Houston. 23 October was the day of the Polish American Congress banquet in Sugarland. Again, President Wałęsa made an appearance. 24 October included a trip to Panna Maria where the festivities continued. Two Catholic Masses rounded out the festivities: one was held at the Our Lady of Częstochowa Polish Parish in Houston on 3 October, and the other at the Polish Church in Panna Maria on 24 October 2004.

An Update on the Polish Economy

Richard J. Hunter, Jr. and Leo V. Ryan, C.S.V.

As we complete the fifteenth year of the Polish transition, the glass may appear half full or half empty. According to experts from the World Bank, Poland may need as much as thirty years to catch up with the rest of the European Union. However, the general economy continues to grow at a rate of nearly 6 percent, surpassing most economic predictions and the increase of 2.4 percent registered in 2003. Morgan Stanley predicts an increase of 5.5 percent in 2005, while Merrill Lynch predicts a growth rate of 5.5–5.6 percent. The złoty continues to gain against the
In terms of international trade, Poland continues to expand its exports especially to the EU nations—further distancing the Polish economy from its heavy industry orientation toward the former Soviet Union. Receipts from exports expressed in the euro increased by 10.2 percent and exporters reported that their sales increased on a year-to-year basis by an impressive 39.7 percent, with three-quarters of Polish exporters reporting net profits. Exports to the EU now account for nearly 70 percent of total Polish exports. Imports increased by 33.4 percent, with 61.2 percent of Polish imports originating from the EU. Major export partners included (in statistical order): Germany, Italy, France, Great Britain, Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Belgium, Russia and Spain. Major import partners (in statistical order) include: Germany, Italy, France, Russia, China, the Czech Republic, Netherlands, Great Britain, Sweden and Spain. Recently Polish meat products were authorized by the United States Department of Agriculture—adding hope of increased Polish agricultural exports to the United States.(3) On the macro level, the Central Statistical Office (GUS) indicated that 14,811 reporting Polish companies reached Zł.13.4 billion in profit during the first quarter of 2004—more than four times the 2003 figure for the same period (a complete listing of Poland’s 500 largest enterprises may be found at www.polishmarket.com, while a full statistical review can be found at www.stat.gov.pl/english).

Considering the topic of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Poland, Poland continues to be an attractive destination for worldwide foreign direct investment inflows—although at somewhat of a slower pace than during the peak years of 1998–2000. In 2003, Poland attracted more than $6 billion in FDI and the aggregate amount that has flowed into Poland since 1989 stands at more than $72 billion. (The figure may be a bit misleading since FDI is normally counted only from the 10 percent threshold or at the basic amount of $1 million.) Foreign investors from France (20 percent—93 companies), the United States (14 percent—126 companies), Germany (13 percent—128 companies), Holland (9 percent—91 companies), and Italy (6 percent—62 companies) continue to dominate the scene. Some of the leading investors for 2002–2003 included KB Bank (Belgium), EBRD (International), ITI Group (The Netherlands), Credit Agricole (France), Glaxo SmithKline (Great Britain), GAX Rail (USA), Metro AG (Germany), Guardian Industries (Spain), Carrefour (Spain), Deutsche Bank Americas (USA), Vattenfall (Sweden), Toyota (Japan), United Technologies (USA), and Ferrovial (Spain). (4) Continued areas of concern include the poor condition of Poland’s infrastructure, including the costs of telephone and internet services, inadequate expenditures for research and development, continuing lags in patent applications, and the number of computers owned by schools, as well as the sometimes confusing requirements for licenses and permits that exist for companies that wish to penetrate the Polish market. (5) While some investors fear that the continuing political uncertainty may impact negatively on FDI, investor fears following the resignation of Prime Minister Leszek Miller seem to have ebbed with the elevation of Marek Belka to the position of Prime Minister. (6) It has not been helpful that there has been endemic instability in the important position of Minister of Finance or that the Belka government may not be able to survive past this fall. Belka was able to win confirmation by gaining the support of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), Labor Union (UP), Marek Borowski’s newly formed Polish Social Democracy (SDPL), and the Federative Parliamentary Caucus (FKP) of Roman Jagieliński, as well as sixteen unaffiliated deputies. The opposition was composed of Civic Platform (PO), Law and Justice (PiS), Andrzej Lepper’s Samoobrona, the League of Polish Families (LPR), and several members of other right-wing caucuses.

On the positive side of the Polish ledger have been the growth of small- and medium-sized businesses and the rise of a truly entrepreneurial business class (not just from the remnants of the former nomenklatura). Today there are more than 2.5 million small- and medium-sized businesses operating with a varied capitalist mix. Franchises continue to blossom with both international brands (McDonald’s, KFC, Wendy’s, Pizza Hut, IKEA) and a host of local Polish companies.
(for example, “Out of Africa” a new specialty coffee shop franchise) rushing to exploit growth opportunities.

However, while inflation had remained under control in 2002–2003, it is expected to rise to 4.4 percent in 2004 fueled by increases in fuel prices and factors having to do with Poland’s accession to the European Union (as of this writing, the confirmed figures about Polish inflation are not yet available). Poland has already seen a rise in prices for sugar, pharmaceuticals, fuel, coke, and construction materials, as well as radio and cable. (7)

The pension and health care systems are still in jeopardy, while reforms have again been delayed for political reasons or for the lack of either Presidential or Parliamentary leadership. Poland’s eastern regions, former “state-owned farms,” and regions of the “single industry” geared toward the Soviet Union, are still under the grip of unemployment. with the figure approaching an alarming 40 percent in some regions. In July 2004 aggregate unemployment stood at 19.3 percent, with as much as 10–15 percent of the population discouraged and no longer seeking employment. Poland’s debt has also increased and approaches 55 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Poland’s investment expenditures stand at a very low 5 percent—hampering development and overburdening other financial sectors. (8)

What are the future prospects? Much may depend on settling the seemingly endemic political infighting that destroyed Prime Minister Leszek Miller who left office with an approval rating of around 8 percent. A second factor revolves around the ability of current Minister of Finance Mirosław Gronicki to reinvigorate the privatization process—yet another important lynchpin (along with foreign trade and FDI) in the process of economic transformation. Over 5,500 state-owned enterprises were subject to commercialization and privatization over the past thirteen years. However, the process has seemingly stalled and through 1 June 2004 privatization brought about Zl 1 billion into the Treasury, as opposed to Zl 8.8 billion planned in the budget.(9) As a result, former Minister Socha announced plans to speed up the privatization process by replacing many “key people” in Treasury-owned companies—especially in so-called “strategic companies” such as copper mining KGHM and energy firms NP, PKN Orlen, and PGNiG. (10)

In the second half of the year, the listing details of the largest Polish bank, PKO BP, has been filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The Treasury has kept a large percentage of shares for itself, while the percentage of shares available to small investors was increased to 38 percent in November 2004 (11). A “privatization adviser” was to be selected by the end of 2004 for the possible privatization of the Warsaw Stock Exchange (GPW).(12) It should also be noted that in November 2004 the Polish stock exchange’s main index, the WIG 20, was up around 30 percent since the beginning of the year.(13)

The benefits of economic transformation have not been spread evenly over Polish society. While half of the Polish population believe Poland will benefit from membership in the European Union, more than 40 percent of Poles feel that the situation in Poland has “deteriorated,” and only one-third of Poles evidence trust in the European Union to solve their major problems—identified as unemployment and a “lack of prospects for an improved economic situation.” Yet, as indicated by almost all accounts and an objective review of statistical data, progress has been steady and pronounced.

Now, as a member of both NATO and the EU (although four out of five Polish voters stayed home on election day during June 2004 elections to the European Parliament), Poland is still struggling to recapture her past and her rightful role in the “new Europe”—a past marred by the catastrophe of Yalta and the ensuing dysfunctionality of central planning. △

NOTES
8. Central Auditing Office (NIK), as reported in Warsaw Voice, 18 July 2004, p. 32.
11. UPI, 10 November 2004.
In Memoriam: Zygmunt Kubiak
April 20, 1929 – March 19, 2004

Michael J. Mikoś

Zygmunt Kubiak, a distinguished Polish writer, essayist, and translator, died suddenly in his Warsaw apartment, leaving his wife Henryka, son Piotr, daughter Monika, their families, many friends, and countless readers to mourn his death but find consolation in remembering his life and his remarkable literary achievement.

Born in Warsaw where he spent his entire life, Zygmunt experienced early the horrors of war followed by the long years of Communist oppression. His formal schooling was interrupted, but he read voraciously and became fascinated with the ancient Greeks and Romans. From 1948 to 1952 Kubiak studied classical philology at Warsaw University. When his plans for an academic career were thwarted by the Communist authorities, he found employment with Tygodnik Powszechny where he was a staff member from 1951 to 1953. One of the few leading intellectuals who was always unyielding in his opposition to the regime in Soviet-occupied Poland, Kubiak was denied regular employment and for a number of years was unable to publish his writings.

He found spiritual and material support in the Catholic Church as a translator of Josephus Flavius’s Antiquitates Judaicae (1965, 1979, 1993). After the end of Stalinism he returned to Tygodnik Powszechny (1956–1959) and devoted himself to freelance writing and translating. He excelled as an essayist, reflecting variously on Homer and the Bible (Półmrok ludzkiego świata, 1963); his literary readings (Wedrówki po stuleciach, 1969), the European tradition in literature (Szkola stylu, 1972); the Mediterranean cultural tradition (Przestrzeń dzieł wiecznych, 1993); Poland’s place in European culture (Brewiarz Europejczaka, 1996), and travels, including a trip to the United States (Jak w zwierciadle, 1985).

Many of Kubiak’s essays were inspired by his translations from Greek and Latin. He created a veritable canon of classical literature in Polish including The Greek Muse (1960, 1968, later published as Palatine Anthology, 1978, 1992), The Roman Muse: Poetry of Ancient Rome (1963, 1974, 1992); commentaries on Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey (1990); St. Augustine’s Confessions (1978, 1982, 1987, 1992; and Virgil’s Aeneid (1987), the last two considered his most important achievements. He crowned his lifelong communion with the ancient world with his bestselling Mythology of the Greeks and Romans (1997), Literature of the Greeks and Romans (1999), and History of the Greeks and Romans (2003). In his carefully honed, almost sinewy language he conveyed to his readers the spare simplicity of ancient Greek and Latin.

Kubiak also translated from modern Greek and from English. His two-volume Constantine Cavafy: Complete Poems (1995) combined a biography of the celebrated Alexandrian poet with the first comprehensive anthology of his poems. Kubiak’s 554-page anthology Twarde dno snu (1993) traced the Romantic tradition in the English language. The book, which features the poems of Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Longfellow, Hardy, and others, elevated its author to the rank of a leading translator of English literature into Polish.

Kubiak had a special love for Polish literature. In sixteenth century Polish poetry he saw a rich repository of the classical tradition exemplified most clearly in the poetry of Janiciusz, a peasant’s son fromZNIN who was crowned with poetic laurels in Italy; and Jan Kochanowski, a law-giver of the vernacular poetry, whose Latin poems Kubiak translated into Polish. He also extolled the classical heritage of such nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Cyprian Kamil Norwid, and Boleslaw LeŚmian.

Kubiak’s literary and editorial achievements were recognized by numerous awards, including those of the Kościelski Foundation (1963), Polish PEN Club (1967, 1991), the Jurzykowski Foundation (1980); Authors’ Association ZAIKS (1981, 1987); Solidarity (1987); Premio Canaletto (1989)—the last two for his poetic translation of Aeneid. He also received the Stanisław Vincenz Prize (1995) and the Totus Award (2002) granted for special achievements in the Christian culture by the Polish Episcopate Foundation.

A tireless writer whose workday often extended to sixteen hours, Kubiak also loved to travel, especially in Greece, Italy, and the United States. He participated in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa (1975), was invited to lecture by the Kosciuszko Foundation (1976, 1978, 1987), and returned in 1996 to speak at several universities and at Polish American gatherings. He was a generous host and friend whose favorite pastime was to take long walks and talk, mostly about literature. A modest, soft spoken, and erudite man, Kubiak was nevertheless
passionate about political issues. He often recalled a comment by his uncle, Dobiesław Damięcki, a respected actor and theatre director, about the eagerness of some of his colleagues to cooperate with the Communist regime: “Look, how they rush, how they push, how they declare their new views. I will tell you why. They are being chased by the Erinyes, because there are no zones of silence in their lives.” To the end of his days, Kubiak was concerned about the future of the Polish nation.

Kubiak admired Greece and loved Rome. For him, the Greeks lived in a world filled with dread and suffering, yet they faced death with unflinching resolution. They accepted their grim condition without illusions and found solace in the serene beauty of art and literature which they bequeathed to future generations. They also created democratic institutions, meditated on philosophy, and developed scientific thought. The Romans continued to build on these foundations. They also believed in their ability to cope with the existence of chaos, and confidently created an enduring civilization, the Pax Romana, and a powerful multinational empire—a forerunner of the European Union—until they were overcome by invading barbarians.

Kubiak viewed the twentieth century as the century of totalitarian regimes and genocide. He thought of historians such as Francis Fukuyama as “big children,” because they envisioned “the end of history” and believed that the forthcoming centuries would be guided by reason. He relentlessly reminded his compatriots of their Mediterranean heritage, taught them to cherish the enduring treasures of the past, and wrote of their responsibility to preserve the classical legacy for future generations in a world constantly threatened but illuminated by the glow of transcendence. It is fitting that Kubiak’s last endeavor was a translation of the New Testament from the Greek, the language that in his opinion had developed for centuries to become the “chosen vessel of love.” Δ

BOOKS BOOKS and CDs received


A laudatory comment on this English translation of the first Polish chronicle is in order. This volume is obviously a foundational one, so far as the history of Poland in English is concerned. The idea that Poland is a “new nation” that erroneously emerged out of the ill-conceived Treaty of Versailles is by no means rare among American historians. In due time, translations like this one should make a difference.


Finally, a history of Poland that is not merely a history of war and diplomacy. This history concentrates on demography, GDP, transportation, living conditions in the homes in both cities and the countryside. The book brims with crucial figures and statistical data, and it paints a realistic picture of Polish society in the nineteenth century. It shows the connection between standards of hygiene and quality of housing on the one hand, and the success or failure in defending Poland’s national interests. It is fascinating to read, and we cannot recommend it highly enough. It is easily available at the Merlin Bookstore. Among the dozen or so books we have ordered from that mail-order Polish bookstore, all came on time and in perfect condition.


This rare book was authored by C. Meriam Cooper, the American who created the Polish Air Force and used it to stop Marshal Semyon Budyonny’s konarmia from joining Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky in the attack on Warsaw in 1920. Cooper is best known by Americans for his production of the movie *King Kong* plus most of the John Ford/John Wayne western classics. More important was his key work in the relief of Lvów/Lviv in 1919 and his defense of that city in the summer of 1920.

Interestingly, Cooper’s great-great grandfather had carried the dying Casimir Pulaski off the field of Savannah and had given to his descendants the charge to help return the debt of honor America owed to the Poles. Needless to say, the book gives an entirely different picture of the Polish-Bolshevik war than one known through Isaac Babel’s *Konarmia*. (jrt)

The author is an Auschwitz survivor. Before Auschwitz, she was involved in the Polish Resistance. Among the remarkable features of this book are the photographs (of excellent quality) of the three heroes of Aleksander Kamiński’s classic Kamienie na szaniec: Zośka (Tadeusz Zawadzki), Alek (Alek Dawidowski), and Rudy (Janek Bytnar). All three perished fighting the Nazis; Bytnar died after horrible tortures by the German Gestapo. He did not betray his coconspirators. Zawadzki was a born leader: his pseudonym was eventually assumed by a Home Army Battalion. Zośka, Rudy, and Alek were buried at the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw. Their graves remain carefully tended, and they are among the most admired heroes of the Second World War. While Trzcinska-Croydon mainly tells her own story, she came from the same Polish circles that produced so many irreplaceable figures of the Polish Home Army. (sb)


The title of the book in English is Word and Image, and its concerns embrace literature and the fine arts. It focuses on the concept of the emblem. It presents Polish poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries against the background of the European sacred and secular culture. The author discusses the Renaissance and Baroque Polish writers from Mikołaj Rej to Zbigniew Morsztyn, as those who continued in their works the tradition of ancient Greece and Rome as well as medieval Christianity.

The book presents emblematic forms found in sermons, architecture, and gardens, and it demonstrates in various ways the connection between poetry and the fine arts.

The use of the emblem reflected the intellectual and aesthetic needs of the seventeenth century, the love of puzzles and symbolic representations of states and occurrences. Pelc leads the reader into the world of early Polish culture, in which a combination of word and image occupies a privileged place. The work is enriched by numerous illustrations from the early books of verse reflecting the rich imagination of the Renaissance and the Baroque in the presentation of both secular and spiritual matters, the laws of the macrocosm, and the encounter of man with the sacred. Janusz Pelc’s monograph shows the spread of the emblem in European culture and highlights the part played by Polish authors in the development of early European literature. The volume is well written, and the author’s meticulous selection of source materials and penetrating interpretations deserve much praise. (Danuta Künstler-Langner)


An interesting attempt to gather together various versions of Polish Jewish history in Jewish folklore. Partly based on the writings of Bernard Weinryb. Not entirely successful as a scholarly book, it is nevertheless interesting as a self-reflection of Jewish writers.


Some of the most beautiful and inspiring manifestations of polskość, or Polishness, relate for this reader to generous Polish expressions of sympathy for other Slavs, a cultural and political feature not often associated with the Poles or the Polish stereotype. The two volumes under review have appeared through the efforts of an organization of enthusiastic Polish scholars founded in Opole in 1999 to promote the languages, history, and culture of the Sorbs (often referred to in
1096  

America as Wends). Inhabiting the southeastern corner of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Sorbs are sometimes referred to as the “Last Mohicans” of Slavdom, and they represent the smallest Slavic nation.

The first volume contains five papers in Polish and Upper Sorbian from a conference on the Sorbs held in 1998 in Brzeg, Poland. Ewa Siatkowska in “Geneza języków lużyckich w świetle danych historycznych i lingwistycznych” offers a concise summary of the diverse views of linguists on the origin of Upper and Lower Sorbian, which represent two autonomous literary traditions and groups of dialects. Siatkowska also briefly comments on the linguistic ties linking modern Serbian and both varieties of Sorbian. Krzysztof Mazurski in “Ewangeliccy lużykanie wobec współczesnych wyzwań” examines the history and current situation of Lutheran Sorbs who represent a majority among the speakers of Lower Sorbian (while speakers of Upper Sorbian are, for the most part, Roman Catholic). Leszek Kuberski in “Próby utworzenia państwa lużyckiego w latach 1918–19” looks at an interesting moment in the history of Czech-Slovak Panslavism, when Thomas Masaryk and other Czech-Slovaks advocated the territory of the Sorbs be detached from Germany. Unfortunately for Slavs, that plan was never implemented. The fate of the Sorbs under Communism, when the officially sanctioned Sorbian cultural institutions benefited from substantial government support, is examined by Edmund Pjech in “Politiske a socialne wuwiãe luÏiskich Serbow 1945–1989.” Some aspects of post-war Polish interest in the Sorbs are analyzed by Piotr Paßys in “DziałalnoÊci przewodniczącego ‘Domowiny’ Pawła Nedy (1934–1950),” and by Zbigniew Kolciów in “Michał Nawka i Jan Skala,” in Annett Brzanec’s “Polsko-łuÏyckie kontakty w działalności przewodniczącego ‘Domowiny’ Pawla Nedy (1934–1950).” Jakub Brodacki in “Styl propagandy ‘Prołuzu’ w latach 1945–1949” examines postwar Polish sympathies toward the Sorbs, especially in the region of Wielkopolska. Krzysztof Stecki in “ŁuÏyce 1945. Najmniej znana z polskich bitew?” looks at one of the final battles of the Second World War and its implications for Polish military history.

Scholarship on the Sorbs is scarce, and the materials presented in both volumes represent a valuable resource on one of Europe’s smallest nations. Particularly interesting is the information on the political and cultural situation of the Sorbs since 1989. The editors cite sources in Upper and Lower Sorbian, Polish, Czech, Russian, and German. It is regrettable, however, that no English summaries are provided. This reader looks forward to future publications from Opolski Oddział Towarzystwa Polsko-Śródlużyckiego. Finally, though the Sorbian cultural institutions since 1989 have been crippled by the loss of government funding, each summer Serbski Institut in Budyšin/Bautzen sponsors the International Summer School in Sorbian Language and Culture. Information on the activities of that organization can be found at www.serbski-institut.de. (Kevin Hannan)


The first volume Cassubia Slavica is divided into two parts: one containing scholarly articles in linguistics, sociological, and literary studies; and one dedicated to reviews. This new journal accepts articles in Kashubian, Polish, German, Russian, and English.
A paper by Jörn Achtenberg and Marlena Porebska, "Research into the Vitality of Kashubian Language: An Empirical Study in Głodnica," deals with the chances of survival of the Kashubian language. The authors' research concentrates on demographics (birth, mortality, and migrations rates) and the existing institutional support (the role of school and church). The researchers confirmed their initial hypothesis that the vitality of the Kashubian language in the village of Głodnica is high. It is still a primary means of communication. Due to the introduction of bilingual education and of the language’s usage in church for prayer, Kashubian has been revitalized. Another paper by Iwona Joc looks at the Kashubians’ attachment to their region, and poses the question of why children should study Kashubian. She considers the language to be a part of Kashubian identity, and points to the role of teachers and schools in revitalizing the language. Jowita Kęcińska emphasizes the importance of regional cultures in the study of literature. In the modern world the existence of smaller cultures has been endangered. Their disappearance would be a loss for Europe whose vitality is rooted in cultural diversity.

Peter Oliver Loew presents fragments of Otto von Bismarck’s letters to his sister. In his time, Poland was under hostile partitions, and Bismarck was anxious to Germanize the originally Slavic Pomerania. He traveled through that region many times, even purchasing a piece of property there. During his travels Bismark came into contact with the Kashubians who, despite the politics of Germanization, retained their own language and identity. Aside from Bismarck’s negative remarks, his letters testify to the Kashubian identity that is neither German nor Polish. Lastly, Ferdinand Neureiter, an Austrian scholar, describes his “Path to Kashubia.” He is the author of a History of Kashubian Literature (Gdańsk, 1982), and has been honored for his studies in Kashubian culture by the Polish authorities. The volume also presents Zbigniew Zielonka’s introduction to Józef Borzyszkowski’s work on Aleksander Majkowski: Biografia historyczna. Majkowski (1876–1938) was the author of the first Kashubian novel, Remus’ Life and Adventures.

In the reviews section, Wojciech Osinski writes about Paweł Huelle’s novel Mercedes-Benz, Wiktor Pepliński’s study of Kashubian periodicals titled Czasopiśmiennictwo kaszubska w latach zaboru pruskiego, and a collective publication dedicated to Bolesław Fac, a recently-deceased translator and author (Bolesław Fac. Dichter und Vermittler deutsch-polnischer Kultura, by Wolfgang Schlott, Inge Buck, and Konstanze Radziwill). Another review by Aleksander D. Dulićenko takes on Język kaszubski: Poradnik encyklopedyczny (Encyclopedia of Kashubian Language) edited by Jerzy Treder.

Cassubia Slavica closes with excerpts from the 2002 Polish population census. According to this census, 5,100 persons in Poland consider themselves Kashubian, while 52,700 occasionally use the Kashubian language at home. Virtually all of them are inhabitants of Pomerania. It should also be added that the Kashubians have never wanted to separate themselves from Poland. They possess a double identity, Polish and Kashubian. This is best expressed in a Kashubian saying: “There is no Kashubia without Poland, nor Poland without Kashubia.” (Agnieszka Gutthy)


A memoir of the Second World War by a survivor who was born during the war and was a preschool child in postwar Poland. The book is ideally suited for children, and it belongs to a growing body of memoirs of Polish survivors who managed to emerge alive from the Second World War, only to be thrown into the pit of Communism for fifty years following the war.

The Complete Mazurkas of Karol Szymanowski performed by Matthew Bengtson, piano. More about this pianist at www.mattbengtson.com. This CD was received from Publicity Works, A WBE State Certified Agency, P.O. Box 557, Bowmansville, PA 17507.

It is not often that we have an opportunity to compare Chopin’s and Szymanowski’s Mazurkas. A lovely recording.


As indicated by his emphases and by the choice of items for inclusion about nations he knows something about, and those he knows next to nothing about, the author’s expertise lies south and southeast of the borders of the former Polish Commonwealth. His center of attention is Hungary and adjacent territories. Jaroslav Dąbrowski (rather than Romuald Traugutt) is singled out as “leader” of the January 1863 Rising (perhaps he was singled out because he participated in the Paris Commune). The book shows no understanding of the cause of liberty. It could have been written in Soviet-occupied central Europe. Avoid it.
Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy
2003


Edward J. Rozek

Editor Barbara Wizimirska should be complimented for a professionally produced book of 450 pages. The text consists of articles and speeches by the leading politicians in Warsaw. It describes numerous international meetings in which representatives of the Polish government participated.

The United States made it possible for Poland to join NATO—through the efforts of, among others, my former student, US Senator Hank Brown.

Poland maintains eighty embassies and almost twice as many consulates around the globe, and it has diplomatic missions at the United Nations in New York, NATO in Brussels, and now the European Union in Brussels, as well as UNESCO in Switzerland. Polish representatives were quite busy on the chessboard of international politics in 2003, taking part in a galaxy of conferences—some significant, most insignificant, and none consequential. It has been estimated that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw employs between 5,000 and 7,000 individuals in its embassies, consulates, and various missions.

The articles contained in this volume have to be viewed in a historical context. What is routine for countries that knew no foreign domination in modern history is a hotly—and justly—contested issue for those that know the taste of hostile military occupation. Between 1772 and 2003, Poland as a sovereign state was independent only between 1918 and 1939. Between 1939–41, western Poland was occupied by the Nazi Army and the Gestapo, while eastern Poland was occupied by the Red Army and the NKVD. On June 22, 1941, the Nazi armies took over eastern Poland and occupied it until 1944. Behind the Red Army which was marching toward Berlin in 1944, moved the NKVD. On Stalin’s orders and with Franklin D. Roosevelt’s and Winston Churchill’s tacit consent, it established a regime consisting of the Moscow-approved individuals who ruled Poland on behalf of Moscow until 1989 while enjoying varying amounts of wiggle room. It is to be expected that while withdrawing back to the borders of Russia, the Russians would leave a number of moles in the Polish political establishment. The withdrawal occurred fifteen years ago under the combined influences of Pope John Paul II, the AFL-CIO, President Ronald Reagan’s discreet support of Solidarity, and simultaneous pressures on Mikhail Gorbachev.

Since that time, Poland has had two prime ministers in whose cabinets the former noncommunist opposition figures played a leading role: the short-lived government of Jan Olszewski (January-May 1992), and the government of Jerzy Buzek (1997–2002). Other governments prominently featured former Communists and fellow travelers.

Aleksander Kwaśniewski succeeded Lech Wałęsa as President in 1995, and he has since won a second term. Under his leadership, the main architects of Warsaw’s foreign policy have been Prime Minister Leszek Miller, Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Speaker of the Sejm Józef Oleksy, and President of the Senate Longin Pastusiak, all former members of the Communist Party. Virtually all members of Solidarity who had been appointed by Olszewski or Buzek have since been replaced by trusted individuals acceptable to the government. While people do change with circumstances, this reviewer feels justified in treating the pronouncements of some Polish politicians with caution.

Item: in one of this book’s chapters, Jarosław Ksiąžek asserts that relations with Russia are of prime importance for Poland. Indeed they are. But Ksiąžek goes on to say, with apparent regret, that “[i]n spite of the best efforts of the Polish Government, it was impossible to normalize political, legal or trade relations with Russia.” The tone is that of a petitioner lamenting that his master does not love him. Książek does not say which Russian actions made such normalization impossible, let alone criticize them. In fact, in 450 pages there is not a single article critical of Russia, but there are several essays critical of the United States.

The editor states that “The American attack on Iraq and disregard for the UN were critically received abroad and [brought about] disapproval of American claims to global leadership.” She quotes Jarosław Starzyk who supports the notion that “the EU will become less dependent militarily on the United States and will catch up with America economically and be
equal to the USA.” She also quotes Janusz Rolicki who states that “America has never risked anything for the Poles.” While this may be true, has there ever been a country or nation that risked anything for the Poles? The amount of friendship America has shown Poland may be limited, but it compares favorably with that of the European countries, not to mention Poland’s neighbor to the east.

It has to be said, regretfully, that the results of the two-generations-long Communist grip on Polish education manifest themselves as historical amnesia in Polish government and diplomatic circles. Janusz Rolicki seems not to know that Woodrow Wilson incurred the displeasure of both Georges Clemenceau of France and David Lloyd-George of England at the Versailles Conference in 1919 by insisting in his Fourteen Points on the independence of Poland. During the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, American bombers flew from Italy to bring supplies to the Poles who were fighting and dying in Warsaw. They were forced to fly back to Italy because Stalin refused to allow them to land in eastern Poland, from which the Red Army had expelled the Nazis. Some of those planes were shot down and their pilots killed. In 1989, the United States provided substantial help to Solidarity, which compelled the Communists to retreat. How could an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have forgotten that it was the United States that made it possible for Poland to become part of NATO just a few years ago—through the efforts of, among others, my former student, United States Senator Hank Brown? It is regretful that the editor did not take a firmer stand concerning some public figures’ ignorance of history and their apparent inability to articulate and defend Poland’s interests.

Selected Poems


Kevin Christianson

This new collection of Norwid’s poetry has much to recommend itself. Awarded the (UK’s) Poetry Book Society’s Recommended Translation in winter 2003, the translations represent decades of diligent effort at bringing Norwid’s verse to the attention of the English-speaking world. Attractively designed with one of the poet’s watercolors and his last self-portrait gracing its covers, the book features many of Norwid’s most famous poems including a healthy sampling of lyrics taken from the poet’s major opus Vade-mecum. Regrettably, Czerniawski tells us, “Chopin’s Piano” ("Fortepian Szopena") was omitted due to its untranslatability. Perhaps this accounts for the absence of “To the Citizen John Brown” ("Do obywatela Johna Browna") which would interest American readers. Poet-scholar Bogdan Czaykowski has contributed an illuminating essay “The Poet as ‘Christian Socrates’” which, among other things, offers insightful comparisons of Norwid to Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, and Ezra Pound. A page of notes (alas, too few) appears at the back of the book.

According to his translator’s note, Czerniawski consulted original manuscripts edited by the Norwid scholar Juliusz Gomulicki and also conferred with Polish scholar Agata Brajerska-Mazur, whose article “The Untranslatability into English of Some of Norwid’s Semantic Techniques” outlines the major challenges facing the Norwid translator. Although Czerniawski’s translations have been “severely tested” in seminars at three Polish universities, certain difficulties I encountered indicate they might have benefited doubly from being tested on native English speakers at British or American universities.

“How to verify Norwid’s genius?” asked Adam Czerniawski in the Afterword to his bilingual translation of Norwid published in 1986 in Poland. Czerniawski’s answer reflects his methodology: “One should reveal Norwid’s originality.” Partly to that end, Czerniawski has “scrupulously maintained Norwid’s idiosyncratic punctuation and quirky use of italics” as well as endeavored, “wherever possible,” to reproduce Norwid’s rhyme schemes without “padding or distortions of meaning.” While some may argue that typographic fidelity is merely cosmetic and superficial, Norwid’s punctuation and italics—like Emily Dickinson’s dashes and capitalization—represent an innovative feature of the work, producing not only syncopated colloquial rhythms but conveying nuances of thought and feeling. On the other hand, Czerniawski’s stated desire to duplicate Norwid’s rhymes aroused skepticism. How can a translator use rhyme schemes without inevitably padding and distorting the original’s meaning? Moreover, how does reproducing rhyme schemes help convey a poet’s
“genius” or “originality” more effectively than other formal and rhetorical elements?

Compared to those done by Claire S. Allen, Barry Keane, and others, Czerniawski’s translations mark an advancement in Norwid translation. In general, his are more accurate and faithful, boasting greater lucidity, vitality, and grace. For all their merits, however, Czerniawski’s translations achieve uneven success, marred by lapses in fidelity to Norwid’s diction, syntax, rhetorical devices, and line structure. In most cases, not surprisingly, such deficiencies result from the translator’s efforts at producing rhymed and metered facsimiles of the Polish originals.

Norwid’s “Their Strength” (“Siła ich”) illustrates a few strengths and weaknesses in Czerniawski’s work as well as certain problems which Norwid’s poetry presents to a translator. Relying solely on Czerniawski’s translation, I struggled to understand this poem. After consulting the Polish version, I realized that Norwid’s epigram appears to be an attack on censorship and political oppression in the poet’s homeland under German and tsarist Russian occupation. The “few thoughts . . . which aren’t new!” might refer to the concepts of liberty, national sovereignty, social and political justice, human rights, and so on.

Their Strength
Valiant commanders, armies fully trained,
Police—male, female, uniformed and plain—
Thus united against whom? —
A few thoughts . . . that aren’t new! . . .

Siła ich

Ogromne wojska, bite generały,
Policje—tajne, widne i dwu-płciowe —
Przeciwko komu tak się pojednały? —
Przeciwko kilku myślom. . . co nie nowe!

Though Czerniawski maintains Norwid’s idiosyncratic punctuation, his compulsion to duplicate the formal structure of an epigram—even though he ends up substituting couplets (AABB) for Norwid’s original ABAB rhyme—results in distortion of meaning. In the first line Czerniawski reverses the order of phrases and takes liberties with the original diction for rhyme’s sake. Rather than literally translate generały as “generals,” Czerniawski chooses “commanders,” and the “armies” (wojska) which Norwid describes as ogromne (“huge,” “enormous”) become “fully trained” in order to provide a rhyme for “plain.” Although translating policje as a singular noun (“police”) instead of plural (“police forces” or better, “police units”) does no serious harm to comprehension, Norwid’s use of parallelism and the combined effect of his three plural nouns—“generals” (generały), “armies” (wojska), and “police units” (policje)—which underscore the ironic contrast between their large quantities and the “few thoughts” has been muted. Translating widow as “uniformed” rather than the literal “visible” or “seen” is astute on Czerniawski’s part. But why “plain” for tajne, which literally means “secret”—as in “secret police”? Does “plain” describe the police’s attire, facial expressions, speech, attitudes, or behavior—as in the sense of “drab,” “common,” “ordinary,” or “direct and to the point”?

If “plain” is shorthand for “plainclothes” police officers, then Norwid’s meaning has been severely distorted. In common usage the term “plainclothes” refers to police officers who do not wear uniforms but either suits and ties, as in the case of detectives, or street clothes, as in the case of undercover officers who infiltrate gangs and illegal organizations which threaten society. In both cases, “plainclothes” police are viewed by law-abiding citizens as benevolent protectors of society, whereas the same cannot be said of the feared and despised secret police who terrorized society in tsarist and Soviet Russia, and in other Soviet-occupied states. In the English speaking world, “plain”(clothes) police officers do not have a reputation for arresting, imprisoning, beating and torturing, and even murdering innocent citizens for political reasons. That is a significant difference which a translation ought to make clear, without regard for the artificial demands of rhyme.

In this same line Czerniawski’s choice of “male, female” for Norwid’s peculiar, and perhaps untranslatable, dwu-płciowe is understandable. This plural adjective describing the police is formed from the prefix dwu- (“di-, bi-, dual-, two-, etcetera) and płciowy, which is the adjectival form of pleć meaning “sex” or “gender” as in “sex organs,” “gender discrimination,” “sexual reproduction.” Here is an instance where the translator could convey Norwid’s semantic inventiveness by creating a portmanteau word that replicates the poet’s original, as in “dual-gendered” or “two-sexed.” Moreover, where “male, female” is neutral in tone, Norwid’s original seems to carry a negative tone, suggesting that the “dual-gendered” or “two-sexed” police are a species of living creature separate and distinct from the human variety. English speakers might benefit from a footnote alerting them to Norwid’s unusual diction as well as providing
relevant background information about censorship and political oppression which Poles were subjected to by their German and Russian occupiers in the nineteenth century—and prophetically in the twentieth.

Without question Czerniawski’s translations of Norwid’s verse deserve praise for their accuracy, lucidity, and vitality. In general, when compared to those of other translators, Czerniawski’s liberties are less damaging. On the other hand, English-speaking readers may struggle to comprehend what Norwid is saying and talking about. To provide readers with a more immediate experience of this poet’s “genius” and “originality,” the translator might pay less attention to rhyme schemes and greater attention to Norwid’s diction (especially connotation), syntax, as well as rhetoric structures, tropes, and line-structure (especially the poet’s use of *enjambment*). Adding more footnotes would alert readers to the complexities of Norwid’s semantic and thematic elements, as described by Brayerska-Mazur, as well as provide useful political and historical background information. Such an approach may result in prosaic translations lacking the recognizable “bounce” and “jingle” of conventional rhymed-and-metered verse, but they may help English speakers comprehend more successfully the contents of Norwid’s verse.

A Question of Honor
The Kosciuszko Squadron:
Forgotten Heroes of World War II


Raymond Gawronski, SJ

He was an incongruous figure in Brooklyn. Dressed in a three-piece suit, hobbling on feet frozen while crossing wintry mountains in his escape from Poland, Pan Andrzej Komornicki used to charm and delight the people he visited. Kissing ladies’ hands, speaking of the Kraków of his youth, he would flash a courageous smile from those metallic teeth of *quondam* Eastern Europe. People would sing songs of prewar Poland when he visited, and then the evening would be over, and graciously he would head out into the alien world of postwar New York.

Pan Komornicki returned to me recently, in the America of the twenty-first century, as I read this magnificent paean to the Polish fliers and other military personnel whose contribution to the Allied War effort was virtually essential, and yet was repaid with rank dishonor. Olson and Cloud are a husband/wife team of jouranlists. Both authors have had journalistic postings in Moscow and the White House; Cloud had been “Saigon bureau chief.” They live in Washington. In *A Question of Honor*, they have seriously contributed to the rehabilitation of Poland in the eyes of the world.

To understand what they have attempted, one must have a sense for the treatment of Poland in Western literature. Sometimes lionized as heroic lovers of freedom, one is as often dismayed to see references to “those Poles” who were perpetually chafing against the good order established by three European imperial powers which had, incidentally, divided Poland up among themselves and slated it for destruction, not only as a state, but eventually as a cultural entity, as a nation. Eventually, with the support of the United States, Poland emerged from the Versailles Conference a state once again, which, even in its multinationality, was a decent semblance of what it had been before the Partitions. No sooner was the treaty signed than Poland found herself in a war with the Soviet Union, which was intent on marching through Poland to unite with the workers in Germany. The defeat of the Soviet Union under Marshal Piłsudski was a stunning blow to the young Joseph Stalin, among others, and it gave Europe a breathing space from the raging and growing Bolshevik crusade.

The fourth largest of the Allied contingents in the Second World War, Poland suffered losses far higher than any other nation in the War: Warsaw alone had more casualties than the United States in both Pacific and Atlantic theaters.

Under the Partitions, the areas that had been Poland had been relegated to become the most backward provinces of the three powers. The authors document how, in the twenty years between the two world wars, the Poles did a remarkable job of building a functioning modern state. Steeped in European culture, religion, history, it was the generation that bore the hopes of generations, and would produce a Karol Wojtyła, among other notable figures.

Poland began forming an air force, a patchwork made up from planes from various neighboring states and others. Its academy produced rough and ready pilots
who, with the help of some Americans who were mindful of America’s debt to Poland in the Revolution, formed what was called the “Kosciuszko Squadron.” In September 1939, Poland was invaded by two monstrous powers, Nazi Germany and, seventeen days later, the Soviet Union. Contrary to myth, Poland fought valiantly for over a month, exacting significant losses especially from the Germans. The authors are at pains to put to rest hostile German propaganda which portrayed the Poles as a primitive people, who fought tanks with cavalry (not at all the case). They maintain that this German propaganda was later picked up in the West when it became inconvenient to support the Poles.

The book rather loosely follows the careers of a handful of fighters of this Kosciuszko Squadron as they make their way West from a defeated Poland, through a defeatist and stunningly unhelpful France, to Britain. Initially treated with contempt, the Polish flyers quickly proved themselves remarkable and made a most significant contribution to the Battle of Britain. During that Battle, in fact, they were seen as indispensable. Feted by the British population, they were given their own commands in the Allied War Effort. Indeed, Poland was the only nation to have fought the Germans from the first until the last days of the War. The Poles were also the ones who broke the German code—the Enigma—and laid the indispensable foundation for successful later British efforts to crack its successor codes.

Though subtitled “The Kosciuszko Squadron,” A Question of Honor aims for far more: it tells much of the story of the Polish role in the Second World War (even as The Red Horse did for the Italians). The thread of the air battle for Britain and its heroes continues throughout the book, but though central, it links the major events in the War, especially in Poland. The fourth largest of the Allied contingents, Poland suffered losses far higher than any other nation in the War: Warsaw alone had more casualties than the United States in both Pacific and Atlantic theaters. Warsaw emerges as the heart of Poland, and the Warsaw Rising in 1944 features prominently in the story. Both the cynical Soviet refusal to help the Poles whom they had encouraged to rise up, and the refusal of the Allies to come to their aid are documented, and well considered.

The War began for Poland’s integrity, even though her Western Allies did not keep their part of the agreement at the beginning of the War. Poland fought heroically, counting on the opening of a Western Front by an attack on Germany’s exposed Western border which the French and the British did not open. In addition to the flyers who came to Britain, an entire Army was assembled in the Soviet Union and worked its way West to fight most notably at Monte Cassino in Italy.

But even as the Poles distinguished themselves on every field of combat in the War effort, the Western Allies had made an alliance with the Soviet Union, one which gradually began to squeeze the Poles out of the picture. The Soviets had killed some twenty thousand Polish officers at the Katyn Forest and elsewhere. And the Polish government in exile were urged to enter into an “alliance” with the Soviet government. The United States and Britain pretended not to understand that this was impossible.

The last sections of the book detail how, beginning at Teheran, Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill disposed of this troublesome “ally.” It is clear in this presentation that Stalin was master of the situation throughout. Roosevelt is portrayed as a consummate egotist, blinded by his own charm and conviction that he could manipulate “Uncle Joe.” Only at the very end, prior to his death, did Roosevelt begin to “get a clue” that it was he who had been manipulated throughout. Churchill emerges as a tragic figure. A man of powerful rhetorical gifts, he was able to rally the British nation at the nadir of the War, when its very existence seemed doomed at the hands of the massive German air invasion. With the help of the Poles—for which he was effusively grateful—Churchill rallied against the Germans. He repeatedly pledged Poland’s territorial integrity. But Britain herself was drained by the War, and found herself a junior partner to the American allies who had little interest in Poland, apart from Roosevelt’s successful manipulation of the then significant Polish ethnic vote in America. Having duped the Polish Americans, Roosevelt gave Stalin a free hand in Poland. Churchill is portrayed as psychologically drained and unstable in the latter days of the War: in the end, he has to justify himself in his autobiography by denigrating the Poles.

At the book’s end, we find the Poles treated as a nuisance once again. This powerful ally was excluded both from the founding of the United Nations and the victory parade in London: we find Polish soldiers weeping on the sidewalks of London, while representatives of tiny nations around the globe marched celebrating victory. For those from Eastern Poland—an especially large contingent of the fliers—the betrayal was doubly painful as the Soviet Union simply incorporated the eastern half of prewar Poland. For the rest, there was generally no return to a Stalinist puppet government which it suited the Western powers to recognize.

A Question of Honor is a genuine achievement. It shows both the history of the Poles, and how Western
propaganda—news media, film—changed images with political fortunes. It begins to explain why the Poles have been so vilified for decades: the worst enemy one can have is a bad conscience, and the bad conscience of Poland’s allies had to destroy Poland’s image. If Poland emerges as the most honorable of the nations involved in the Second World War, the authors are also realistic and fair in their treatment of the Allies, especially the British who, in spite of good and sincere intentions, found themselves in an impossible situation.

Every November I visit the Polish cemetery at Doylestown, Pennsylvania, where my parents are buried. It is also a military cemetery, and on the way to their graves, I pass the grave of Pan Komornicki. This year I shall pause longer at his grave, and pray with profound respect in the midst of the hundreds of military veterans buried there, who fought so valiantly, and suffered so long, “for your freedom and ours.”

When God Looked the Other Way
An Odyssey of War, Exile, and Redemption


Marek Jan Chodakiewicz

I have read many memoirs of the Second World War and its aftermath, including a large number of Polish recollections of the Gulag. Most are primary sources accessible only to scholars who have time and funds to research in such far-flung documentary depositories as the Hoover Institution at Stanford, CA or the Eastern Archive (Archiwum Wschodnie) in Warsaw, Poland. Many primary sources, both published and unpublished, are marked by understandable bitterness and anger. Their authors routinely indulge in generalizations and ethnic stereotyping. Their suffering often blinds them to the suffering of others. The memoir writers often assume bad will on the part of virtually anyone who crossed their path. Scholarly objectivity is missing in many wartime recollections, although it goes without saying that we should not expect objectivity from victims.

I am happy to report that Wesley Adamczyk’s memoir does not follow these tendencies. Portions of this highly original work rank with such formidable Gulag memoirs as Józef Czapski’s Inhuman Land and Gustaw Herling-Grudziński’s A World Apart. Now, to qualify my praise, whereas Czapski and Herling were adults in the Gulag, Adamczyk experienced the horror of Stalin’s Russia as a child. This circumstance influenced both the story and the way it is told. A child’s memories are highly selective; not only is his point of view limited, but he also cannot properly process the developments around him. In addition, trauma can and often does negatively influence what one remembers and how. Adamczyk himself admits that he suppressed his memories for many years. At the end of his life, however, he embarked on a journey to resurrect his past. Some basic facts he established by consulting with family members. Elsewhere he relied on a Proustian stream of consciousness to reconstruct the vignettes of who he was and what he did. Adamczyk has been eminently successful in producing a powerful memoir.

The catalyst for writing the memoir was the urge to tell the truth about his personal misfortune. Adamczyk tried to put his sorrows to rest when Stalin’s crimes were publicized by the Soviet dictator’s successors. But he could not be satisfied with the perfunctory condemnation of Stalin often visible in public sources. The Soviet secret police terror killed Adamczyk’s father and, less directly, mother. Adamczyk wanted to collect and reassemble the broken pieces of his life.

On one level, When God Looked the Other Way is a personal memoir. On another level, it is a journey in search of one’s identity. Adamczyk argues that one’s identity is firmly anchored in one’s conscious and subconscious memories. One is shaped for life by one’s early childhood experiences. Although Adamczyk never quite elucidates his thesis, it nonetheless reverberates throughout his memoir. The author recounts what his paradise was and how it was lost. Shreds, bits, and pieces of his paradise have clung to him in the form of cultural norms and religious beliefs, a legacy to which he has adhered throughout his life, albeit with varied intensity. Ultimately, his is a story of survival by sticking to one’s ways, despite the occasional slip forced by brutal reality of life both in and out of the Gulag. In telling this story Adamczyk succeeds admirably both as an author and as a person in search of his own humanity.

This is an important memoir, maybe even a welcome harbinger of change in the area of Soviet/Russian studies. It should be of interest to sociologists,
theologians, Sovietologists, historians of Russia and Poland, as well as to cultural anthropologists, education specialists, and gender students. Lest this sounds farfetched, I would like to stress that the memoir contains a bonanza of raw data for a multidisciplinary scholar.

An example: Adamczyk deals in depth with gender roles in a European Polish family and in its Soviet and American counterparts, as reflected among the various ethnic groups (e.g., Kazakhs and Polish Americans). He explores such distinct social classes and subcultures as the NKVD nomenclature. The way that the author’s mother learned to manipulate the Soviet system should give pause to the proponents of the patriarchal understanding of the Polish family. Also, Adamczyk’s detailed (and gross) depictions of defecation techniques, customs of hygiene (or rather its lack), and table manners among the Soviets are a gold mine for both social students and medical professionals, as are his depictions of the indigenous minority peoples under Soviet rule. The author’s ruminations on Soviet art are incisive and should inspire scholars to reassess at least a few of many long-held common assumptions. Comparative civilization studies should also benefit from Adamczyk’s insights on the manners and pastimes in the USSR (e.g., the role of hunting and lumbering in Polish and Soviet societies; or standing in line). One should not overlook Adamczyk’s insights into the civilization he encountered, including, for instance, his suggestion that cursing in the USSR functioned as “freedom of expression.” In other words, Soviet citizens reacted to Stalin’s terrorist rule by surrendering all freedom except the sphere of profanity. On the other hand, one could argue that crudity was a sign of revolutionary liberation from civilized norms, and hence supported by the revolutionary Communist state. It is also important to note the corrupting influence of war, displacement, and dispossession, as it asserted itself both in the Gulag and outside, most notably in England where Adamczyk turned to burglary, dubiously justifying it with the British betrayal of Poles during and after the war.

Adamczyk is at his best, however, when he recalls his time in the “worker’s paradise.” The depiction of the Soviet petty tyrants is just beautiful. Educators will find useful information about the Soviet educational system, homeschooling efforts, and the games children played in labor camps. Moral issues such as the utility of lying or at least not volunteering the truth are also well presented. A theologian will be drawn to the following message: “Mother continually reminded us to have faith and to pray that soon we would return home. She taught us that without hope there is no survival. That, in the end, was the lesson I remember most.” And, despite the culture shock which Poles experienced in Soviet Russia, Adamczyk makes his message attractive and endows it with tolerance: “Mother [reminded us] that we were not in Warsaw or Paris and that we should adjust our expectations accordingly. ‘Do not pay any attention to these people, but remember that one cannot always blame them for the way they live,’ she said. ‘The Communist system has imposed much of their way of life on them. What I want you to always remember is how you were brought up and who you are.’”

To modify my rave, I would like to add that I strongly dislike the title. When God Looked the Other Way is incorrect both theologically and factually. First, theologically, in the Christian tradition God never looks the other way but works “in mysterious ways.” Second, factually, God was consistently looking after Wesley Adamczyk. The Lord did not take his mother until after she had succeeded in saving her family from the Gulag. Wesley Adamczyk has survived and carried his family’s legacy until this very day. It appears that God has “shed His grace” on him. That includes the fact that the good Lord allowed Mr. Adamczyk to write this highly readable memoir.

Myśli o szczęściu

(Thoughts about Happiness) By Janina Brzostowska. Edited by Miriam Akavia. Foreword by Witold Brostow.

Wojciech Kajtoch

Janina Brzostowska (1897–1986) wrote for over fifty years. In her youth she was associated with the expressionist poetic group Czartak created in the 1920s under the leadership of Emil Zegadłowicz. Brzostowska was the youngest member of that group. In 1925–77 she published eighteen volumes of poetry and three novels. Miriam Akavia — herself a writer — made the selection for this volume of poetry in Hebrew translation, with the Polish originals included. The translators are Jael Shalit, Arie Brauner, Irit Amiel, Szoszana Raczyńska, and Miriam Akavia.
Some poems in this volume deal with human relationships: “Friendship,” “When You’ve Captured Somebody’s Heart,” “Tell Me,” “The Wall,” “A Game of Chess.” This last poem is an analysis of a budding love. There are also lyrical descriptions of motherhood (“The Evening of the Covenant”) and of childhood (“The Lion Gate”). In this last poem, the child’s naive and hyperbolic way of looking at the world is confronted with a later adult perception.

Another motive in the volume is nature. In “An Enchantment” the poet admires the charm of an autumn day in Kraków. In other poems she uses nature to speak about the human condition, human helplessness, and the power of feelings (“The Nest Abandoned by a Bird” and “Cactuses in Bloom”). Sometimes nature seems to be a safe refuge from the dangers of human society. In “The Viper” she writes: “But I fled to the riverside / not for the beauty of the trees / which grew most luxuriantly in the valley. / Among the people it was too hard / to walk around carrying protests by the armful.”

Some poems contain a direct critique of the human world. Brzostowska is annoyed by its dullness and greed (“Thoughts on Happiness”), by jealousy and unfriendliness (“The Stick”), by conceit of the powerful, by wrongs done to the weak (“There Is More,” “When a Man Complains”), by “measuring others by one’s own yardstick” and by society’s refusal to accept originality (“I Want to Be Myself”). On the other hand, she praises disinterestedness, simplicity, and frankness which in her rendition are typical of poets (“The Poets”).

I find three more topics in this volume to be of particular interest. The first two are the unreliability of the senses and the search for inner peace. Brzostowska realizes that the senses can mislead and that reality may not in fact be what we think it to be. It happens sometimes that “reality is shapeful / with crystalline clarity / but there is in it / no naked truth.” People are often afraid to venture outside of established paths, and they cover their uneasiness with empty swagger (“The Tales of a Man”). To protect oneself from such existential problems the poet advises inner frankness and striving for peace that many simple people have achieved (“Along the Fence”). This seems to be an echo of Czartak’s poetical theory and practice.

An important leitmotif of the volume is the irreversible lapse of time. The poet uses two scales to measure it: the personal one (childhood and youth pass, what lasts is friendship and love) and cultural. Time measured with the second set of scales does not disintegrate. Houses, places (“The Old-Town Market Square in Prague” and “Jewish Cemetery in Prague”) and even furniture (“The Old Cupboard”) preserve the life, work, and ideas of entire generations. I presume the poet’s conviction of the vitality of tradition must have won the hearts of readers in Israel.

This Hebrew reader is also the addressee of the “Foreword to the Translation of Janina Brzostowska’s Poems into Hebrew by the Author’s Son.” In it, Witold Brostow reminisces on the history of Polish-Jewish relations. His conclusion contains a thought that has often been overlooked by those who have commented on the subject in recent years: these relations have always contained more light than shadows.

Translated from Polish by Anna Kajtoch

Lives Remembered

Polish Poetry in Siberian Exile
A Survivor’s Daughter’s Commentary

Halina Ablamowicz

In the mind of many Poles the word “Siberia” does not refer to a mere geographical area which extends eastward from the Urals across North Asia, and southward from the Arctic Ocean to the steppes of central Asia and Mongolia. It symbolizes the oppression of Poles and other nationalities in Russian-occupied Poland by tsars and later by commissars. It was under Josef Stalin’s leadership that hundreds of thousands of Poles were arrested and sent to the Siberian concentration camps without any legal process or trial. Siberia is known among the survivors as Gehenna or “inhuman land” where millions of Poles and other Central and Eastern Europeans died from hunger, cold, exhaustion, sickness, and excessive labor. The survivors of Siberia are called “Sybiracy” in Polish. Like the Holocaust survivors, they have their organizations and websites.

During the Soviet era, no one in Poland was permitted to speak openly of the slave labor camps in Siberia, and history textbooks remained totally silent about this topic. The survivors began publishing their stories in the 1990s. The Union of the Siberians, an organization established in 1928 but outlawed by the Soviet occupation forces after 1939, was reactivated in 1988. In 1993 their periodical, The Siberian, published a selection of poems written in the Siberian camps by Polish deportees.
American readers learned from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* that the NKWD began to establish a network of labor camps in the Soviet Union as early as 1917. In 1930, the GULAG, a new government agency administering these camps, came into being. The inmate population increased rapidly to 5 million by 1936, while by 1943 the number tripled or even quadrupled, by some estimates. These deportation places were established in such a way that the labor of prisoners benefited the Soviet Union at the expense of the prisoners’ survival. Indeed, these were death camps where people were sent to perish. This aspect of the camps is well expressed by a poem by Beata Obertyńska:

**Supplications**

From hunger,  
From marches,  
From rain,  
From lice,  
From strong wind that slashes your face,  
From fire’s warmth—when at night they order you to leave it,  
From marshlike taiga that you sink in up to your knees,  
From torn-off shoe soles,  
From stolen breadbag—Save us, Lord!  
From tundra lying on its back facing the sky,  
From nightmare of white nights,  
From swarms of mosquitoes,  
From sudden and unexpected night marches,  
From leaden dawns to sooty dusks,  

- Holy God!  
- Holy Almighty!  
Holy and Immortal, save us, oh Lord!  
We the sinners,  
We the tired,  
We the ones given up to vast expanses,  
We the ones cast out to be eaten alive by the frozen wastes,  
We the ones deprived of humanity and legal rights,  
Trampled like grass,  
Hounded down and rounded up—  
We the louse-infested beggars,  
We the ones stupefied by hunger,  
We the nameless multitude  
Poisoned by wrongdoings,  
We the filthy,  
We the ragged,  
We at times the ludicrous,  
We the consoled,  
We the sinners,  
You Lord God we beg,  
The Living and True,  
The One and Indivisible,  
- Holy God!

The Soviet government called these death camps “corrective and reeducational places of detention.” Yet, only an estimated 10–15 percent of the inmates were actually criminals who might have benefited from “reeducation.” While they were a minority, they were usually better off than the rest of the inmate population. The criminals lived in solidarity among themselves and were able to extort better food and treatment while continuing their criminal practices. They stole everything they could lay their hands on, especially food from other inmates, and camp authorities did nothing to stop them. The remaining 85 percent were simply ordinary citizens forced into close association with the professional criminals and into heath-destroying labor.

In addition to imprisoning their own citizens, the Soviet government arrested and deported between one and two million Poles. Seventeen days after Hitler’s invasion of Poland in 1939, Stalin invaded the eastern part of Poland. Within months deportations began. Women and men, children and elderly were driven out of their homeland and deported to various concentration camps in Russia’s northeast, in Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Generally speaking, the deportees’ sense of “Polishness” was perceived as a threat to Communism. No trials, no due process, no reasons given except for the phrase “you are an enemy of the Soviet people.” That was what my mother was told when the NKWD came to her house at night and told her parents to pack in fifteen minutes and get ready for deportation. Her story is that of pain and suffering, but most importantly of survival.

My mother was twenty-five years old in 1940, when she and her parents were arrested and sent into a labor camp. My mother and grandmother were assigned to a prison camp in Tutujas-Kajzak in the Kemerovo region; my grandfather was separated from them and sent to a different prison in Iskitim, also in the Kemerovo region. My mother never saw him again. In 1943 she learned that he was shot, but no information was received as to where he was buried—if he was buried at all. My mother and other Polish deportees were “freed” in 1941, after Hitler declared war against the Soviet Union, but they remained in Siberia. They had to leave
the camp, however. From the camp they had to walk two hundred miles with several other “freed” people in order to get to the nearest village. Many in that group did not survive the journey. For two years, from 1941 to 1943, they were under surveillance by the Soviet authorities and could not leave the village to which they were assigned.

My mother’s family was middle class before 1940: it owned a house, farm buildings, and 250 acres of land in Dubnoviche in the region of Polesie, Poland. The Soviets mostly targeted the wives and children of landowners, military and government officials, and the best educated, because they feared them and wanted to exterminate as large a number of the Polish intelligentsia as possible. In her unpublished memoirs, my mother vividly recalled that tragic night when she was taken away:

The NKWD came in the middle of the night. They banged on the door and demanded that we open it. Several soldiers in Soviet uniforms barged into the house saying the Soviet Government sent them. They read our names and declared we were the enemy of the people. We were told that we were under arrest to be sent to prison camp to be reeducated as to how to live in the communist society, to learn to work and not to sit and be waited on by the servants. We grabbed what we could in a rush and they wouldn’t allow us to take many things.

My mother and her parents were taken to a temporary camp in nearby Mikaszewice. This transitory camp was a large plaza surrounded by barbed wire. In the middle of it there was a small train station where people slept. The place was crammed with people, crying children, filth, stuffiness, lice. They were kept there by NKWD from February until May as they brought more families—mostly women and children—from nearby farms. Finally the cattle cars arrived and people were loaded into them. Zofia Metelicka wrote:

On the Way to Exile
I remember an early April morning
And persistent knocking at our door
Loud harsh words of soldiers
And bitter tears of helplessness
Fear and resignation in Mother’s eyes
And pitiful crying of small children
A gray sky enveloped with fog
And a day which did not resemble spring.

Long weeks spent locked in a freight car
To us they seemed like years
Before us the Urals, behind us Europe
Are they taking us to the end of the earth?

One morning the train came to a halt
They opened the doors, and ordered us out
Then loaded us and our luggage together
Onto huge cargo trucks.

All around us—vast and gray—lies the Kirghiz steppe
We journey endlessly and time drags
Until, finally, a remote village in the steppe
And wretched huts—here is our destination.
How will we live in the middle of this desolation,
Among people alien and almost savage
Despair and grief rip open our hearts
Deep yearning for our country awakens.

Years passed by in squalor and cold
And terrible hunger took away our strength
Many have never returned
Lonely graves remain on the steppe.

After three weeks on the train, my mother’s transport arrived in Stalinsk (now Novokuznetsk) in the Kemerovo district. They were then loaded into barges on the Tom River and taken deeper into the taiga forest to a labor camp located on the Kajzak-Tutujas River. When they got to the river they had to walk all day through the taiga to get to their destination. The camp was a large enclosure surrounded by barbed wire fences with high towers for the guards at each corner. Inside were camp offices, kitchens, and the barracks. The prisoners would stay inside the barracks and sleep on bunk beds that were pieces of wood with no mattresses or coverings. The cold was intolerable, reaching temperatures of minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Each day they were awakened at 5 o’clock in the morning and divided into groups of twenty. Clothed in rags, they had to walk for several miles in darkness and cold to reach a place where they would chop and haul lumber for twelve hours a day. The prisoners had to work regardless of weather. People would get frostbite; amputations (performed in primitive conditions) were common. Some died from trees falling on them: they were unable to escape because the snow was waist high. My mother had to haul and burn branches which sometimes were as big as a large tree.

No food was given to the prisoners during the day. Sometimes, as my mother remembers, she would bring a piece of frozen black bread, melt snow in a can over a fire, put bread crumbs in it and drink it. A fellow prisoner Zofia Metelicka wrote the following:

Our Daily Bread
I remember how my Mother
Made the sign of the cross over bread
And from the time I was an infant in the cradle
She taught me respect for it.
I remember how in the steppes of the Siberian exile
Bread was a distant memory.
To hold a slice of bread in my hands
Was my only desire.

Today reverently
I lift a breadcrumb to my lips.
Give us oh Lord “Our daily bread”
I ask You this in prayer.

In summer, men had to stand knee-deep in water or mud for twelve hours. As my mother recalls, despite mild temperatures of 60 degrees Fahrenheit, there were swarms of mosquitoes that literally ate people alive—from their bites they were all swollen. “We used tar and gasoline. No medicine, no medical supplies, no soap. Appalling sanitary conditions. People were dying of starvation and exhaustion, and many went blind because of malnourishment and a lack of vitamins.”

My mother’s story is reflected in the poems written by other survivors. The following three poems describe an arrest and a deportation. The titles of these poems refer to the fact that in February-April 1940 the Soviets intensified mass arrests of Polish nationals (as well as committing the murders of Polish officers in Katyn and elsewhere). Here is a poem by Anna Rudawcowa:

April 13, 1940
On the night of April 13 the world collapsed
And a new, completely different, horrible world came into being
When in darkness an outstretched brutal paw
Destroyed our nest—our family home.

A knock on the door. Clenched and cunning,
Importunate hands yank at the doorknob.
A flash of consciousness: this is the end, the end!
Quiet prayer “Under Your Protection, O Mother of God.”

The pounding of heavy boots...In the window a flashlight Flickers and then goes away.
In their little beds the awakened children cry,
And their hearts pound, pound like hammers.

This child’s eyes are insane with fear,
Pale, trembling lips, she is frantic!
A shout in Russian from the other side of the door: “Open up! This is the Soviet government.”
And the thought: we’re done for...no use trying...nothing can be done!

Now they’re inside the apartment—smiling, polite,
But something lurks in the depths of their eyes
And the heart senses danger—
The intended blow will fall at any moment.

A house-search. The shadow on the wall like a stain,
Spy-like eyesight which penetrates each object
Precious mementos in greedy brutish paws.
And finally the verdict. Almost a death sentence.

The journey in dark freight cars. Like cattle!
Small barred windows. One last time we see before us
This Polish soil, this dearest and sacred soil,
This martyred land that says farewell to us.

And then the sad and ashen-gray Russian fields,
Hungry despondent people standing on the train station platform
And the gray sky covered by clouds,
Our lifeless eyes and helpless hands.

And finally the steppes. The steppes and bent grasses,
The faces of the Kirghiz people, the wind’s savage wailing,
And the first year among the wretched huts
Long as eternity, dark as ink.

Another deportee, Helena Bartoszewska, wrote the following:

February 10, 1940
Oh Poland, our beloved land
All drenched in blood in 1939.
Not only had to send your sons and daughters to Siberia.
The 10th of February we will remember.
The Soviets came as we slept
And put our children on sleds
And took us to the train station.

Oh horrible moment! Oh horrible hour!
A pregnant woman forgets her labor-pains,
But we can’t forget that moment
When they locked us up inside a dark boxcar, like in a coffin.
Oh farewell Poland! Farewell sweet home,
Farewell the soil that nourished us,
Farewell sweet sun and golden stars,
Because we are leaving our homeland.

We rode four days across the Polish soil
At least we said farewell to her through the gaps in the boxcars’ walls
On the fifth day the Soviet locomotive started out
As if each of us had been stabbed with a dagger.
Days and nights go by, weeks go by
Once a day they give us bread and water,
We travel through Russia and the Urals
And keep going farther and farther.
On March 4th the locomotive came to a halt,
And then another transport began.
We go by truck, and then on sleds,
Across the snowy taiga, rivers, and forests.

Sorrowful was our caravan
Every morning they gave us hot water and bread,
Frozen children are falling off the sleds,
And whenever we stopped for the night those who died were
left behind.
Oh our Poland! Our sacred land
Where are your sons, where are your eaglets?
Today they arrived in the Siberian taiga.
When will we ever see you again?
The golden sun sadly rose today,
When it looked into the barracks this morning,
It saw coffins dressed in pine,
Mothers knelt weeping over them.

We are left to ourselves, the guards have abandoned us,
For what’s there for them to do with us in this place?
They locked us away from the world.
Forests, trees are everywhere.
Here the little birds don’t even sing to us.
Cruel typhus rages among us,
More and
more people lie in the cemetery.

Spring arrived, the sun came out,
But here in this place it brought us no joy.
Holy Maiden! You who shines from the Ostra Brama!
We won’t let them tear you out of our faithful hearts!
Return us, return us to the land of our fathers.
Queen of Poland, Virgin Maiden.

Zbigniew Czerepowicki wrote:

Reflections of a Siberian
And the year 1940 came,
February tenth—a cold chill.
In the night people were awakened from sleep
To be taken away to the East.

We left behind
Our homeland, property and belongings,
To reach the gates of the taiga
After a month on the road.

For many long years,
We lived in Siberia.
We survived Gehenna
Who will give us back this lost time?

We lived lives of adversity and misery
Each day as long as a century
Our hearts desired
The end of suffering.

He who lived through those years,
Whom hunger did not kill
Who survived the forced labor
He was truly a miracle.

These poems are full of sorrow, but they also convey
strength and hope. These “hound down” and “chased
after” people were half-starved and emaciated by heavy
labor, yet they were capable of reflecting on their faith
and expressing love and yearning for their homeland.
Anna Rudawcowa wrote the following:

In the Siberian hut
It’s cold and gloomy in my Siberian hut
White with frost and gray with worry.
A little image of the sorrowful Mother of God
Has appeared on the snow-covered window.

Freezing cold has become a permanent guest in my Siberian
hut,
Hunger knocks at the door more and more insistently.
Where to go? Where to look for mercy?
Who—whether living or dead—will hear us?

Where are our legal rights? We have been turned into cattle
and paupers,
We are human pariahs, the victims of an evil and violent
power
Who has judged us and who will dare
To help us in our last hour?

In the Siberian hut children cry from hunger.
Cowering, bluish from cold, they lie on a pallet,
Who has condemned them to the life of a homeless dog,
To the abject fate of imprisoned animals?

Who has entangled our paths so tragically,
Who cast us onto the Siberian dunes of snow
Where freezing cold and misery lurk in every corner,
Where death and insanity bear their black teeth?

So horrible it is to die in exile,
To kill the heart’s last glimmer of hope
To fertilize foreign soil with one’s own ashes
And, dreaming of Poland, to yearn for her even in the grave!

No! to endure everything—the hunger and burning cold,
To say nothing, to complain to no one,
Like a hunted-down dog who is dying,
Yet wants to drag itself home with its last bit of strength!

Maria Niwinska wrote:

Wigilia (Christmas Eve)
Wigilia. Against the sky’s backdrop
A small star trembles.
The holiday is approaching. I would need nothing
If only you were here with me.

Enough of the four-year-long torment and suffering
Enough of the nightmares.
Do I have to die and leave this world
In order to see you again?

Does barb wire perhaps separate you
From people today.
And are you awakened each night from a deep sleep
By the biting German knout?

And your days there, do they pass
Like a painful rosary of adoration
When for each word spoken in Polish
A German fist falls?

Or has God perhaps changed your soul
Into a silvery star,
And now you’re looking at us from the expanses
Of celestial Milky Ways?

The sun has set on the horizon
And darkness has swept over the world.
I stretch out my yearning hands to you
I almost hear your footsteps.

But evidently in the Lord God’s eyes
My days on earth aren’t over yet.
And the road of penance has not yet come to an end
Nor the rosary of tears.

Again, Zofia Metelicka:

**Longing**

If I were an eagle of the Steppe
Or the warm breath of the wind
Or a cloud floating on high
Or the distant echo of a memory

Then would I fly away to my country
Even though the journey would be long and hard
There my friends are and family home
There the land of my birth yearns and waits

I won’t be growing wings on my shoulders
I won’t be a wind or an echo
Only in a dream will I see my homeland
Greet her with a warm heart, with a happy smile.

And in the morning when I open my eyes
Right away the heavy burden of my suffering will return
And I will be waiting for the prophetic dream

In order to behold once more my beloved Homeland.

Other Polish women were deported to Kazakhstan rather than to Siberia, among them Józefa Auterfoff. She wrote:

**Kazakhstan**

Enough punishment, Righteous Lord,
May Your hand foretell a journey for us
Receive from us orphans this fervent supplication
May Your face no longer be obscured from us.

May the cold Siberian exile be only a memory,
May the freezing snow storms remain behind us,
And the exiles trusting in the might of Your proclamation Shall walk away from Siberian exile.

This arduous journey will not be torturous to us
Because from afar Poland will shine before us
And the great distance will not be a tribulation
Because the gates to our homeland will be opened.

May one more request fly straight up to heaven,
Which we fervently uphold—
May we never be wanting for daily bread
For this oh Lord we will be continually grateful to you.

The sixteen-year-old Wacława Batowska wrote:

**Oh Land of Siberia**

Oh Land of Siberia! Land forever sad.
Why do you constantly enchain our loved ones
To your cold bosom? Why are you so cruel
That even a child’s smile dies on its sweet lips?

Did the Lord curse you from the very first day he created you,
And has He branded you with an indelible mark?
And made you the seat of His anger and wrath?
Will you not bring forth any joy and happiness?

Covered with expanses of uninhabited taiga and steppes.
Oh land of Siberia — strange and incomprehensible,
Will you appease God with your gifts?
Or will you remain cursed by Him for all the ages?

Will the exiled, homeless wanderers always water
Your cracked and shrivelled bosom with their tears?
Will you always hear only groaning and crying?

Only wistful sighs for the homeland?
Forever on your entire expanses you shall have
No other adornment
Than leaning crosses, than white crosses
A monument to the Polish victims of Siberian and Central Asian labor camps was built in 1990 in Jasna Gora, Poland. It bears the following inscription: “If I were ever to forget them, may God forget me.”

NOTES
1. This and subsequent poems have been translated by Halina Ablamowicz and Kevin Christianson. The poems were originally published in Polish in Sybir w poezji. Antologia Poetycka edited by Robert Gorczyca (Słupsk: Związek Sybiraków, 1993).

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An interview with Aleksandra Napierstków, 21 September 2003.

Jerzy Narbutt, “Measure”
A human being seldom measures up to the cause in the name of which he acts: causes tend to be greater than individual human beings. There have been few Krzysztof Baczyński’s in history.

But true dedication to a great cause is the most reliable measure of human greatness. There are people who do not understand this. Henryk Sienkiewicz did understand. That is why he occasionally drew his characters with a coarse pen, unmindful of the possibility that Jerzy Andrzejewski would call them “heroic fools.” That is why I admire Sienkiewicz’s intelligence and remain indifferent to the fact that in certain circles, one can earn a reputation for high intelligence by denigrating Sienkiewicz’s.

Krzysztof Baczyński (1924-1944), an extraordinarily talented Polish poet who died in the 1944 Warsaw Rising. Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916), a Nobel-winning Polish novelist, author of Quo Vadis and With Fire and Sword.
Jerzy Andrzejewski (1909-1983), a Polish novelist who accommodated himself to the conditions in Soviet-occupied Poland after the Second World War. He wrote Ashes and Diamonds (1946).

About the Authors
Halina Ablamowicz is an Assistant Professor of English at Tennessee Technical University.
Marek Jan Chodakiewicz is a Research Professor at the Institute of World Politics in Washington, DC. His most recent book is Between Nazis and Soviets: Occupation Politics in Poland, 1939–1947 (2004).
Kevin Christianson is Professor of American and world literature at Tennessee Technical University. In 1999/2000 he was a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Toruń, Poland. His poems have been published by numerous small presses, and his teaching includes creative writing.
Agnieszka Gutthy is an Associate Professor of Spanish in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at Southeastern Louisiana University.
Raymond Gawronski, SJ, is Professor of Theology at Marquette University. His most recent book is A Closer Walk with Christ (2003).
Kevin Hannan teaches English literature at the University of Łódź.
Richard J. Hunter, Jr., is Professor of Legal Studies at Seton Hall University. He and Leo V. Ryan have published widely on Polish economics and politics, including From Autarchy to Market: Polish Economics and Politics, 1945-1995 (1997).
Wojciech Kajtoch obtained his PhD in Russian literature from the University of Warsaw. He is a Lecturer in the College of Journalism at Jagiellonian University.
Danuta Künstler-Langner is Professor of Polish Baroque Literature at the University of Toruń and the author of numerous books on the Baroque period.
Michael J. Mikoś is Professor of Polish Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the author of a multi-volume English-language anthology of Polish literature from the Middle Ages until the present time.
Jerzy Narbutt is a contemporary Polish essayist and the author of, among others, Ostatnia twarz portretu where the meditation published in this issue first appeared.
Edward Rozek is Professor of Political Science Emeritus at the University of Colorado and the author of, among others, Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland (2nd ed., 1989).
Leo V. Ryan, C.S.V., is Professor Emeritus at DePaul University.
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Correction
In Czeslaw Milosz’s review of John Guzlowski’s bilingual collection of poetry, an incorrect edition of the book was quoted. The correct one is Język mulów i inne wiersze / Language of Mules and Other Poems. Translated into Polish by Bohdan Zadura. Graphics by Tadeusz M. Siara.

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