

THE SARMATIAN REVIEW

Vol. XXXI, No. 3

September 2011

Asking Questions about Smolensk



The canopy in front of Warsaw's Presidential Palace as of June 13, 2011. It was set up on April 10, 2011, the first anniversary of the Smolensk catastrophe in which President Lech Kaczyński and 95 other Poles died. It is maintained as a sign of social protest against inertia of the Polish authorities who allowed the Russians to construct the narrative about reasons for the catastrophe. The "tent" is a place where information is distributed and lectures are given by those public figures who support the protest. Photo by *Sarmatian Review* staff.

The Sarmatian Review (ISSN 1059-5872) is a triannual publication of the Polish Institute of Houston. The journal deals with Polish, Central, and Eastern European affairs, and it explores their implications for the United States. We specialize in the translation of documents. *Sarmatian Review* is indexed in the American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies, EBSCO, and P.A.I.S. International Database. Since September 1997, files in PDF format are available at the Central and Eastern European Online Library (www.cceol.com).

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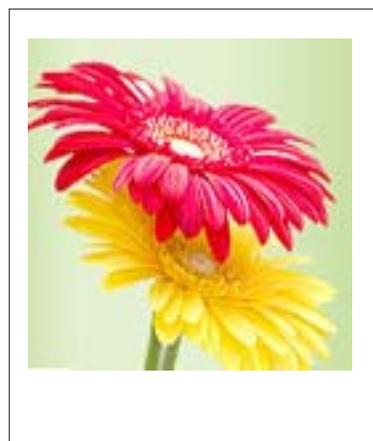
Our Take

A Modest Proposal concerning Eastern European orthography

This idea was put forth by a friend of ours, an academic on the other side of the fence (i.e., a scientist), who has no roots or interest in non-Germanic Central and Eastern Europe. The said scientist has attended numerous conferences in Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Bucharest, Zagreb, Vilnius and other cities of the region. He does not speak any of the languages spoken there, but he often deals with things Eastern European. What irritates him is the high number of diacritical marks that each language possesses. There is simply no possibility that a foreigner can spell these words correctly, he says. It is hard to locate streets whose names have many

dots and dashes above and below the letters. Words with diacritical marks are more difficult to remember than words without them. These marks make Eastern European languages even more alien to an English-speaking person.

There are some diacritical marks in French and especially in German, but Eastern Europe beats these two by many lengths. “For a visitor,” our friend said, “this is both inconvenient and annoying. Couldn’t these peoples stop using these marks? The native speakers know how to pronounce these words even when the marks are not there—look at their email correspondence.” Sounds reasonable to us. Granted, from time to time there may occur some confusion as to what is meant, but such cases would be rare: sentence structure and pronunciation are enough to keep words firmly within the meaning they are supposed to represent. Pronunciation would remain the same, but spelling would do away with the marks. In English there are words whose meaning depends on pronunciation and place in the sentence (e.g., research), and no one seems to complain. Perhaps a consensus of a group of academics would be a good beginning: this may be the right time to start building such a consensus. Δ



Sarmatian Review Data

Organic food production and consumption in Poland

Estimated number of private farms producing organic food in 2010: 20,000, or 3,000 more than in 2009.

Voivodships in which organic farms are the most numerous: West Pomerania (Zachodniopomorskie), with 2,400 organic farms; then Warmia-Mazuria, Carpathian, Little Poland, and Podlasie.

Percentage of organic food exported abroad, mainly to EU: 80 percent.

Number of processing plants specializing in organic food: 264, or 13 less than in 2009.

Estimated increase in consumption of organic food in Poland in 2010: 15–20 percent more than in 2009.

Estimated percentage of organically certified arable land that consists of meadows and grazing grounds: 50 percent.

Source: Beata Drewnowska, "Przybywa producentów ekożywności," *Rzeczpospolita*, 17 March 2011.

Emigration of Russians from Russia in 2010

Estimated number of Russian professionals who left the country in 2010 in search of economic and personal security: one million.

Source: Czech TV, 24 February 2011 (<http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/1097181328-udalosti/211411000100224/obsah/148767-exodus-ruske-stredni-tridy/>), accessed 26 February 2011.

Diplomacy and spying in Poland

Number of foreign diplomats in Poland in 2010: about 2,000; of these, number of persons for whom diplomacy serves as a coverup for spying: about 300.

Means of communication Russian spies still use: shortwave radio.

Source: Head of ABW (Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego) Krzysztof Bondaryk, as reported by *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 March 2011.

Russian empire and genocide

Estimated percentage of Circassians (inhabitants of the Caucasus and vicinity) killed or deported by Russians upon conquest of the Caucasus in the nineteenth century: 90 percent.

Source: Valery Dzutsev, "Researcher calls on the Russian security services to use Soviet experience to weaken North Caucasian émigré organizations," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 8, no. 75 (18 April 2011).

Price of Polish dependency on Russian gas

The price of gas that Polish households pay in 2011: three times higher than in the American households.

Reason: the prices Russia charges for gas vary from country to country, and the price it charges Poland is among the highest.

Source: Piotr Gabryel, "Sukces sumy małych kroków," *Rzeczpospolita*, 29 May 2011 (<<http://blog.rp.pl/gabryel/2011/05/29/sukces-sumy-malych-krokow>>, accessed 29 May 2011).

Russian-speaking organized crime groups in Poland

The largest and most powerful network of criminals in the world today: one originating in the former USSR.

Two European countries where RSOFC groups are the most active: Germany and Poland.

Estimated number of Russian-speaking criminals operating in Poland in 2011: 20,000, making it the largest Russian (includes Belarusian and Ukrainian) criminal diaspora in the world.

Activities in Poland: murders, pimping, car theft, and car smuggling.

Favorite activities in the Białystok region, or near the Polish-Belarusian border: car robberies.

Their center in Poland: the city of Poznań.

Their centers in Germany: Berlin and Köln.

Person in the Polish government who allegedly accepted favors from RSOFC groups: Barbara Blida, former Minister for Construction and member of Parliament (she committed suicide during a police search of her home in April 2007).

Person who probably was murdered by RSOFC members: Grzegorz Michniewicz, Director of the State Chancellery (found hanged in his apartment in December 2009).

Source: Walter Kegö and Alexandru Molcean, "Russian Speaking Organized Crime Groups in the EU," Research Paper of the Institute for Security and Development Policy in Stockholm, Sweden (www.isdp.eu/publications/index.php?option=com_jombib&task=showbib&id=5961), accessed 1 June 2011.

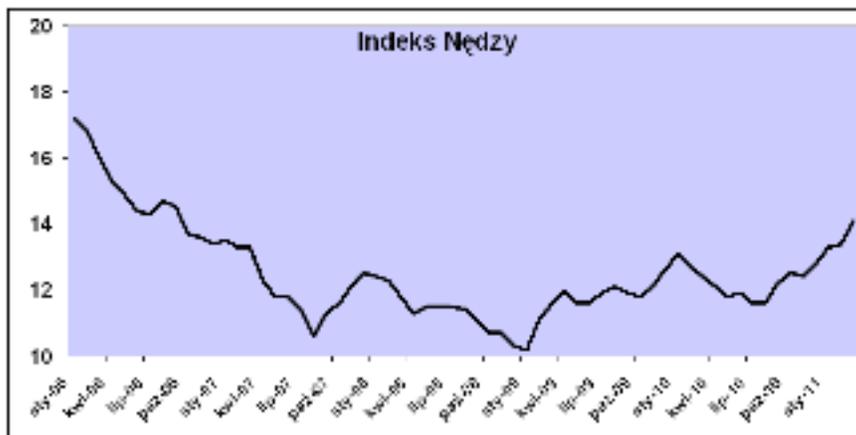
Poverty index for Poland, January 2006–January 2011

Factors deepening poverty in Poland: a combination of inflation and unemployment.

Authorship and period of existence of the poverty index: financial site <bankier.pl>, since 2008.

The period with the most rapid decrease of the poverty index in Poland: July 2007 to January 2009.

Author's conclusion: in spite of percentage growth of the economy, the lower third of society is getting poorer, not richer.



Source: Krzysztof Kolany, "Polski indeks nędzy najwyższy od pięciu lat," Polski portal finansowy, 2 May 2011, <<http://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Polski-Indeks-Nedzy-najwyzszy-od-pieciu-lat-2331472.html>>, accessed 6 May 2011.

Readership of opinion weeklies in Poland in 2010

Gość Niedzielny (Roman Catholic): 143,204 average weekly sales, 5 percent increase over 2009.

Polityka (postcommunist and radically leftist): 143,089 average weekly sales, 1 percent decrease since 2009.

Newsweek (modeled on its American counterpart): 119,935 average weekly sales, 12 percent increase over 2009.

Wprost (moved leftward after change of ownership): 102,987 average weekly sales, 4 percent increase since 2009.

Gazeta Polska (radically right wing): 51,011 average weekly sales, 103 percent increase over 2009.

Przekrój (title leftover from Soviet-occupied Poland): 46,623 average weekly sales, 11 percent decrease since 2009.

Przewodnik Katolicki (Roman Catholic): 27,563 average weekly sales, 2 percent decrease since 2009.

Tygodnik Powszechny (left wing, nominally Catholic but bent on change in the Catholic Church): 22,201 average weekly sales, 0.2 percent increase over 2009.

Source: Fronda Online (http://www.fronda.pl/news/czytaj/gosc_niedzielny_najlepiej_sprzedajacym_sie_tygodnikiem_opinii), accessed 22 February 2011.

Some facts and their possible implications concerning the world's demography between 2010 and 2030

World population growth between 1900 and 2000: from 1.6 billion to 6.1 billion (up 400 percent).

Life expectancy growth between 1900 and 2000: from 30 to 65 years.

World fertility implosion in the last fifty years: from 4.9 births per woman in the early 1960s to 2.6 in the first decade of the twenty-first century, with indications that these figures will fall below replacement levels worldwide in the future.

Implications for Western and Eastern Europe: negative growth of working-age population between 2010 and 2030 (ca. 8 million for Western Europe and ca. 10 million for Eastern Europe). In Eastern Europe virtually all of the negative growth will be in the fifteen-to-twenty-nine-year-old category, the most economically valuable. Projected decline in numbers of workforce in the Russian Federation between 2010 and 2030: 20 percent.

Estimated total annual exports for Russia and Belgium in 2009: \$303.4 billion and \$369.9 billion.

Projected median age in German and Italy in 2030: 50 and over 50.

Projected immigration to Western Europe in the next 20 years: 20 million people.

Source: Nicholas Eberstadt, "World Population Prospects and the Global Economic Outlook," a working paper of the

American Enterprise Institute, 2010. **SR Editor's comment:** one notes in this paper a complete disregard for entities such as the European Union, evidently considered to be a paper entity behind which national interests continue to play a preeminent role.

Mitteleuropa Blues, Perilous Remedies

Andrzej Stasiuk's Harsh World

Terrence O'Keefe

PART 1

Andrzej Stasiuk, born in Warsaw in 1960, is a prolific and talented writer well known in the West. "Well known" is a relative term, because the readership of European fiction in translation may be large in the case of prominent figures (including those whose prominence depends as much on scandal as on any perceived literary merit, e.g., Michel Houellebecq), or quite small in the case of writers whose native lands and languages seem too far out of the mainstream to unadventurous readers. Polish literature straddles this divide, with its literary eminences and stars who have international reputations and its bevy of writers respected in their homeland but little known abroad. As of 2010 three of Stasiuk's novels and a thematic collection of essays have been translated into English; these and other of his books, including poetry, plays, and essays, have received translations into several European tongues, most prominently German.

A rebellious character by nature, his sharp opinions on the late communist and the incipient "free market" eras of his native land converge on the judgment that both systems have been equally hard on his countrymen (as well as on the broader region's peoples), leading to a kind of spiritual malaise. His own lifetime has been concurrent with a period in his native land during which a general demoralization conducive to apathy and cynicism has been spiked by bouts of political and cultural turbulence, producing cycles of enthusiasm followed by disappointment. In Poland his is an authentic voice of the murky stream of modern history and its unsatisfactory resolutions of very old problems. In the revered tradition of Central and Eastern European literature, he is prophet and scold, though popular reverence for such figures seems fast vanishing. Like everyone else Poles read less serious literature and spend more time playing with their electronic toys as they climb the greasy pole toward prosperity, a sign of their participation in a worldwide consumer economy that, like a tidal wave, is unstoppable, arriving to submerge everything, then settling into normality as it alters the terrain. While many of the region's

inhabitants, including artists, question the further utility of the distinctions "Eastern" or "Central Europe" (*versus*, as usual, the West and Russia), Stasiuk himself has burrowed into what he believes to be the last recesses of local cultures either fighting to survive or ignored by modernity. The inevitable exchanges between these and the outside are a recurring object of contemplation and commentary in both his fiction and non-fiction.

Because neither his first book, *Mury Hebronu* (The Walls of Hebron), stories that recreate his year and a half in prison, nor his next one, a collection of poetry, have been translated into English, we start our journey with *White Raven* (*Biały kruk*), a novel that sows the seeds of a harvest of misery and its exaltations to come. And then soldier on through the territories of his other three works that have come over from Polish into English via several talented translators: off to a derelict collective farm village on the edge of southern Poland's mountainous border, back to the mean streets and dives of Warsaw, and then on to a series of road trips through "Carpathiana" and the Balkans, Stasiuk's privileged realms of Slavic hardiness and folly (Romanians, Gypsies, Hungarians, and Albanians are conscripted as honorary Slavs here). In these precincts we will encounter adaptations to the varieties of modern despair and the farcical and dispiriting clash between ideas of East and West, a process that starts out as the arrival of the rubes at a country fair or urban kiosk displaying cheap and colorful marvels and ends with the discoveries that the path to their acquisition is hardly worth the effort and that the customer is being fleeced, eagerly yet not fully aware of the nature of the transaction. The customer is always fleeced, regardless of the salesman's ideology: communism sold one set of illusions, capitalism sells another.

White Raven is an adventure story—a rough boy's tale if you will, with Hemingway's ghost looming somewhere in the literary ether some writers still breathe—that entails tightly circumscribed mayhem and murder, but that's merely its armature of meditation. We meet a band of five men, or five hypertrophied adolescents, depending on your ideas about what the correct response to general hopelessness might be. One is the story's anonymous first-person narrator, an early instance of Stasiuk's fictional alter egos (the author was an unruly young man who deserted the army, served time in jail, then fled Warsaw for the mountains and literature). Two have nicknames only—Goosy and Shorty (a tall, immense, powerful man). And two get the benefit of full names—Vasyl Bandurko

and Kostek Górka. The latter two are variations on the theme of purposeful escape taken to its extreme, self-annihilation. Vasyl, a furtive homosexual and a pampered young Red prince whose mother was a respected member of the Party establishment, seeks an escape from himself, a way out of the unattractive limitations imposed on him during his youth, thus joins the original gang of three who are rebellious working class boys in Warsaw. His spacious private home (no doubt confiscated by the Party and assigned to his mother) astonishes the others by its solidity and appointments; it also elicits their contempt—scorning what you'll never have makes your own life more bearable. Kostek, from Łódź and of obscure independent means, arrives late on their scene and becomes an ironic commentator on the margins of the group, a man with a maturing plan who slowly brings the four to question the nature of their futile rebellion, manifested in drinking binges, self-enforced idleness, quick and dirty sex, and the obvious desire never to join the world of their elders, the world of late Communism and early Capitalism (the “transitional period”) in Poland. Kostek, in Nietzschean fashion, formulates theories that will justify his desire to escape humanity by dehumanizing himself. Once an aspiring writer who concludes that such a vocation is pointless, he comes as a savior, infiltrating the minds of the others. He experiences a calling that will lead to self-destruction during his thirty-third year of life, 1993, and believes himself to be a prophet scorned in his own land. Unlike the possibly implied Christian savior whose teachings counseled faith, hope, and charity, Kostek understands his own mission to be an entirely nihilistic one (reminiscent in this respect of Dostoevsky's Stavrogin). In a way he is mad, but the group's final adventure, a winter waltz in the remote woods of the Carpathian mountains, brings about a failure of nerve on his part (he forsakes his deliberate madness in the interest of survival); yet his goal is achieved.

The gang's world incarnates Hobbes' description of life as short, brutal, and nasty. This characterization is personalized by the narrator's qualification that such a life may be desirable, the only kind of life worth leading, in fact psychologically necessary to one's self-esteem, given the alternatives. The comfortable, prosperous, imitation-of-the-West life does not entice Stasiuk—it's too self-satisfied, predictable, and dull, starving the imagination that runs riot in his favorite purlieus that teem with marginal men. In reminiscing about their glory days of nonstop intoxication, dreary and opportunistic copulations, petty theft, listening to

jazz (that odd Eastern European addiction, due to its classification by the old communist authorities as forbidden fruit), brawling and pub-crawling through Warsaw's most run-down dens (where the booze is cheaper and more toxic), the members of the group return several times to the fate of their acquaintance Regres, who takes his final leave from their scene with the valediction, “Fuck it. I'm off. You can all kiss my ass.” And off he is, by ferry to Sweden, where he deliberately drinks himself unconscious and freezes to death on a park bench. He is their *beau ideal* of true commitment to their way of life—he has balls, and then he has nothing, *is* nothing, the final solution to the unacceptability of life.

Stasiuk's delight in describing the vast variety of alcoholic beverages consumed by his gang rivals the lyricism of his nature hymns to the severe beauties of the mountains in winter. There are numerous brands of vodka, sometimes used as a solvent for other substances (coffee, sugar), home-brews, cheap fortified sweet wines, and beer, which in winter is consumed hot with dissolved sugar (or again, coffee). During hangovers, while preparing oneself for the day's menial job, or loafing, the hair of the dog that bit you provides some of life's sweetest moments of repose or a brilliant surge of mental clarity. But the way of life depicted is beginning to get tiresome, stale, as the men approach their thirties. They're losing their certainty about the desirability of following the path of their deceased friend Regres. At this point in their lives they become receptive to a vague plan hatched by Vasyl and ornamented by Kostek's improvisations. It's not clear who the leader is, but Kostek, with his studious silences, ironic detachment, and existential glosses on reality seems to have the upper hand at the outset of their adventure. The fact that he can hold as much liquor as the rest of them while remaining alert, self-contained, and lucid adds to his luster in their eyes.

Vasyl has spent the previous two summers and fall scouting out remote locations in the mountains of southeastern Poland. He has a mental map of the terrain and the routes one must follow in order to avoid people in general and border police in particular. When they get there, there being an abandoned shepherd's cabin, they'll figure out what to do next. Perhaps they'll look for cached weapons and play at being guerillas (in an ironic way they are fond of Commandante Castro's exhortation of “Socialism or Death!”). Something that might add piquancy to their little Scout's trip will suggest itself after they take the first step into isolation under extremely harsh conditions: late winter blizzards,

limited food supplies, no communication with the outside world. Taking the first step is the important thing. Kostek, as usual, joins the group late, on his own schedule. The narrator must hike out during a severe storm to meet him and lead him back to their hideaway. Kostek loses no time in supplying the event meant to galvanize their trip—a policeman stops the two to check their papers on an isolated road. With no particular provocation Kostek kills the man, or at least leaves him to die. They take the police car on a joyride through the blizzard to a small town, where they abandon it and strike out through the woods. The rest of the tale is that of pursuit by the authorities (which proves to be an illusion) and escape. It ends in Vasyl's and Kostek's deaths by each other's hand. The narrator wonders if the events are any more meaningful than a dream, just one more memory of wasted lives that is blending into a larger gray vortex of nothingness that is the futility of consciousness. The latter dispiriting conclusion aside, there is a resemblance between the narrative of *White Raven* and James Dickey's popular "backwoods existential adventure" novel, *Deliverance*. And, like that story, one can see cinematic possibilities in Stasiuk's tale, with the proviso that only Poles, including the author, should be involved in order to avoid the ludicrous conceits and compromises of a typical Hollywood production.

The novel's translator, Wiesiek Powaga, uses an English that we have to assume reflects the author's various stylistic shifts—blunt and coarse at times, lyrical at other times and, through its allusions to regional history and literature, even contemplative at times. The latter quality informs two elements of the story—presented as authorial meditations placed in the mind of its narrator—that Stasiuk embellishes and reconsiders in his later writing. First, the imperturbable presence and meaning of the Gypsies (here referred to as a band of "Romanians" encountered in a small town railroad station):

Their faces were empty. They were masks, part of a weatherproof traveling kit, protection against foreign climes, against the fear and traps of unknown lands. They looked like a little tribe, a chip off that huge tribe of nations which set out in search of food, land, freedom, pornography and hamburgers—depending on the times. They won't be stopped by hostile climates or oceans. Nothing can stop them.

And then there is the fraught relationship between Europe's East and West, a constant exchange of illusions that grows in importance in Stasiuk's mind

over time. Vasyl's lonely life, communist middle class (to the extent of playing classical piano music) and at more than one remove from the gang's experience, is emblematic of the two worlds:

He never acted with premeditation. . . . He was sitting in that world hurriedly assembled from crumbs, knowing how fragile and false it was, being merely an answer, a pale reflection of our worlds, the hopeless constructions of fear and abandonment.

What are those once attractive, now moldy crumbs from a vanished Polish past that admired and imitated the West? And what new scraps from the same source have replaced them? In a scene set in a remote hostel where the fugitives break their flight for a night's rest, a self-intoxicated poetic youth comments on Goosy's guitar-playing and singing of American tunes (Goosy's real objective is not the collective conviviality brought on by music, but bedding a woman who shows an interest in his soulful performance):

C'mon, young man, give us something in Russian! You blue-jeans king of the ballad. They have betrayed us. Instead of sending us jackets soaked through with the sweat of blacks and apostles, they've built factories of jackets. You got what you wanted. The factories churn out soulless rags that have as much in common with blue sky as . . . Oh, words fail me.

The sweat of blacks? The music and accoutrements of the fellow oppressed across the sea, no doubt. Apostles? The starry-eyed, feverish rebels of the Ginsberg-Kerouac generation and their heir apparent, Bob Dylan as drifter minstrel. But that's all ancient history now, deader than a doornail in the imaginary land of its former existence, Amerika, which deflects and then absorbs its critics and marginal men by enriching them, just one of its many vast assimilative powers. The "they", the betrayers and deluders? The shiny, new, contemporary, voracious West. The eager entrants into the false consumer paradise? Stasiuk's "we," the East. The polarity is real, alive and kicking (or, as Stasiuk sees it, the placid, tolerant, omnivorous senility of the one impregnates the expectant womb of the other, and a malformed cretin is hatched). The infinite blue sky of freedom will never be attained. No happy prospects for either side, there. And the significance of the book's title? It alludes to two brief sightings of a large and powerful mutant raven. Surprised that it has not been pecked to death by the other members of its flock, the narrator can only conclude that it lives by virtue of its strength and aggressiveness. Should we apply that lesson to

humanity? The answer is not given, but the bird's ability to survive is admirable.

What's a man to do in such sorry circumstances? Continue the journey, perhaps find a safe haven. English-language readers, having to settle for the next of his translated efforts, can pick up his novel woven of miniature portraits, *Tales of Galicia (Opowieści galicyjskie)*, beautifully translated by Margarita Nafpaktitis. The Polish texts of *White Raven* and *Tales* were both published in 1995, their English translations in 2000 and 2003, respectively. The men and women of *Tales* inhabit a nameless village associated with a defunct collective farm once known by its acronym, the PGR. It is somewhere west of Dukla in southeastern Galicia, under the mountainous border with Slovakia, the area of the Low Beskids, a part of the overall Carpathian range situated roughly halfway between the High Tatras and the Ukraine. The capital city from which the anti-heroes of *White Raven* fled is only marginally present here, a distant memory of warrens of shabby back streets, bars, and whores in the minds of a few townsmen who have visited or worked there briefly. In the PGR life is hemmed in by the mountains to the south, by often impassable side roads, by weather, by mud, by the inbred notion that this place must somehow be the center of an eternal world. From the nearby forested hills and mountains boars raid potato patches and wolves keep an eye out for stray calves. The center of social life, such as it is, is the Border Pub, a scene of long silences, stewing feuds that erupt into an occasional brawl or murder, muttered conversations with oneself, chain-smoking, and killing the day with cheap wine, vodka, and beer. Men leave to work at slovenly encampments, logging or construction sites. Their women expect no explanation for prolonged absences and shoulder the burdens of farming, gardening, haying, and taking care of the livestock. The only residue of the area's former non-Polish population—Ruthenians, Ukrainians—is a rectangular patch of nettles where the Greek Catholic church once stood, disassembled and hauled away for restoration by cultured city people. Violence of an almost ritualistic, at times penitential, nature happens and is absorbed like stormy weather as it comes and goes: a knifing over a flirtation with a man's wife, an accidental but perhaps willful self-drowning in a state of deep inebriation, a walk into the mountains' woods in search of a place to sleep and then freeze to death. And then there is the violence of nature: extremes of cold and heat, overpowering snowstorms, flooding rains, and incinerations of wooden hovels by lightning strikes.

Parsing any one of these tales, each a condensed biography, gives the reader a good idea of the whole, and the book's opening story, "Józek," will suffice for this task. Józek leaves the family farmstead often, driving his ancient caterpillar tractor from town to town (always stopping at local pubs on the way), or into the mountains in pursuit of odd-jobs of hauling timber or anything else. If his tractor tips over in the mud he might even take a nap in it—the solution to his problem will come sooner or later anyway. The next thing always happens. He has a limited stock of words and phrases, but this is sufficient to produce loquacity when he is under the influence of vodka. He's an easy-come, easy-go kind of man, assuming that all of life's events and rhythms—family, work, food, and shelter—follow a natural pattern of feast then famine; why resist it? Working in spurts is necessary and, because violence sleeps lightly everywhere, vigilance even more so:

Once on the way to the pub, I asked why he had that handy crowbar up his sleeve. "I don't know everyone there. I don't know who's one of us and who's an enemy."

The initial "I" is the first indicator that the tales are being told by an anonymous narrator about whom we are told nothing. He is the cool observer, the reader's surrogate eye that takes in and describes the quality and cadence of local life. We have to assume that he is Stasiuk's alter ego without worrying about the totality of that equation. What is it about the minds of the region's people that captures the narrator's interest and obvious, grudging respect? For the minds he meets are truly limited by ignorance, that is, by lack of any meaningful formal education that extends itself to lack of interest in the broader world beyond the village. Here is the narrator's answer to that question:

And so, he was completely faithful to his senses and to wariness, to rapid reasoning for the moment's advantage. "When you're eating, then eat. When you're drinking, then drink." Those are the kind of instructions Zen masters give to adepts. In all likelihood, they would make Józek burst into hearty laughter. Masters waste so much time on the discovery of basic truths. But even he would engage in reflection, if it could bring him solace.

And, to generalize from this:

There is no doubt that uncomplicated minds are much better suited to the task of interpreting reality. The PGR *civitas* had been founded on the principles of collectivity. Availing himself of Ockham's razor, Józek learned the ultimate lesson from the formula "to each according to his needs, from each according to his abilities." For all intents

and purposes this postulate did not set any limits. Because, after all, a person's abilities were hard to qualify. They presented themselves as the circumstances required and reason demanded. Not to mention a person's needs, with roots embedded in the dark and irrational will.

What we perceive as the limitations of ignorance actually sharpen the intellect for dealing with the problems immediately at hand. Self-sufficiency, cleverness of adaptation, and fatalism are the results. Irrational acts based on strong emotions are inevitable. Noting that the approved philosophy of the communist state had "disinherited and liberated [the villagers] from the harsh dictates of morality, religion and memory," it doesn't surprise the narrator that their self-serving impulsivity, coupled with the logic of acquisition, made the system implode. Józek himself is a casualty of fatalism and impulsivity—after a sweltering day's work he drinks poisonous water from a stagnant puddle and dies at the age of forty: "When the doctors in the hospital looked at his body, they claimed he looked at least a hundred years old."

But no place is truly timeless and, though pockets of resistance linger, change comes to the village. The style of modernity associated with the "transitional stage" from communism to capitalism is imported by Władek and his family. Władek and his wife and twelve children are the most hapless of villagers, he the laziest and worst farmer, she the fertile beast of burden who scours the forest like a hunter-gatherer of old in order to supplement the family's meager larder. Viewing a kiosk in a nearby town, he discovers the possibilities of trade and selling, becoming the village's first vendor of the new items of consumption. The whole family joins the business, expanding their holdings from a beat-up sedan to two newer cars and a van. They sell produce, the supply of which expands with private marketing opportunities, and all the fabulous household trinkets and cheap, gaudy clothing that rush into the communist-created consumer vacuum. They, or rather their wares, change minds:

And so there was Władek, the proprietor of this altar before which the May-decorated church became but a distant reflection: its pastel, ethereal and transitory colors were wilting like flowers and fraying like ribbons. . . . Forty years of waiting, of hibernation in a state of poverty, only to transform in two years into a messenger and herald of a new worldwide religion which would eliminate the opposition, do away with controversies and fulfill desires. . . . Children and women, young and old, moved away from the display. It was hard to guess their thoughts, but it was not in their thinking that the transformations were taking

place. They took hold of feelings, touched the places where wonder and enchantment are conceived.

This is the change—the neoconservative fantasy of "free markets" conquering all sources of human strife and dissatisfaction—much on Stasiuk's mind after 1990, leading him to a calculus of losses and gains with no clear net winner and the suggestion that everyone in the East remains a loser, even those who are "making it" under the new system; perhaps they have lost their souls, certainly they are losing their way and their independence of spirit. While prescient of a preoccupation of Stasiuk's later work, the contemplation of the ungainly East-West embrace is still a muted polemic in *Tales*. It is incidental and marginal to a narrative path that does not begin to emerge until the book's midpoint, where a new metaphysical direction is indicated by the footsteps of a character once alive, now dead. The living body of Kościejny murdered a man in the pub and met its end when it walked into the woods to freeze to death during a three-day leave from prison. Its very earthy mind now inhabits Kościejny's ghost and has hardly changed its former outlook on life, as restless and yearning for peace now as it was then (Kafka's lost and wandering deceased hunter, Gracchus, comes to mind here). The ghost is visible and audible only to the village's police sergeant, importuning him for intervention with the local priest and dropping hints that it might impart what really happened in the case of another murder for which the wrong man has been imprisoned. Apparently, in the right circumstances, dead men do tell tales. There is a sort of closure for Kościejny's unhappy soul—the police sergeant herds the town's population, including its barflies (one of whom can play the organ), into the village's small church so that an improvised funeral mass for the deceased can be performed. Afterward everyone one else, baffled by their experience as mourners, must carry on the daily struggle.

The ghost's visitations tie together the earlier individual portraits, and the reader learns the details of how the lives of the village's cast of characters (Lewandowski, Janek, Grandma, Maryśka, Gacek, Edek) are tightly interlocked in ways not hitherto suspected. But then this is a place so small that everyone knows everyone else. Their fates, girdled by geography, history, and social mores are bound to be interlocked. The world of the village is encased in a concave lens, as it were, so all of life's forces are centripetal, resulting in collisions. There is a certain grim comedy tinged with melancholy in the tales' incomplete resolutions, suggesting the possible

influence of a source that may strike readers as highly unlikely, the urbane Karel Čapek. The illustrious Czech's bemused and often philosophical policemen who inhabit his *Tales from Two Pockets* could well be the literary ancestors of Stasiuk's red-haired police sergeant. And Kościejny alive might very well be one of their mentally opaque rural murderers, while Kościejny dead could come straight from Čapek's *Apocryphal Tales*. This is Slavic magic realism (perhaps mystical naturalism is a better term) with a long genealogy, its grandest offspring being Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, where spirits from across the ages bestride grimy and gloomy Russian venues and interact with the common man. The inner murkiness, emotional confusion, and distress of rural souls is the pith of Čapek's novel *Hordubal*, whose central character of that name may or may not have been murdered by his wife and her Gypsy lover—with the final decision about what really happened to be made by another policeman as philosopher who will also decide what constitutes justice in a tangled reality where both saints and sinners deserve mercy. *Hordubal* is the first story in a trilogy published as *Three Novels* (*Meteor* and *An Ordinary Life* are the other two of the set). For the reader only familiar with Čapek as an early "science fiction" writer (based on the broad success of *R.U.R* and *War With the Newts*), the narrative and literary qualities of this trilogy, as well as the differing authorial voices and tones spread across the three short novels, will probably come as quite a surprise. *Three Novels* is a work built upon a grand theme: an epistemology of the self, with its firm illusions scarcely contained within fluid boundaries, concerns not unlike those we meet in *Tales of Galicia*. Perhaps my suggestion here is off the mark with respect to its tracing of literary influences; if so, the parallels remain, striking in themselves.

Tales of Galicia is a little gem that displays Stasiuk's powers as a poet using prose to capture a world as far removed from poetry as possible, a harsh, unforgiving, rural workaday world comparable to the desperate milieu of urban anomie depicted in *White Raven* and also in the novel *Nine*. At the book's end there is a short and useful set of explanatory notes regarding local Polish events, things, and terminology. The translator, Margarita Nafpaktitis, has also supplied a set of analytical notes that strike me as odd beyond compare, its writing contrasting to that in the *Tales* in a manner that takes the unwary reader by surprise and might make his or her head spin from the heady vapors of its seminar-room language. It induced the same result in

me as the remark about Zen masters would in Józek. Two snippets should suffice to show you what I mean: "[T]his peripheral setting offers a prime vantage point from which to view the effects of transition spreading out from the center. Stasiuk also uses this setting to activate a diachronic awareness of the region as a centuries-old palimpsest created by a succession of migrating (or invading) cultures." And "Testing implicit lines of demarcation plays out on several structural levels as well. For example, Stasiuk problematizes the narrative persona of *Tales*." There is much more of this, even worse and more cluttered, the opacity of which makes the village's turbid fictional mindset seem limpid by comparison. All such passages can be translated down into much plainer English, but then they seem so much less grand, since they become unmoored from the inflated language of that postmodern whip and stigmata, "theory." The excellent and moving translation of the work itself is more than sufficient penance for such venial interpretive sins. The paperback edition published by Twisted Spoon Press is handsome beyond compare, from its sturdy cover through its paper and typography and, given its price as shown by internet searches, seems to have already become something of a collector's item. You can read the rest of Stasiuk in English on the cheap, but not *Tales*.

Four years later, in 2007, came the Bill Johnston translation of the novel *Nine* (*Dziewięć*) into English. By this time Stasiuk had made a splash in Germany with both *White Raven* and *Dukla*, and his writing in the present decade shows a growing engagement with German themes, though Germany is marginal in *Nine* which was published in Poland in 1999. With respect to this it is sensible to remember the centuries-long fact that, politically and culturally, Poland is trapped between those powerful pincers, Germany and Russia. The lesson of just yesterday was, heed the words of Hitler "Woe to the weak!" and acknowledge the superior weakling-bashing performance of his victor Stalin. Today's lesson may be a commercial variant thereof. Stasiuk's favorite haunt, the old Austrian portion of partitioned Poland, Galicia and its margins, benefited from somewhat more enlightened, certainly less punitive, administration. Joseph Roth captured this in his repeated character: the sympathetic, tolerant, often eccentric Polish nobleman who admires the Habsburg dynasty as a protector of the Empire's diverse nationalities and their ways of life. In Stasiuk's writing the nationalities interpenetrate fluidly in the Carpathians, since their core identity is not an ethnic one, but that of "mountain men," relicts of a vanishing

past. Some of this barren, bracing territory has been covered before, for example, by Gregor von Rezzori, but his point of view is that of declassed individuals from the former Habsburg upper middle class rather than that of Stasiuk's fictional protagonists, raw urban child-men and country isolates who seethe and grieve beneath their placid exteriors.

The see-sawing tides of the Second World War allowed both Germans and Russians to kick the limp body of the nation they had wounded grievously, but those events are now on the verge of extinction as living memories. The near-corpse was resuscitated in the wrathful-godly image of Stalin that persisted for almost half a century. Russian domination and Poland's satellite status (including the dry-rot and decline of a cynical communism) was the context of Stasiuk's youth and that of his characters.

Nine puts us back in Stasiuk's starting place, Warsaw, here the veritable "belly of the beast." (Stasiuk's metaphysics of the place and time are not unlike the obsessions of our own deceased brawler, Norman Mailer, for whom television and plastic were cultural forms of cancer, invasive pathogens akin to Stasiuk's cheap junk from the West. Mailer's literary protégé, the jailbird Jack Abbott, of *In the Belly of the Beast* fame, endeared himself to his patron, while his overly wary prison mentality led him to an unprovoked murder soon after his release, a sort of Stasiuk character in the flesh.) "Memories of Underdevelopment," both material and spiritual, would be an apt *aperçu* of the book, though the phrase has been pre-empted by earlier use. An alternate title of "Down and Out in Warsaw" would also be perfectly appropriate to describe its tenor. (In 1960, when Stasiuk was born, Warsaw had not yet removed all the rubble left from 1939–45, and the city was being rebuilt in two fashions: restoration of its central Old Town gothic and baroque buildings of note—some based on surviving plans, others on the cityscape paintings of Canaletto's nephew, Bernardo Bellotto—and the surrounding metastasis of industrial sites and gray concrete housing blocks, that instantiation of socialist equality as the lowest and cheapest common denominator. Practically speaking, due to the ravages of the war a large number of people had to be housed rapidly, so the shoddy result may have been inevitable.

But this is not the down-and-out of willful bohemians or fanciful bourgeois youths suffering from *nostalgie de la boue*, but of men and women born into a gray world with few options and innumerable sources of resignation and despair. In *Nine* half a dozen lives

intersect, chiefly Paweł's, Jacek's, and Bolek's. Their female companions, casual sexual partners and hangers-on (one a meek, harmless employee of Paweł's shop), suffer from the collateral damage of the men's collisions. A forty-eight hour period in which betrayals, mishaps, escapes, and pursuits occur brings the three men together in a fashion common to novels in which individual skeins trace paths that seem fated to tie themselves up in a neat, though nasty, knot. The men are all working-class lads born circa 1960 who have rejected the factory clock-punching and rancid two-room apartment family life of their fathers and mothers. They have gravitated into the world of binge drinking, drug use, drug selling, loan-sharking, and shady business deals involving products and commodities that strike the reader as ridiculous when they are not meretricious (but such is the stuff of dreams, of barter and exchange, of "moving on up" through the communist-era black market and then legally in the post-1989 "transitional stage" of crony capitalism and criminal entrepreneurship). Stasiuk repeatedly itemizes the cheap and gaudy baubles that his countrymen hanker after, and the sheer volume of bad taste and pointless consumption continues to astonish and demoralize him.

There's a developing crisis: Paweł, Jacek and Bolek all know each other from their earlier years of street life as dissolute and rebellious adolescents. Bolek is now muscle for a mobster or, more properly speaking, he is the foreman of a muscle crew. The crew's most prominent member is a nameless, fit, blond specimen who wears a purple track suit (in Stasiuk's world the satiny, brightly-colored track suit with stripes is emblematic of idlers and petty hoodlums, more junk from the West and a signifier that modern men are turning into perpetual adolescents). He is a thug who enjoys tormenting his victims, though he values cooperation and orderly compliance in principle; he's also something of an automaton of Nietzschean perfection among the occasionally nostalgic and sentimental low-lives who improvise rather than plan. No one in the game questions the rightness of an amoral thug to prosper. Under the right circumstances—a business opportunity, a deal—they would be happy to share a beer and cigarettes with him. Bolek has to run down Jacek for the latter's transgressions in a petty drug deal, while Paweł seeks help from both men in his effort to escape the minions of another money lender. Fate is most unkind to the most innocent and fragile of all, Paweł's employee Zosia, who meets her

end at Bolek's hands as he drives recklessly through the city and inadvertently runs her over.

The violent end anticipated by the reader for Jacek and Paweł, in flight together, never comes. They sit out the tail-end of their exhausting two days of hustling, importuning, and eluding their pursuers on the roof of an apartment building in a cold April thundershower. The storm briefly washes the city clean of its funk of decay, but not of its or their desperation. Here Stasiuk punctuates their story with a brief interpolation of an unrelated episode: the death of a man in an automobile crash as he drives his father into the country to settle an estate—his last thoughts are that he has not been sufficiently kind to and respectful of his father; his father, who survives the crash, feels he has nothing left to live for. You can almost hear the cinematic voice-over: “The naked city has two million stories, this has been one of them.” The interpolation is one of many such vignettes and is not there by chance. They are a structural feature of the novel.

Stasiuk has been compared to Kerouac, but *Nine* recreates a desolate urban milieu that is far closer to the Brooklyn tales of Kerouac's contemporary, Hubert Selby. And *Nine* is also similar to *Last Exit to Brooklyn* in the means used—interweaving lives played out against an unattractive and hopeless setting. This is a vision of the twentieth century's mass man as mass victim, of himself and others, of cupidity, of ignorance, and of the unpalatability of every possible choice. And this is where the interpolations play their role. The protagonists, casing their surroundings or studying an escape route, let their eyes alight for a moment on a passing pedestrian or the occupant of a tram, bus, or car. A brief description of that anonymous man's or woman's current trajectory through space and time, its vector in the small arena of his or her life, is given. The trajectory normally leads to dull routine, a dreaded encounter, or an unpromising attempt to enliven one's dreary existence. Such is the stream of Polish small town life, modern life, in which the active characters are bounced around like all the other little pebbles in a fatalistic torrent that we glimpse as in five-second jump-cuts in a film. The interpolations are leitmotifs that echo the stream's funeral themes for the principal players.

This is done with a certain style and humor. As to style, every vivid metaphor of the gristle and throb of hoodlum life, and every entropic one of Jacek's and Paweł's lives serves the story well, pointing to a murky, pervasive social reality, as in “Daybreak came in over the windowsill and went slowly across the floor like dishwater. It rose higher, submerging them [two

sleeping fugitives], then reached the tabletop and finally the ceiling.” That's what a flood of light filling a room is, more aqueous than you had imagined the moment before you read it, and not heavenly blue or sunrise golden but dishwater in hue, light as the revealer of dullness, disorganization, and decay. As to humor, consider the conversation between Jacek's girlfriend, Beata, and Paweł, whom she instructs with New Age dietary advice:

“Brussel sprouts without salt are good for the upper loins, and blocking the energy there makes a person worry too much about material things. The right kind of massage could also work. . .”

“The problem is, I borrowed money and now I have to pay it back. But I don't have it. Brussels sprouts won't help.”

“If you started right you never would have ended up in a situation like this. Me, I divided my body into seven zones, and every day I nourish myself with vegetables from one of the seven groups. In this way I live in total harmony. I mean, we're cosmic beings, aren't we?”

“Gagarin?”

“What?”

“The cosmonaut.”

“Oh, you mean those fascist technocrats. You know what Lao-tzu said?”

“Yeah, you can't jump higher than your prick.”

“What?”

Or the terse existential patter of guys on the lam, Paweł and Jacek, scrounging for money, drugs, or hiding places:

“I was here yesterday. Remember Bogna?”

“Not really.”

“She didn't have anything either.”

“Does anyone have anything?”

“I already tried the people who do, and they don't have anything either.”

Or that of Jacek's pursuers, a pair of hoodlums shooting pool in a bar:

“Tell him to put something on,” said the one who had lost.

“He'll only put on fag music,” said the other.

“Whatever. Just so it's not quiet.”

“Quiet bothers you?”

“When it's quiet, something can happen.”

“And when the music's on, it can't?”

“It can, but you don't have to wait.”

“Shut up and play, Waldek.”

Regarding both pursuers and pursued, Stasiuk writes: “In their veins not blood, but images of actions. They were actors in a reality they had made up, because the time when sons repeated the gestures of their fathers

was over.” For the latest incarnation of the New Man, life under early capitalism is following the script of a bad Hollywood adventure film. The props of this new life are presented in contrasting inventories of stuff. Here is a partial list from the older world, that of local marketplaces in small town and rural economies that survived even under communism:

Heart-shaped cheeses, eggs, pickled cucumbers. . . . live birds in shit-stained cages, carrots, parsnips, cream in metal cans, black rapeseed oil in old vodka bottles . . . pigs’ heads, cows’ udders, flies, the stink of burnt feathers, the dry smell of burlap sacks, old women’s armpits, honey in bottles.

Suddenly, magically, this cornucopia of the real and the edible is replaced by

Beatle boots with stacked heels and turned-up tips, plexiglas cuff links with naked women inside, neckties on elastic bands pre-tied and labeled ‘de Paris,’ gold chains, crimson lipstick, Dacron, nylon raincoats with silver buttons, Cossack boots with zippers . . . all made of bright psychedelic polymers as in a child’s kaleidoscope.

More important, here is the pivot point of moving from a system of want to a system of plenty:

From the reek of cabbage you entered a world of glistening, sterile color, everyone did, those too who had hardly anything, who had seen these manmade hues only in their churches during May services. And that was the real revolution, because it took place in their hearts and eyes, and from that time they were destined and nothing could stop them in their march.

You will note the colors of the May religious services that also appeared in *Tales*, formerly encountered rarely and then under conditions of piety or reverence, now constantly visible, bright bait for the unwary. The want and need of essentials have been replaced by an addictive craving for a plenitude of inessentials.

This is a version of the decline and fall of communism in Poland without reference to Solidarity, the role of the Catholic Church, or the Polish Pope as engines of old-fashioned nationhood, or the economic and diplomatic vises squeezing Poland’s Soviet patron and its failed tightrope-walker, Gorbachev. In fact, it is a kind of superfortified “dialectical materialism” that has produced the change, if we grant that “materialism” in its coarsest form—sheer stuff—has a grim power over spirit. The move from dreams of useful, earthy goods rendered in earth tones to the new toys of life that come in unearthly hues is clear, the pathway irresistible, and the result both laughable and sad—it is all a futile process that drives the lives of the new

“businessmen” and their customers. *Nine* leaves its characters splayed out and limp like ragdolls soaking in a puddle of stale beer and its readers equally battered. Is there a way out of this mess? How exemplary can Stasiuk’s personal response, flight to the mountains and participation in an older, “timeless” rural economy, be? How exemplary should it be? And just how widespread and structural is the mess, anyway? We would have to go other Polish writers to see if Stasiuk’s lamentations are part of a collective refrain, or if any of his peers see a glimmer of light anywhere. With an exception noted below, I have not yet undertaken the suggested comparison.

(To be continued in the next issue)

Hollywood’s War with Poland, 1939–1945

By **M. B. B. Biskupski**. Lexington, KY: Kentucky University Press (www.kentuckypress.com), 2010. xii + 362 pages. ISBN 978-0-8131-2559-6. Hardcover.

Raymond T. Gawronski, SJ

The day I gave the valedictory at my New England college, my father, an honorably discharged veteran of the “greatest American generation,” took me aside and said: “I know what this country is like: I will understand if you change your name.” We have all understood why, and many of us have disappeared into an “Anglo” identity. But why should one deny the heritage that gave us a John Paul II?

There are plenty of good reasons, at least in America, and M. B. B. Biskupski digs deeply into one very important, indeed crucial, time and period of American life to investigate how the American film industry consistently ignored, belittled, and demonized Poland and the Poles, whether in Europe or America. More: he demonstrates how an image was created that had no relation to reality. Professor Biskupski’s book is exhaustive in its study of the films and serials that Hollywood produced during the war years. The documentation could hardly be more painstaking: almost one-third of the book is given to notes.

The study is rich and nuanced, leaving a reviewer sorely tempted to simply rehearse much of the book. A few main points will have to suffice here. For example, though Poland had the strongest underground in Europe, lasting throughout the war, it was totally

ignored in the movies in favor of much less significant players like Norway, Czechoslovakia, or France. Professor Biskupski is a subtle writer and very knowledgeable, so he intimates that Czechs were favored by Hollywood, though their contribution to the war effort and their suffering at Nazi hands were incomparably less than that of the Poles. He implies that this is because they would be docile with the Soviets (as they were, at least relatively speaking, with the Germans). This is part of the pattern that elevates other nations at Poland's expense in the estimation of Hollywood: the more pliable toward Soviet domination, the better the portrayal. There are no Poles at Rick's Café in Casablanca.

Biskupski's research is meticulous as he explores the development from book to scripts to film, and demonstrates how often portrayals of Poles were transformed from favorable to "nasty"—a word he has to use, alas, all too frequently. He demonstrates that the government agencies charged with overseeing wartime films were themselves following a pro-Soviet policy and willing to overlook bad portrayals of Poles. Biskupski's thesis—more than amply demonstrated and carefully argued—is that Hollywood was dominated by a leftist mentality that supported a strong communist core of writers. Once the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union was formed, the U.S. government was intent on seeing that nothing was done to damage the image of the Russian ally: this fed into the leftist sentiments of the Hollywood community perfectly. More, that community was very heavily Jewish—he cites one authority who states that in 1936 "of eighty-six major producers in Hollywood, fifty-three were Jewish" (p. 323, fn. 70). The Jewish community, fairly recently immigrated and coming from what had once been Polish lands, had a very negative image of the country they or their recent ancestors had left. Of this community Warner Brothers was most notably hostile, the "Brothers" themselves seriously misunderstanding or even misrepresenting their own family's roots and experiences in Europe. As so often, Poles were held accountable for historical Russian crimes: "Polish police" were blamed for wrongs in a place where no such police could possibly exist. Moreover, the more recently arrived Polish Catholic community in the United States was very largely working class and relatively powerless to defend itself. Although there had been a Polish presence in the world of film early on, this presence actually became smaller and of no significance.

These factors combined to produce a "perfect storm" in which it was in no one's interest or to no one's taste

to portray Poles and Poland well, and it was in virtually everyone's interest to lionize the Russians at Poland's expense. Interestingly, Biskupski also notes that there was a tremendously favorable image of notably large numbers of Irish ethnics in American films of the time, as was similar with Jewish characters. The Poles, scripted with ludicrously unpronounceable names, were vilified in every way imaginable as degenerate cretins, cowardly and mentally unstable, heirs to a Fascist culture, stupid peasants of worthless culture, ruled by totally selfish aristocrats, or in need of correction by other ethnic groups. Hollywood was willingly doing Moscow's work of destroying the Poles as a significant member of the European war effort and subsequent "settlement," while adding twists of its own and creating what would become the standard American image of the "dumb Polack." All of this had no bearing in reality. The names Poles were often given could not possibly be Polish, or even of any other nation. The actors depicting the rare Poles in film were virtually never Poles and were indeed invariably typecast as short (generally less than 5'6") and very swarthy: they were the "bad guys," dark and foreign. In one remarkable film a tall, fair Pole is cast as a non-Pole.

This book has been my Lenten reading, and I confess it has been a penance reading it because it stirs painful memories that any Polish American of the mid and late twentieth century would have been raised with, starting with the World War II movies. It has been a penance occasionally made lighter by the author's bits of humor and his penetrating intelligence. At times the material becomes so absurd that the author has to laugh and the reader with him, and it is a joy to see him strong and knowledgeable enough to allow laughter to soften anger at such relentless injustice. But even so, one chuckles in a very dark place because what Professor Biskupski is documenting—carefully, responsibly, without polemics or dramatics—is that which in its full-blown form could be called little less than "cultural genocide." What else can we call it, when the children of one identifiable minority are taught by the media of the dominant culture that they were born into a nation of mentally inferior people?

Professor Biskupski's work is a very important, indeed an essential contribution to the work of undoing and healing that cultural genocide. He is a keen observer of films, and I strongly urge him to continue his work through Stanley Kowalski and Archie Bunker to "the Big Lebowski." △

Reformacja w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i jej europejskie konteksty. Postulaty badawcze

(Reformation in the Old Republica and Its European Contexts) Edited by Piotr Wilczek. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Sub Lupa (www.sublupa.pl), 2010. 230 pages. ISBN 978-83-9292-44-3-2. Paper.

Howard Louthan

Scholars of the early modern world with an interest in eastern and central Europe have long lamented a basic shortcoming in the field: English-language historiography on the Polish Reformation is remarkably thin. The last monograph specifically devoted to this subject, Paul Fox's short study *The Reformation in Poland*, appeared in 1924 and focused primarily on the economic and political aspects of this phenomenon. Other texts have, of course, appeared since Fox's time, but these have focused on specific aspects of Polish religious life and come with their own sets of problems. Two themes in particular have attracted at least modest attention from Western scholars. Janusz Tazbir's *Państwo bez stosów*, famously translated as *State without Stakes* (1973), highlighted the issue of toleration and to some degree celebrated it as a great patriotic virtue of the kingdom's Golden Age. We will return to the issue of toleration later in this review. The activities of Poland's antitrinitarian community have also generated interest in the Anglophone world. The studies of G. H. Williams and E. M. Wilbur and the translations of Stanisław Kot and Lech Szczucki are relatively well known, but as with the case of toleration they bring with them some particularly difficult methodological questions.

Against this backdrop *Reformacja w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i jej europejskie konteksty* highlights the work of younger scholars in the field. The volume is a result of a conference held in Warsaw in December 2009 and is connected to a broader undertaking, *Cultures of Knowledge*, led by Howard Hotson at St. Anne's College, Oxford. *Cultures of Knowledge* (<http://www.history.ox.ac.uk/cofk/>), a large-scale project funded by the Mellon Foundation, seeks to reconstruct intellectual networks of the seventeenth century with a significant emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe. *Reformacja w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i jej europejskie*

konteksty is the result of this December conference. The volume is not a traditional collection of essays around a central theme; instead, as the title indicates, it is a series of short papers that highlight work in progress and themes for future research. As such, it offers a broad array of topics that the editor Piotr Wilczek has organized under five general headings. Part 1 examines general themes of the Reformation in Poland set within a larger European context. Here there is discussion of Polish political thought, the role of women in religious reform, the impact of Erasmianism and religious toleration. Part 2 looks more closely at the humanist world and considers the contributions of individuals such as Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski and Peter Ramus. Part 3 shifts to a theological examination of biblical exegesis in this period. Part 4 focuses on sources and plans to publish primary material on the Polish Reformation. Part 5 considers the place of Calvin and Polish Calvinism. A final section turns to the Radical Reformation and a reassessment of the Polish Brethren.

There are many issues that could be discussed in relation to this volume since it does cover significant ground. In a compelling presentation Alan Ross suggests that we examine the intellectual history of this period from a new vantage point, while Joanna Partyka encourages researchers to turn to the study of gender for a new set of questions and methodological tools. Theologians and philosophers too raise a series of intriguing questions. However, I will focus on two issues that to my mind lie at the heart of this volume. The first concerns sources. A number of scholars who contributed to this project comment on the pressing need for new primary source editions to replace or augment old standards such as Theodor Wotschke's *Der Briefwechsel der Schweizer mit den Polen* (Leipzig, 1908). Dariusz Bryćko and Piotr Wilczek propose a Calvin reader in Polish that would include selections from the *Institutes* and other writings. Special attention would be paid to Calvin's correspondence in the late 1550s when the Christological disputes began. Dariusz Chemperek calls for a team of scholars to commence work on critical editions of Polish Protestant texts. One of the most important of these text projects is highlighted in the work of Anna Skolimowska who heads the "Laboratory for Editing Sources" (<http://dantiscus.ibi.uw.edu.pl/>). The crown jewel of this center is its work on Jan Dantyszek, or Johannes Dantiscus (1485–1543). Humanist, diplomat, and churchman, Dantiscus served three Jagiellonian kings shuttling around Europe on their behalf. His travels

took him as far afield as England where before Henry VIII he sought to establish an alliance with the island nation against the double threats of the Turks and the Teutonic Knights. Dantiscus carried on a lively correspondence with Erasmus, who dedicated his translation of Basil of Caesarea's *De Spiritu Sancto* to his friend and kept a bust of the Polish humanist in his study.

The second issue that comes to the fore is the study of toleration and irenicism. The contributors to this volume consciously push our understanding of this phenomenon both chronologically and geographically. Gergely Schreiber-Kovács examines the famous 1573 Warsaw Confederation, and muses over the possible connections to Transylvania where the religious acts of the diets of Torda mirrored what would occur a few years later along the Vistula. Dariusz Bryćko considers the irenic activities of the Polish Calvinist Daniel Kałaj (d. 1681). While in exile Kałaj wrote the intriguing text *A Friendly Dialogue between an Evangelical Minister and a Roman Catholic Priest* (Gdańsk, 1671), which illustrates that irenic tendencies still existed in the Polish Calvinist community as late as the second half of the seventeenth century. Finally, the philosopher Steffen Huber returns to a classic source, Frycz Modrzewski's *Sylvae*, to work through the tangled skeins of these complicated treatises that spoke to the issue of religious toleration. These papers point to the vitality of the debate that Tazbir's early work helped stimulate. In closing two final texts should be highlighted that are important contributions to this ever-changing scholarly debate. Wojciech Kriegeisen's *Stosunki wyznaniowe w relacjach państwo-kościół między reformacją a oświeceniem (Rzesza Niemiecka, Niderlandy Północne, Rzeczpospolita polsko-litewska)* (Warsaw, 2010) examines toleration in a broader European context, primarily from a political and social perspective. This work will be an important starting place for future discussions on this theme in Polish historiography in particular. In the Anglophone world Magda Teter has now published two monographs on Christian-Jewish relations in the early modern era. Her most recent work, *Sinners on Trial: Jews and Sacrilege after the Reformation* (Cambridge, MA, 2011) works very carefully through sets of court records and explores the tension and violence that existed between these two communities in the Commonwealth. In sum, *Reformacja w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i jej europejskie konteksty* highlights a significant research agenda for the next generation of scholars. Essays are accessible to an Anglophone audience since they are written either in English or appended with a short English summary.▲

Stone Upon Stone

By Wiesław Myśliwski. Translated by Bill Johnston. New York: Archipelago Books (www.archipelagobooks.org), 2010. 534 pages. ISBN 978-0-9826246-2-3. Paperback.

Dorothy Z. Baker

Stone Upon Stone is an interestingly untidy novel whose tensions, confusions, lacunae, and contradictions conspire magically to communicate the mystery of being human in this world. The narrative does not purport to deliver truth. Rather, it illustrates the path of an earnest man who takes wild pleasure in the many joys of life and knows how to withstand its unrelenting pain. This man is Szymek Pietruszka, born between the wars to peasant parents, whose main ambition at the end of his life is building a family tomb, placing stone upon stone to immortalize a life that is no more.

Stone Upon Stone is a rush of stories, this being one of the productively disordered aspects of the novel. One tale is barely finished when the next begins. Appearing to lack any design, the narrative is fashioned anecdote upon anecdote, stone heaped upon stone. In this respect the novel's structure mimics a life, the shape of which is often discerned only at its close. *Stone Upon Stone*'s seemingly naive structure also suggests the immediacy and veracity of Szymek's voice. His tales are artless because he is artless. Szymek Pietruszka commands an epic memory of his peasant family, their village life, his brawls and romances, days in the army and then in the resistance, a brief career in the new socialist bureaucracy, and his return to the family farm. Raw, elegant, humiliating, proud, sensual, and brash, these richly detailed accounts are not reined by chronology or theme. They express only the unbridled memory of their teller.

Central to the novel's fruitful uncertainty is its protagonist. Szymek Pietruszka is an unlikely candidate to win our respect, let alone our admiration. By most standards, his life is a failure. No longer a young man, Szymek has no wife and no family. The one girl he hoped to marry betrayed him by aborting his child. He buried his parents alone. Szymek has lost contact with two brothers and cares for another, Michał, who is mute and simpleminded. As a boy Michał was the favored son, so bright that he would have been a priest if the family could have paid for the schooling. We never learn why Michał returns home as a broken man, but

we suspect that the story would be painful to recount and Szymek is loath to speak ill of his brothers. Szymek's legs are maimed, but he works the family farm as best he can, although farming was never his aspiration. His current ambition, the plan to build a family tomb is stalled by lack of money and his own indecision about its design. This is a strangely quixotic venture for an otherwise pragmatic man—especially when he also reveals that his parents' remains are already decomposed, and he is doubtful that his brothers wish to be buried in the country. Szymek Pietruszka's life is thoroughly unremarkable with the exception of his love of life in all its forms, his awareness of the comic aspects of this world, his fragility and his resilience. For this he commands our attention and our admiration.

Szymek Pietruszka is unfailingly kind. Even when he is blunt and critical, he is kind. This quality might be a challenge for a man who inhabits a liminal site between two generations, two worlds, the Second Republic and the People's Republic. He can't invest himself in his parents' Catholicism with what he sees as its irrationalities and thou shalt nots; neither can he adhere to their dogged trust in authority and their place in the world. This is not to say that he has replaced their religion and stable identity with a new philosophy—one that is grander and more flexible, one that permits modern irony. No, he speaks of his mother's devotion to the Virgin with great tenderness and respect. He continues to get his eggs blessed on Holy Saturday. Likewise, he is not blind to the soulless lives of his brothers who have abandoned the country for office jobs, cars, and wives they won't introduce to the family. However, he will not disparage them or the invalid brother he supports. When Szymek's memory leads him to hurtful moments that he cannot reconcile he becomes mute, and his narrative frays.

Consistent with the novel's design of artlessness, Szymek does not interrupt his rush of memory to reflect on his anecdotes. However, without any grand philosophizing on the part of the narrator, the novel is clearly reflective. One of its pieties is the enduring power of the land. Only God is more important than land, Szymek observes with the quick, wry qualification that this is true only if you believe in God. Even when he is away from the land, lying in a hospital bed, his stories center on the land. However, one of the cruelties of the novel is that only those who are broken return to live and labor on the land. As we experience both the pieties and the cruelties of the novel, we are grateful to Wiesław Myśliwski and his Szymek for access to this intensely physical and profoundly human world. ▲

Firing the Canon

Essays Mainly on Poetry

By Adam Czerniawski. London: Salt Publishing, 2010. viii + 217 pages. Notes, Index of Names. ISBN 978-1-84471-483-4. Paper.

Katarzyna Cieplińska

Writing about the canons of modern poetry is a challenge, but writing about poetry and philosophy in a passionate way can be achieved by few authors. Adam Czerniawski, Polish poet and prose writer, dared to undertake the task in his newest collection of essays.

Firing the Canon is an adapted and expanded version of his book *Wyspy szczęśliwe* (2007). It is also a continuation of the discussion started in that Polish-language volume about the role of poetry in the modern world. As critic and scholar, Czerniawski uses reason to persuade the reader that the power of poetic expression is something worth pondering. Although he has lived in Great Britain since 1947, in the essays he writes about his strong ties to the Polish poetic tradition.

The illustration on the cover pictures cannons being fired. The guiding motif of the first chapter is the author's criticism of the canon of Western literature created by Harold Bloom in *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (1994). Bloom included in his canon three contemporary Polish prose writers—Witold Gombrowicz, Stanisław Lem, and Bruno Schulz, and three poets—Zbigniew Herbert, Czesław Miłosz, and Adam Zagajewski, but he omitted all outstanding poets of previous epochs. Czerniawski criticizes the exclusion of Renaissance poets like Jan Kochanowski, Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński and Andrzej Morsztyn, especially that “in Bloom's Aristocratic Age there is room even for Campion and Wyatt, alongside Petrarch, Tasso and Camoens. . . . And if Bloom can pack practically the whole of English nineteenth-century poetry into his canon, why are Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and Norwid omitted?” (10). Therefore, Czerniawski accuses Bloom of insufficient knowledge and contrasts Bloom's pitiful arrogance with Al Alvarez's *Faber Book of Modern European Poetry* (1992). In the latter anthology, the selection of poems demonstrates that in Europe today Poland plays quite a role as the homeland of great poets. Finally, Czerniawski sets his own canon of European poetry

for the English-speaking reader, complete with the names of many Polish poets.

The roles of poetry and of a poet in society, as well as the relationship between poetry and ethics are the problems discussed by Czerniawski in the essay “Hamlet or Fortinbras?” The author recalls the times when the word “poet” was a magical word and poets “turned the bread-eaters into angels”—a quote from Juliusz Słowacki (21). According to Czerniawski, poetry should be contemplative and polyphonic, while the poet’s role is to use “non-prescriptive language” (23). A poem should be an autonomous form of art, free from moral and political interference.

In the second chapter of *Firing the Canon*, Czerniawski continues the discussion about translatability of poetry that he began in *Wyspy szczęśliwe*. The author believes that poetry is translatable but only translators who are not just philologists but poets themselves can successfully “recreate the spirit of the original” (49). The uncompromising tone of the essay “Translation of Poetry—Theory and Practice” contrasts with the tone of “Perils of Self-Translation,” a record of the author’s dilemmas around translation of his own poems. Seemingly, Czerniawski, as a bilingual poet and recognized translator of Polish poetry into English, should be an ideal translator of his own verse. Yet the roles of poet and translator can collide. As he confesses, the prospect of self-translation evokes resentment or embarrassment. Although the perspective of expanding the author’s readership is tempting, self-translation inevitably leads to writing in the second language, which involves the risk of disintegration or even a loss of literary identity. Czerniawski concludes that writing in an author’s native language is strongly connected with the nation’s poetic tradition (60).

The character of the third chapter, “Choosing a Favourite Poem or *De Amicitia*,” is also personal, as Czerniawski writes about his friendship with the late Bogdan Czaykowski and Tadeusz Różewicz. Czerniawski values his friendship with Czaykowski in particular. Poets usually compete with each other, but this was not the case in this particular relationship. The essay is not only a valuable record for future biographers of the author and his friends, but also a spectacular, though rather incidental, departure from the methodology popular in literary studies in the West: the analysis of a poem intervenes with autobiography, “a heresy so extreme that it wasn’t even noticed by the priests of New Criticism” (65). In the essay “St Anselm

and I: Ontology, Coincidence and the Fortunate Isles” that focuses on the ontological proof of God’s existence, the author admits that, following Descartes and Wittgenstein, he believes in “non-inferential knowledge guaranteed by the experiencing self” (89).

The fourth and most extensive chapter examines the rivalry between poetry and philosophy, which fight each other “for control of the same territory,” i.e., the area of linguistic expression. This section contains essays that are variations on the relationship between poetry and logic, and poetry and nonverbal forms of art, such as music or painting.

Despite a wide range of topics, the book is internally coherent, clearly composed, and written in a light style with traces of the author’s brilliant sense of humor. The book is Adam Czerniawski’s contribution to the struggle for recognition of Polish poetry in the West, freed from political immediacy and not limited to contemporary poets. As a poet and a philosopher, Czerniawski admits to being a disciple of Plato and and he unfolds his poetic creed in the essays. He contemplates reality and provokes in the reader the need for a philosophical perception of the world and of human nature. The author’s enthusiasm in engaging in this task is the most remarkable feature of this book. Δ

More Books

Na stracenie, by Janusz Krasieński. Białystok: Versus 1992. 314 pages. ISBN 83-7045-026-1. Paper. In Polish.

The best novel to read to acquire an idea of what it was like for Polish Catholics to live in the 1940s, first under German barbarism and then under the Soviet. This third-person, occasionally stream-of-consciousness narrative, recounts the story of an eighteen-year-old survivor of Auschwitz and Dachau who returns to Poland after the liberation of Dachau by American troops. What else could he do and where else could he go? He was a high school student when he was arrested by the Germans and sent to Auschwitz where he was expected to die from exhaustion after working several months for the Reich. He thought he was returning to Poland; instead, he finds himself in a Soviet-run prison.

He wants to be a sailor and goes to Gdańsk to seek employment there amidst the devastation brought about by the Russian and German invaders. He is incautious enough to take some pictures of the port to share with friends. The pictures are found and he is declared to be a traitor and spy. Imprisonment and torture follow. The Golgotha of his interrogations is meticulously described as are the stories of his prison mates, among whom are the best sons of Poland such as Witold Pilecki and teenage AK members. But the most impressive of all is the description of the show trial. It

is painfully real. The methods of “reasoning” employed by “prosecutors” and “judges” at this trial are still employed in many parts of the globe.

The book is a powerful presentation of postwar Polish reality. Why is it not promoted by the Polish consulates and embassies, who find time and money to promote yet another festival of folk art or yet another exhibit of paintings of dubious quality, or yet another tired concert of popular music? Why is the novel available only at a few university libraries in the United States; why is it out of print in Poland? Why has it not been translated into English at the expense of the Polish Cultural Centers abroad for which the Polish taxpayer shells out taxes? (JB)

***Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, by Monika Baár.** Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010. xi + 340 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-958118-4. Hardcover.

Five nineteenth-century historians are considered: Joachim Lelewel, Simonas Daukantas, František Palacky, Michály Horváth, and Mihail Kogălniceanu. While one could argue with the author about the relative importance of these five in their respective countries and in Europe generally (except for Palacky and Horváth who undoubtedly deserved inclusion in this book), the fact that such a book has been written outweighs its possible imperfections. The author is of Hungarian background and does not fail to note that non-Germanic Central Europe has usually been excluded from general histories of Europe. Her book brings that part of Europe into focus. Baár’s findings cannot be ignored. She demonstrates that nationalistic historians in Western Europe (especially in Germany and England) matched or surpassed in their nationalism the self-assertive voices of their non-Germanic Central European colleagues. Also, European historians need to realize that the virtues and shortcomings of scholarship in Western Europe were paralleled in non-Germanic Central Europe. The book outlines the mythologies that smaller countries like Lithuania created “for the uplifting of hearts.” Alas, some of these mythologies simply do not correspond to historical facts, but that was the case in Western Europe as well.

***Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe. Wizja, Projekt, Ludzie*, edited by Paulina Dudek and Anna Kowalska.** Warsaw: Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, 2010. 180 pages. ISBN 978-83-927590-2-7. Hardcover. In Polish.

This volume details the development of the Polish Digital Archives mainly through interviews with scholars involved in the process. The most valuable

part of the volume consists of tables showing the usage of digitalized materials in various parts of Poland and the savings accrued thereby. This promotional volume is available online at www.nac.gov.pl. We are waiting for a digitalized archive of all Polish dissertations, hopefully in English!

***Jan Kochanowski*, by Piotr Wilczek. Edited by Jan Grzenia.** Katowice: Nomen Omen Publishers (www.nomen-omen.pl), 2011. 50 + 4 pages. Illustrations. ISBN 978-83-62187-15-7. Electronic edition. In Polish.

This little book by a professor of Polish at the University of Warsaw ably introduces to college and high school students the greatest poet of the Polish Renaissance. It contains the poet’s biography and short discussions of his major works. Technically it is a masterpiece—its graphic solutions are excellent.

***Żeby Polska była Polską. Antologia publicystyki konspiracyjnej Podziemia Narodowego 1939–1950*, edited with an afterword by Marek Jan Chodakiewicz and Wojciech Jerzy Muszyński.** Warsaw: Institute of National Memory, 2010. 1080 pages. Index. ISBN 978-83-7629-212-0. In Polish.

A comprehensive collections of documents from the Polish underground presses maintained in German-occupied Poland and Soviet-occupied Poland during the Second World War and throughout the 1940s, when Soviet terror in Poland was unbounded and when the remnants of the Polish patriotic and educated strata of society were systematically hunted and killed.

***Diariusz drogi spisanej i różnych przypadków pociesznych i żalonych prowadząc córkę Jerzego Mniszka, Marynę, Dymitrowi Iwanowiczowi w roku 1606*, by Stanisław Niemojewski. Edited by Roman Krzywy.** Warsaw: University of Warsaw Polish Studies Press, 2006. Introduction, index of persons, index of geographical names, appendix, dictionary of Old Polish words. ISBN 83-89663-02-03. Paper.

While the original seventeenth-century manuscript resides in the Ossolineum in Wrocław, its editions (and translations into Russian) have had an interesting history detailed in the Introduction. This is a memoir of the nobleman who accompanied Maryna Mniszek, the so-called False Dmitrii’s fiancée, to Moscow. The memoir abounds in digressions and is a treasure-trove of local color. One imagines that it could become a source for a historical novel.

***Literatura polska w Kanadzie. Studia i szkice*, edited by Bożena Szalasta-Rogowska.** Katowice: University

of Silesia Press, 2010. 347 pages. Index of names. ISBN 978-83-60743-40-9. Paper. In Polish.

A collection of several dozen papers on Polish émigré writers who at some point in their career lived in Canada.

Inne wyzwania. Poezja Bogdana Czaykowskiego i Andrzeja Buszy w perspektywie dwukulturowości, by Janusz Pasterski. Rzeszów: University of Rzeszów Press, 2011. 360 pages. Bibliography, Index of names, English summary. ISBN 978-83-7338-611-2. Paper. In Polish.

A solid academic tome on two Polish poets born in eastern Poland, victims of Soviet deportations to the gulag. Both were saved by General Anders's evacuation of surviving Polish citizens, arrived in London and moved to Canada where one passed away in 2007 and the other presently lives. Truly an example of multiculturalism, though not in the commonly accepted sense of the term. A review to follow.

The Polish Operation Stalin's First Genocide of Poles 1937–1938

Tomasz Sommer

Below I present an annotated translation of a recently declassified Soviet document written by head of the NKVD Nikolai Yezhov. It details the fate of families and individuals of Polish nationality and mostly Catholic background who were subject to the first wave of repressions in the “Polish Operation,” or the systematic killing of every third or fourth person in the USSR's Polish minority from 1937 to 1938. The vast majority of victims were not immigrants to the USSR (as were some enthusiastic Americans who tried to help the Soviets), but rather inhabitants of areas that became the USSR after the October Revolution. At first the Soviet government let them alone. Persecution began when the Soviet system solidified. In the English-speaking world there are no studies detailing the fate of this minority that numbered, by various counts, between 600,000 and one million persons.

The Poles were an uncertain and dangerous element for the Soviet government for three reasons. First, they were not scattered among Russians, Ukrainians, or Lithuanians, but usually lived in densely populated communities that viewed themselves as native to the

land. Second, owing to Poland's political rebirth in 1918, they were suspected of being the fifth column bent on regaining for Poland territories lost after the first partition of 1772. Third, Poles were Catholic, meaning that they were members of an institution considered by atheistic Soviets to be their greatest enemy. From the Soviet standpoint, there was only one truly satisfactory solution to eliminating the Polish danger: physical extermination of the Polish population.

The command to begin liquidating the Poles (Order # 00485) was issued on 9 August 1937.[1] Two days later it was disseminated to NKVD personnel in the entire USSR.[2] To be sure, the murders of Poles took place earlier as well. At the time that the above order was issued they were already in progress. It can be said that the decision of KC WKP(b)'s Political Bureau legitimized the already existing phenomenon and made it into a mass occurrence. The genocide of Poles sanctioned in 1937 was the crowning “achievement” of the depolonization tactic undertaken by Russians in the eighteenth century and carried out by the Soviets as well.

How many victims did this depolonization process claim? According to Nikita V. Petrov and Aleksandr B. Roginskii, the NKVD documents list 111,091 death sentences imposed during the “Polish operation.” These death sentences fell under the “state of exception” (not requiring court approval).[3] Rev. Roman Dzwonkowski SAC, a Roman Catholic priest who researched Catholic martyrology in the Soviet Union, writes that “thousands were shot outside of the official ‘Polish Operation’—according to some, close to 150,000.”[4] According to the Soviet census of January 1937, there were 636,200 Poles living in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.[5] This is almost certainly an undercount. Poles avoided listing their nationality in official documents for the same reason that Jews avoided registering as Jews in German-occupied countries during the Second World War: in both cases persecution was imminent. The actual number of Poles in the USSR in the 1930s was probably between 800,000 and one million persons. The number of Polish victims most likely adds up to a quarter million. The anti-Polish repressions before the Second World War (i.e., the war and postwar deportations of Poles to Soviet prisons and gulags are not included) thus has to be an extraordinarily high figure.[6]

The NKVD was a secretive and criminal organization, but it kept detailed accounts of its crimes. Access to some of these documents is still difficult.[7]

The missing names (i.e., those killed whose names were not on the death sentence lists) may become available in the future. The vast majority of those arrested were not intelligence agents but simply persons of Polish nationality who lived in various areas of the Russian empire, sometimes going back centuries. Their arrest and subsequent execution were due to the fact that they were of Polish and Catholic background. One can only imagine the amount of torture it took to extract fake confessions from those arrested. The Report translated below has to be viewed with an understanding that people under torture may admit to actions they never committed.

Order # 00485 contains an outline on how to report the killings of Poles. Field telegrams about mission advancement were to be sent “every five days,” that is on the first, fifth, tenth, fifteenth, twentieth, twenty-fifth, and thirtieth of each month to the NKVD Headquarters in Moscow, specifically to Yezhov’s desk.[8] In turn, Yezhov was to report to Stalin on the progress of the genocide. At first Yezhov’s office was very much involved and thorough in its reports, creating special *résumés* that were compilations of field reports. Later, however, Yezhov supplied only a short introductory paragraph followed by a full copy of the field reports. At the beginning of 1938 reports pertaining to the “Polish Operation” became less distinctive in character—they were added into the main body of reports relating to progress in the Great Terror operation, although there were exceptions to this rule.

I gained access to Yezhov’s Report during a query in Moscow in 2009. It is the first report about the “Polish Operation” written expressly for Stalin, detailing the first arrests and execution of Poles. Here is its first translation into English:

File number: CA FSB F. 3, Op. 4, D 104,
L. 262–274
Top Secret
For Comrades Stalin, Molotov,
Voroshilov, Kaganovich
No. 59660
5/9 37

In accordance with the order given by the NKVD of the USSR[9] pertaining to the operational liquidation of the Polish intelligence cadre, on August 20 we began to arrest Polish fugitives, political emigrants, POWs, consulate associates, and other individuals suspected of spying for Poland.[10]

Between August 20–30, 1937, 15,218 Poles were arrested: 5,410 in the Ukrainian SSR, 3697 in the Belarusian SSR, 775 in the Western region, 1,293 in Leningrad, 615 in Moscow, 820 in the Western Siberian Region, 450 in the Sverdlovsk Region, and 1311 on the train.

Preliminary results of the operation testify to its importance in obtaining material evidence and successfully preventing counterintelligence and sabotage activity. We confiscated weapons, ammunition, explosive and toxic materials, grenades, counter-revolutionary literature, fake passports, incomplete blank documents, and large sums of money in Soviet and foreign currency.[11]

In the course of the operation we discovered and liquidated a number of residencies of Polish intelligence connected to the Second Division of the Polish Staff Headquarters through special couriers and Polish consulate apparatuses composed of people operating in commercial companies, as well as certain highly qualified spies specifically inserted during different periods of time into the territory of the USSR.

As a result of the operation in the more remote regions of Sverdlovsk and Western Siberia, many peripheral branches of the Polish Military Organization were identified and extirpated.[12]

Below we present the most significant data concerning the Polish Operation in the republics and regions saturated with the cadres of Polish intelligence.

USRS

The arrests of individuals suspected of spying for Poland and subsequent interrogations gave us much information about Polish sabotage and intelligence activities. The largest operations were undertaken in the Kiev Oblast’ where 1,621 persons were arrested, and the Vinnytsa Oblast’ where 1,346 were arrested. The arrests eliminated 51 Polish intelligence residencies in the Kiev Oblast’. Polish agents collected intelligence in the border regions of Korosten, Nizhnii Novgorod, and Zhytomir, as well as in the city of Kiev. These residencies were oriented toward intelligence concerning the Kiev Military District and toward

infiltration of large economic enterprises.

Thus the deputy director of Gosgeos'emka named Gluchowski[13] was arrested in Kiev along with a group of engineers he had recruited who were passing on information of defensive importance to the Polish consulate. Also arrested in Kiev was a former member of the Communist Party of Poland, I. K. Skakovski, who testified that having lived in Poland in the 1930s he was recruited by the Polish Defense Ministry with the aim of infiltrating the Communist Party of Poland, and in 1931 was transferred to the USSR by the Second Division. He created a number of underground groups (POWs) in commercial organizations in the areas of Magnitogorsk, Ulan-Ude, and Zaporozh'e. About 20 intelligence gatherers have been found to be associated with Skakovski. A veteran agent of the Second Division named Lipinski was likewise arrested. Lipinski was a former lieutenant of the Polish Army, convicted in 1923 and sentenced [by the Soviet authorities] to ten years imprisonment.[14] After returning to Ukraine in 1933, Lipinski returned to underground activity. He made contact with the Polish consulate in Kharkov and recruited seven coal industry workers, five of whom were engineers. With the aim of maintaining contact with Lipinski, a Polish consulate courier visited him regularly in the Donbas region, supplying him with orders and money.

In Shepetovka a subterfugal organization of the POW type was found and eliminated. It was established in 1924 by an illegal immigrant from Poland named Skarniewski. He was an army officer who managed to install himself in the role of a schoolteacher. The organization prepared combat teams in which anti-Soviet Polish youths participated. Their armament and training were masquerading as "Osoaviakhim" activities.[15] Sixteen individuals were arrested, of whom eleven admitted to the crime. In the Radomysl region the NKVD located a Polish espionage group preparing to blow up the Eighth Artillery Regiment's ammunition supply. In 1936 members of this group attempted to blow up the ammunition depot, killing the security guard in the process. The detonation was foiled due to armed

resistance by the guards. According to witnesses, this diversionary band was created by the commissioner of the Mironov artillery regiment. Mironov was arrested as well.

Based on the confession of a Polish fugitive named I. M. Lach, captured in the city of Cherkasy, it was established that he was an agent of the Polish intelligence and established a residency in the city of Kansk, where he lived and worked as a teacher.

An agent of the Polish intelligence named I. I. Radkiewicz was also unmasked and arrested in Cherkasy while masquerading as a locksmith in a cigarette factory. In 1932 Radkiewicz crossed the border along with a group of eight Polish spies and established an espionage network in Pervouralsk and Zlotoujście.

K. A. Polech[16] was an agent of the Polish intelligence who illegally arrived in the USSR in July 1937. He was unmasked and arrested. During interrogation he admitted that he had been transferred to the USSR in order to undertake intelligence gathering missions in branches of the Korosten garrison or in the militarily sensitive region, and that for that reason he was given a special preparatory course for secret agents. The following items were confiscated from K. A. Polech: two revolvers, two bombs, a compass, various Soviet documents with the surname of Melbekka, and 1,200 rubles in Soviet banknotes. Analogous materials were obtained in the Nizhnii Novgorod Region where two agents of the Polish intelligence, Konopczuk and Chainski,[17] were unmasked and arrested after they crossed the border. They too had false documents and weapons. During the arrest Chainski resisted and attempted to escape; he was, however, wounded and arrested.

Numerous illegal border crossings were discovered, and the persons arrested belonged to Polish and Romanian intelligence. In the stretch of the Slavuta Border Region over the past five years, a Polish intelligence agent named A. I. Zastovski-Bublik clandestinely crossed the USSR border seven times and encountered no difficulty in returning to Poland. In the same Slavuta Border Region in the years 1936-1937 couriers

Lepinski, Jaworski, and Slucki crossed the border without difficulty and reported to one Kierekowski from the Second Division. Here also a certain Polish agent named Gomula made his border crossing.

In the section of the Iampolskii Border District, agents of the Polish intelligence L. Karpinski and one Witoslawski passed on packages with gathered intelligence to the head of the Polish watchtower team (headed by one Zdybanski) located directly across the border. They did so for four years. An agent of the Polish intelligence named P. Z. Domasiuk-Kuczewski-Orlov crossed the border without impediment in the Volhynian Border District, and he continued doing so over a long period of time that ended only in April 1937. In the Mohylev-Podolia Border District a Romanian secret agent named W. Emuliak made illegal border crossings between 1928-1937. He recruited 11 collaborators for the Romanian intelligence.

BSSR

As a result of initial interrogations of persons arrested in Orla, a Polish subterfuge group was exposed. It was headed by A. I. Kaminski, whose two brothers were officers in the Second Division of the Polish Staff HQ. Kaminski admitted that he recruited 13 diversionists, including those working at the Gorlov power plant that was to be blown up.

One hundred and fifty-three Poles were arrested in the area of Dzerzhinsk,[18] 19 of whom worked as directors, eight as NKVD workers, and 24 as employees of regional enterprises. During searches bundles of weapons were found, together with explosive and bacteriological materials, false documents, and large sums of money.

A subterfuge group composed of 18 members was discovered in the Smolevitse region. It was organized by the local veterinarian named Tura, who was also a Polish fugitive. Tura's testimony confirmed an association with the Polish intelligence. A member of the right-wing deviation group and a former director of the Narkozem Veterinary Administration of the BSSR[19] named Pasmaninka was also arrested. He organized a mass outbreak of infections in large

populations of cattle on the orders of Polish intelligence.

During the operation conducted against Poles in the town of Osveia, a group of spies led by one Czerwoniec was identified and arrested. It had six members and worked for the German intelligence. A person named Krasowski admitted to having spied for Poland and named 15 other spies, including one worker of the NKVD border control. Similarly, in the town of Gomel' an individual identified as Palev admitted to spying for Poland, and he named ten other collaborators. Among the arrested was an individual named Dausza, former employee of the Polish newspaper *Orka*. During interrogation he admitted to involvement in the POW since 1916, and testified to parallel spying operations in the Mohylev region. An individual named Beneka also was a member of POW; he had been arrested in 1918 and was the former People's Health Commissar of the Belorussian Republic. He said there were many cells of the POW in central regions of Belarus.

In Polotsk the arrested Pole named Wojciechowski admitted to membership in the anti-Soviet "White Russian" émigré organization bent on military resistance to the Soviet government.

The Western Region

Seventeen Polish espionage organizations and 19 Polish spies were discovered and eliminated. W. F. Wasilewski, a Red Army soldier from the Logistics Division of 166 Air Brigade, was arrested in Smolensk. Masquerading as a technician in the management of construction, he testified that he had been an agent of Polish intelligence since 1930. He was recruited by a courier named Szubyniewicz, who came from Poland and brought with him a letter of reference from Wasilewski's relatives in Poland.

A Polish spying group operating along the Moscow-Kiev and Belarussian railway was discovered and eliminated. It was created by a resident of the Polish intelligence named W. A. Uglik, who held the position of dispatcher at the Briansk-2 station. Uglik testified that Poles had recruited him already in 1919, and at the request of the intelligence bureau he organized spying cells along the

Belarusian and the Moscow-Kiev railway lines. During the course of the investigation it was established that in 1936 the aforementioned organization undertook an assassination attempt directed at a military train traveling on a branch of the Leshchyn Belarusian railway. The organization's mission also included assassinating Party and government leaders. During the inquiry, 39 members were identified.

An Austrian army officer and a former prisoner of war named Z. M. Goldberg was arrested in Viaz'ma and testified that he illegally crossed the border into Poland in 1928, where he was recruited by the Tarnopol branch of the Polish intelligence and was subsequently transferred back to the USSR with espionage and subterfuge missions in the area of health care. He recruited two doctors into espionage work.

An individual named M. W. Kukiewicz entered the USSR pretending to have deserted from the Polish Army. He became a hairdresser in Klintse, and during interrogation admitted that in 1929, while he was studying in the officer cadet school in Ostróg, Poland, he was recruited by a lieutenant of the Polish intelligence [name illegible] and was transferred to the USSR for a spying mission along with another spy named Zareczuk. Kukiewicz revealed the address of the conspirators that he had received in Kiev from the Polish intelligence.

The Leningrad Region

Initial results in the Leningrad district indicate that the POW and the Second Division of the Polish Staff Headquarters organized wide-ranging and extremely harmful activities in the important defense enterprises in Leningrad and in the units of the Red Army. A significant number of spies were given the mission to destroy military factories at the moment of Polish incursion into the USSR. The military factories "Bolshevik" and "Red October," as well as factories nos. 4, 6, 52, 218 and others had Polish agents working within, preparing for destruction of the facilities. One of these agents named Andrzejewski, an engineer in factory no. 4, admitted that he was a member of POW since 1915, having

been recruited by a former colonel named Aranowski. He maintained contact with one Labinski, likewise an agent of the Second Division. Labinski worked as an engineer in the same factory and prepared diversionary tactics as directed by Andrzejewski. He recruited seven members of the spying ring among the factory workers.

A former corporal in the Polish army named Kukharev worked as an engineer in factory no. 208 at the time of his arrest. During interrogation he confessed that in 1923 he had been illegally transported to the USSR by the Polish intelligence and established at the military factory in Leningrad. In 1934 a courier from the Second Division of the Polish Staff HQ visited Kukharev and passed on directives for preparation of acts of sabotage in the factory.

An engineer of the electrotechnical institute named Daczkowski likewise confessed that in 1934 he was recruited by a resident of the Second Division and an employee of the Polish consulate in Leningrad named Karszo, to whom Daczkowski passed on information about topics studied in the institute, particularly the experiments with radiation that would have negative effects on airplane engines.

A worker from the Stalin Factory named Winicz confessed to having been recruited in 1936 by a Polish scout named Piotrowski, and having passed on information about the factory. Winicz was given an order to blow up the turbine department. For this reason Piotrowski gave him potent explosive materials.

Wowczak and Inzigirej, two workers at an artillery range, admitted belonging to a sabotage group created by a Polish scout named Dektiarev. They confessed that they were preparing a detonation of the gunpowder supply located on the range.

A former planner of the 201 Outpost of the Leningrad Military Region named Kabicki admitted that in 1920 he was recruited in Warsaw by a colonel of the Polish intelligence named Marski, and was subsequently transported to the USSR with intelligence gathering aims. In the USSR he organized many conspiratorial meetings that the high-placed workers of the LWO

attended. He tried to involve them in espionage activities.

The arrested helper of the manager of WWS LWO named Vesilev testified that in 1935 he was recruited by an agent of the Polish intelligence named Zielski, and was passing on information about WWS LWO for financial compensation.

A brigadier named Mironowicz was arrested in the Zdanov Factory where he worked. He admitted to complicity in organizing an illegal Polish Catholic organization and in preparing acts of sabotage.

An aide to the commandant of the 15 Special Infantry Battalion named Szpakowski admitted that in 1933 he was recruited by the Polish intelligence. His contact was one Kochanski (arrested), the former commander of the Third Air Brigade. On Kochanski's orders, Szpakowski organized in his battalion a branch of the POW composed of nine members.

A man by the name of Pancern who was a supervisor in the Bolshevik Military Factory was recruited to the POW in 1933. He devised a method for recruiting other workers into the POW under the guise of working for the NKVD. He was an active spy and prepared acts of sabotage to be implemented in the event of a war with Poland.

The West Siberian and Sverdlovsk Districts

In Sverdlovsk in the Urals and in the Western Siberian Oblast', the activities of Polish spies were vigorous. Owing to the confession of a Roman Catholic priest named Zukowski obtained during an interrogation^[20] and information obtained from another individual named Piotrowski (both were arrested in Novosibirsk), it was established that the operation of the intelligence-gathering, espionage, and saboteur organization POW occurred in the Siberian territories. In command of the Siberian POW were Filipowicz and Sosenko, in addition to the aforementioned Zukowski. The organization possessed branches in many larger cities in Siberia. At the order of the POW Piotrowski infiltrated the UNKVD mess hall with the aim to poison UNKVD workers in the event of a war scenario. A similar situation was detected in Sverdlovsk where, as a result of the inquiry, a Ural branch of the POW was discovered. It had been

organized in 1933 by a certain Malinowski [illegible], an active Pilsudskiye transferred from Poland. The aforementioned POW HQ possessed intelligence-gathering agencies located in many important industrial enterprises in the Ural region. Both of the previously mentioned POW HQs were identified as a result of the present operation intended to eliminate the Polish intelligence cadre; before there had only been a general suspicion that they existed.

The above report summarizes only the beginning of the Polish Operation and therefore is far from complete. A significant portion of the arrested have not yet been fully interrogated and unmasked; nonetheless, there are numerous indications of mass assignments of Polish intelligence agents to our institutions and factories and of Polish penetration, not solely of the border regions but also of many industrial complexes and certain large enterprises deep inside the country. As a result of the investigation, numerous well-embedded and well-trained diversionary groups have been identified. As of 1 September 1937, 930 Polish agents have been tried and executed.

Signed: The People's Commissar of the USSR Internatal Affairs, General Commissar for State Security Nikolai Yezhov

September 1937

Translated by Andrzej Skulski

Insofar as possible the Polish spelling of Polish names has been preserved or reconstructed. The report was written in Russian and the translator has followed the Russian rather than the Ukrainian transliteration rules regarding names of places and regions in Ukraine.

The Polish version of this article will appear in vol. 23 of *Studia nad faszyzmem i zbrodniami hitlerowskimi* [Studies in Fascism and in Hitler's Crimes], edited by Marek Maciejewski (Wrocław: University of Wrocław Press, October 2011).

NOTES

1. Order #00485 was given by Nikolai Yezhov on August 11, 1937. It was an operational order, i.e., it had been approved by Stalin two days earlier, on August 9, and it follows the decision of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) to physically eliminate Poles. The text of the order

- was first published in Nikita Petrov's article "Polska operacja NKVD," *Karta* (1993), pp. 27–29. The order also appears in *Rozstrzelać Polaków. Ludobójstwo Polaków w Związku Sowieckim w latach 1937–1938. Dokumenty z centrali*, edited by Tomasz Sommer (Warsaw: 3S Media, 2010), p. 81. The text of the order as it appears in Petrov's article was obtained during the brief period of free archival access under Boris Yeltsin. A copy of the order also exists in Kyiv Archives (HDA SBU, f. 9, spr. 23, k. 20–24). The original remains in Russian archives to which access is presently prohibited.
3. Nikita V. Petrov, and Aleksandr B. Roginskii, "<<Pol'skaia Operatsiia>> NKVD 1937–1938. Repressii protiv poliakov i pol'skikh grazhdan," *Istoricheskie Sborniki Memoriala*," Vypusk 1. Moscow: Zven'ia, 1997, pp. 40–44.
 4. Roman Dzwonkowski SAC, *Religia i Kościół katolicki w ZSRS 1917–1991* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2010), p. 214.
 5. *Vsesoiuzhaia perepis' naseleniia 1937 goda. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), p. 87.
 6. The author of the present article is currently preparing a monograph on the "Polish Operation" where these issues will be discussed in detail.
 7. Nearly all documents concerning the genocide of Poles in Ukraine have been handed in by Ukrainians to Polish researchers and published in the collective work *Wielki terror: operacja Polska 1937–1938* [The Great Terror: the Polish Operation, 1937–1938], vol. 8 of the series *Polska i Ukraina w latach trzydziestych-czterdziestych XX wieku* [Poland and Ukraine in the 1930s and 1940s], Warsaw-Kyiv: Institute of National Memory, 2010. Courtesy of *Memorial's* Nikita Petrov, this author has edited and published additional documents in the collective volume *Ludobójstwo Polaków*. However, no documents from Belarus and very few from Russia have been released or accessed.
 8. *Ludobójstwo Polaków*, p. 85.
 9. The reference here is to order #00485.
 10. Order #00485 was formally directed against "counterrevolutionary Poles" that included the aforementioned categories. In practice, the determining feature was nationality, and the arrests were based on whoever caught the eye of the NKVD police. *Ludobójstwo Polaków*, pp. 1–22.
 11. The first published photocopy of Yezhov's report appeared in *Ludobójstwo Polaków*. The original is located in the Central FSB Archives where it is sewn together with other documents pertaining to September 1937. Its identifying number is CA FSB F. 3. Op. 4. D. 104. L. 262–274. Subsequent reports show an increase in the number of arrests. The increase amounted to 143,810 persons, of whom 111,091 were executed.
 12. The Polish name is *Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego Wojska Polskiego*, or *Komórka Organizacyjna Sztabu Generalnego WP*. Its task was intelligence including radio intelligence, counterintelligence, sabotage, cryptology, and the study of foreign armies and foreign affairs in the years 1918–1939. In Soviet documents persons associated with the Second Division were called "defensiva." The NKVD "invented" an organization called the Polish Military Organization [Polska Organizacja Wojskowa, or POW in Soviet documents] that allegedly was a continuation of Józef Piłsudski's POW founded in 1914. According to the NKVD this organization was on the verge of taking over the USSR in the 1930s. Every person of Polish background was potentially a member of this network, as implied in NKVD documents.
 13. Gosgeos'emka was a Soviet government company that made geological photographs. The name Głuchowski (Glukhovskii) also appears in the "Report of the People's Commissar for Internal Affairs of the USRS" written by Israil Leplevskii. *Ludobójstwo Polaków*, p. 569.
 14. Andrzej Lipiński, b. 1897, arrested June 28, 1937, executed September 23, 1937, posthumously rehabilitated in 1959. HDA SBU, Donetsk, issue 14196-PF.
 15. Obshchestvo Druzei Oborony i Aviatsionno-Khimicheskogo, an organization that explained to young people how to defend themselves in case of air and chemical attacks. It had over ten million members.
 16. Konstantin Andreevich Polech was sentenced to death on September 23, 1937, in Kyiv. HDA SBU, f. 5, spr. 465, k.11–18.
 17. Mikhail Anastas'evich Kononchuk [name misspelled in the report about the death sentence], sentenced to death August 31, 1937. HDA SBU, f. 5, delo, 465, k. 11–18. Karp Andreevich Chainski, sentenced to death August 31, 1937. HDA SBU, f. 5, delo, 465, k. 11–18.
 18. The former Koidanov Region in the Minsk Oblast'. Like the Marklev Region in Ukraine, it was declared by the Soviets to be an autonomous Polish region in 1932. It numbered 44,000 residents. In 1938 its autonomous status was withdrawn, apparently because so many Poles were arrested and executed.
 19. Part of *Narodnyj Kommissariat Zemlerobstva*, or Ministry of Agriculture.
 20. Fr. Antoni Żukowski, b. 1885 in Irkutsk, ordained in 1909, murdered during the "Polish Operation" on October 12, 1937, in Novosibirsk. He was active in parishes from the Ural Mountains all the way to

Lake Baikal. He was first arrested in 1920, but was released and continued to clandestinely serve Roman Catholics in Siberia until his final arrest and execution in 1937.

Letters

Personal remembrances of Czesław Miłosz

I read with interest the poetic recollection of Miłosz by Professor/Fr. Raymond Gawronski (*SR*, April 2011) and would like to contribute some personal memories in that connection. While my younger sister Anna was an undergraduate at the University of California-Berkeley as a Comparative Literature major in the late 1980s, she was considered as a possible candidate for an assistantship to Miłosz. The poet invited her to his place and basically had one question: “How did you acquire your last name?” (*Skąd Pani ma to nazwisko?*) My sister’s answer was, “I acquired it at birth” (*Od urodzenia*). Miłosz never got back to her, and she never became his assistant.

The future Nobel Prize winner knew our grandfather, Jan Chodakiewicz, a fellow student at the law faculty of the Stefan Batory University in Wilno. They met through my grandfather’s friend from high school, Lech Beynar (aka Paweł Jasienica). Miłosz was also a high school classmate of my grandmother’s oldest brother, Janusz Cieszewski, also a law student at USB. The late Jerzy Przyłuski recalled the cordiality between the two many years later. Janusz Cieszewski was a hardcore Endek. While in the United States Miłosz recoiled from anything that had to do with his personal past.

On the other hand, my personal dealings with Miłosz were invariably positive. While I did my volunteer work at Amnesty International at Berkeley and audited classes at UC Berkeley, I was interested in neither the poet nor in his poetry. Since I was barred from dealing with Poland and the USSR, I focused on Afghanistan, Cambodia, Vietnam, and North Korea. However, whenever we needed something done for Polish prisoners of conscience, my boss, Laola Hironaka, a Catholic nun, a JD and a PhD in Japanese literature, would turn to me and say, “Let’s hit Miłosz.” And he would invariably come through, including intervention on behalf of Fighting Solidarity (*Solidarność Walcząca*), a courageous group in Poland that did not eschew armed self-defense against communism.

*Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Institute of World Politics
Washington, DC*

The Past

by

Cyprian Kamil Norwid
Translated by Leo Yankevich

1.
God does not make the p a s t, nor death, nor grief,
But he who breaks the law,
Whose depths are so raw,
He, knowing evil, seeks a m n e s i a for relief.
2.
However, he’s not like a child inside a stroller,
Crying: “Look, there’s a tree,
Only I see it flee. . .
Into the woods!”; the tree remains; the child grows older.
3.
The past exists today as well as beyond the green:
A simple hamlet waits
Not this or that odd place. . .
Whose fields no living man has ever walked or seen.

Przeszłość

1.
Nie Bóg stworzył p r z e s z ł o ś ć i śmierć, i
cierpienia,
Lecz ów, co prawa rwie,
Więc nieznośne mu—dnie;
Więc, czując złe, chciał odepchnąć
s p o m n i e n i a!
2.
Acz nie byłże jak dziecko, co wozem leci,
Powiadając: „O! dąb
Ucieka! . . . w lasu głąb. . .”
—Gdy dąb stoi, wóz z sobą unosi dzieci.
3.
Przeszłość jest i dziś, i te dziś dalej:
Za kołami to wieś
Nie—jakiś tam. . . coś, gdzieś,
Gdzie nigdy ludzie nie bywali! . . .

Aleksandra N. Lawera, M.D.

Katy Internal Medicine Associates, L.L.P.

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Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1821–1883) competes with Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki for the title of the greatest poet of Polish Romanticism.

Tomasz Sommer is a Polish scholar and journalist. He obtained his PhD in sociology from the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. In addition to being the author of numerous books, he is managing editor of the weekly *Najwyższy Czas*.

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We are grateful to those readers who support the *Sarmatian Review* over and above the price of subscription. Without them, it would be exceedingly difficult to continue the publication of our journal. Donations to *Sarmatian Review* and its publisher, the Polish Institute of Houston, are tax deductible. Below is the list of donors between April 2011-July 2011:

Dr. Aleksandra Ziolkowska-Boehm and Mr. C. Norman Boehm; Professor Ralph Frankowski and Mrs. Elizabeth Frankowski; Professor Richard J. Hunter, Jr.; Mr. Steven Kaminski; Professor Joseph A. Kotarba; Professor Bogna Lorence-Kot; Rev. Walter J. Rakoczy; Mr. William J. Zoltowicz.