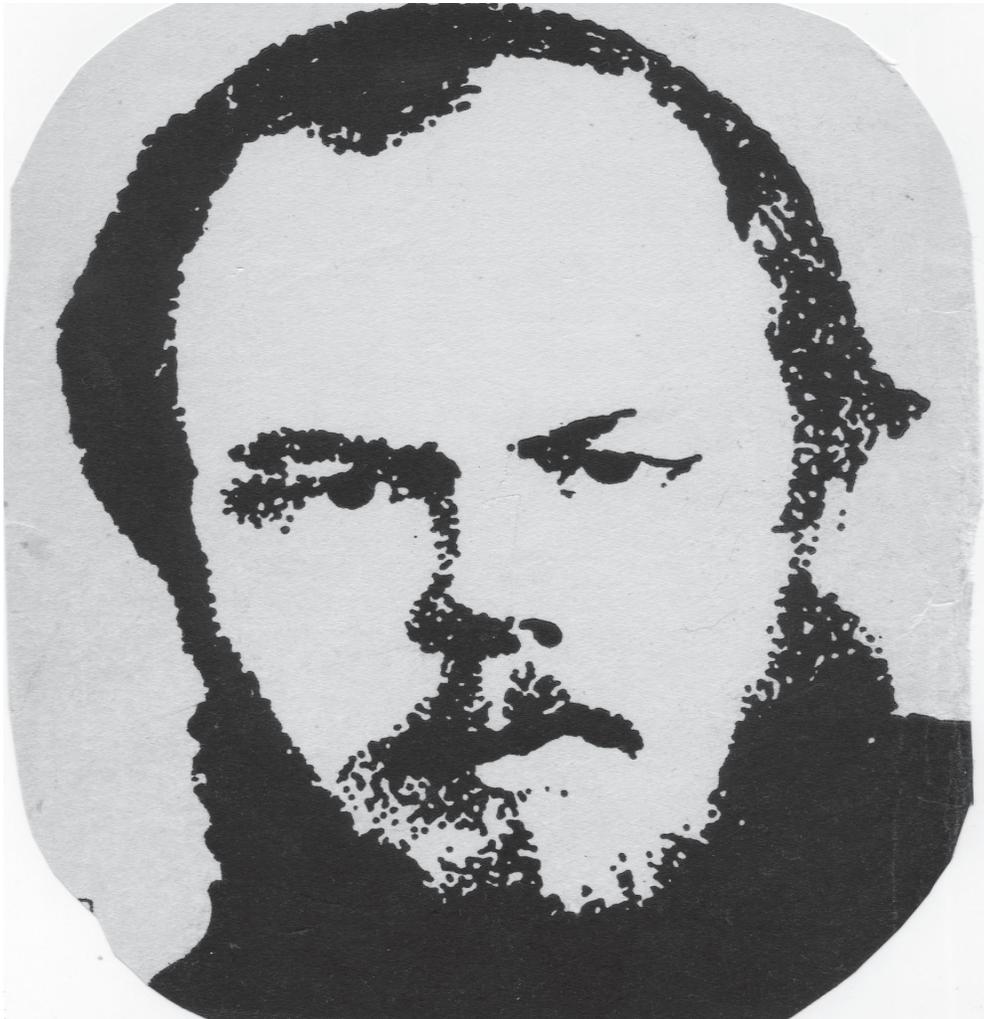


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Fyodor Dostoevsky and **Simon Tokarzewski** **The First English Translation**



Tadeusz Michaluk's rendition of Fyodor Dostoevsky in his youth. From the *Sarmatian Review* Archives, by the author's permission.

In Siberian Prisons

1846–1857

Simon Tokarzewski (1821–1890)

Arriving at Omsk. Vaska

On November 12, 1849, toward the evening, we saw the town of Omsk in the distance and said to each other: “Even if Omsk is hell and Vaska Kryvtsov [the commander of the labor camp] is Lucifer himself, it is better to go to hell and meet Lucifer, but get a little rest.” The Cossacks in charge of the convoy were brutal, and five weeks of travel on foot exhausted us, especially that most of the time we wore leg irons while marching.

But the arrival in Omsk was the beginning of the saddest and most vividly remembered part of my life. The commandant of the local fortress to which we were first taken looked at our papers and dispatched us to the labor camp chief whose name was Vasili Grigorovich Krivtsov. He was commonly called Vaska, and I will call him so from now on.

In the guard house we met an official named Diaghilev. He was polite beyond measure and lamented our fate while telling us that our personal belongings would be confiscated. He apparently hoped for a bribe; he also advised us to immediately change into prison clothes, because Major Krivtsov demanded it, and he is very severe. Finally he took us to Vaska.

The moment I saw Vaska will never leave my memory. I was threatened with beatings by one Zhuchkovsky in the [Russian-controlled] police headquarters in Warsaw, and with gallows by Storozhenko; and I endured foul language from Leichte, Siyanov, Tansky, Zhuchkovsky, Blumenfeld, and Kwieciński. But all of them could have taken lessons from Vaska.

We lined up in the courtyard of Vaska’s house. Diaghilev went in to announce our arrival, having beforehand reminded us to take off our caps. Soon there appeared on the porch a man of considerable height, a bit on the heavy side, with graying hair. His small moustache went as far as sidewhiskers, which in turn gave the impression of pieces of string attached to his red cheeks. This, and the red-lined eyes, indicated that Vaska was an alcoholic. The master of our life and death stepped out of his house in a housecoat.

“What’s that?” he shouted, “You call yourselves prisoners? Hard labor prisoners dressed in civilian clothes? Unshaven, with beards and moustaches? (Professor Zochowski and Josef Boguslawski had long beards and moustaches.) What is this? How is it possible?”

I was standing right in front of Vaska and looked at him with the kind of apprehension one feels while being approached by a mad dog and not being able to move. I cannot describe the feeling. We all kept silent and possibly it would have ended with verbal insults only, if Vaska did not look at Professor Zochowski and said:

“Who is that? He looks like a brigand!”

Zochowski felt insulted and answered back:

“I am not a brigand but a political prisoner!”

I dare not repeat the words which then poured out of Vaska’s mouth. They were dirty and revolting. When he finished, he ordered Diaghilev to write down that Professor Zochowski was to receive three hundred lashes.

“I’ll show you! I’ll teach you what it means to serve!” Vaska kept repeating. He ended with an order:

“Shave their heads off, put prison clothes on them, put leg irons on, and bring them to me tomorrow for a checkup.”

“What should I do with their personal belongings, Your Highness?” Diaghilev asked.

“Take them away and give me a list, then sell them at auction and use the money to supplement the prisoners’ diet.”

A philanthropist indeed: he was concerned about the prisoners’ diet! One more outpouring of invectives ended with “*Poshli von!*” [Get out!] In the guard house it took little time to surrender our belongings and change into prison clothes. We were dispatched to the barracks for the night. It was dark. As we approached the barracks, we suddenly saw Jan Woźniakowski, [a mathematician and an earlier Polish insurrectionist] who had received a twenty years’ term. However, four or five years into his sentence a mathematical work of his caught the eye of a dignitary in Petersburg and as a result, he was released from prison, dispatched to a military work battalion, and given the rank of sergeant.

The first night in the barracks resembled an earlier night in Ochair [during our journey to Omsk]. In the morning we were marched off to be transformed into prisoners by a barber. Our friend Josef was the first to go: I have to admit I cowered behind. When Josef came back, with his beard and moustache gone and half of his head shaved off, I closed my eyes involuntarily. I swear that not even our mothers, fathers, or other family members would have recognized us after that operation!

We were taken back to Vaska. It was early morning. Vaska was about to depart for a meeting with his superior, and for that reason he was sober and his eyes and cheeks were less red than usual. Even his voice was less stringent, and he attempted to speak moderately and gently, feigning compassion and consideration. He told us that we deserved the punishment we received, and that the punishment meted out to us was just. The words *tsar* and *zakon* [law] were used abundantly in his speech. He concluded by saying that we should curry his favor by our good behavior. After that lecture, we were led to the smithy where thick and heavy irons were soldered onto our legs. As mentioned before, in the guard house all our belongings were taken away: the only exception was a couple of shirts left to us on Vaska's kind orders. The rest was sold. Where? When? To whom? We were never told. Later, while working in Vaska's home, I noticed our satin pillows on Vaska's bed, while the fine woolen suit that belonged to Alexander Mirecki eventually appeared on Vaska's body shielding it from the cold.

Alexander Mirecki came to the Omsk prison in 1846. For four years he was the only political prisoner there and lived among common criminals. Of all the Polish prisoners he suffered most from Vaska's brutalities. A poor fellow!

Vaska, who was then new to Omsk himself, would visit the barracks several times a day and issue innumerable orders for changing and reforming everything. He incensed the convicts so much that at one point they plotted to murder him. This happened before we came. A certain Vlasov attacked Vaska; the attack came to naught, and Vlasov was put on trial and sentenced within twenty-four hours. He died under the blows. He received two thousand lashes while alive, and an additional thousand when he was already dead. The prisoners were ordered to watch the execution.

There apparently existed other plans to murder Vaska. At one time, Vaska entered the barracks surrounded by armed soldiers. The convicts began to shout and goad each other to have a go at Vaska. Some of them shouted, "Let us not just stand here!" Others retorted: "Cowards! Cowards! You were not afraid of thousands of men, and now you are afraid of this one man?"

Yes, they were afraid! Like maltreated animals, they were afraid to strike their torturer and persecutor. The fear of painful punishment and the fear of death were stronger than the desire for vengeance and murder. But Vaska also showed fear. He promised to improve. It was grotesque to see, I was told, how this impudent and omnipotent major, this frightening prison dictator became as gentle as a lamb and began to speak in a frightened voice:

"Children! From now on I'll be your father! I'll feed you kasha!"

He left the barracks unharmed.

The vengeance was terrible. For a long time, not an hour passed without someone being dragged out of the barracks and taken to the guard house for a beating. The usual "portion" was three hundred lashes; depending on Vaska's mood and the amount of vodka he consumed, an extra hundred or two might be added.

It is true that many convicts were nasty people, but Vaska habitually ordered this torture for no reason at all. It was enough to sleep on one's right side to qualify. This is not a joke. On a number of occasions Vaska would storm into the barracks at night and select for beatings those who slept on the right side of the body. He explained this by saying that Jesus Christ always slept on the left side and everybody should follow Him. Another reason to be beaten arose if one passed Vaska's house without taking off or putting on his cap at a required distance and in a prescribed manner.

We all tried to keep away from the Major's house. Vaska was proud, vengeful, cunning, promiscuous to an extreme degree, a card sharp and a drunkard: almost an embodiment of evil. This man had unlimited power over the social refuse gathered in prison, and over us political who were incarcerated there. It was his ostensible duty to improve the morals and manners of convicts who hardly ever thought of anything but satisfying their physical desires. But Vaska was no different. Indeed, we all agreed that his moral profile was similar to that of the most hardened criminals.

While speaking of Vaska, I should also mention other dignitaries who had indirect or direct power over the prisoners. During my years of incarceration, Peter Dmitrievich Gorchakov was the military governor of Eastern Siberia. He was a prince and an aristocrat known for his promiscuity. His mistress, a certain Mrs. Shramova, had a husband who was a general serving under Gorchakov. It was commonly known that Mrs. Shramova was a "make-believe" wife of Prince G. and bore him three daughters and one son. She was also the real ruler of Eastern Siberia: in order to get anything done, one had to appeal to "Mrs. General" and curry her favors with the well-known means. Only after taming her could one go to the Prince, this time with a certainty that one's request would be met. Mrs. Shramova's protégés got the best paid jobs, and of course the Prince's sons-in-law received appropriate titles and remuneration. For his beloved the Prince organized balls and pleasure trips on lakes and land. Military orchestras played over the Irtysh River, and its banks were illuminated by lanterns to amuse Mrs.

Shramova and her guests. (1) All this while General Shram silently followed the Prince and his “real wife,” and for his silence received orders, stars, crosses, and other distinctions. Whoever refused to maintain relations with Mrs. Shramova or did not try to flatter her received a cold shoulder from the Prince. It happened more than once that such a person was removed from office and had to stand trial.

Alexei de Grawe, the son of Colonel Fyodor de Grawe (the fortress’ commandant), was unjustly persecuted in this manner. His name indicates that his ancestors came from France, perhaps during the French Revolution. Aleksei Fyodorovich de Grawe was not a bad man. If he did not accomplish anything positive, it was because he did not know how; but he did not do evil because he did not want to. In his early youth he served in the military in Lithuania; because of his name and French background he was admitted to the homes of the gentry there. He always remembered his Lithuanian years with fondness, regretting that they were irrevocably gone. He was a passionate hunter and an excellent shot; he liked to hold parties, praising Polish hospitality [in Lithuania], and he himself entertained guests generously. He liked to be told that “De Grawe welcomes guests in the Polish way.” He was a Russian Orthodox and did not speak a word of French. His wife Anna was of a purely Russian background. She was an exceptionally fine and noble woman with a serious outlook on life: she regarded it as her duty to help people financially and morally, and she helped everyone who asked for her help. It was owing to her solicitations that a Home for orphan girls was founded in Omsk. Anna Andreievna taught there and collected money for the Home by organizing theatrical performances in which she was both actress and stage director. During my sojourn at Omsk I never heard anyone speak ill of her. Both I and other Poles were recipients of her kindness and assistance. Whenever the persecution was particularly harsh, it was enough to mention the circumstances to Anna Andreievna, and the culprit would calm down. Yet in spite of his basic honesty her husband Aleksei was harassed and persecuted by Prince G., and only because Anna Andreievna refused to ingratiate herself to Mrs. Shramova and did not attend the balls given by the governor.

To return now to our story. We were led to the door of that satanic abyss in which I spent seven years of my life, where I lost my youth, my health and my physical strength; and where I often suffered more than human beings are able to suffer. Having left that place, I can say, following the poet, “Like Dante, I passed through Hell.”

The door of the prison opened. Alexander Mirecki stood on the threshold. Even though he did not know us, he embraced us with a sad smile. Together with him stood a band of common criminals who were to be our companions for the next seven years. My God! How horrible they seemed at first. These shadows of the condemned approached us, so as to shake our hands with the hands that committed murder and other awful crimes. Even though we felt repulsion, we had to submit to it. I have to confess that I lost courage. At one point I withdrew my hand and, pushing everyone away, I entered prison with my head held high. This was very undiplomatic of me. All the men in the barracks became furious at me, started hating me and calling me “the devil” and, if they felt so inclined, throwing other invectives at me. There were weeks when I could not cross the courtyard without hearing curses and invectives. There were moments when I felt like jumping down a precipice if it opened before me, in the hope that it would be more bearable than my surroundings. But there was nowhere to hide, not even for one minute. Moral turpitude everywhere, and criminals everywhere.

Once I fell into total despair and fury. I ran out into the courtyard with my heart pounding, and the wildest thoughts went through my mind as I hurried around that yard that was the only space where I could move on my own. I suffered so much and felt so helpless that I decided to commit suicide. A thought occurred to me that since I was strong, I could use that strength to inflict an injury upon myself, and then the end would come. I would probably have done so, because suicide seemed to be the only escape from the insults, persecution, and physical suffering.

My dear Professor Zochowski saved me from from this attack of cowardice and from the sin of forfeiting my soul. It was late in the afternoon, and other convicts had not yet returned from their labors, while we Poles were already in the barracks, having completed ours. Professor Zochowski went out to pray. This old man had truly suffered injustice from the drunkard Vaska, as he was sentenced to three hundred lashes on his arrival at Omsk. He lived in the same environment as I but, unlike myself, he was so serene. He did not resent his fate and did not curse it, but looked at everybody and everything with the calmness of a sage and the forgiveness of a Christian. I felt so imperfect by comparison to him; I knew I was small-minded and sinful. I fell to his feet, fettered by heavy irons and pressed my head against his knees. “Please let us pray together, father!” I cried. “And then please pray for me, pray for me every day!”

I always feel embarrassed when I remember this moment of weakness. At that godless moment I forgot that God had given me a Will, the power of which should conquer everything. My Will ordered me to suffer for my homeland, and to suffer without dramatic despair, to suffer in silence.

I had already mentioned Alexander Mirecki. He arrived in Omsk in 1846. Soon afterwards Vaska was appointed the master of our prison, and the Pole became his favorite victim. Vaska took away everything Mirecki had owned, and then sent him to the hardest labor, personally supervising the discharge of his orders. Every day during his morning and evening visits to the prisoners' barracks he poured invectives at Mirecki. He used to say to him: "You are a *muzhik* [peasant], and therefore I can thrash you!" Once he ordered one hundred lashes be administered to Mirecki. Why? Mirecki and others did not know. Fortunately, Vaska's deputy Kuplennikov was a decent man, and he told the soldiers not to beat Mirecki and keep this a secret. It was only later that we learned why Vaska so persecuted Mirecki.

When we arrived at Omsk, Mirecki was working at the most repugnant and hardest job: he was a *parashnik*. That meant that he had to clean pit toilets at night. The work would start at 10:00 PM and end at about midnight. On several occasions the fateless Mirecki had to be lowered on ropes into the very depth of these pit toilets. While doing his "work" he lost his sense of smell and never regained it. Before we came, the hapless Mirecki served in that capacity for two full months, and then, after a certain break, again two months.

On the next day after our arrival we were awakened by screams, devilish guffaws, and swear words. On Vaska's deliberate orders each of us politicals was assigned to a different barrack, so that we only had *deistvitelnye* [real] criminals as our companions. When the latter went to work, Professor Zochowski, Josef, and myself got together in the yard. We shook each other's hand, and Professor Zochowski said in his saintly voice: "Good morning!" This wish never came true. Not one day of the twenty-five hundred and fifty-five days spent in the Omsk Gehenna could be called "good."

The yard was a large square resembling some unusual geometrical figure, perhaps a hexagon. The fortress itself was not surrounded by a wall as is the custom in Europe, but by a high fence made of entire trunks of trees pressed to each other and sharpened at the top. The trunks were firmly planted in the ground. This wooden wall was surrounded by an earthen embankment guarded by soldiers day and night. The gate was even more solid than the wall, and was likewise guarded. It opened twice a day: to

let prisoners under guard to go to work, and to let them in again.

Inside the wall there was a space of several hundred yards across. There were two barracks there, each of them surrounded by its own wooden fence.⁽²⁾ The two *kazarmas* [military barracks] were inhabited by the common criminals and by political prisoners, and the third housed a kitchen, cellars, and a pantry. Each building was long and narrow. Daylight came through the window reinforced with iron bars. At night the barracks were illuminated by thin tallow candles called "Sabbath candles" in Poland, because the poorer Jews used them on Sabbath day.

We slept on plank beds. A prisoner's allotment of space on these communal beds was three wooden boards. A make-believe "pillow" was also made of wood. The prisoners who could not afford real pillows had to use these substitutes. The "real" pillows were made of straw, wood shavings, sand, and rags randomly collected. The pillow cover was made of cotton, and the gaudier it was, the more attractive it seemed to the convicts. Each barrack housed from twenty to thirty men, and in each of them air was poisoned by the breathing of the inhabitants, the smell and smoke of candles, and odors of vodka and tobacco. In theory, the prisoners were forbidden to smoke and drink, but they disobeyed this rule on a grand scale.

As soon as the barracks were locked at night, lawless freedom took over. "Do what you wish!" seemed to be the criminals' motto as soon as the duty officer's steps faded away. At that time a drunken orgy began: in spite of the official rules, the convicts managed to procure vodka from town. How? A certain convict who was positively disposed toward me once tried to introduce me to the mysteries of this procedure and the adventures related to it. In his view, such smuggling required "wisdom" and "cleverness" to cheat soldiers and guards. According to the convicts' moral code, a smuggler was a real hero. But we politicals avoided the smuggled vodka, and our ideas about heroism were quite different. Thus I thanked my conversationalist profusely and pleaded a lack of time. Therefore, I cannot say anything about the ways vodka was smuggled into prison.

The convicts also liked to play cards. Some of them were born card cheaters. The game would start on a cheerful note and end sadly. The loser beat up the winner with fists, kicked him, and sometimes stabbed with a knife. Of course it was forbidden to have knives, and therefore the lucky winner concealed his wounds before the authorities and did not complain at all. The players' savings were staked up in this game; they were tiny by standards of the free world, but the convicts treasured them greatly.

Because of prison conditions, they were precious to them. Thus the lucky player would become the owner of a gallon of vodka and a few kopeks—and would get a beating from the loser.

Our clothes were made of a poor quality woolen fabric, and the colors were black, navy, or gray. The coats were sewn in such a way that one side was black and the other gray. The same style was used for trousers: one leg was navy, the other black. The sheepskins had random patches sewn into them.

I already wrote about how we were shaved. There was some leeway in that department. The convicts who paid attention to their appearance ordered the front of their heads to be shaven while leaving hair in the back, whereas those who had no interest in appearance were shaven in the usual way, with one side hairless and the other covered with hair. We Poles chose the second way. According to the *ukaz* [edict] of His Highness Vaska, we were shaved weekly—half of our heads and moustache on the same side. The barbers were talentless and they used blunt tools; sometimes it seemed that the razors were made of wood. As soon as the barber started going over a convict's face and head with his dull razor, the entire body of the victim would begin to tremble. The convicts complained a great deal about these terrible barbers, and often quarreled with them using foul language. We Poles bore it—perhaps not patiently, but at least with a certain silent pride which we pledged to observe in prison, and especially in the presence of the common criminals.

The workday started as follows. At dawn, the drum was sounded in the military barrack. Soon afterward an officer and military guards began to open the prisoners' barracks one after another. This meant that we had to get up. Sometimes it was very difficult to drag one's bones down from the plank beds, especially because our nights were often sleepless and devoted to memories and dreams. But one could not tarry. The crowds of sleepy convicts ran to the water buckets. People used small jugs to draw water which they then put in their mouths, and then spat onto their hands; thus they washed with a mixture of water and saliva. Since they were half-shaven, there was not much time spent on hair combing. Then they jumped into their prison clothes and were ready to go.

We stood in two rows in front of the barracks, surrounded by soldiers with their rifles on the ready. An officer who was also a civil engineer appeared in the company of guards. We were divided into groups and went to the places of work assigned to us. At night the guards checked whether anyone was missing. They remembered how many people left in a given group, and counted aloud: one, two, three. But sometimes a guard was not good at

counting and had to recount many times over; finally he would call on each convict by his name and patronymic. We were supposed to answer, "Here!"

Once a convict tried a joke. Instead of answering "Here!" he answered "He is not here!" Alas for the jester, Vaska was present in the barracks even though the convicts did not see him. The jester received one hundred lashes for what was in fact an innocent prank.

Upon leaving for work in the morning we took with us big slices of bread. The bread was well baked and tasty, of the kind called *rye mix* in Poland. This piece of bread was our breakfast. Dinner was eaten in the kitchen in small shifts. We sat down at the table and the cook poured soup into our earthenware bowls. There were two or three persons to a bowl, depending on its size. Large bowls with sliced bread were also put on the table, and one could eat as much bread as one wanted. Soups alternated between cabbage and cereal, and meat byproducts floated in them; on holidays, real meat was served. Not infrequently, the soups included unwanted additions, mainly cockroaches. Ordinary convicts joked about these floating insects: they simply took them out and kept on eating. For us Poles this caused nausea and inability to eat, sometimes for several days.

Soon upon our arrival, the ailing Karol Krzyżanowski was brought in from Ochair. He never got well and eventually died in the prison hospital. His widow and two daughters also arrived and settled in Omsk. Mrs. Anna Krzyżanowski was a truly good woman, and she often visited us both in the barracks and in our workplaces outside the camp. As I mentioned earlier, we had left our meager funds with her in Ochair; thus her arrival improved our situation considerably. She procured for us excellent pillows stuffed with camels' hair, as well as folding mattresses and homemade underwear and comforters. But just because these comforters were so good, they had to be given an appearance of being old rags, so that Vaska would not requisition them. Whenever he saw anything that was in a prisoner's possession that had any value, he ordered it to be taken away and sold, or he used it for his own benefit. He even allowed the rich prisoners to procure their own food. Obviously he thus saved on their upkeep.

Having received money from Mrs. Krzyżanowski, we made a deal with one of the cooks (the most promising one, by our estimate) to receive a piece of broiled or fried beef every day. The cost was minimal: a pound of meat in Omsk cost one *grosz* [penny] in winter, and three pence in the summer. We also acquired our own *samovar* [water boiling equipment], teakettle, glasses, and plates, as well as spoons and forks (knives were not allowed). Finally we got ourselves a washbasin. All this we had to hide in heavy trunks with good locks, because stealing was a

matter of habit in prison. The convicts did not consider it a transgression, but rather a clever and convenient way of bettering their fate. The person from whom things were stolen could not complain or seek the return of stolen goods. If he did, he became a butt of jokes and acquired the nickname *durak* [idiot] because of his inability to guard his property.

Another common feature of life in prison was eavesdropping. One stool pigeon is worth mentioning. He was a spy in the grand style, and in his previous life he knew how to cheat the counts and princes in Petersburg. But finally he was caught and sent to the Omsk fortress.

Some time into my stay I decided to learn a trade and volunteered for the smithy. After three months of diligent work, I learned how to hold the hammer well, and some of my work looked real nice. One day Vaska burst into the smithy and, upon seeing me there, got furious.

“Away with you,” he shouted shaking his fists, “You are government cattle, you are government property. You have no right to learn, you were sent here to work for the government and not to learn a trade.”

I eventually mended my relations with the common convicts. At the beginning, the three of us [political prisoners] kept them at arm’s length or, as they used to say, *na blagorodnoi distantsii*. They called us “boyars” and invented nicknames for each of us. Professor Zochovski was called “saint,” because during his beating upon arrival in Omsk, he came back to the barrack pale as paper and with bleeding lips, but he did not swear, did not use profanity, did not moan or cry. Instead, as a true martyr, he knelt down and prayed. This poor old man prayed every day for a long time. He was always quiet, silent, and serious, and he evoked sympathy and respect of the most cruel and savage criminals.⁽³⁾ Josef Boguslawski was called *bolnoi* [sickly]. Indeed, he was sick all the time and he looked bad. I was called *khraibri* [brave] because while I never started quarrels with anyone and tried to get out of the way as much as possible—the criminals were afraid of my fists and kept away from me. “Don’t touch him!” the word went out to all the barracks. The convicts had an exaggerated idea of my physical strength, because one of the soldiers escorting us from Ust-Kamenogorsk told them that I carried the sick Josef Boguslawski for miles, in fact, most of the time during the trip of several hundred miles. Sometimes the convicts began conversations with us, and occasionally we talked together for quite a long time.

Fedka

There was in the camp a *muzhichok* [little peasant] of less than twenty years of age. He was tall and slim, with blond

hair and blue eyes, and with a pale and pleasant face. He always seemed immersed in deep thought. His sentence was twenty years for murder, and his face was branded. I liked this *muzhichok* and thought with melancholy that after twenty years, this near-child would get out not as a grown man but as a deeply corrupt criminal. I wanted to know why he killed and in what circumstances? He told me. We used to go together to work at a brick factory. One day I lay on the grass during a rest period. The sun was hot, but proximity of the Irtysh River made the air pleasantly chilly. Fedka squatted next to me and whispered: “*Barin!*” [Master]

“What do you want, brother?” I said, “Please do not call me master, my name is Simon Sebastianovich.”

“Well,” said Fedka, “please tell me, Simon Sebastianovich, is it so everywhere in the world that people are punished so severely for killing a man as here in Omsk?”

“In other countries, the punishment is even harsher than here in Russia. Often the killer is sentenced to death. His head is cut off, or he is hanged from the gallows that is taller than our fortress wall.”

Fedka grabbed his head with both hand and moaned.

“So it is better here!” he exclaimed, “If they cut off your head or hang you from the gallows, all is over! Whereas here one suffers for a long time, but eventually one gets out and back into the world.”

“You poor child,” I thought, “Do you realize how long you will have to suffer and what you can expect from ‘the world’?”

But I seized the opportunity to satisfy my curiosity about Fedka’s past and asked whom he killed, when, how, and where. The boy thought a little and then said:

“I killed a nobleman, my father ordered me to.”

From Fedka’s incoherent narrative I gathered that his father, also named Fedka, was a forester at a large estate in the province of Tver. The owner of this estate sold his forest and was returning home with money. The old Fedka decided to become rich all at once: kill the estate owner, steal the money, and run away. So he waited in ambush in the forest through which the nobleman was expected to pass. He handed his rifle to his sixteen-year-old son, and said: “Aim well, son, and directly at the head! First the master, and then the driver!”

Fedka followed orders without thinking why. The carriage came. Fedka fired and hit the nobleman. The frightened horses galloped away and the driver brought to the estate the dead body of his master. In the meantime, Fedka Senior ran away without paying attention to his son. In a few hours the search was called. Fedka Senior knew the forest well and found such a good hiding place that he was not discovered. But the boy with his rifle was

caught immediately. When asked, he admitted he fired the shot, repeating all the time as an excuse: "My father told me to fire at the nobleman, he told me to fire at his head, he did."

Fedka spent two years in the Tver prison, then was sentenced to twenty years of hard labor in Siberia. He happened to be sent to Omsk.

I marveled at the father who pushed his only child into crime and then left him to be picked up by the police: an obvious monster unworthy of being called a man. After talking to Fedka I was depressed for days. I also felt so much compassion for Fedka that I had to hide it. In the meantime, Fedka told other prisoners what I said about punishment for murder in countries other than Russia. I was repeatedly being asked by convicts to confirm my statement that "elsewhere," "in faraway countries," when one kills by accident, one is hanged from the gallows or one's head is cut off. Many times, I repeated that this was the case. And repeatedly I heard:

"Well, to hell with them! Russia is better!"

Having lived with the common criminals for many years, I had an opportunity to ascertain numerous times that they were maniacally afraid of death. A criminal laughs at being beaten with a knout, he is much more afraid of rods, and he trembles like a contemptible creature before death. He knows full well that for a few rubles, the soldier beating him will beat less severely, that the soldier himself is his brother, that he himself was probably beaten and now he beats others. The rods are more frightening, because they are usually supervised by an officer. But even an officer would ease up for a few rubles. He would walk around and say to the soldiers, *Legche, rebiata, legche!* [Ease up, boys! Ease up!]

But every criminal trembles before death. I collected numerous proofs of this while talking about "riding a mare" or "plowing the noncommissioned officers" (two criminal expressions meaning "lashes with a knout" and "beating with a rod"). Whenever I told them how they executed criminals in other countries, they repeated: "Our brothers are treated much worse over there! What's the point of acquiring money by killing someone, if I myself am killed rather than allowed to do penance for my deed. It is definitely better in Russia. Hard labor is difficult and frightening, but while suffering it, there remains hope that one will let oneself go and have a good time after getting out of here."

The Old Believer

We greatly liked and respected a certain Old Believer, a white-haired man of about sixty. He was imprisoned for

setting fire to an Orthodox church that was built on the outskirts of an Old Believer village. He bore his fate with the calmness and patience of a true martyr. He never complained but prayed ardently, and he used to say that he was not in the least worried about the fate of his wife and children, because "the Highest Power" was taking care of them better than he possibly could. His face was branded and wasted, yet it was serene. Josef Boguslawski and I felt great pity for him. He never spoke about his religious beliefs, but he expressed no regrets regarding the arson which landed him in prison. "When it comes to the defense of the Faith, I am always ready. I am ready to suffer and [even] burn [Orthodox] churches," he once whispered to us while his gentle, blue eyes shot fire and his tiny body seemed to acquire extraordinary strength. Apart from this Old Believer and Fedka, and the Caucasian mountaineers with whom we eventually made friends, we did not fraternize with the convicts.

Fyodor Dostoevsky

In January 1850 two new political prisoners were brought to our prison: Sergei Fyodorovich Durov and Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky. Both had been sentenced to four years of hard labor, and then to being drafted into the army. Both were extraordinarily weak, nervous, and overmedicated with iodine and mercury.⁽⁴⁾ During the very first meeting with us, Durov said that his mother was a direct descendant of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, while his uncle was a governor. He repeated this over and over, with and without reason, as if he wanted us to remember his genealogy forever. Otherwise, he adapted rather well to hard labor, even though he posed as a learned man and a *bon-vivant*. He loved to tell stories about high life in Petersburg. His stories usually took place in coffee shops or bars. From time to time he aimed higher and told stories from the lives of well-known personalities: from that we gathered that he served in a government office and spent his free time collecting gossip. He bored us to death telling us the same stories many times over, especially when they included him as the main actor. We called him "varnished" because of the following story he told:

"Once I attended a ball. As you can see, I am good-looking, and my silk stockings and Parisian coat attracted attention. Ladies devoured me with their eyes, especially Anna Dmitrievna who looked only at me and wanted to dance with me only. I swear it was so! The music started to play, the floor was slippery like a frozen lake, and I approached Anna Dmitrievna like this (here Durov showed how he waltzed toward her). At the same time, Andrei Nikolaevich moved toward her. I bowed like this (again

Durov showed us how), and Andrei Nikolaevich did the same. I extended my hand to Anna Dmitrievna, and so did he. Well, I thought, a general's daughter is not for you, Andrei Nikolaevich."

I was bored and interrupted him:

"So what did you do?"

"I slapped Andrei Nikolaevich in the face," Durov exclaimed while looking at us triumphantly, as if he expected approval and admiration.

We found the story distasteful. Since that time we called him "varnished," because his social polish and elegance were only a coverup for brutality and cruelty. But while Durov was usually boring and ridiculous, on occasion he could make a pleasant interlocutor, even though one could not reveal to him one's inner self.

The other man, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, was the acclaimed novelist and author of *Poor Folk* [1845]. But we felt that this "ornament of the northern capital" (5) did not measure up to his fame. Certainly, he was talented. But it was not his talent but his personality that we encountered. How on earth could this man have ever entered any conspiracy? How could he have participated in any democratic movement? He was the vainest of the vain, and his vanity had to do with belonging to the privileged caste. How could he possibly desire freedom for the people if he accepted only one caste—the nobility, and regarded it as the only class that could lead the nation forward?

"Nobility," "nobleman," "I am a nobleman," "we noblemen" were constantly on his lips. Whenever he addressed us Poles and said "we noblemen," I interrupted him: "Excuse me, but I think that here in prison there are no noblemen, but only people deprived of rights, prisoners in a hard labor camp."

He foamed with anger:

"You are of course pleased that you are a prisoner in a labor camp," he shouted with malice and irony.

"I am glad that I am *who I am*," I answered trying not to show my emotions.

So how did Dostoevsky become a conspirator? Probably he allowed himself to be carried away by a momentary impulse, just as sometimes, and also on impulse, he showed his deep regret that the waves of conspiracy carried him to the prison in Omsk. He hated us Poles, perhaps because his features and name betrayed a Polish ancestry. He used to say that if he learned that in his veins there flowed even one drop of Polish blood, he would immediately order it to be let out. It was painful to hear this conspirator and sufferer for liberty and progress exclaim that he would be happy only when all countries surrender to the Russian tsar. He did not seem to understand that Ukraine, Volhynia, Podolia, Lithuania, and

Poland were forcibly annexed by the Russian empire; on the contrary, he maintained that all these lands belonged to Russia from time immemorial, and God's justice handed them to the Russian tsar because they could not possibly exist on their own, or rise from their backwardness, barbarism, and destitution without Russia's help. According to Dostoevsky, the Baltic countries were also Russia, and so were Siberia and the Caucasus. While listening to these ravings we concluded that Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky was mentally challenged concerning Russia's properties. But he repeated his absurdities with great pleasure. He also maintained that Constantinople should belong to Russia, not to speak of the European part of Turkey which, in his opinion, would soon become a jewel of the Russian empire. On one occasion, he read to us his ode commemorating the eventual conquest of Constantinople by the Russian army! The ode was indeed beautiful, but none of us was in a hurry to congratulate the author. Instead, I asked him:

"*A na vozvratnyi put' u vas ody net?*" [Have you written an ode to commemorate the return of the Russian army back to Russia?]

This made him mad. He sprang up and called me an ignoramus and a barbarian. He shouted so loudly that ordinary criminals began to murmur that "the politicals are fighting." We all left the building and went to the courtyard to end this scandalous scene. Dostoevsky kept saying that there exists only one great nation in the world, namely, the Russian nation, and that it is destined for a great mission. According to him, the French were barely acceptable, while the English, Germans, Spaniards were simply human caricatures. By comparison to Russian literature, all world literatures were trivial. I remember I told him that in 1844 in Poland a subscription was issued for *The Wandering Jew*. (6) First he did not believe me, and then said that I was lying. Finally Durov interrupted him and confirmed my statement. Even then he did not quite believe me. He was always poised to belittle any nation, not just the Poles whom he hated with all his heart, but also everyone else but the Russians. He tried to deny that anyone produced anything beautiful, great, or noble, as if wishing to destroy, wipe out, cover up all human achievement in order to prove that Russians were superior to everybody in the world. The style of his disputations was hard to bear. He was conceited and brutal, and he finally made us avoid not only the disputes with him but also ordinary conversations. Thus we had to "conceal our joys and sorrows/And become impenetrable like an abyss." (7)

It is very likely that this inability to control his temper was a sign of mental illness; as mentioned above, both

Durov and Dostoevsky were nervous and sickly types. So how was it possible that a graduate of the Russian military school became a Russian political prisoner? Judging by what he told us, he was an avid reader. It is possible that images of the French Revolution inflamed his imagination. Or perhaps he found lofty ideas in the works of the great thinkers, and these ideas overpowered his mind and heart and led him onto the road which he soon wished to exit at any price. When Dostoevsky and Durov came to Omsk to live in the same barrack with me, it seemed at first that they were two glittering lights on the dark northern sky. But it was a momentary impression that soon passed, and both I and my companions stopped conversing with Dostoevsky because of his temper.

After serving his term, Dostoevsky was drafted to the battalion billeted on the town of Semipalyatinsk. While serving there as a private and on the occasion of the Crimean War, he wrote a poem about Tsar Nicholas I in which he presented the Tsar as residing above all the Olympian gods. He wanted to publish the poem, perhaps hoping that flattery would lead to the shortening of his sentence or maybe even to a monetary reward. On this basis and on the basis of our conversations with him, we concluded that Dostoevsky was a man of weak and unattractive character. One could forgive him his hatred of Poles—we bore greater hatreds and succeeded in forgiving them. But it appears that the reason he got to jail was not worthy of respect. I say that even though I was already in prison, in fact on my way to a hard labor camp (and thus outside the realm of the civilized world, where an informed opinion could have been acquired) at the time when [the Petrashevsky affair] was playing out in Petersburg. I know nothing about other members of the Petrashevsky Circle, but I do know this: among the few honest and educated Russians whom I met in Siberia, the Petrashevsky affair did not generate either sympathy or interest—quite unlike the Decembrist uprising.⁽⁸⁾

Final remarks

I wrote my *Memoirs* in Velikii Uchastok [in 1857?]⁽⁹⁾ in two copies. One of them I gave to the Polish students in Moscow [on my way back to Poland from my first hard labor term]. The other one I gave to my co-exile, Mrs. Teresa Bulhakov. This last copy was returned to me in 1882, and I am adding to it some more details. I thank my wife Halina, the daughter of my fellow [political] prisoner in Modlin, Mr. Josef Belima-Leszczynski, for her help in copying my notes and putting them in proper order.⁽¹⁰⁾ Szymon Tokarzewski, *Siedem lat katorgi. 1846–1857*. 2nd ed. Warsaw: Gebethner and Wolff, 1918. 240 pages. Pages translated: 137–173, 230–231.

NOTES

1. This episode was described in Tokarzewski's short story "On the Irtysh River," in which Fyodor Dostoevsky figures prominently. Tokarzewski and Dostoevsky were both born in 1821, and they served their sentences in the same camp and at the same time.
2. In *Notes from the House of the Dead* (1862), Dostoevsky says that the camp had 250 inmates. He also says that prisoner barracks were divided into sections, each of them containing approximately 30 inmates.
3. But not of Dostoevsky who describes him in the *House of the Dead* as "shallow."
4. An indication that Dostoevsky and Durov suffered from syphilis.
5. A paraphrase of Pushkin's line in *The Bronze Horseman*.
6. An edition of the legend of the Wandering Jew popular in the Gentile and Jewish folklore.
7. A quote from Juliusz Slowacki.
8. The first political rising in Russia that took place in 1825 and resulted in several executions and many prison sentences.
9. An unidentified settlement near Omsk.
10. In the 1907 edition, information about the Polish students and Mrs. Bulhakov did not appear. The editor of the 1918 edition states that portions of the earlier editions were deleted by censorship. The final passage of the 1907 edition runs as follows:

I wrote my *Memoirs* in Velikii Uchastok. Upon return from my second Siberian term which lasted nineteen years (I returned on 15 August 1883), I am adding details which were omitted earlier [in 1857?]. What I wished for at that time, I wish today as well, with no less strength and dedication of heart. My personal wishes can be comprised in the words of a peasant lyre player from Mazovia:

*I wish to see a quiet morning
As a repayment for all that life could have given me, but didn't,
Please, Holy Maiden, beg God for a sleep-like death,
And be so kind as to close my eyes yourself.*

The end of the *Memoirs* of my first imprisonment in Siberia and first hard labor term. Signed, Simon Tokarzewski.

Translator's Note

Simon Tokarzewski's *Memoirs* are remarkable for several reasons. First, even though they are related to (and probably precede) Dostoevsky's *House of the Dead*, they have hardly ever been mentioned as a possible stimulus for Dostoevsky's work. Second, they contain notable comments about Dostoevsky. The details and insights Tokarzewski provides fit well with Dostoevsky's enigmatic personality. Critics have maintained that

Dostoevsky changed radically in prison from a “revolutionary” to a “reactionary.” Tokarzewski demonstrates that this is inaccurate and that Dostoevsky went to prison through one of those systemic quirks (common in autocratic Russia) that sent people to prison for brushing shoulders with revolutionaries. Tokarzewski shows that Dostoevsky was already an ardent patriot upon his arrival in Omsk, rather than changing as a result of his imprisonment. The format and style of Tokarzewski’s *Memoirs* bear a striking resemblance to Dostoevsky’s *House of the Dead* (1862). Did Dostoevsky read Tokarzewski’s *Memoirs*?

It is interesting to note that in one of the editions of Tokarzewski’s *Memoirs*, the Editor’s note states that a copy of these *Memoirs* was kept by a canon of the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków. After his death, it was discovered that some fifteen pages of the manuscript were missing. The Editor does not say which pages were missing. Could they have referred to Dostoevsky and what he did in Siberia? Was this disappearance a work of the tsarist agents or was it a simple accident?

There are other unanswered questions. Did Dostoevsky have syphilis and was he cured by the “mercury” mentioned by Tokarzewski? Dostoevsky’s biographers stress his interest in criminal police stories, but perhaps it was also personal experience that led him to conjure up so many interesting prostitutes in his novels.

Tokarzewski is repetitive on occasion: his arrival at Omsk is mentioned several times, and so is the ill health of Josef Boguslawski and Durov’s vanity. This repetitiveness testifies to the authenticity of his testimony: a good editor would have eliminated these obvious lapses.

Tokarzewski’s comment quoted in the 1907 edition of his *Memoirs* (seventeen years after his death) indicates that the original version was written in 1857 upon his release from his first imprisonment in Siberia. If, as he says, he left a copy of these *Memoirs* with the Polish students in Moscow, it is possible that Dostoevsky read it and drew on it for *House of the Dead*.

In the nineteenth century Russian empire, many unpublished works were being read, to mention only Tolstoy’s late stories or Pushkin’s rebellious poems. The size of the reading public was small: hundreds rather than thousands, as indicated by the number of subscribers to Dostoevsky’s *Diary* (900: see *SR Index*, p. 1087). Since Tokarzewski’s *Memoirs* circulated in manuscript, and they were written by a former prisoner and a member of a nationality suppressed by the official circles in Russia, Dostoevsky did not acknowledge the borrowings. It is also possible that the two authors wrote their accounts independently of each other and did not

read each other’s works. If that was the case, the similarity is remarkable, and the comparison between the same persons and episodes described by both writers becomes even more compelling. Tokarzewski’s *Memoirs* offers rich rewards to readers and scholars. ▲

BOOKS BOOKS and Periodicals Received

“*Głos prawdy i sumienia:” Kościół w pismach Cypriana Norwida*, by Ryszard Zajęczkowski. Wrocław: Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, 1998. Bibliography, index of names, English summary. 247 pages. ISBN 83-85220-89-5. Hardcover. In Polish.

The book looks at Poland’s most “mystical” and untranslatable poet from the point of view of Christian philosophy rather than from a purely literary standpoint. Norwid can be compared to William Blake and Emily Dickinson, in the sense that his writings are similarly obscure and in need of a commentary. However, as Zajęczkowski argues, Norwid was also a remarkably faithful interpreter of Catholic culture, and his poetry is in fact a proclamation of that culture. Zajęczkowski further argues that, unlike his contemporary Adam Mickiewicz, Norwid never deviated from Church doctrine, articulating it instead in his highly original and idiosyncratic verse and prose.

In the English summary, the author points out that for Norwid the world possessed a “proecclesiastical structure” and thus was potentially peaceful and diverse yet tolerant. Rome remained the world’s spiritual capital even in the nineteenth century when Norwid’s discourse came into being. Norwid “regarded the papacy as the guardian of spiritual values and a political force accelerating democratization of the world.” Norwid also felt that, owing to Church doctrines, it was possible to initiate economic development in Europe. Wherever Church doctrine extended, it left behind (even as it was discarded or pushed aside) a comprehension of creative curiosity, friendship, and tolerance. These values were less prominent in other cultures, hence their economic backwardness by comparison to nineteenth-century Europe. It goes without saying that this was a slow development that came to full fruition in the modern age. Zajęczkowski further elucidates Norwid’s understanding of the Eucharist and his concept of “the Mass of history” that has been going on ever since Incarnation.

This is not a book for beginners or for postmodernists.

Sendung und Dichtung: Adam Mickiewicz in Europa

(Mission and Poetry: Adam Mickiewicz in Europe)

Edited by Zdzisław Krasnodębski and Stefan Garsztecki.

Hamburg: Reinhold Krämer Verlag (www.kraemer-verlag.de), 2002. 324 pages. Paper. In German.

Harry Louis Roddy, Jr.

Sendung und Dichtung is a valuable contribution to the critical study and reception of Adam Mickiewicz in Germany. A collection of fifteen essays, *Sendung und Dichtung* is organized according to four thematic rubrics: “Nationale Sinnstiftung”; “Zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland”; “Emigrationen”; and “Slawische Verwandtschaften—amerikanische Verbindung”. These organizational constellations serve as motific guides for both specialists and lay readers.

As suggested by the title, Krasnodębski and Garsztecki, though wishing to reignite critical interest in Mickiewicz in Germany,⁽¹⁾ nevertheless situate this volume on Mickiewicz’s life and work not in Germany, but rather in all of Europe. This is a noteworthy distinction for, though Mickiewicz was and continues to be an important and revered figure in Poland, Lithuania, France, Italy, the Balkans, Russia—in all of the areas surrounding Germany—he left few traces in Germany itself. However, as the center of a newly unified Europe, Germany is an important location for a new appraisal of Mickiewicz the poet and revolutionary. Furthermore, as Mickiewicz is most closely associated with Romanticism, a literary and intellectual movement with strong German roots, it is fitting that a firmer connection be made between German Romanticism and this Romantic Pole.

As such, the symbolic centerpiece of *Sendung und Dichtung* is Stefan Garsztecki’s “Mickiewicz’s Messianismus und romantisches deutsches Sendungsbewusstsein” (127–70). This piece is introduced, intellectually speaking, by Marek A. Cichocki’s essay, “Die politische Romantik in Polen und in Deutschland” (119–26). In this short article, Cichocki traces the history of political attacks on the Polish traditions of Romanticism and republicanism, the most recent of which stem from Adam Krzemiński, before arguing that no sensible political system will ever be established in Poland without recourse to its republican tradition (124). In making this argument, he claims that, in contrast to the antidemocratic tradition

of German Romanticism, Polish Romanticism was always grounded in “openness” and should thus be maintained in modern political life (124).

Garsztecki follows Cichocki’s essay with a comprehensive comparative inquiry into Polish Messianism, and particularly Mickiewicz’s messianic impulses, and German Romantic *Sendungsbewusstsein*. According to Garsztecki, the fundamental difference between Mickiewicz’s Messianism and German Romantic “missionary consciousness” was the lack of a viable Polish state. Thus Mickiewicz’s Messianism never took the form of a reactionary nationalism, as there was no nation to which he could affix such inclinations, but rather took on mystical dimensions. He interpreted the Poles as a “chosen people” who, with Poland’s rebirth, would bring freedom to all oppressed peoples (137–9). Mickiewicz stood firmly with the underdog. As opposed to this, German Romanticism, first expressed as a “completion of the enlightenment through a new mythology” (144) in the works of Schiller, Novalis, and Friedrich Schlegel (144–53), became transformed in the works of Fichte into the handmaid of German exceptionalism and nationalistic messianism (160) and in the works of Ernst Moritz Arndt into a more explicit ethnic nationalism (160). The conservative German counterreaction to the bloody aftermath of the French Revolution as expressed in a more pronounced Romantic nationalism remains a tarnished intellectual movement.

In earlier essays, Zdzisław Krasnodębski explores Mickiewicz’s Messianism with respect to his “political theology,” while Wolfgang Stephan Kissel explicates it in terms of a “critique of civilization.” In “Adam Mickiewicz’ politische Theologie” (33–58), Krasnodębski positions Mickiewicz as an “uncomfortable ancestor” of modern Poles who are occupied with demythologizing their history and the symbolic religious logic of Romanticism (33–4). For Mickiewicz, political events could only be understood in terms of religious events (38), as political ideas also have theological meanings (42). In the context of these convictions, Mickiewicz developed a political Messianism, based on Jewish Messianism, that addressed the dilemma of maintaining ethnicity without a solvent nation (50–52). In “Die Anfänge einer Zivilisationskritik in Osteuropa: Čaadaev—Mickiewicz—Puškin” (59–82), Kissel links Mickiewicz’s Messianism to the critiques of civilization found in the works of Petr Chaadaev and Alexander Pushkin. After tracing the intellectual history of the concept “civilization” in France and England in the late eighteenth century (63), Kissel demonstrates how

Mickiewicz reinterprets the French notion of civilization in order to connect his idea of Polish civilization to that of antiquity (70–71). Mickiewicz uses this reinterpretation to call on Poles to counterpose Western notions of civilization with that of their true Christian civilization (72–3).

The remaining essays in this collection cover a wide range of subject matters. They include an appeal for a scholarly biography of Mickiewicz (Rosiek, 19–32); an inventory of musical works based on Mickiewicz's texts (Ritter, 83–115); an aphoristic meditation on the role played by France in Mickiewicz's thought (Rutkowski, 171–86); a comparison of the Messianism found in Benjamin's *Passagenwerk* to that of Mickiewicz (Bock, 187–204); and the historical parallels between the "Great Emigration" following the failed rebellion of 1831 (Hahn, 207–27) and the "Second Great Emigration" that followed the absorption of Poland as a Soviet satellite after the Second World War. Basil Kerski provides an excellent cultural history of Jerzy Giedroyc's journal *Kultura* (229–45), while Elżbieta Kiślak draws illuminating parallels between the emigrations of Mickiewicz and Czesław Miłosz (247–71). The volume closes with a consideration of the impact Mickiewicz's lectures on Slavic literature at the Collège de France had on the Southern Slavs (Wöltjen, 275–92); an impassioned reflection on the continuing relevance of Mickiewicz in Belarusian national consciousness (Miracycki, 293–300); and a spirited exploration of Mickiewicz's "American connection," namely, his intellectual reception of Ralph Waldo Emerson and his physical reception of Margaret Fuller (Mostwin, 301–319).

This volume disappoints somewhat in its omissions. The centrality and importance of Mickiewicz's lectures while chair of Slavic Literature at the Collège de France (1840–44) is made evident in many of these essays; a single essay devoted specifically to this topic would have been welcome. Additionally, the ruinous effect Towiański's thought had on Mickiewicz is alluded to repeatedly but never detailed; again, an explicit consideration of this topic would have been appropriate. Nevertheless, Krasnodębski and Garsztecki have succeeded in providing a comprehensive portrait of Mickiewicz's life and thought, thus making an important contribution to Mickiewicz studies in both a German and European context. ▲

NOTES

1. This book is the result of a conference held in Bremen in 1998 on the occasion of the two-hundredth anniversary of Mickiewicz's birth.

Revansh istorii rossiiskaia strategicheskaia initsiativa v XXI veke

(The Revenge of History: Russian Strategic Initiative in the Twenty-First Century)

By Aleksandr Sergeevich Panarin. Moscow: Logos, 1998. 391 pages. ISBN 5-88439-085-8. Hardcover. In Russian.

Sally Boss

Panarin writes in the tradition of eighteenth-century historiographers such as Herder; his book concerns itself with the future of Russia and the Orthodox East. Under consideration also is "the crisis of the West."

In the last paragraph of his book, the author says that he commented on "the revenge of history, and not on Russian revenge or the revenge of the East" (390). In books of this type, the last paragraphs are often constructed in such a way as to preempt criticism. To put it differently, the last paragraph is misleading. Here is the book's table of contents: *Introduction: What kind of future awaits Russia? 1. Identity and passion 2. The paradigms of Russian statehood. 3. The cycles of Russian history 4. In the search of a great idea 5. The experience of humanistic political prophesy 6. Geopolitical scenarios in the early twenty-first century. Conclusions: The revenge of history.* The book says very little about the East or about history, and it ignores worldwide theoretical research in the field. Except for a few twentieth-century names serving mostly as decorations, it might have been written in Herder's time. The text is devoted to the promotion of the idea that Russia should consider itself not just a state but a civilization, and should act accordingly. The underlying assumption seems to be that all civilizations seek to overcome their rivals. Samuel Huntington is invoked, and his views are distorted to suit Panarin's.

Within this kind of vision, the enlargement of NATO is perceived as a threat to Russia. The author does his best to promote the decades-long Russian policy of creating a rift between Europe and the United States. He argues that American civilization has little to do with the European one, and that the United States displays hegemonic tendencies that should be rebuffed by Europe. The rebuff should take the form of repudiation of American interests in Europe. In Panarin's opinion, America's hegemonic tendency is apparent in the extension of NATO into the territories that twenty years earlier were dominated by Soviet

Russia. The author invokes European self-interest: “NATO’s push toward the east is no less dangerous for Europe than it is for Russia. It is an example of the Americanization of Europe. In the long run it does not strengthen Europe’s status in the world but on the contrary, it weakens it because it makes the decision-making process more complicated” (370). Often the author forgets to conduct his discourse within his wishful-thinking taxonomy (Europe vs. the United States) and reverts to what he seems to really believe (and what he opposes); namely, that western civilization is more attractive to virtually all post-Soviet peoples than Russian dominance: “The genuine interests of Russia dictate a policy of reintegration of the post-Soviet space; without such reintegration Russia will be swallowed up by the wave of de-industrialization and will fall back to the level of third world countries. . . . The geopolitical concessions which post-Soviet Russia made to the West are the *maximum* [italics by A. S. P.] Russia will ever concede. Any further *attack* [italics mine, SB] by the West—be it in the form of a further enlargement of NATO or by playing the Ukrainian, Georgian, Azeri, or Central Asian ‘cards’—would mean that the aforementioned concessions by Russia were like the concessions to Hitler at Munich. From the standpoint of global strategy, the 1990s were for the West exactly the same as German gains at Munich in 1938” (348).

Having compared the democratic West to Hitler’s Germany, the author proceeds to argue that Russia has “a double nature” (347): on the one hand, it is Eastern Orthodox, on the other, it has an Asian component. Likewise, [western] Europe (which is the proper partner for Russia, according to Panarin) is not a “monolith.” The flexibility of both entities allowed Peter the Great to “break into Europe” [*prorubit’ okno v Evropu*] by conquering the Baltic area. Panarin does not mention the partitions of Poland which gave Russia instant presence in Europe together with a relatively advanced material culture and an educated citizenry. For him, any territorial gain that Russia made, or could make, at the expense of Europe is described as “westernization” of Russia, a phenomenon of which Panarin approves. In other words, Panarin wants western Europe to permit Russia to expand into eastern and central Europe simply because such an expansion is advantageous for Russia. The fate of some 150 million people who inhabit the former Soviet sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe and who are opposed to Russia’s expansion into their territory is of no interest to him (in this he agrees with

politologist Stephen Cohen of Princeton University and with journalist Patrick Buchanan). In spite of his invocations of Huntington, he seems to argue that Russia’s expansive interests are Europe’s interests as well. He is dissatisfied with the present situation, which he considers temporary. According to Panarin, the reclaiming by the West of its eastern marches (never mind that it happened with full agreement of their citizenry) makes the West “less open to the outside world and less pluralistic” (347). Panarin predicts that “the wave of westernization” will soon end. We can surmise that it will involve the “return” of, at the very least, eastern Europe to the status of Russia’s colony (central Europe, with its four largely Catholic states of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Czech Republic, may be reluctantly ceded to the West). Panarin clearly believes in the zero-sum game, and any concept of democracy is clearly alien to him.

Panarin is one of a growing number of so-called Eurasianists in the Russian political elite. His spectacular rise from a professor of philosophy at the provincial university of Ul’ianovsk-Simbirsk to a prominent place in the Russian Academy of Sciences is one indication of this trend’s popularity in Putin’s Russia. Eurasianism is a code word for empire restoration, but some of its peculiarities go back to the pre-Soviet period where the word first appeared. As etymology indicates, Eurasianism involves a belief that Russia is a *sui generis* civilization (a belief reinforced by Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations*), and that its peculiarities stem from the vastness of its territory and a combination of Slavic and Turkic elements. In *Aktual’nye problemy natsional’noi politiki i federalizma v Rossii: Iz materialov nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Moscow, 1995, p. 10) Panarin wrote: “The supporting structure of our state is the union of the Slavic and Turkic peoples. Without this, *Rossia* cannot be preserved; without this, *Rossia* will split asunder to the Volga and beyond.” He further asserted that “[t]here is no way that we can keep a united *Rossia* if we do not creatively reinforce ourselves by imagining a sort of a new historical and sociocultural synthesis of Slavism and Mussulmanism on our territory, within the framework of our state. In other words, we are speaking of the restoration of a single spiritual space, permitting the Slavic and Turkic elements in our Eurasia to be integrated” (p. 50).

Needless to say, Panarin’s hope that the Slavic and Turkic peoples of Russia might form a voluntary union is at best utopian and at worst imperialistic: Panarin’s Eurasian culture is to be dominated by Moscow rather

than Islam. It would appear that the Turkic people's only accepted contribution is the supply of territory and the political system that became deeply entrenched in Russian political culture (the Muscovite state derived its political principles from the Mongol conquerors and from the Tatars who formed an earlier state on the Volga River). All the power is expected to rest with Moscow.

It should be noted that of all "European" states Russia has the largest percentage of Muslims. Most of these Muslims are of Turkic origin, and they are scattered throughout the "Russian" territory. While their largest concentration is on the Volga (Kazan is the capital of Tatarstan), they originally dominated southern Russia as well.

On the other hand, Panarin seems to hold the opinion that in order to make this Slavic-Turkic union strong, it is necessary for Europe to yield its "eastern marches" to *Rossia*. Δ

Pravoslavnaia tsivilizatsiia v global'nom mire

(The Eastern Orthodox civilization in the globalized world)

By Aleksandr Sergeevich Panarin. Moscow: Algoritm, 2002. ISBN 5-9265-0036-2. 492 pages. In Russian.

Sally Boss

The publisher specializes in historiographical works that take on the topics of Eurasianism and Russophilism (a twenty-first century version of Slavophilism). As was the case with *The Revenge of History*, the title of the book is misleading. There is little in it about the Eastern Orthodox doctrine and its development; indeed, the case for it is not argued at all. The author states, "I am absolutely convinced that the Eastern Orthodox areas will become the new epicenter of the Christian spirit" (415).

The book denounces American hegemony and predicts its speedy demise: "I am absolutely convinced that if nations of the world were polled about the harlot mentioned in the Book of Revelation, the majority would recognize in her the United States of America" (386). In addition to being anti-American, the author is anti-Marxist and anti-Hegelian. The idea of the Third Rome is ushered in and defended, and in anticipation of possible objections the reader is assured that the idea of Russian hegemony does not have a military component. Panarin's description of "globalism" (said to be sponsored by America) is significant; he sees it as motivated by a "satanic energy" (365). He declares that there are three paradigms of history, and they

compete with one another in the present age: "history as determined by the laws of development (Marxism), history as natural selection (social Darwinism), and history as temptation" (366). The third paradigm is the one to which the author subscribes, and he states that it is also the one closest to the Christian understanding of history. But outside of Russia, he claims, the third paradigm finds no defenders. Not only America but also the European Union are in essence repressive mechanisms; he quotes F. Anastasios who stated that the logic of "repressive mechanisms" activated to defend the EU borders inevitably activates the same mechanisms inside the EU. What Panarin has in mind is the Shengen agreements whereby the borders of the EU are protected. Since the Russians have always been subjected to such supervision (even under Tsar Alexis in mid-sixteenth century an unauthorized trip abroad was punished by death), one wonders why the "repressive state mechanisms" in the Orthodox East are passed over in silence, whereas the same mechanisms in the West are seen as irredeemably evil. On p. 373, the author explains that the number 666 is the password to the special computers in which secret EU data are stored. The footnoted source of this information is a book titled *Electronic cards and the Seal of the Anti-Christ* published in Moscow in 1999.

In Panarin's opinion, "the American globalists" desire a unipolar world, and they are actively engaged in "deconstructing" national sovereignties (392). Panarin compares Russians to Jews: "The Russians—and in this they are like Jews—are a messianic nation" (402). But Jews play a deconstructive role in the modern world, in his opinion. Since the world is now engaged in the process of secularization that will inevitably lead to a catastrophe, the Russians have a chance to exercise their messianic propensities by resacralizing the world with the help of their Russian Orthodox faith and culture.

It hardly needs saying that Panarin's meditations are not bolstered by facts or figures, or indeed by argumentation. He seems to be unaware of the statistics according to which seventy percent of Russians consider themselves Eastern Orthodox, while fifty percent declare that they believe in God and three to seven percent go to church at least once a month. As Edwin Bacon pointed out, "over half, and possibly three-quarters, of all the practicing Christians in Russia [in the 1990s] were *not* Russian Orthodox" [*italics mine, S.B.*]. Panarin's views could be dismissed as marginal were it not for the fact that he is head of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He received the Solzhenitsyn Prize in 2002. Δ

Antologia poezji polskiej na obczyźnie 1939–1999

(An anthology of Polish poetry in diaspora, 1939–1999)
Selected, edited, and with a Preface by Bogdan Czaykowski.
 Includes short bios of cited authors. Warsaw: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Czytelnik and Polski Fundusz Wydawniczy w Kanadzie, 2002. 631 pages. ISBN 83-07-02846-9. Hardcover. In Polish.

Dariusz Skórczewski

It has become customary that poets, critics, and even philosophers compose anthologies of poems of their choice. Leszek Kołakowski's anthology *128 Very Nice Poems Created by 68 Poets and Poetesses of Poland*, accompanied by an influential marketing campaign, became very popular in Poland in 2003. Yet a year earlier another anthology, of much greater importance for those interested in Polish poetry but regretfully much less promoted, was released and made available to the Polish-speaking audiences in Poland and overseas. This is the first anthology of its type in Poland; its goals are ambitious and go far beyond the framework of popular collections. The book was compiled by Bogdan Czaykowski, an accomplished poet and critic, as well as professor emeritus of Slavic literatures at the University of British Columbia. The editor's persona is by no means irrelevant to the concept and composition of the volume, as this review will further show.

Czaykowski's anthology cannot be viewed as a political gesture, in the sense in which the word *political* was used with regard to literature under communism: at present, one no longer risks his/her personal freedom publishing émigré poems in Poland or in any other country of the former Soviet bloc. Nor do those poems stir up political debate, as was often the case only fifteen years ago. Why, then, separate émigré Polish poets from those who write inside the country? Despite the fact that since the 1980's émigré poetry had become part of the canon of Polish postwar literature since the 1980s (in 1980, Czesław Miłosz won the Nobel Prize for literature, and in 1989 the Round Table talks ended communism in Poland), the perspective from which it has usually been presented was "country-oriented." The frame of reference was always the poetry produced "inside Poland." In Czaykowski's opinion, this frame of reference created certain patterns of misperception and misrepresentation. Czaykowski prefers the notion that Polish postwar poetry is essentially one, and

consequently the attempts at dividing it into "poetry written in Poland" and "poetry written in exile" echo the Communist practice. He also does not believe that these two branches of Polish poetry are so different that drawing any parallels between them is pointless and misleading. His anthology is dedicated to proving the validity of his view.

The book contains some four hundred and sixty poems written by sixty-eight Polish poets in diaspora. The editor deserves high praise simply for acquainting his audience with these poems, some of which were rarely, if ever, published in Poland and had never before appeared in a comprehensive collection. The anthology is a groundbreaking work aimed at synthesizing the sixty-year period of Polish poetry outside of Poland. With a volume of these dimensions, the question arises regarding the criteria of selection. I estimate that tens of thousands of Polish poems have been written by poets in exile. What made Czaykowski draw the boundaries of his anthology?

Czaykowski spells out his criteria in the Preface. To begin with, he took into consideration time and space, as well as length of individual poems. The poems included in the anthology had been written outside Poland during and after the Nazi and Soviet invasions of 1939, and the subsequent respective occupation and colonization of Poland's territory. Their authors were poets who were not necessarily émigrés *sensu stricto*, but lived outside the country for a substantial amount of time. The amount of space dedicated to such poets usually does not exceed two pages. Of much greater importance for the contents of the volume, however, are the other criteria which determine why certain poems are represented while others are excluded. They have to do with Czaykowski's conceptualization of the history of Polish poetry in diaspora.

The anthology is divided into three major parts; this division is essential for the image of the poetry that emerges from the volume. The poems comprised in Part One share a peculiar characteristic: they can be read as artistic yet simultaneously historical documents of the time of the Second World War, German occupation, and the postwar period, and they all testify to the collective experience of Poles in that period. The arrangement of the poems, however, indicates that Czaykowski is not trying to promote pathos. While not disregarding the martyrological and nostalgic motifs in the output of Kazimierz Wierzyński, Julian Tuwim, Stanisław Baliński, Antoni Słonimski, and Jan Lechoń (all of whom, along with many others, are represented in the first section of Part One), in the third section the

editor moves on to give voice to poets who wrote after 1945. The development thereby captures points to some key changes of emotions, themes, and values which transpired in the Polish poetry in diaspora between 1939 and 1999. One of these transformations, of which Czaykowski himself was a witness and participant, was the refusal to give in to nostalgia, the poets' redefinition of their attitude toward the country of origin, and reconsideration of their allegiance due to their cross-border and cross-language experience. This fascinating phenomenon occurred in the case of the poets of the *Kontynenty* group of which Czaykowski himself was a member. This links Polish poetry to the broad universal experience of modern nations in diaspora, where one's own identity is usually redefined.

Interestingly, Czaykowski does not neglect the output of the poets who declared their willingness to collaborate with the Soviet invader. The second section of Part One is devoted solely to "Polish poets of the Soviet Union" (*polscy poeci sowieccy*), as they labeled themselves. According to Czaykowski, Adam Ważyk, Jerzy Putrament, Lucjan Szenwald, Władysław Broniewski *et consortes* deserve attention despite their servility or even treason, as their production constitutes a distinct category which can be viewed as symmetrically parallel, and at the same time opposite, to that which has usually been considered the mainstream of Polish émigré poetry; i.e., the poetry of the national cause. By juxtaposing these two ideologically antipodal models of poetry in diaspora, the poems by patriots and poems by the "captive minds," the editor achieves two goals: he discloses the "schism" (as he calls it) of Polish poetry, and he calls on his contemporary fellow poets to remain watchful of ideological servitude. This call certainly should not remain unnoticed, given the fact that all too often, in Poland and elsewhere, poets and writers involve themselves in politically correct activities which are not necessarily honorable.

Part Two is very different in that it offers Czaykowski's own formulation of the canon of the Polish poetry in diaspora. The poems comprised in this part were written by authors born before 1920, including Czesław Miłosz, Aleksander Wat, Waclaw Iwaniuk, and Jerzy Pietrkiewicz. Due to its character, this part certainly raises questions concerning the reasons behind some of the editor's choices. For instance, why has Miłosz's "Bypassing Rue Descartes" been left out? This is an outstanding poem which encapsulates the experience of solidarity of the

colonized and "uncultured" peoples vis-a-vis the indifference of those deemed "civilized."

According to the editor's design, the last part of the anthology gives voice to several generations of poets who were born between 1920 and 1966. Besides those grouped around *Kontynenty*, the poets who left or were forced to leave Soviet-occupied Poland, or those of current dual status such as Adam Zagajewski, are represented in order of birth, as carefully observed here as in other parts of the volume. Next to Stanisław Barańczak, Andrzej Busza, Bogdan Czaykowski, Adam Czerniawski, Janusz A. Ichnatowicz, and Zagajewski—all of them widely recognized—are the poets who do not usually appear in anthologies, such as Bogumił Andrzejewski, Grażyna Zambrzycka, and Edward Zyman. Their introduction to Polish audiences is certainly a positive feature of this collection.

This encounter with Bogdan Czaykowski's admirable anthology prompts the following reflections. First, that if culture is memory—even collective memory—poetry, given the intensity of its language, is an extract of culture and thus deserves particular attention. The notion of poetry as a vehicle for translating experience into language or embedding experience into text is acutely true in the case of this volume. The experience of twentieth-century history-in-the-making by an individual from a Central European country such as Poland has been perfectly described by Polish émigré essayist Jerzy Stempowski. He wrote of "unleashed History" ("Historia spuszczone z łańcucha"). This experience is ubiquitous in the anthology, especially in but not limited to Part One, both in collective and personal dimensions.

The second thought is that a flawless anthology is unattainable. While the editor cannot be refused the right to submit poems of his own choice, the reader is certainly free to question the final result thereby achieved. How adequate is the general image of Polish poetry in diaspora as depicted by Czaykowski?

By virtue of the methodical design and sophisticated structure of his anthology, Czaykowski has actually submitted a book which diverges markedly from the format of a plain anthology. It must be read as his own synthesis of the history of Polish poetry in diaspora in the last six decades. As is usually the case with syntheses of national or comparative literatures, it imposes the author's own constructions onto the poetry that has been included. While this image is true in general, and faithful in terms of directions of poetic developments, it may at times seem incomplete, with some accents misplaced. For instance, one regrets that

Stefan Borsukiewicz's highly original poetry is represented by a single poem, that Zofia Ilińska's poetry is not even included, and that Zagajewski's mesmerizing lines in "To Go To Lviv"—a powerful poetic testimony to the traumatic experience of displacement from the the eastern borderlands of Poland—are omitted. Despite these deficiencies, Bogdan Czaykowski's editorial work indisputably deserves much acclaim as an authentic and detailed attempt at composing the overall image of Polish poetry in diaspora. It will serve for a long time as a basic reference book to the students of Polish and Slavic literatures, and it will maintain its cognitive value even after other anticipated anthologies are published. One may only regret that these poems have not been made available to English-speaking readers, even at the expense of losing some of their qualities in translation. A bilingual anthology would have provided a powerful testimony of the Polish encounter with two totalitarianisms of the twentieth century, and it would have demonstrated how individual human experience acquires general and timeless features in the universal idiom of poetry.

At the same time, a very different anthology of poetry by a person as knowledgeable in poetry as Czaykowski could be conceived, and it might merit the necessary editorial labor in the future. That anthology *in spe* should set as its goal the rendering of the Polish encounter with the Other, e.g. with the West, be it Western Europe or America, or with the exotic, such as Africa in Bogumił Andrzejewski's *oeuvre*. In his Preface Czaykowski rightly remarks that the poems in the anthology were written by poets dispersed in many countries of almost all the continents. In what way(s) did these poets' encounter with other peoples, cultures, and places modify their artistic imagination and sensibility? That anthology-to-be could also include poems by poets outside diaspora who simply crossed borders while traveling. There are many poetic testimonies to this type of encounter, from Miłosz to Zagajewski and Julia Hartwig to the poets of the "bruLion" generation (Marcin Świetlicki, Jacek Podsiadło, Dariusz Sośnicki), to mention a few. What is the balance of the native and foreign elements in such an encounter? How does the new transnational awareness come about? It is clearly a great theme in Polish poetry, one definitely worth presentation and critical exploration. ▲



The Pulaski Legion in the American Revolution

By Francis Casimir Kajencki. El Paso, Texas: Southwest Polonia Press. 2004. xx + 407 pages. Index, illustrations. ISBN 0-9627190-7-2. Hardcover. \$120.00.

James R. Thompson

This carefully researched volume by a seasoned historian of Polish American military history will be a valuable sourcebook for Pulaski scholars. Much of Colonel Kajencki's work is devoted to responding to charges made by detractors of General Pulaski. Over the years these false charges have been implicitly dismissed by a grateful country which has been pleased to name counties, municipalities, and bridges after the hero of Bar (Poland), Brandywine, Haddonfield, Charleston and Savannah. However, given the tendency of some to engage in character assassination of Polish heroes, Colonel Kajencki has done good service preemptively to give thorough data, painstakingly gleaned, concerning each of the issues of controversy.

One of the major points emphasized by Kajencki is the fact that George Washington, experience in the French and Indian War notwithstanding, started off the American Revolution as a rather mediocre general, hesitant, opinionated, and frequently ill informed. By the time of the death of Pulaski, Washington had distinguished himself only at the Battles of Princeton and Trenton. He was beginning to appreciate the attrition made possible by partisan warfare, as Kosciuszko had shown in the fighting retreat from Ticonderoga to Saratoga. But, until the end of the War, Washington really never appreciated the value of cavalry in the triad of "horse, foot, and artillery." Even the minimalist "Pulaski Legion" was beyond his comprehension, in spite of the similar structure utilized on the British side by Banastre Tarleton. Only ninety years earlier, on September 12, 1683, at the Battle of Vienna, a Polish cavalry corps had smashed a Turkish army larger than the total forces utilized on all sides in the American Revolution, marking the end of Islamic expansion to the west. As the military commander of the Polish Confederacy of Bar, Count Pulaski had credentials aplenty, and could point to Poland's glory days of Beresteczko, Alsen, and Parkany. The unfortunate reality seems to be that Washington had little understanding of contemporary military history, save for that of the British, French, and Prussians. The arrogant

dismissal by the Anglo-Saxons of the military abilities of the Poles is, alas, not a recent or isolated phenomenon.

It is interesting to note that Kosciuszko (and, incidentally, Kajencki's book on Kosciuszko's military activities in America is the best I have seen), who spoke English, never presumed to explain to the Americans "the way we Poles would do this job." He quietly used his expertise (generally vastly superior to that of his American colleagues) in fortifications and partisan warfare. By the end of the War, a much wiser George Washington recognized the value of the contributions of Kosciuszko and his fellow Poles. It was the high born non-Anglophone Count Pulaski who found it simply impossible to watch quietly while Washington disregarded the cavalry as an essential part of the Army. If the Americans were not interested in forming cavalry units at the divisional level, at least one full regiment of cavalry for scouting and spoiler purposes was required. On paper, Pulaski got his legion of 300, but the reality was that its personnel were constantly being stripped away for small unit tasks.

If Washington failed to grasp the importance of cavalry as a shock force, Napoleon did not. It could be argued, however, that in the later War Between the States only Confederate leaders in the West, such as Nathan Bedford Forrest and Jo Shelby, succeeded in adapting the use of cavalry to the weaponry of the age (in this case, the Light Horse concept of mounted infantry which used the horse to move quickly, with six shooters rather than sabers the weapons of choice for close in combat, and fighting dismounted once dominance of killing zones had been achieved). Still later, the brilliant partisan General Christian De Wet used the Light Horse concept to bring the British near to defeat in South Africa to the point where only a ruthless policy of starving and imprisoning the civilian population gave Lord Kitchener the ultimate victory against the gallant Boers. It was from Kitchener and not the Nazis that we first have the term "concentration camp".

Polish history is full of romantic "coincidences" which strike some as "providential". For example, Marshal Piłsudski's victory over the Soviet Union's Tukhachevsky began on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1920. Just three months earlier was born Jan Karol Wojtyła, who became Pope John Paul II and whose devotion to the Virgin Mary is well known. On October 9, 1779, probing for a weak point in the British lines at Savannah, Georgia, Casimir Pulaski was mortally wounded by grapeshot. He was carried from the field of battle by several comrades, including Colonel John C. Cooper. Following the American

Revolution, Colonel Cooper gave an intergenerational mandate to his descendants that they try and repay the debt of honor owed to Pulaski and his fellow Polish volunteers who fought "for your freedom and for ours" in the War of American Independence. In response to this mandate, Cooper's great-great-grandson, Merian C. Cooper, organized in August of 1919 the Kosciuszko Squadron, the beginning of the Polish Air Force, with eight American aviators. In the Polish-Soviet War of 1920, Cooper's men used their tiny air force successfully to break up attacks by the *Konarmiya* of General Semyon Budyonnyi (whose chief political commissar was Joseph Stalin). It was this use of air power which prevented the linkup of the armies of Tukachevsky and Budyonnyi and thus made possible the "Miracle on the Vistula" battle which started on August 15, 1920. The *Konarmiya* was the last example in warfare of a cavalry unit of corps/army size.

One of the facts of which Kajencki reminds us is that slaves who presented themselves to the British for promised freedom were seized and sold by the British onto plantations in the West Indies: an example of Perfidious Albion which escaped the attention of Mel Gibson when filming *The Patriot*.

Colonel Kajencki's is a hands-on historian who did much of his research physically visiting the sites discussed in the current book. He goes so far as to present complete muster lists of military formations commanded by Pulaski in America. No scholar of Polish American military history will want to be without a copy of *The Pulaski Legion*. ▲

Shut Up Shut Down Poems

By Mark Nowak. Afterword by Amiri Baraka.
Minneapolis: Coffee House Press
(www.coffeehousepress.org), 2004. ISBN 1-56689-163-9.
161 pages. Paper. \$15.00.

Danusha V. Goska

Shut Up Shut Down contains five formally experimental poems by Polish American Mark Nowak (b. 1964). The poems address de-unionization and de-industrialization in the Rust Belt. Nowak did not want to write "elegies to the worker." Rather, he chose to emulate electronic music's technique of sampling. Nowak does so by stringing together a series of very brief excerpts from a variety of sources. Twenty-

five black-and-white photographs of squalid industrial graveyards illustrate his work. Adrienne Rich praises Nowak as “a highly gifted and conscious artist” charged with explaining to working class people “who they are.”

The book itself is well bound on high quality paper; its design is excellent in itself and in its service to its theme: the cover is a muted rust, bordered in black.

My parents were blue-collar Eastern European immigrants. A PhD, I earn more money cleaning houses than at white-collar work. I live in the prototype for industrial decay: Paterson, NJ. I type these words in a former silk mill; its jobs were outsourced after American workers learned to strike. I have manned picket lines, and risked everything that goes with that duty. I write days after the 2004 presidential election, in which people like me voted against their own interests for a scion and protector of privilege. Key to that election and Nowak’s book is the effort to find a language and a style that communicate working class concerns to a wider audience. I actively disliked this book.

I am one of many for whom reading is a luxury. For low-wage workers there is always the struggle for time; there is the search for that rare commodity—in a city of car alarms and violence—quiet. In a life of constant worry, simple attention is the most precious commodity of all.

I picked up Nowak’s book, tried to read its first page, felt discomfort, felt that old insecurity that haunts members of the underclass when we don’t “get” work we have been told is “high class”—a telling synonym for “worthy.” I squirmed at feeling this all-too-familiar discomfort, the discomfort of being outside the inside. I put the book down. I put the book away, on a shelf in a dark closet, for a week. Took it out. Tried again. Failed again. Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

After a couple of weeks of this, I said to myself, “I hate this book.” Urged on by the immigrant work ethic, I took one more whack at it.

What confronted me on the first page: some words are placed in parentheses, some are in boldface type, some appear in block form, some are sprinkled across the page like pepper. Some sentences are punctuated; some are not. Some appear to be from a sentence diagram: “Past (participle) past (participant) past (articulating).” Workers’ statements are interspersed.

I know that there are audiences who can read such text and feel confident that they “get” it. I am not that audience. Having read Nowak’s book more than once, I still have no idea what is going on on this first page, other than an experiment in poetic form. Academics appreciate experiments in poetic form. Nowak claims he is not writing this book for academics, but for workers. I rage.

My most uncharitable, paranoid side suspects that Nowak is posing for academics, and using poor and working class persons like myself as props. I do not see poor workers like myself, like my parents, picking up this book and feeling welcomed or respected by it. I do see the Radcliff-educated poetess Adrienne Rich, daughter of a professor and a concert pianist, appreciating this book.

Having formed that uncharitable conclusion, I see what looks like evidence. In an illustrated book about workers, there is not one photo of a worker. Explanatory text added to the book claims that there are three workers in the cover photo. Where? I see what looks like heavy machinery; any recognizable human being has been subsumed by the industrial image. Workers’ statements are presented in a disembodied, decontextualized format. Mere fragments—not even whole sentences—of workers’ statements are placed beside dehumanizing, experimental, politically correct, academically inspired fragments like this: “working class (white) masculinity.”

The workers’ statements Nowak exploits were not even collected by him; he lifted them from others’ anthologies. He does not provide the workers’ names; ironically, one poem laments working class children writing their names on a wall where those names will be erased (20). I regard words as sacred, as expressions of the bodies and souls of the person from whom those words came. Nowak’s use of nameless, disembodied fragments strikes me the way a pot here or a gourd there taken from a once-intact Indian community, now randomly scattered throughout a museum, strikes some Native Americans. Our individuality is erased as part of Nowak’s larger, socialist agenda. The worker one “understands” from this book is no individual, but a generalized Tom Joad figure.

The choice of Amiri Baraka to pen the afterword does not reassure. Baraka once called for the “elimination of the white man.” Baraka’s racist political stances are not immaterial. His analysis of, and praise for, Nowak’s poetry could alienate many Polish American workers. I will mention just two points here: Baraka places Nowak’s work as part of a desired “Socialist Revolution.” Those words sound quite different to Poles familiar with Stalinism than they sound to Baraka. And Baraka reports that whites require tutelage by blacks and Hispanics to understand how to be true revolutionaries.

I rejoice that Nowak is published, is published in a handsome volume; I rejoice that his work is well received. What I voice here is a working-class Polish American woman’s perspective. ▲

Journey from Innocence

By **Anna R. Dadlez**. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, no. DXIII (distributed by Columbia University Press), 1998. ISBN 0880334118. xii + 308 pages. Hardcover.

Patricia A. Gajda

This is a memoir of Anna Gąsowska, a young Polish girl from Lwów/Lviv born in the years between the two world wars. Her life is forever changed in September 1939 when her country is invaded by powerful neighbors. Her father, a respected jurist, is separated from the family and never heard from again when she and her mother are deported to the Soviet Union by eastern Poland's new occupiers. The book recounts the long and tortuous route she and her mother took, first as deportees in Soviet Asia, then as wartime refugees in Iran and Lebanon, and finally as postwar displaced persons in the United Kingdom.

The writer reveals herself as a precocious and confident child, interested in her extended family and friends, who copes with a disability so well that she never allows it to curtail her curiosity or her impulse to take part in events occurring around her. She becomes a determined student, doggedly pursuing education in exile but also remembering her wellspring of Polish patriotism and culture. She draws from the national literature her understanding and expectations of human nature. Her world view is colored by naive and romantic notions such as the chivalry and strength of General Władysław Anders and the inevitability of Allied assistance, even a third world war, to restore a free and independent Poland.

The adult Anna Gąsowska Dadlez tells us of her two purposes in writing: to examine her wartime decisions and their consequences, and to couch her memoirs in an accurate historical context. In the first of these she succeeds admirably, but in the second her success is uneven. When she writes about what she knows best, for example, her life in Lwów/Lviv, her descriptions and analysis have a ring of truth and confidence. In other chapters, when she engages history and the world of diplomacy, she sometimes surrenders credibility. For example, she states that the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 23, 1939, "demonstrated a failure of British policy-makers in their efforts to convince Stalin to join the anti-Nazi alliance," giving the impression that Britain seriously courted Stalin, whereas contemporary insiders make it clear that Britain actually dragged its feet on the issue, passing time and assuming that Stalin's anti-Fascist ideology would naturally dictate his alignment

with the western Allies. She effectively places her experiences into historical context at several points. For example, after getting word in Persia of the Katyn massacres, the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto, and the mysterious plane crash that killed General Władysław Sikorski (Soviet spy Kim Philby was in charge of the British intelligence at Gibraltar when Sikorski boarded the plane at that locality), she discusses the 1943 Allied conference held in nearby Teheran that included no Polish representative and engendered fear among Polish refugees that their homeland was being "sold to the Russians."

Besides telling her own story, Dadlez is a good observer of society. She frequently exhibits or describes a kind of class consciousness in recalling the workings of prewar Polish society, the relationships between peoples among whom the Polish deportees and refugees found themselves in wartime, and their postwar experiences as displaced persons. For example, in Persia she is conscious of no longer being a deportee as she had been in the Soviet Union, and thinks that her new, more dignified status as refugee calls for her to give up her old rags and to find real shoes to wear. In more important and insightful accounts, she observes that among expatriate Poles tensions sometimes developed between those who had "joined the Home Army, those who had undergone torments in prisons, and those who had been incarcerated" in the German prisoner of war camps. Because the Germans in charge of these camps were thought to have at least in part abided by the terms of the Geneva Convention, the POWs were sometimes referred to as "our countrymen, who surrendered to the Nazis and spent the war in peace and comfort." In Britain, she observes a definite categorization. On one hand there were the displaced persons like her family, who had arrived by way of the Soviet Union and the Middle East; on the other, there were ex-officials of what had been the Polish government-in-exile and the professionals who had serendipitously found themselves in the West when war began, "who never lived through even a minute part of our unhappy experiences." Finally, she analyzes the demobilized Polish soldiers in Britain, for the most part demoralized, with no education, riddled with self-doubt, and not well served by their countrymen who had arrived long before them. In contrast to them were the Home Army (AK) survivors, imprisoned by the Germans after the collapse of the Warsaw rising of 1944 and later liberated by the Allies. Unlike the others, with whom they usually did not associate, the Home Army survivors had been able to retain their self-confidence and belief in their country's coming restoration.

Poignantly recounted is the difficulty, indeed the trauma, of deciding to emigrate, to start again from nothing, to make up one's mind to stay in the West in a harsh postwar world absorbed by youth and consumerism.

In the end, the reader is left curiously unsatisfied on several scores. Although many references to the author's health and disability appear throughout, the reader never learns whether ultimately there was a diagnosis and solution to those problems. A few almost oblique references to the woman who "would become my mother-in-law," and to her older sons, Tomasz and Jerzy, never quite fill out the story of her life. There is no mention of her marriage, so it is only in the dedication page that we learn that it is Tomasz who became her husband. Her account ends in Britain, giving the impression that she lived out the rest of her life in that country. She never discusses coming to America or any of the circumstances that brought her here, yet she shifts viewpoint midway in her closing observations about life in Britain to include musings about the American condition as well.

The author tells an important story, but it is compromised by several factors. This book is weakest when the author tries to use historiographical methodology instead of concentrating on her experiences and valuable observations that are, after all, the most precious elements in the account. The reader is never sure whether it is little Anna's voice we are hearing or that of the mature woman she became. Too much repetition is evident in the frequent reintroducing of the same person, item, or event. Endnotes appear to be erratic, sometimes erroneous (54, note 12), sometimes repetitive (150, notes 20 and 26), sometimes ill-chosen (standard textbooks), or unnecessary. Because the organizing principle, for the most part, is the author's location, the chapters vary too much for easy and orderly reading; one focusing on the Soviet Union is nearly sixty pages long and the following one describing the escape from that "Paradise" spans little more than ten pages. This book needs a proofreader and deserves a better editor. ▲

A note on Wisława Szymborska's "The Tarsier" ("Tarsjusz")

Ela Rossmiller

The tarsier, or tarsus, is a squirrellike nocturnal animal of the East Indies and the Philippines, with large, goggle eyes. It lives in trees and feeds on insects.

"The Tarsier" is typical of Wisława Szymborska's poetry. The language is whimsical, the imagery uses animals to say something about life, and the meaning is complex and nuanced. Like most of Szymborska's poetry, "The Tarsier" can be read on many levels, depending on the tone of voice with which it is read.

For example, in what tone of voice do you read: "My coat's too small for a fur collar./My glands provide no bliss./And concerts go on without my gut"? Is the tarsier merely being meek, or is the tarsier expressing anger at the ironic observation that the only reason he is alive is because his death would not have served someone else's purposes?

Similarly, the lines "My good lord is gracious, my good lord is kind" could be read either in a sincere tone of voice, or a sarcastic one. I hear sarcasm, because later it says "But what you've come to know about yourselves will serve for a sleepless night from star to star." The "lord" is neither gracious nor kind, but guilty of some crime.

The tarsier's death would not be profitable to the master, and so it is permitted to live. Even so, the master finds a way to exploit the creature, and sells it "for the poses I strike to make you smile." That he has permitted the tarsier to live, albeit as a plaything, allows the master to believe in his own mercy and goodness, thereby easing his guilty conscience.

The stanza which follows draws out the point. It could be paraphrased, "We few who have not been skinned, mutilated, or plucked, are your dream, which finds you innocent of murder for now, but only for so long as we are alive. Should we die, our death would proclaim your guilt."

The relationship between the tarsier and the master is perhaps captured by the Romanian proverb expressing the relationship of the weak to the strong: "Kiss the hand you cannot bite." The weak may hate their oppressors, yet treat them with obsequious gentility because of their relative weakness in the face of such powerful domination. The tarsier, a frail creature, adopts whimsical, graceful, and clever speech to launch a cloaked accusation while avoiding a direct confrontation.

And what does the tarsier say about itself? First, it takes comfort in the fact that tarsiers have existed for generations and will continue to exist. The tarsier will endure, as tarsiers have always endured. Second, the tarsier is certain of its own dignity, despite its apparent insignificance. Finally, the tarsier is ineffably self-possessed, sure of its purpose in the world: "I, a tarsier, know well how essential it is to be a tarsier." I would speculate that the tarsier's essential character is to be a

symbol to the world revealing the infinite significance of the most insignificant of creatures.

The interpretation of the poem depends on who you think the tarsier and the master symbolize. It is certainly possible that the tarsier represents no other being than itself, that the master represents the human race, and that the poem is about the unjust exploitation of animals.

It is also possible that the tarsier represents humanity, that the “lord and master” represents God, and that the poem is about our unjust treatment at the hands of a cruel deity.

Or the master is a political demagogue responsible for the death of millions of people who were, in actuality, treated as animals. In this case, it would make sense for Szymborska to employ a language so beautiful, and images so rich, that this meaning would not be apparent at first glance. Given that the poem was published in 1967, such intentional indirectness would be necessary to get by the censors.

But do we really need to travel across the Atlantic and back in time to find people and situations to whom and to which the poem can apply? The themes are universal: the humility, dignity, and endurance of the weak; the domination, arrogance, and deceit of the strong; and the beauty, frailty, and stubborn persistence of life. Δ

“Tarsier” can be found in *Nothing Twice/Nic dwa razy*, a bilingual selection of Szymborska’s poetry translated by Stanisław Barańczak and Clare Cavanagh (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997).

Letters

Cyprian Norwid’s obscurities

I read with great interest Kevin Christianson’s review of my Norwid translations, especially his close analysis of the “Siła ich” epigram (*SR XXV/1*, January 2005). My comment on his analysis is to say that the historical context of this poem, on which the reviewer places such emphasis, is of secondary importance. It is because the epigram applies to twenty-first century police forces, as it did to the nineteenth-century forces, that makes it worth translating. Good poetry transcends its time.

I was amused by Christianson’s insistence that as translator I care more for rhymes than for other features of the poems. I have on a number of occasions upbraided translators of Polish poetry precisely for adhering to rhyming schemes at the expense of other formal qualities. On this and related topics I commend to him my essay “Translation of poetry: theory and practice,” *Modern Poetry in Translation*, no.15(1999). I do retain rhyme, or at best assonance, only where

this does not interfere with other qualities. For this reason I have abandoned rhymes altogether in, for example, “Rzeczywistość,” “Bema pamięci żałobny-rapsod,” “Zródło,” “Fatum,” and all long poems. His failure to notice this effectively invalidates the main contention of his review.

Ultimately, every translation is a compromise, and I am not afraid to say so. Some compromises are better than others. Christianson’s preferred compromises would, as he himself admits, result in “prosaic translations.”

Christianson comments: “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.” I happened to conduct seminars on translating Norwid at Polish universities because I was invited to do so; no such invitations came from British or American universities.

Pace Christianson, in my preface I specifically mention the help I received from my wife who is a native English speaker, as well as from Agata Brajerska-Mazur and Bogdan Czaykowski. Brajerska-Mazur is the author not only of the article Christianson refers to but also of a full-length book *O angielskich tłumaczeniach utworów Norwida* (Lublin, 2002) devoted to all aspects of Norwid’s English translations. As regards Czaykowski, I pay tribute to “his poetic sensibility and his deep understanding of Norwid.” Brajerska-Mazur and Czaykowski may not be native English speakers, but I am prepared to claim that their command of the language exceeds that of some 90 percent of the native speakers in the United States and Great Britain. I have been fortunate in having the assistance of these three people, and I doubt whether I would have done any better with those English and American academics Christianson recommends. In any event, poets and poet-translators must be careful not to get too involved with academia. The mass of cloned poetry that now issues from the American and British translation-and-creative-writing courses is a major cultural disaster of our time.

Overall, the reviewer worries that “English-speaking readers may struggle to comprehend what Norwid is saying or talking about.” As it happens, Polish-speaking readers have so struggled for many years. When reviewing my 1986 Norwid selection, Bogdan Czaykowski complained that I had clarified the poet’s obscurities.

Adam Czerniawski, Monmouth, Wales, Great Britain

Professor Christianson replies:

Given the fact that a reviewer's task is more thankless than a translator's, I'm flattered that Adam Czerniawski has responded to my review of his translations of Norwid (*SR*, XXV, January 2005, 1099-1101). I regret that my review suggested that most of his translations contain overt rhyme schemes or, worse, that their accuracy has been compromised by adherence to rhyme schemes, however assonant the rhymes might be. On the other hand, a good third of Czerniawski's translations make noticeable use of rhyme, including his "Obscurity," "Nerves," "My Country," and "Feelings" (*Czułość*), and this compulsion to rhyme bears some responsibility for unnecessary liberties with the originals which undermine fidelity.

It came as a surprise to learn that my review had suggested that the translator's wife and Polish colleagues possess an inadequate grasp of English. I also do not recall advocating that these translations be tested out on "British and American academics." When Czerniawski refers to the seminars he conducted at Polish universities, I interpret that to mean that his translations were analyzed in conjunction with the Polish originals by Polish students majoring in English philology—not by a group of Polish professors and scholars, as the term "academics" implies.

Apparently Mr. Czerniawski shares my assumption that the audience for a book of translations is not, or at least should not be, a small group of academics and specialists but the general reader encountering the foreign poet for the first time. In reviewing Czerniawski's book, I adopted this role and sought to imagine how undergraduate students, for example, enrolled in World Literature courses would "decode" the texts placed before them. After all, in the United States at least, students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two probably constitute the largest pool of consumers (albeit often unwilling ones!) of literature in translation. In my own work as a translator I find myself constantly stepping back and asking: "How might my students *misinterpret* this word, phrase, line, *et cetera*?"

With regard to Czerniawski's distaste for translations that are prosaic, I wonder why up until a few decades ago Penguin Books published only prose translations of verse written in foreign languages. If notoriously obscure poets like Norwid and Emily Dickinson are indeed not untranslatable, perhaps prose translations combined with glosses and notes can provide a more direct and intimate reading experience for the general

reader than versified renditions.

Accuracy about Katyn

Professor Raymond Gawronski's excellent review of Lynne Olson's and Stanley Cloud's *A Question of Honor* (*SR* XXV/1, January 2005) contains one error. Concerning the massacre of Polish prisoners by the Soviet forces, Professor Gawronski writes that "the Soviets had killed some twenty thousand Polish officers at the Katyn Forest and elsewhere." This is incorrect. As Lavrentii Beria's letter to Stalin (dated March 1940) reveals, the people to be shot included 15,000 Polish uniformed personnel and 11,000 civilians. The latter included some Catholic priests and also my father, who had never served in the army.

The above document is quoted in Pavel and Anatoli Sudoplatov, *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of An Unwanted Witness* (1994), 476. It is also mentioned in Zbigniew Brzezinski's *Out of Control* (1993), 13. The prevailing tendency to claim that Soviet mass murders of Poles in Spring 1940 included only military officers distorts history and is disappointing to the families of the thousands of civilian prisoners who had been imprisoned and executed together with the military.

*Anna Dadlez, Saginaw Valley State University,
Michigan*

Announcements and Notes**Kultura for a song**

The *Sarmatian Review* Archives has a nearly complete set of issues of the Paris *Kultura* from 1970–1992 totaling 230+ issues. For a donation of \$100 plus the cost of shipping (a pickup will eliminate shipping costs), you can have the entire set. The price is the same for individuals and libraries. If interested, email <sarmatia@rice.edu>.

Summer study at the Catholic University of Lublin

Professor Michael J. Mikos of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (mikos@uwm.edu) leads the five-week study tour at CUL, July 11-30, 2005. The cost is \$2,282 inclusive of everything except transportation. Classes included beginning, intermediate, and advanced Polish, as well as courses in Polish culture.

Summer study at the Silesian University in Cieszyn (on the Polish-Czech border)

August 1–28, 2005; for more information call 48-32-251-2991 or write to <szkola@homer.fil.us.edu.pl>.

About the Authors

Sally Boss is one of the founders of *Sarmatian Review*. She wrote for the Paris *Kultura*.

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Harry Louis Roddy received his PhD in German from Rice University in 2004. He now teaches German at Rice. Ela Rossmiller spent a year at the Jagiellonian University after completing her studies at Harvard. She is currently working on a book of poetry.

Dariusz Skórczewski is Adjunct Professor of Polish in the Department of Literary Theory at the Catholic University of Lublin.

James R. Thompson is Noah Harding Professor of Statistics at Rice University and author of eleven books on statistics that amply use historical materials.

Simon Tokarzewski was a nobleman-turned-artisan who was twice sent to the Siberian gulag for membership in the secret societies whose goal was Polish liberty.

Thank you note

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