

Those Who Trespass Against Us. One Woman's War Against the Nazis

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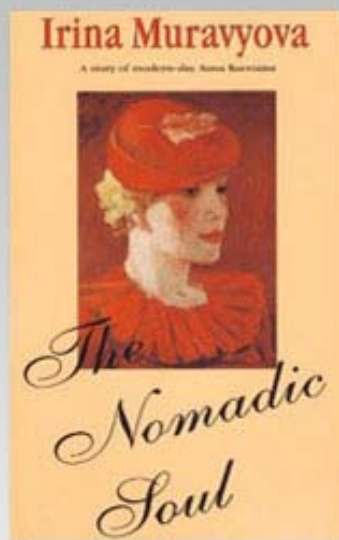
by Lora Wildenthal

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The Nomadic Soul.

A Story of Modern-Day Anna Karenina
Glas New Russian Writing,
Moscow, 1999, 240 p.

By **Irina Muravyova**

THE NOMADIC SOUL traces the dramatic history of several generations of an upperclass family during the First World War and the Civil War in Russia. Historical events providing a background for the narrative are depicted not directly but rather as seismic shock waves overturning and transforming the lives of ordinary people.

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could have done shy of going to war with the Russians, given the military situation in late 1944–early 1945. This is a minor quibble that does not detract from the massive amount of research presented in this book.

The greatest significance of this volume is contained in its last two parts. Part V examines the intelligence activities of the Home Army (originally named *Związek Walki Zbrojnej*, the Union of the Armed Struggle). This work gives a more complete picture of Polish activities conducted literally under the noses of the Nazi authorities during the German occupation of Poland. Too often scholars only consider the partisan activities of civilians, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1943, or the larger uprising in Warsaw in 1944. The fifth part of this volume details the amount of work done by Home Army operatives, and the incredible amount of information these men and women supplied to the Allied side. In his chapter “Home Army Intelligence Activity,” Andrzej Chmielarz points out that “the most important achievement of Home Army Intelligence was the creation of very modern working methods,” which allowed it to supply “military, economic and industrial reports, not only from Poland, but from the immediate rear of the eastern Front and indeed from German territory” (488). Among this important intelligence was information about V-1 and V-2 production at Peenemunde, German troop strength and movements both prior to and during Barbarossa, and information on economic matters and morale issues.

Part VI contains summaries of the information thus presented. The messages were succinct and informative, but still included important analyses. Daria Nałęcz, the Director General of the Polish State Archives, was too modest when she stated that the Polish contribution to Enigma was the greatest part of their effort (552). Judging from the information contained in this book, it is clear that much more credit is owed to the Poles than has customarily been given. Ms. Nałęcz points out in her summary that of 80,000 reports generated by the Polish stations, over 85 percent were deemed of very high or high quality (557).

As a reviewer, I am left with a number of questions, mostly directed to the Polish authors rather than having to do with a criticism of the work. The case of Colonel Jerzy Iwanov-Szajnowiej is one of those fascinating stories that seems to have been left unfinished. I found myself wondering why he was left to dangle by Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, aka MI-6, or Military Intelligence) and forced to try and escape on his own. Gill Bennett’s summary of the Anglo-Polish cooperative effort in the Middle East makes no mention

of this man who was apparently an important figure in Polish intelligence. I agree with the assessment of Jan Ciechanowski that this case “still calls for many more explanations” (375–376). In addition, given the relative efficiency of the British Intelligence groups, I find it curious that important documents relating to the Polish connection would be destroyed without some documentation as to what they contained. One wonders if some secrets are still being held; at the very least, a more detailed answer is owed to the men and women who risked their lives to work for the Allied intelligence.

Although slow in the middle, this work is a critical contribution, and not only to Anglo-Polish relations. More importantly, it is an essential addition to our knowledge of the Polish effort at home and abroad during the entire course of the Second World War. As an addition to the body of intelligence history, it is important to our understanding of how a government in exile created what appears to be an exemplary intelligence structure, albeit with British funding. This is an essential work for any research library, or for any individual examining intelligence cooperation between nations. ▲

Those Who Trespass Against Us One Woman’s War Against the Nazis

By Karolina Lanckorońska. Translated by Noel Clark. Preface by Norman Davies, Introduction by Lech Kalinowski and Elżbieta Orman. London: Pimlico (Division of Random House), 2005. xxix + 339 pages. Photographs, index. ISBN 1-8141-3417-2. Hardcover: £14.99 in U.K. Paper: \$19.49 on Amazon.com.

Lora Wildenthal

As Norman Davies points out in his preface, this memoir offers an unusual perspective on the Nazi war in East Central Europe. First published in Polish in 2001, Karolina Lanckorońska (1898–2002) actually wrote the text in 1945–1946, much closer to the events in question. Lanckorońska’s social position and political commitments repeatedly placed her in situations that were as useful for observing Nazi rule as they were dangerous. Before the Second World War

she was a professor of art history at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów/Lviv, the first woman to hold such a post in Poland. She also perceived the war through the eyes of a traditional aristocratic woman, noting that it permitted her to take up again her “great, long-standing interest in nursing, which in my youth had once almost blossomed into a professional pursuit” (247). A countess, she had strong family and historical ties to her home region of eastern Poland (now Ukraine). After Poland’s defeat in 1939 she joined the underground resistance, becoming a member of the Union for Armed Struggle (*Związek Walki Zbrojnej*, ZWZ). In May 1940, fearing deportation or execution at the hands of the Soviets, she fled Lwów, which lay in Soviet-occupied Poland, for German-occupied Poland. Then in 1941, all of Poland was occupied by Germany. In the summer of 1941, Lanckorońska began “above-ground” work for the Main Council for Relief (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*, RGO). In this capacity she was responsible for supplying food and medical aid for political prisoners and criminals alike in German-occupied Poland. In the last weeks of 1941 as she traveled for that job to Volhynia Province, east of the General Government, she had her first glimpse of the genocide of the Jews. In May 1942 she herself became a prisoner of the Germans, first in Stanisławów, then from January 1943 in Ravensbrück, the women’s concentration camp north of Berlin. Lanckorońska’s ties through her art history work to influential persons in Italy, and intervention by the Italian royal family and her friend the historian Carl Burckhardt, head of the International Red Cross, shaped her story in an unusual way, sustaining and finally saving her in April 1945.

Lanckorońska had a specific aim in publishing this memoir: to record *Schützstaffel Hauptsturmführer* Hans Krüger’s murder of twenty-five Jan Kazimierz University professors. Krüger’s intemperate indiscretion in telling her of his deed both helped and endangered her between 1942 and 1944, as factions within the SS argued about how to handle him and how to respond to her knowledge of Krüger’s acts. She insisted on serving as a witness in his 1967 trial, but he was never formally charged with those murders since he was already sentenced to multiple life sentences for the murders of over 10,000 Jews.

Lanckorońska had a wider aim as well: to set down a memorial to the courage of Poles in resisting invasion and maintaining their integrity under occupation, in prisons and in concentration camps. In her clear and sometimes truly poetic prose, she gently analyzes

human frailty as well as endurance. This gift for sketching out how ruthless power imposed from above affects relationships among those it subordinates makes her descriptions of occupation and especially of Ravensbrück well worth reading. She herself served as room-leader for a group of prisoners in Ravensbrück, and claims that, as with other positions she held, she sought to use her privileges to benefit the more helpless. The book’s title refers to that part of the Lord’s Prayer that offers forgiveness to “those who trespass against us”; as a serious Christian, she is unsettled by her inability to forgive the Nazis for what she has seen (166).

Lanckorońska offers the American reader an unusual perspective in that, as a Pole, she faced two aggressors in 1939. She encountered the Soviet aggressor first, as eastern Poland was annexed by the Soviet Union. Her descriptions of the Soviet occupation, with its cruel deportations to the Soviet interior, are shocking and powerful. Her account of the Soviets’ privileging of Ukrainians over the formerly dominant Poles is informative, once again displaying her talent at showing the effect of domination on those under it. At that time she and her colleagues believed that a German occupation could not possibly be as bad as the Soviet one. Although they hoped for Germany’s ultimate defeat, they wished that Germany would first crush the Soviet Union (66), and they rejoiced when Operation Barbarossa reunited Poland under German rule (75–76).

At the end of the war, her Polish standpoint highlights another painful development: her sense of betrayal by the Western Allies. Lanckorońska experienced the end of the war in Italy, where she painfully realized that Allied victory meant her exile.

Lanckorońska’s memoir is of interest as a document of nationalism as well. In the introduction by Lech Kalinowski and Elżbieta Orman, she is quoted as answering the question “Polishness—what does it mean?” as follows: “Polishness is for me the awareness of belonging to the Polish nation. I consider we should do everything possible to provide concrete proof of this awareness, though I do not understand the need to analyse it” (xxii). This is a perfect expression of nationalism from the inside—a force that is powerful yet inexplicable to its advocates. The alchemy of a nationalism that Lanckorońska does not want to analyze can make complicated things simple: Poles who are Communists or Nazi collaborators are not genuinely Poles; Ukrainians are deeply unattractive people, but for an exception who proves the rule (157); and Jews

are relatively distant figures to be pitied (99). It adds to the interest of this text that she is describing a critical moment in the forging of Polish national identity. As she herself says, indirectly drawing attention to the crippling political divisions among interwar Poles, “The persecution of *all* Poles aroused in our society something that nobody who experienced that occupation will ever forget—the consciousness of complete unity among the Polish people. . . there was a period of the most intense happiness, when nobody bothered about anybody else’s class origins or party affiliation” (90). In her RGO days, she fostered a vision of overcoming social divisions by offering food to Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians together, and ultimately succeeded in that provision of aid (99). Yet it is also clear that her vision of Poland is deeply Christian (e.g., 90), and does not leave much space for Ukrainians. The memoir is a rich source for examining the nature of nationalist claims.

After her release in April 1945, Lanckorońska joined the Polish Forces still fighting in Italy. She resided in Rome after the war, where she created the Polish Historical Institute to support Polish culture outside of the auspices of state socialist Poland. Her memoir is a powerful document of an unusual and courageous woman. ▲

The Look at Architecture

By Witold Rybczynski. New York: Oxford University Press/The New York Public Library, 2001. 130 pages. Illustrations, index. ISBN 019-513443-5. Hardcover. \$25.00 on Amazon.com.

George Gasyna

“Commoditie,” “Firmeness,” and “Delight”—with these three terms, borrowed from the seventeenth-century English architect Sir Henry Wotton, Witold Rybczynski sets up the shorthand for this remarkable tour of the achievements and follies of (mainly) modern architecture. Rybczynski, professor of urban studies and real estate at the University of Pennsylvania and one of America’s foremost architectural critics, navigates between these three ideas (which could be rephrased as utilitarian value, structural soundness, and aesthetic integrity) with an intimate, almost elemental ease. Little wonder: his previous studies have journeyed over a vast terrain of subjects architectural, from the domestic *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (1986) through the

utilitarian *One Good Turn: A Natural History of the Screwdriver and the Screw* (2000) to the theoretically polemical *City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World* (1995). In this short work, originally a series of public lectures given at the New York Public Library in late 1990s, Rybczynski restricts his focus to a discussion of architecture as style. Style is set in a dichotomy with “vocabulary,” the latter term embodying the typical establishment view that Rybczynski demolishes with panache: “[I]f architectural style is a language—an analogy that is deeply flawed—it is closer to slang than to grammatical prose. Architectural styles are mutable, unregulated, improvised. Architects break the rules, and invent new ones” (86). In Rybczynski’s use, style must be understood as something greater than a mere metaphor for “convention” or “fashion.” It signifies a set of prescriptions and a mode of living. The thesis to be tested is that despite much theoretical posturing and jargon to the contrary, style—even to the point of flamboyance—is what modern architecture is really all about, with decidedly mixed results.

The main idea guiding his discussion is this: in its negation of the functional in favor of the formal, modernism has rendered a great disservice both to the idea/ideal of the city as a social space and to the notion of architecture as synecdoche of an organic structure. Therefore, modernist architecture is low on *Commoditie*. Enraptured by formal possibility, it works against life. And, insofar as the medium really *was* the message for the modernist masters and, perhaps worse, for their breathless acolytes, the demonstration of this thesis on more modest (read: university) budgets frequently meant, as Rybczynski points out, that the resulting buildings would be compromised from the start by poor construction materials and other shortcuts taken along the way. Thus, more often than not, they also lack *Firmeness*. In its giddy tendentiousness, modern campus architecture is rife with such structures. Rybczynski adduces the Richards Laboratory at Penn as a case of the kind of blatant disregard for the basics of living and working spaces that makes for a failed building, in this case a laboratory space in which excessive fenestration and other formal considerations have defeated the building’s purpose as a place to conduct experiments. My own favorite example of a similar failure is the thirty-year-old brutalist-cubist-quasifigural Robarts Library at the University of Toronto where as a graduate student I once occupied an airless and essentially windowless cubicle.