

# THE SARMATIAN REVIEW

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## Imagining *Pan Tadeusz*



Minor nobility (*szlachta zagrodowa*) in the early nineteenth century, as imagined by the *Pan Tadeusz* illustrator Michał Andriolli (1836–1893). Public domain.

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#### In this issue:

SR Data ..... 1685  
Piotr Wilczek, The Literary Canon and Translation: Polish Literature as a Case Study..... 1687  
Margaret Peacock, Imperiological Studies:

A Polish Perspective (review) ..... 1692  
Lisa D. Chavez, An Invisible Rope: Portraits of Czesław Miłosz (review) ..... 1694  
MORE BOOKS..... 1695  
Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska, One step forward and two steps backward at the Institute of National Remembrance? ..... 1696  
Michał Karnowski, Responsibility and bad taste: a German journalist teaches Poles tolerance ..... 1697  
Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz* (Book Eight), translated by Christopher Zakrzewski ..... 1699  
Ferdinand Ossendowski, Fetishism of the Word (chapters 24–26 of *The Shadow of the Gloomy East*) . . . 1708  
About the Authors ..... 1698  
Letters ..... 1710  
Thank you note ..... 1710

## In this issue

Polish children supposedly read Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* in high school. Our guess is that a decade or so later, no more than 1 percent still remember the poem in detail. We would like to announce loudly and clearly that Book Nine (The Battle) is the most engaging and best of all chapters in *Pan Tadeusz*. It is an "action" chapter that humorously describes a battle between several hundred petty nobility who had just eaten and drunk to their full satisfaction, and a detachment of Russian soldiers who had been cleverly induced to drink pure spirits before the battle so that their worthiness as soldiers would be diminished. Christopher Zakrzewski's translation renders it all in magnificent nineteenth-century English; as a result *Pan Tadeusz* will appeal even to those who seldom read "serious" literature. When the issue goes online, please encourage your non-Polish friends to read this fragment of a genuine masterpiece.

There is no better translation than Zakrzewski's and it is a prose translation, so the text reads like a stylized description of a real nineteenth-century skirmish.

Our usual academic contents begin with a wise article by Professor Piotr Wilczek. He reminds us that in order to begin to exist in the world's cultural memory a literary work has to be translated into English. Translatability is thus the key, but as those of us who speak more than one language know, not all great works are translatable, and many of them are therefore destined to wither away in some obscure language. Readership gives them sustenance, and English readership gives the best sustenance. This is part of the reason why Professor Andrzej Nowak published *Imperiological Studies* in English (the book is reviewed in this issue). Alas, the reviewer indicates that the translation leaves much to be desired. The sustenance that literary works require is also necessary to make scholarly works come alive; the Polish point of view represented by Professor Nowak is all too seldom heard in the English-speaking world.

Finally, in this issue we publish two voices from Poland: one from a university professor, and the other from a top-shelf journalist. The first is an account of the Institute of National Remembrance and the pressures imposed on it by the government; the second is a succinct rejoinder to a German commentator whose good taste apparently leaves much to be desired.

Do not forget about our Data sheet!



## *Sarmatian Review Data*

### **Sex education in Poland compared with other EU countries**

Types of sex education recognized by the American Academy of Pediatrics: A. abstinence-only education, or chastity education, B. biological sex education, C. the two combined.

Type of sex education used in Poland: A.

Type of sex education used in Sweden, Great Britain, and Germany: B.

Total number of legally aborted pregnancies in Poland (pop. 38 million), Sweden (pop. 9 million), Great Britain (pop. 61 million), and Germany (pop. 82 million) in 2008: Poland, 506; Sweden, 38,049; Great Britain, 209,913; Germany, 114,484.

Number of legally aborted pregnancies by teenagers aged 15–19 in 2008: Poland, 42; Sweden, 7,338; Great Britain, 44,974; Germany, 13,300.

Number of diagnosed cases of HIV and AIDS in 2008: Poland, 912; Sweden, 456; Great Britain, 8,115; Germany, 3,329.

Number of diagnosed cases of HIV and AIDS per 100,000 inhabitants in 2008: Poland, 2.39; Sweden, 4.97; Great Britain, 13.26; Germany, 4.05.

Number of legally aborted pregnancies by teenagers aged 15–19 per 1,000 teenagers in 2008: Poland, 0.03; Sweden, 23.73; Great Britain, 23.15; Germany, 5.88.

Results of Poland using family-oriented chastity education: in 2008 Poland had the lowest number of teenage pregnancies per 1,000 girls in the EU; the lowest number of teenage abortions per 1,000 girls; and the lowest rates of HIV infection and AIDS per 100,000 inhabitants in the EU.

Source: Dr. Krystyna Kluzowa, prof. dr. hab. Janina Palus, dr. hab. Janina Wronicz, "Sex education in Poland compared with selected European Union Countries" (2011), <[www.pro-life.pl](http://www.pro-life.pl)>, accessed 19 August 2012.

### **Belief in God vs. atheism in countries of the world in 2008**

Ranking of selected countries on atheism: Germany (East) where 52 percent of the population declares itself atheist; Czech Republic, 39.9 percent; Israel, 6 percent; Poland, 3.3 percent; United States, 3.0 percent.

Nonbelief in God over time ("I don't believe in God and I never have"): Germany (East), 59.4 percent; Czech Republic, 51.2 percent; Israel, 8.6 percent; United States, 4.4 percent; Poland, 1.9 percent.

Belief in personal God (agree): United States, 67.6 percent; Poland, 64.1 percent; Israel, 66.5 percent; Russia, 40.8 percent; Czech Republic, 16.1 percent; Germany (East), 8.2 percent.

Strong atheists: Germany (East), 46.1 percent; Czech Republic, 26.2 percent; Israel, 3.3 percent; United States, 1.2 percent; Poland, 0.5 percent.

Source: Tom W. Smith (University of Chicago), "Beliefs about God across Time and Countries," a report written for International Society of Sustainability Professionals (released 18 April 2012).

### **Chinese power**

Number of Chinese students studying at American universities in 2012: 170,000.

Source: Andrea Mitchell, NBC News, 4 May 2012.

### **Cost of King Harald V's monarchy in Norway vs. cost of Bronisław Komorowski's presidency in Poland**

Amount of money taxpayers in Norway spend on maintaining King Harald V, his family and staff: 110 million Polish ZL (ca. 37 million US dollars) per year.

Amount of money Polish taxpayers spend on maintaining President Bronisław Komorowski, his family and his chancery: 180 million Polish ZL (ca. 60 million US dollars) per year.

Source: Professor Herman Mattijs of Brussels' Free University, as reported by *Super Ekspres* on 14 May 2012 ([http://www.se.pl/wydarzenia/kraj/komorowski-drozszy-niz-krol\\_256408.html](http://www.se.pl/wydarzenia/kraj/komorowski-drozszy-niz-krol_256408.html), accessed 14 May 2012).

### **German views of Israel Anno Domini 2012**

Percentage of Germans who consider Israel to be an aggressive country: 59 percent (10 percent more than in a similar poll in 2009).

Percentage of Germans who believe that human rights are respected in Israel: 21 percent (11 percent drop in comparison to 2009).

Percentage of Germans who think that Germany has no special obligations concerning Israel: 60 percent.

Source: "Israel verliert bei den Deutschen an Ansehen," an opinion poll reported by *Stern*, 23 May 2012 <[www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/stern-umfrage-israel-verliert-bei-den-deutschen-an-ansehen-1830648.htm](http://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/stern-umfrage-israel-verliert-bei-den-deutschen-an-ansehen-1830648.htm)>, accessed 23 May 2012.

### **Old-fashioned colonialist deals made difficult by technology**

Name of the ancient animal whose perfectly assembled skeleton was scheduled for auction by New York's Heritage Auction in May 2012: *Tyrannosaurus bataar*.

Name of country from which it was looted: Mongolia.

Who looted it and when: undisclosed.

Further disposition of this paleontological specimen: Mongolia President Tsakhia Elbegdor was notified of the state of affairs by Mark A. Norell of the American Museum of Natural History. He called a Dallas lawyer Robert Painter (his personal acquaintance); Painter went to the home of a federal judge who issued a temporary restraining order one day before the auction was scheduled. Heritage proceeded with the sale, but when a federal judge in New York signed an order for law enforcement officers to take custody of the dinosaur skeleton, Heritage relented.

Source: *International Herald Tribune*, 21 June 2012.

### **Health, retirement, and you**

Estimated *minimum* amount a 65-year-old American couple retiring in 2012 will spend for health care throughout retirement: \$240,000.

Source: *AARP Bulletin*, vol. 53, no. 6 (July-August 2012), 6.

### **EU's largesse toward Poland vs. remittances of Poles working abroad**

Amount of money Poles working abroad sent back home over the last 17 years: 160 billion ZL, or ca. 50 billion U.S. dollars, a sum exceeding the amount Poland received from the EU to modernize its agriculture and infrastructure.

Percentage of GDP over 17 years attributed to remittances of Poles working abroad: 1.7 percent.

Source: Joint report of Western Union and Center for Social and Economic Research in Poland [a research institute financed from abroad, *Ed.*], released in July 2012.

### **Extreme poverty in Poland in 2011**

Percentage increase in extreme poverty in Poland in 2011 in comparison with 2010: 1 percent, amounting to 400,000 people.

Years when extreme poverty was decreasing: from 12.3 percent in 2005 to 5.6 percent in 2008 [the years when Law and Justice Party headed by Jarosław Kaczyński was in power, *Ed.*].

Years when percentage of the extremely poor stayed the same (5.6 percent to 5.7 percent): 2008–2010.

Number of people in extreme poverty in Poland in 2012: 2.6 million.

Definition of extreme poverty: a single person's income of ZL 495 (ca. U.S. \$130) per month, or a family of four's income of ZL 1336 (\$350) per month (\$4,200 per year for a family of four). By comparison, the poverty line in the United States is \$22,113 per year for a family of four (*NYT* editorial, 9 July 2012).

Source: Central Statistical Office (GUS) Report on "Poverty in Poland in 2011," <[http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840\\_8292\\_PLK\\_HTML.htm](http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840_8292_PLK_HTML.htm)>, accessed 9 July 2012.

### **Prices of rail tickets under Tusk and Kaczyński, respectively**

Price of rail ticket from Kraków's Central Railway Station to Kraków's Balice Airport in 2012 (distance: 11 kilometers): 19 ZL, or \$6.

Price of the same ticket in 2006: 5 ZL, or \$1.55.

Source: *Z biegiem szyn* [bimonthly on railway system in Mazowsze voivodship], no. 4(60), July-August 2012 <<http://www.zbs.net.pl/zbs60.pdf>>, accessed 11 July 2012.

### **Case study of unemployment in Poland**

Polish county with the highest unemployment: Szydłowiec (100 km southeast of Warsaw), with unemployment of 37.7 percent in March 2012.

Reasons for unemployment: Skalbud Company closure of sandstone quarry by Skalbud Company that went bankrupt in 2002 in the process of "introducing capitalism;" recent group layoffs in Profel, a company producing electronic equipment; bankruptcy of cement factory in Wierzbica; and low level of education of the unemployed, of whom 61.1 percent have not graduated from high school (70 percent of inhabitants of Szydłowiec county come from farming areas).

Source: *Z biegiem szyn* [bimonthly on railway system in Mazowsze voivodship], no. 4(60), July-August 2012 <<http://www.zbs.net.pl/zbs60.pdf>>, accessed 11 July 2012.

## The Literary Canon and Translation

### Polish Culture as a Case Study

Piotr Wilczek

What constitutes a canon? A question formulated in this way can provoke a variety of answers. A canon may be defined as a collection of key works of literature; it can refer to philosophical, political, and religious texts that a particular society has come by consensus to regard as foundational. Today the term *canon* has come to signify authors and works that either used to be included in literature syllabi or textbooks, or those works that repeatedly appear in standard volumes of the history of literature, bibliographies, and literary criticism. The canon has become an issue of much contention in the humanities. The purpose of the debate, interestingly enough, has not been (as one might have assumed) about alterations, but instead about comprehending why the canon is as it is, how it was formulated, and how circumstances can alter and condition its supposedly timeless content. The canon has come to be viewed by some as “the expression of cultural authority created by other people influential in the past”; it has been defined as “the space of cultural conflict” and as “debatable ground, the ground of the battle between various groups, practices and institutions”. This ongoing “hermeneutics of suspicion” can produce one of two consequences: either a new canon is established, or the very notion of a canon is called into question. As Jeremy Hawthorn noted: “When feminist critics started to construct a rival canon or canons, not always as a *replacement* for the ‘official’ canon but also as an *alternative* to it, then this struck at the *claim to universality* that lay behind the idea of a single canon. For, in a traditional sense, if there were several canons then there was no canon.”[1]

My paper is not devoted to this debate; it has been held in numerous books and academic essays. As far as the notion of the canon is concerned I am neither a believer nor a nonbeliever. After having read a great deal about the canon I can call myself an agnostic. I am using this notion as a means to clarify my presentation, for even if the canon, or canons, do not exist, there is still a tendency to produce lists of bestsellers, must-read books, books that changed the world, and so on. The same applies to film as an

intellectual medium. Let me mention just one example, an interesting Web site called Beyond the Canon (<http://beyondthecanon.blogspot.com/>) devoted to the selection of “up to 100 films that [are] believed to have been under-represented by film history” that mean more than “the established, well-exposed classics.” Although the canon of great books proposed by Robert Hutchins in the 1930s as a university program and as a book series may no longer be acceptable and has been altered many times, and while the “Western canon” of Harold Bloom has been studied with suspicion by some as just another pseudoconservative effort to preserve a status quo that in fact no longer exists, there still is and will surely always be a tendency to create canons. It may be worth our while to examine the close relations between canon creation and the process of translation.

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**The literatures of smaller nations have a chance to begin to function in the “universal” canon only if they are published in English translation.**

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In 2006 a London publisher Bounty Books brought out *501 Must-Read Books*. It is a sort of illustrated album. It has many pictures and is divided into nine parts (children books, classic fiction, historical books, diaries, contemporary fiction, literature, science fiction, thrillers, travel writing). Each book is discussed on just one page with a brief description and a large picture, usually a cover or an author’s portrait. While the word *canon* does not appear, the intention is clear: to provide the reader with the list of the 501 most important books of all time, masterpieces or “great books.” Among these 501 tomes there is only one by a Polish author: Witold Gombrowicz. At the end of a brief description of the characteristics of Gombrowicz’s novel *Ferdydurke*, the “highly acclaimed” translation of Danuta Borhardt gets equal attention. This translation was published for the first time in 2000 with an introduction by Susan Sontag. The next edition in 2005 has on the cover a quotation from an enthusiastic review in the *Observer* that describes the novel as a masterpiece. Thus we have here the four necessary elements that I claim make it possible for a work of literature from outside the English-speaking world to become a part of the canon: a good translation into English made by an already well-established translator; a well-known publisher (in this case, Yale University Press); a recommendation from a critic who belongs to influential literary circles (in this case, Susan Sontag); and an enthusiastic review in a major literary journal or magazine (*Observer*).

The year 1994 saw the publication of *The Western Canon* by Harold Bloom, a distinguished literary critic and professor at Yale University. While now in print for almost two decades, *The Western Canon* remains the most famous recent attempt to preserve the traditional notion of a pantheon of world literature. Bloom defended the notion of a universal canon against various counterarguments formulated in the American system of higher education by—as he called them in an 1994 interview for *Newsweek*—“pseudo-Marxists, pseudo-feminists, watery disciples of Foucault and other French theorists.” Bloom defends a traditional understanding of the term *canon* against practically the whole establishment of literary theory. The book assails political and sociological methods of contemporary literary criticism as well as New Historicism, especially when interpreted from a Marxist or radically feminist perspective. Bloom makes every effort to redeem the aesthetic value of literature as determinative, and therefore privileges a reading method based on penetrating the text in search of artistic merit rather than for social, political or moral meaning. His collection consists of twenty-one essays that discuss works by Shakespeare, Cervantes, Chaucer, Montaigne, Molière, Milton, Goethe, Jane Austen, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, Ibsen, Sigmund Freud, Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, and a few other writers in the Western tradition as the greatest of the greatest. In the appendices to his work Bloom mentions a few hundred world literature masterpieces that in his opinion belong to the canon of classic literature.

In spite of the controversy, Bloom’s ruling concept has been taken on within the realm of Anglo-American scholarship. But when one starts analyzing it from outside the English-speaking cultures, his version of the canon becomes even more contentious. If one goes beyond the spheres of those larger cultures, say French or Italian, better known to Anglo-American readers and settles on what from a Bloomian point of view might be called a “local” perspective, the issues continue to get quite intriguing. Let us start with my own point of view, Polish culture. Among hundreds of authors and works from around the world constituting the canon Bloom regards as fundamental, he includes the following:

Bruno Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*  
 Czesław Miłosz, *Selected Poems*  
 Witold Gombrowicz, three novels [sic]

Stanisław Lem, *The Investigation* and *Solaris*  
 Zbigniew Herbert, *Selected Poems*  
 Adam Zagajewski, *Tremor*  
 (translated by Renata Gorczynski)

Most Polish readers would react to this list with astonishment. There is not a single pre-twentieth century author. Not Jan Kochanowski, generally accepted as the greatest Renaissance poet in the Slavic world; not Adam Mickiewicz, Poland’s bard and Pushkin’s great contemporary. Nor are there the two Nobel Prize winning novelists Henryk Sienkiewicz (1905) and Władysław Reymont (1924) mentioned in the list. Moreover, at the very least two great poets of the twentieth century are missing: Tadeusz Różewicz and Wisława Szymborska, the latter another Nobel Prize winner. Here is where any literate Pole’s eyebrows would really go up: if the selection had to be a minuscule six, why include Adam Zagajewski? A good poet, yes, a sophisticated intellectual, unquestionably—but does he really deserve to be one of the six greatest names in twentieth-century Polish literature, never mind representing its total contribution to the canon of world-worthy writing? How could it happen that such a list, at best deserving the adjective “eccentric” is claimed as canonical by a critic allegedly knowledgeable and renowned? I cannot resist expressing my own astonishment in a classically American way: what in the world was he *thinking*? To try to understand, I once approached Adam Czerniawski, a distinguished translator of Polish literature into English and someone who has engaged in polemics with Bloom. I asked him his opinion of why the American critic and scholar named only these six authors. The answer was as follows: he is simply not familiar with our literature; only these few names have reached his ears. Of course, he cannot be blamed for a gap in his knowledge, for the man is not capable of knowing everything; but he can unquestionably be blamed for pretending to know everything. He “squeezed” into the canon almost the whole bulk of nineteenth-century British poetry so by these criteria there should be some place not only for Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Norwid (who are not included) but also Malczewski, Lenartowicz and Asnyk. If Krasiński were German and Prus French, *The Undivine Comedy* and *The Doll* would have been included in each European canon a long time ago. Our nineteenth-century literature was ignored since we did not exist as a state at that time. The political aspects of canonization should never be forgotten.

Czerniawski's answer focuses on several factors decisive for the presence, or rather absence, of Polish literature in Bloom's classical canon. Most crucial is Poland's political weakness, especially in the nineteenth century when it did not exist as an independent state. It turns out that if you are a nation without a state (even a relatively large one, by European standards) you are disregarded in multiple ways. One of these ways concerns the role of literary translation from the "local perspective" into foreign languages with international influence. It is the translation into world languages that establishes the grounds for the emergence of local values in the classical canon. For many years now I have been exploring how the presence of certain Polish writers on European and American literary scenes depends on the work of translators. A translator and an anthologist (who not infrequently are one and the same person) are coauthors of the canon to a degree that has never been sufficiently acknowledged.

I discuss this issue later in more detail, but first let us return to Bloom's list. For Polish readers this set of names and titles is certainly surprising both in terms of quantity and quality. The presence of Czesław Miłosz, a Nobel Prize winner and that of Zbigniew Herbert, a highly acclaimed poet and essayist are not unexpected, but if the list is limited to only three poets why is Wisława Szymborska, another Nobel Prize winner not the third choice, or (were we to prove our own discernment and not rely on the judgments of the Nobel committee) Tadeusz Różewicz? Instead, the choice is Adam Zagajewski—a poet less highly regarded from the local Polish perspective.

The reason for Szymborska's absence seems to be very much in line with our premises about which local works make it into the canon, and why: she received the Nobel Prize in 1996, two years after the first edition of Bloom's book, and outstanding translations of her poetry were published widely in the United States only after the 1996 Nobel Prize. *View with a Grain of Sand* appeared that year; the translation was a collaborative effort by Stanisław Barańczak and his former student Clare Cavanagh. *Miracle Fair* was published in 2001 and was translated by Joanna Trzeciak. In the United Kingdom Szymborska was barely better known. Before the Nobel Prize only Adam Czerniawski had made on Szymborska's behalf the considerable effort that translating poetry demands, and he produced a small selection of her poetry titled *People on a Bridge*. This small book only sparked the interest of a small publishing house, Forest Books. Its American

counterpart was a volume titled *Sounds, Feelings, Thoughts*, translated by Magnus J. Krynski and Robert A. Maguire and released in 1981. In this case the publisher was the well-known and highly regarded Princeton University Press, but this collection of Szymborska's poems likewise remained unnoticed until 1996, when it was republished after the author's Nobel success.

By contrast, the poetry of Adam Zagajewski prospered on the American poetry market thanks to the excellent renderings of an influential translator of Polish and Russian poetry, the very same Clare Cavanagh. She is currently on the faculty of Northwestern University. For many years Zagajewski has been a visiting professor at American universities, first at the University of Houston, later at the University of Chicago where he now holds a position on the Committee on Social Thought. Editions of Zagajewski's poetry and essays have consistently been available in mainstream American bookstores, while his new poems have often made their debut in either *The New Yorker* or *The New York Review of Books*. His most spectacular American success was thus described in *Newsweek Magazine* on September 5, 2011:

A week after the collapse of the Twin Towers *The New Yorker* ran Polish poet Adam Zagajewski's "Try to Praise the Mutilated World" on the final page of its special 9/11 issue. Written a year and a half before the attacks, the poem nevertheless quickly became the most memorable verse statement on the tragedy, and arguably the best-known poem of the last 10 years. A critic writing in *The New York Times Book Review* in December 2001 subtly mocked its appeal, "as if America were entering the nightmare of history for the first time and only a Polish poet could show us the way."

Let me quote "the best-known poem of the last 10 years" originally published in English by *The New Yorker* on September 24, 2001:

Try to praise the mutilated world.  
Remember June's long days,  
and wild strawberries, drops of wine, the dew.  
The nettles that methodically overgrew  
the abandoned homesteads of exiles.  
You must praise the mutilated world.  
You watched the stylish yachts and ships;  
one of them had a long trip ahead of it,  
while salty oblivion awaited others.  
You've seen the refugees heading nowhere,  
you've heard the executioners sing joyfully.  
You should praise the mutilated world.  
Remember the moments when we were together

in a white room and the curtain fluttered.  
 Return in thought to the concert where music flared.  
 You gathered acorns in the park in autumn  
 and leaves eddied over the earth's scars.  
 Praise the mutilated world  
 and the gray feather a thrush lost,  
 and the gentle light that strays and vanishes  
 and returns.

One more example—a poem written by Wisława Szymborska after 9/11, titled “Photograph from September 11” and translated by Clare Cavanagh and Stanisław Barańczak:

They jumped from the burning floors—  
 one, two, a few more,  
 higher, lower.

The photograph halted them in life,  
 and now keeps them  
 above the earth toward the earth.

Each is still complete,  
 with a particular face  
 and blood well hidden.

There's enough time  
 for hair to come loose,  
 for keys and coins  
 to fall from pockets.

They're still within the air's reach,  
 within the compass of places  
 that have just now opened.

I can do only two things for them—  
 describe this flight  
 and not add a last line.

I submit the following for your consideration: today “local” (national) literatures begin to function in the “universal” canon only if they are published in English translation. I have attempted to suggest briefly what could easily be documented at length, namely the extent to which the presence of Polish writers on the American and European markets depends on who gets translated, on what and how well, and finally, on just when. The role of translators and anthologists as coauthors should not be underestimated. Compose a list of the four greatest contemporary Polish poets published in English and you will find the list is different depending on which side of the ocean it was created. In the United Kingdom Miłosz, Szymborska and Herbert would be joined by Tadeusz Różewicz; in the United States

Różewicz, who is hardly known in influential literary circles, would be replaced by Zagajewski (this might change since Norton published an anthology of Różewicz's poetry in 2011). The reason for this “replacement” is that in Britain Różewicz has Adam Czerniawski, an excellent British translator, as his champion, but Czerniawski's translations, alas, are hardly available in the United States. Adam Zagajewski, by contrast, is quite well known in American academic circles, well liked because of his regular presence on American campuses and —thanks to his excellent American translator— well represented in popular but highbrow American literary journals and magazines.

These issues became all too clear to me in 1999 when a special double edition of *The Chicago Review* devoted to “New Polish Writing” was being prepared. As a professor of Polish literature at the University of Chicago I was one of the consultants and coauthors. The idea was to present works of all genres written over the previous decade by writers of all generations. But the editor, Bill Martin (then a graduate student at Chicago, now a professor at Colgate University in New York) made a fateful revision to the plan. He decided to include poems from Polish poets who were already considered “classical” or “canonical” that represented their “greatest” work. I then realized that among the four poets he wanted to include there was no room for Tadeusz Różewicz. Instead, together with the two Nobel winners Miłosz and Szymborska, and the indisputable Herbert (who by that time also had an influential translator and critic, Stanisław Barańczak, championing him in English), Martin decided to include Adam Zagajewski. A compromise was finally reached and both Różewicz and Zagajewski appeared in the list of contents, but my astonishment remained. How could he not plan to include Różewicz? I have now supplied you with my then-conclusion, a verdict that I have seen reinforced since. The answer is, it is all about translation.

The author of an anthology is inevitably at least a canon contributor, and if he has the status of a Harold Bloom he is a canon creator as well. If, as in this case, an anthology of recent Polish literature published in the United States becomes the prime source of knowledge about this literature with no alternative available, it inevitably becomes “canonical.” We can criticize such an anthology, just like we criticize Norton or Oxford anthologies of classical British or American literatures: they impose an academic canon of



fundamental works of literature. Although that issue of *The Chicago Review* had different goals and ambitions than a Norton anthology, it ended up fulfilling a similar role when no other anthologies of contemporary Polish literature were available. When there are no other opportunities to learn about recent Polish writing, what was intended to be an overview turns canonical and definitive. You will appreciate how mixed my feelings were a few years later when I saw the collection on a required reading list at one of the top Slavic departments in America.

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**The author of an anthology is inevitably at least a canon contributor, and if he has the status of a Harold Bloom he is a canon creator as well.**

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The aspiration of the *Review*'s editors was, of course, completely different: the idea was to present only newly prepared translations of works of writers of all generations, published in Polish between 1989 and 1999 and unavailable in the United States. This was not supposed to be a representative presentation of new Polish literature, and certainly not a judgment about the best of the best. For starters, there were numerous limitations due to the lack of qualified translators and to copyright issues. The ultimate selection was a subjective amalgam of a series of choices made by the editor and his advisors, including myself. Let me give just one example: a large selection by a young female writer, Natasza Goerke, was included because the editor of the anthology was her translator and admired her work. She has never been popular in Poland among critics and readers, yet based on the *Chicago Review* Natasza Goerke looks like a canonical writer.

In his introduction the editor of the anthology wrote:

Although I had some naive hopes of being “comprehensive” at the beginning of this project, circumstances and my own increasing familiarity with the wealth of work out there have made it clear that even with over seventy-five contributors contained in a whopping four hundred pages, this collection is far from complete. There are many writers I would have liked to include here but was unable to for the usual reasons of time, space, and organizational fray; and many important names have been left out due to the somewhat arbitrary restriction of including only work written or published since 1989. Nevertheless, this special issue is “the most comprehensive” of any collection of contemporary Polish writing to date; and whether or not that criterion in itself has validity, we hope

this issue will inspire readers and publishers to further acquaintances with Polish literature and culture.

This editor was conscientious enough to point out the obvious limitations of time, space, availability of translators explicitly, but such caveats tend to get overlooked when the anthology represents what is available of Polish literature in English and is included on college reading lists. It soon becomes a “canonical” work.

As I come to a close, the standard phrase *in summary* takes on a certain irony as I assert that anthologies of translations are the main sources in the creating and shaping the literary canons. As Armin Paul Frank has observed, “Translation anthologies are. . . indispensable in the study of translation and literary culture. . . [and they] were, until quite recently, part of a ‘shadow culture’ over-looked, by and large, by cultural critics, literary historians, and translation scholars alike.” A translation anthology (including selections of poems of one poet translated to another language) is “one of the most enlightening and memorable ways of transferring culture internationally.” The translator/anthologist has great power to impose on the uninitiated his/her canon of foreign literature. However, s/he needs to be supported by other authorities—publishers, critics, and public figures active in media and cultural life. The combined efforts and judgments of the translator, the publisher, and the literary critic are each crucial for a translation to achieve success.

Let me give you one more Polish example of how a little-known work can become successful abroad if such a combination exists, but can also be a failure if a translation is good yet external support of this kind is lacking. *Laments*, a series of poems written by the Polish Renaissance author Jan Kochanowski, is now considered to be a masterpiece of world literature. It was translated into English by Adam Czerniawski; the translation was published in 1996 by a Polish university press. This publication went almost unnoticed in English-speaking countries. The revised version published in 2001 by a small academic publisher in Oxford received a few reviews in literary journals. Like the first edition published in Poland, it did not have a chance for a wider reception, but this second time for a very different reason: already in 1995 both Faber and Faber in London, and Farrar, Straus and Giroux in New York had published the *Laments* translated by Seamus Heaney, a Nobel Prize winning poet, and by Stanisław Barańczak, a poet and professor at Harvard University. The authority and prestige of the publishing

houses and translators themselves, the combination consisting of four great “brand names” (Faber and Faber; Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Harvard; Nobel) meant that even the Oxford edition of Czerniawski’s translation, by many experts considered to be better than the work of Barańczak and Heaney, passed almost unnoticed, often barely mentioned in the reviews of the “Harvard-Nobel” team. Under such circumstances, two other translations published later by small Polish publishers and translated by Professor Michael Mikoś of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and by a young Irish translator, Barry Keane, had no chance to be noticed.

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**The combined efforts and judgments of the translator, the publisher, and the literary critic are each crucial for a translation to achieve success.**

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Without the four factors of an influential translator, well-known publisher, the recommendation of a respected public intellectual, and enthusiastic reviews in prestigious journals and magazines, even the greatest masterpieces remain unknown in the mainstream market, the way Szyborska’s poems were until 1996, or Kochanowski was for centuries, or as Różewicz remains until this very day. Together with Miłosz—who, remember, had been living in California for much of his life prior to the Nobel, a professor at a prestigious American university—the best known Polish poet is the University of Chicago’s Adam Zagajewski. Rumors have circulated for many years that he has been a serious candidate for a Nobel Prize, especially in 2010 and 2011, based on one of the most reliable sources of information in these matters, the bookmakers’ services (*serwisy bukmacherskie*). Zagajewski has not received the prize yet, but if he ever does we will have a better appreciation of how it came to pass. Professor Clare Cavanagh, his translator into English, should share this success with him. ▲

This lecture was delivered at Cleveland State University on 31 January 2012.

#### NOTES

[1] Jeremy Hawthorn, “Canon,” in Hawthorn, *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (London: Edward Arnold 1922, 26 (Hawthorn’s italics); also Paul Lauter, *Canons and Contexts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Herbert Lindenberger, *The History in Literature: On Value, Genre, Institutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Andrea Lanoux, *Od narodu do kanonu. Powstawania kanonów polskiego i rosyjskiego romantyzmu w latach 1815-1865* (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2003).

## Imperiological Studies

### A Polish Perspective

By **Andrzej Nowak**. Kraków: Societas Vistulana ([www.vistulana.pl](http://www.vistulana.pl)), 2011. 239 pages. Bibliography. ISBN 978-83-61033-46-2. Hardcover.

#### Margaret Peacock

Since the partitions of the late eighteenth century, the Polish population has struggled to understand the nature and legacy of empire. In particular, they have wrestled with the pivotal role that Polish perceptions of victimhood have played in shaping national identity. Andrzej Nowak has undertaken a difficult project attempting to chronicle how Polish victimhood has played both a constitutive and a destructive role in shaping Polish identity. He has endeavored to provide a more nuanced understanding of the negotiations of power that have continued over the centuries between the centralizing Russian/Soviet state and those countries that have occupied the vital margins of the empire. In so doing, he has opened the doors for further exploration in the burgeoning field of Imperiology.

*Imperiological Studies* offers a set of loosely connected chapters that deal with a number of pressing questions in the history of Russo-Polish relations. Little is given in the way of an over-arching argument in the book’s four-page introduction. Instead, the reader is asked to approach each chapter as a self-contained essay. The chapters cover a wide range of topics, some of which are more successful than others. The first chapter, for instance, begins with a lengthy and often seemingly tangential exposition on Euripides’ story on Iphigenia in Tauris. Professor Nowak argues that this ancient narrative can serve as a blueprint for understanding the nature of the Russian imperial relationship with Poland and provides an explanation for what he calls an “anthropology of violence” that has historically shaped Russia’s interactions with its neighbors.

Subsequent chapters examine how Russian elites involved in the imperial project in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries took the lessons that they learned from their work in the western parts of the empire and applied them to the south, and vice versa. He chronicles how Russia had developed an overarching imperial style by the nineteenth century that included turning

local leaders into subordinates of Russian governors and stirring up local insubordination and internal hostilities. In one of the stronger chapters of the book Nowak chronicles the gradual disenfranchisement of Polish elites on the periphery in the 1830s, or in the years surrounding the November Rising, and the repressive measures taken by the tsarist state in the Rising's wake. He then traces the increasing radicalization of these counter-elites on the margins of the empire and argues that they played a vital role in the politicization of the center that would lead eventually to revolution in 1917. In later chapters, Nowak contrasts the idealism of nineteenth-century Polish elites with their Russian counterparts. He argues that the rise of the Russian empire was closely tied to the survival and notoriety of the Russian intelligentsia. Nowak contends that far from maintaining an antagonistic relationship with the tsarist state, the intelligentsia and the Empire frequently found common cause in their shared pursuit of a mythical and uniquely Russian destiny that was rooted in a paternalistic expansionism and widespread xenophobia.

The second part of Nowak's work examines the dual role that Poland has historically played first as a gateway of European culture for Eastern Slavs and second as a "bulwark of Christian Europe" against the "barbarous" East (138). Nowak presents Polish political culture as one devoted to the "tenet of liberty" (142) and supported by the elites of the Commonwealth who unlike their Russian counterparts fought for "freedom against tyranny" (142). Nowak largely refutes contemporary claims of any historical existence of an aggressive Polish foreign policy and argues instead that Commonwealth leaders and elites have historically fought for what he calls a "nationalist international" that would unite subject populations against the despotic monarchs of Central and Eastern Europe. Despite the effective elimination of these elites through the nineteenth century, Nowak chronicles the resurgence of Polish identity through the support of the Catholic Church.

Unfortunately, Nowak's book falls short in a number of crucial ways that mire its potential contribution to the field. First (and most blatantly), given Nowak's record of publication and scholarship, one can only assume that the large number of errors in writing, grammar, and style that can be found on almost every page of this book are attributable to its translation and poor editing. For instance, in his discussion of how the leaders of the Bar Confederation Rising were forgotten

to history, he states, "This was the way how the history of the Confederation was treated—the history of Poland shadowed by Russian domination, where important comparative aspects, elements of significant context might be overlooked" (42). Such cumbersome language pervades the book. Repeatedly, observations that might otherwise have been prescient are lost in basic grammatical errors, fragmented sentences, and strings of phrases and clauses that are incongruous and confusing.

The book also suffers from a lack of overall cohesion, a tendency to digress from the topic at hand, and a meandering sense of organization. Nowak constantly switches from the third to first-person voice, which suggests that this book is more of an opinion piece than a work of historical scholarship. This problem is made more pronounced by Nowak's heavy reliance on secondary sources and a concomitant dearth of archival research. Most problematic, however, is the sense that while Nowak argues on the surface that he is interested in complicating the dominant narrative of victimhood that has defined Polish identity, he nonetheless seems to be supporting that narrative in explicit ways. The most obvious example is the fourth chapter devoted to Edward Hallet Carr's and Richard Pipes' 1950s works on the Russian Revolution. Aside from the fact that this comparison is largely incongruous with the rest of the book, Nowak also valorizes Pipes' interpretation of the Soviet Union as an aggressive and ideological empire. He fails to acknowledge the significant scholarship that has been done since 1954 by historians like Wojtech Mastny, Vladislav Zubok, and Constantine Pleshakov who, unlike Pipes, have had access to archives and have established a far more nuanced understanding of Soviet foreign policy as also motivated by defensive insecurities.

Nowak is at his best when he deals closely with historical figures and movements like Adam Czartoryski and Józef Piłsudski. He also provides a sound analysis of how the socio-cultural divides that we see in Polish society today are rooted in the question of whether or not it still makes sense for Poland to derive its sense of national identity from its perceived victimhood. Nowak's work has in many ways been lost in translation. It is this reader's hope that the book holds together more effectively in its original format. ▲



## An Invisible Rope Portraits of Czesław Miłosz

Edited by Cynthia L. Haven. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press ([www.ohioswallow.com](http://www.ohioswallow.com)), 2011. 280 pages. ISBN 978-0-8040-1155-4. Paper.

**Lisa D. Chavez**

When Czesław Miłosz died in 2004, the world lost one of our great poets. What remains are his words and, in this engaging collection of essays, we have the words of those who knew Miłosz. The authors include friends, colleagues, students, and translators, and the book follows a roughly chronological order, beginning with those who knew Miłosz earliest, such as Elizabeth Kridl Valkeneir—her essay begins with the line “I first knew Czesław Miłosz when I was a child before World War II” in Wilno (10), and progressing toward the final interview with Robert Hass. These thirty-two essays, collected and edited by Cynthia L. Haven, range from the very short which function almost as summaries of his life (“The Exile Who Rejected Pathos”), to anecdotes, to memoirs. There is also an interview conducted by the editor with former U. S. Poet Laureate Hass about his encounters with Miłosz.

One of the strengths of this collection is that the book is honest—it is not a tribute to Czesław Miłosz the Nobel Laureate with writers gushing over the poet in glowing terms, but more a collection of portraits that capture the true man: brilliant, difficult, warm, complex. Daniel Halpern says in his very brief anecdote “Miłosz at Chez Panisse” that Miłosz was “awesome and scary, at times sweet and uncle-ish, affable, and . . . irritable, a man ready to negate the patch of earth you stood on” (164).

Most of the essays are personal memories of Miłosz, and some of the most delightful are from those who knew him longest. I found these earlier essays the most compelling: in them, we glimpse the poet in his early years. In the essay “An Epistolary Friendship,” George Gömöri writes that the great poet’s Berkeley lectures were “very entertaining, especially when he discussed contemporaries, people whom he had known personally” (24). There is something of that quality in this book which is akin to eavesdropping on social

gathering of Czesław Miłosz and his friends reminiscing over good food and drink. Some of the details in the essays are intriguing, such as Marek Skwarnicki’s story about receiving a lost package sent by Miłosz in 1964. The gift, which included poems and sketches, did not reach Skwarnicki until 2002 when Miłosz handed it over in person in Kraków. This essay in particular, titled “Half a Century with Miłosz,” is a beautiful testament to a long friendship and was one of my favorites in the book. “Love at Last Sight” by Richard Lourie, a translator of Miłosz’s work, is another tale of a long friendship, beginning rather inauspiciously with Lourie as a student whose work is singled out in class, and not positively. The essay ends years later in Kraków, just two years before the poet’s death. It is a lovely essay, full of warmth and humor.

Many of these early essays seem more substantial than some of the middle ones, but perhaps that is just this reader’s taste. Some of the shorter essays, gossipy and full of the intrigues of academia and publishing, seemed to be more about the authors of the essays than about Miłosz, and I found these less compelling. A memorable later piece is Judith Tannenbaum’s “Miłosz at San Quentin,” a memoir about the Nobel Laureate’s visit to her creative writing class in the prison. This essay is more than an anecdote, it is a beautifully written memoir that includes Miłosz and ponders the big questions the poet himself was also concerned with as he talks to the inmates about the nature of good and evil.

Overall, *An Invisible Rope* is a very strong collection, and what it gives a reader is a sense of the man, more than of his work, though a few writers, like Seamus Heaney and Joanna Zach, do focus beautifully on poetry. Still, this is not meant to be a collection about Miłosz’s poetry per se; this is a collection of remembrances about the man himself, and, it is an eminently readable book. While it would be useful for students of poetry, I could see the collection appealing to anyone with an interest in the nature of art and genius. In his essay “In Gratitude for All the Gifts,” Seamus Heaney notes that “with Miłosz gone, the world has lost a credible witness to this immemorial belief in the saving power of poetry.” But along with the power of Miłosz’s own words, we have this collection, and these fragments of memory create a captivating and human portrait of the poet and his life. ▲

## MORE BOOKS

*Prawda historyczna a prawda polityczna w badaniach naukowych. Ludobójstwo na Kresach południowo-wschodniej Polski w latach 1939–1946* (Historical vs. political truth in scholarly research: Genocide in Poland's eastern borderlands, 1939–1946). **Edited by Bogusław Paż.** Wrocław: University of Wrocław Press, 2011. 448 pages. Name, Place, and Subject Indices. ISBN 978-83-229-3185-1. Paper. In Polish, with Foreword, Table of Contents, and summaries of chapters in English.

The majority of the articles in this collection deal with the topic described in the book's title; some are general epistemological articles, still others deal with minorities killing minorities, such as the minigenocide of Polish Armenians in the town of Kutu in Ukraine. An article by Romuald Niedzielko deals with those heroic Ukrainians who tried to shield their Polish neighbors from the detachments of Ukrainians who, often in collaboration with Germans, engaged in particularly cruel murders of Polish women, children, and men. The book is a hard read; in the words of Zofia Nałkowska (pronounced in the context of another genocide), "human beings prepared this fate for other human beings." The editor, whose family came from Ukraine and who together with other Polish survivors escaped to the city of Wrocław (ceded to Poland by the Great Powers after the Second World War), provides a foreword and an emotional dedication as follows: "I dedicate this volume to Colonel Jan Niewiński, a member of the Borderlands Self-defense in the town of Rybcza; to other defenders of the Polish Borderlands; and to the nearly two hundred thousand Poles murdered so cruelly by the OUN-UPA [Ukrainian Revolutionary Army] and SS 'Galizien' — those who fell undefended by a human hand or by human conscience."

From the editor's foreword it is clear that the goal of the book is not to incite revenge, but rather to fulfill a moral obligation to those who perished. The fact remains that Volhynia (now in northwestern Ukraine) had its Polish population thoroughly wiped out not by Russians or Germans, but by Ukrainians. Polish villages and towns were destroyed, and death came by burning people alive or beating them to death. According to the 1939 census, Volhynia was inhabited by 1.4 million Ukrainians and 346,000 Poles; the estimates of how many were killed range from under 100,000 to under 200,000. The reason for the lack of

more exact accounting was the war conditions and German and Soviet occupation of that territory until 1991.

It is to be hoped that books like these will transform personal and painful memories into historical memory, and that these past horrors will be viewed with due detachment by Poles and Ukrainians alike. Good neighborly relations between Poland and Ukraine are important and an awareness of this fact should hasten the transformation of memories.

*Angielsko-polskie związki literackie. Szkice o przekładzie artystycznym* [English-Polish literary relations: Sketches about literary translation], **by Piotr Wilczek.** Studia o przekładzie pod redakcją Piotra Fasta, no. 32. Katowice: Wyd. Naukowe "Śląsk," 2011. 153 pages. ISBN 978-83-7164-695-9. Paper. In Polish. Summary in English.

A collection of very interesting reflections on translations of Polish poetry into English from Kochanowski to Miłosz on the one hand, and from John Donne to Byron on the other.

*Zwycięzca po przejściach: zebrane eseje i szkice, V* [The winner after his experiences: Collected essays and texts, V], **by Zdzisław Krasnodębski.** Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej ([www.omp.org.pl](http://www.omp.org.pl)), 2012. 318 pages. Index. ISBN 978-83-62628-29-3. Paper. In Polish.

A collection of essays dealing mostly with German-Polish relations in the twenty-first century. Their author, a distinguished sociologist and professor of sociology at the University of Bremen, shows by means of numerous examples that in recent years, Germany has begun to tense its muscles vis-à-vis its weaker eastern neighbor. The conclusion seems to be that the period of German expiation for crimes committed during the Second World War is over, and a new and assertive Germany has been born. Many of these essays had previously been published in *Rzeczpospolita* and other leading Polish periodicals.

*Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XX I XXI wieku, 2<sup>nd</sup> vol.* [Migration narratives in Polish literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries], **edited by Hanna Gosk.** Kraków: Universitas ([www.universitas.com/pl](http://www.universitas.com/pl)), 2012. 402 pages. Index. ISBN 978-83-1682-6. Paper. In Polish.

Essays on Polish literature during the period of Soviet occupation.



## One step forward and two steps backward at the Institute of National Remembrance?

**Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska**

In January 2012 I wrote a letter to Professor Andrzej Paczkowski, until recently head of the Institute of National Remembrance's Board of Directors, expressing my concern about discontinuation of the *IPN Bulletin*, a bimonthly publication of the Institute dedicated to the events of recent Polish history suppressed or distorted under communist rule. Professor Paczkowski answered me in a friendly way and assured me that members of the board hold a positive view of the new periodical intended to replace the *Bulletin*.

In April 2012 the new periodical replacing the discontinued *Bulletin*, *Pamięć.pl*, appeared in print. Its editor, Mr. Andrzej Brzozowski, announced in the introduction that the periodical intends to "respond to the challenges and needs of modernity." Since I was the last chair of the now-liquidated IPN College, I feel obligated to make public my impressions concerning this periodical.

Let us start with the "Calendar of Events" commemorating significant events in the month of April over the last several decades. In the first issue of *Pamięć.pl* the following events have been commemorated: Zdzisław Najder's assumption of directorship of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe in 1982, the signing of the Polish-Soviet agreement on the erection of the "Palace of Culture" modeled on Soviet architecture in 1952, the first broadcast of the underground radio "Solidarity" in 1982, the campaign against private shops and private trade launched in Soviet-occupied Poland in 1947, the forced relocation of Ukrainians from southeast Poland into the previously German northeast Poland in 1947, and the beginning of transports of Polish prisoners of war to their execution near Katyń in 1940. This last event is editorialized as follows: "Today one often hears that the elites of the Second Republic perished at Katyń." *One often hears?* Whose point of view does the editor of this publication represent? There is no mention of Janusz Kurtyka, director of the Institute of National

Remembrance who perished together with ninety-five others in a plane crash near Smolensk in April 2010. He was on his way to Katyń to honor its victims on the seventieth anniversary of their murder.

The first issue of *Pamięć.pl* does have an article on Katyn titled "The Katyn Crime," and its proclaimed goal is historical education. The article begins with the following sentence: "For a good part of Polish society the word *Katyń* is associated with martyrological boredom." Documentation for this opinion is provided by a quote from an anonymous Web commentator who allegedly stated that "if my child brought a Katyń album from school, I would raise hell with the school superintendent!" The address of the commentator's entry is not given. I have never heard of opinion polls confirming this kind of comment even though, as a sociologist, I am familiar with many public opinion studies concerning Katyń. It appears that the editors of *Pamięć.pl* are trying to create new facts by inserting into an authoritative publication comments from anonymous sources. A propaganda technique of quoting "Internet facts" from an unknown source seems to be at work here. The new periodical also features a conversation with Professor Paczkowski about IPN and what the interviewer calls "memory traps." He states that "everyone" practices the art of removing certain people and events from history; the result is that they cease to matter to historians. If so, one wonders whether the deafening silence regarding the fate of the late Janusz Kurtyka falls under the category of such removal?

Professor Marcin Kula's article "March 1968 as a Subject of Sociological Analysis" also elicits doubts. It so happens that in March 1968 I was an archeology student at Warsaw University and participated in the events to which Professor Kula refers. On March 8, 1968, I was present at University Square on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street; I was present in meetings of the Student Strike Committee and faced the police on Marszałkowska Street when students of Warsaw Polytechnic marched toward Warsaw University. I therefore approached Professor Kula's article with great anticipation. Professor Kula begins by announcing that the events of March 1968 took place "on several levels". According to him, March was the month of "ethnic hatred, specially of anti-Semitism; it was a period when one set of communist cadres was replaced by another; it represented a shift toward legitimizing a system that moved from socialist to nationalist ever so slightly." It was also "an injection

of chauvinism, a significant point in the history of Polish emigration, a period when communism turned against the intelligentsia, a period when democratic evolution (?!?)—*BFR*) of the communist system was stopped.” Finally, it was “a consecutive chapter in the history of the world student movement.”

Professor Kula recounts many specific stories. He offers stories about baby carriages and diapers, imprisonment of protesters and fights between police and students in Poland’s larger cities, anti-Semitic slogans coming from the communist party apparatchiks that were, he states, “approvingly met by Polish society,” and the ensuing emigration of persons of Jewish background. Professor Kula remembers by name party leader Mieczysław Moczar, the Soviet “scientist” Trofim Lysenko, Marxist indoctrinator Adam Schaff [portrayed by Czesław Miłosz in *The Captive Mind, Ed.*], party leader Władysław Gomułka, the so-called revisionist Marxism, Marxist propaganda and society’s jokes about it, as well as the so-called *volks-dozents* (my recollection is that they were called “March dozents”). He is undoubtedly correct when he mocks the communist party accusation that “a few youths from communist families of Jewish background brought out thousands of young men and women into the streets,” but he does not say a word about what really brought thousands of youths into the streets: he says nothing about January 30, 1968, when the performance of Adam Mickiewicz’s *The Forefathers’ Eve* [written in 1834! *Ed.*] was closed in the National Theater because it contained lines that could be conceived as anti-Russian. He says nothing about demonstrations of students from Warsaw University and the College for Theater Performance who made the following demands: “We want to hear Mickiewicz’s truthful words, we want freedom without censorship, and we want our theaters open.” Professor Kula conceals the fact that on March 8, 1968, a student demonstration was called in defense of two fellow students expelled from Warsaw University: Adam Michnik and Henryk Szlejfer, both of whom came from Jewish and Marxist families and later became well known figures in Polish political life. The March 8 protest was the beginning of so-called March 1968 events in which one group in the communist party tried to push another group away from power. Without these crucial facts to which not only I but also other participants can testify, an analysis of what happened in Poland in March 1968 is neither trustworthy nor correct, unless the goal is to remove certain historical facts from memory, a goal that would be in clear

conflict with the Institute of National Remembrance’s charge. It is this Institute that Professor Kula’s article represents. Δ

This article was originally published in Polish as “Pułapki pamięci,” *Gość Niedzielny*, 17 May 2012.

Translated by permission.

## Responsibility and bad taste

German journalist teaches Poles tolerance

Michał Karnowski

Quite a few German journalists take for granted the flattering words directed at them by fellow journalists from *Gazeta Wyborcza* [Poland’s leftist daily, *Ed.*]. Some of them were mightily surprised when they discovered that there are journalists in Poland who are not lying prostrate before them in spite of all the money poured into Poland by Germans, all the grants and fellowships meant to educate the locals. After all this, is it possible that not everyone has been properly trained? Alas.

Ms. Gabriele Lesser, a journalist representing, among others, *Berliner Tageszeitung* (the paper that used to vulgarly mock the late President Kaczyński), was truly irritated when she encountered in *Uważam rze* [a rightist Polish weekly, *Ed.*] an article by Sławomir Sieradzki about German correspondents in Poland and their manner of reporting. Appearing live on Polsat News, Ms. Lesser announced that she felt threatened by the article. In other words, when she expresses her opinions about Poles she merely practices freedom of speech, but when she herself is evaluated a coup against democracy is launched. Nasty Polish journalists! But Ms. Lesser overcame her fears and, during the same Polsat show, volunteered to explain to Poles the proper meaning of democracy and tolerance. She advised Poles to see themselves in the now-infamous BBC show [where a British sportscaster tried to discourage British football fans from going to Poland for EURO 2012 by saying that they might return in coffins, *Ed.*]. Ms. Lesser agreed with this view. Poland is a dangerous place for football fans, almost a death zone!

Incidentally, the British are in an awkward position for teaching others how to behave at football stadiums. The Manchester fans and their conduct have undermined Albion’s right to instruct others on how to behave in a civilized fashion at sports events. But even

British sportscasters have more of a claim on pontificating on stadium manners than German journalists pontificating on the issue of tolerance. If I may cite Jacek Kaczmarski [singer and composer, *Ed.*], “There are still people here who wake up during the night screaming.” We Poles saw three of our generations wasted because of German aggression in 1939. We saw our educated classes wiped out. I wish we could easily remove from our collective memory the unprecedented bestiality and aggression directed at us by the *Herrensvolk*. We are still coping with the corruption and demoralization that inevitably take root in a brutalized nation. We are still shouldering—and will shoulder for a long time—material losses that foreign occupation has caused. Should not a nation that three generations ago built its totalitarian system so perfectly learn a bit of humility? Yes, Germans are now engaged in building a perfectly democratic system, but shouldn’t humility be a part of their historical memory and of that system? Perhaps Germans will soon begin to teach us how to combat the kind of anti-Semitism that leads to extermination camps for millions.

Speaking of which, in recent years Germans have become all too willing to share the responsibility for the Holocaust with the rest of Europe. During her interview Ms. Lesser waved a periodical published by a society of professional antiracists, *Nigdy więcej*, demanding that Polish authorities take stringent measures against the alleged cases of racism described therein. The fact that a number of these cases were shown to have been staged is of no interest to Ms. Lesser. She only listens to one side; the other side is by definition racist. Ms. Lesser’s performance seems to have one goal: present Poles as being somewhere at the humanoid level and requiring the magnificent German journalists to teach them what tolerance really means.

I am far from maintaining that as a community we Poles are free of blemish, or that as individuals we do not sin, but with all our sins and blemishes we have avoided the totalitarian temptation in the twentieth century. Our streets are not as clean as German streets and our citizens are not as law-abiding as German citizens, but our political conscience is clean. We do not have to castrate our family histories and rewrite national history to show that, in fact, we were a brave anti-Nazi nation. By and large, the Polish educated classes had the courage to oppose both German and Soviet totalitarianism—oppose it not only intellectually but also physically. They did not fall for a primitive

mythology and they maintained their Christian identity. The Polish educated classes turned out to be wiser than their counterparts in Germany. Perhaps they continue to be wiser?

Therefore, even though we Poles have many shortcomings, Ms. Lesser ought to take advantage of the occasion to keep silent and abstain from teaching tolerance of one’s neighbor to Poles, especially since her comments on Polsat, deeply steeped in tactless and aggressive *Hochmut*, have the potential of harming Polish-German cooperation. Δ

This article originally appeared in the news portal <wpolityce.pl> on 29 May 2012. Translated by permission.

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Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) competes with Juliusz Słowacki, Cyprian Norwid, and Zygmunt Krasiński for the title of the greatest poet of Polish Romanticism.

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## Pan Tadeusz

by

Adam Mickiewicz

(continued from the April 2012 issue)

### Book Nine

### The Battle

*Argument:*

*On the perils resulting from disorderly encampment. Unexpected relief. The sorry plight of the nobility. The almsman's visit, a portent of rescue. Major Plut's excessive gallantry brings down a storm on his head. A pistol shot, the signal for battle. Baptist's exploits, Matthias' exploits and perils. Watering Can's ambush saves the Manor. Cavalry reinforcements, assault on the infantry. Tadeusz's feats of valor. The leaders' duel cut short by an act of treachery. The Chief Steward tips the balance of the battle by a decisive maneuver. Gerwazy's bloody exploits. The Chamberlain, a magnanimous victor.*

Translated by Christopher A. Zakrzewski

So soundly did the nobility sleep that neither the light of the lanterns nor an incursion of several dozen men roused them from their slumber. The intruders pounced on them even as the harvestman spider drops from the wall on a drowsy fly: scarcely has the fly time to emit a buzz when the grim assassin envelops it in its long legs and throttles the life out of it. The nobility slept more soundly than any fly; no one so much as peeped. All lay as dead, though strong hands seized and turned them bodily like sheaves for the binding.

Only Matthias Watering Can who could hold his liquor better than any guest in the district (he was capable of draining two firkins of linden mead before beginning to sway on his feet or slur his speech)—only Matthias, though he had feasted long and slept soundly, showed any sign of life. He opened one eye. Horrors! What a sight! Two frightful faces, each sporting a pair of whiskers, leaned directly over him. He could feel their breath on his cheeks, feel their long whiskers brushing his lips. Two pairs of hands whirred like wings over his body. Panic-stricken, he tried to bless himself, but he found his right hand pinioned to his side. He tried to move his left arm. Alas! The phantoms had swathed him up like a newborn babe. More frightened than ever, he shut his eyes and lay

still, holding his breath. His blood ran cold; you would have sworn he was dead.

But Baptist sprang up to defend himself. Too late! They had constrained him by his own belt. Nothing daunted, he curled himself into a ball and flipped onto his feet with such force as to come crashing down on the breasts of his sleeping companions. Rolling over their heads, he began to toss about like a pike on a sandy shore, all the while roaring like a bear, for he had a lusty pair of lungs.

“Treachery!” he bellowed. Instantly the awakened throng picked up the refrain, “Treachery! Assault! Treachery!”

Their cries of alarm echoed all the way to the hall of mirrors where the Count, the Warden, and the jockeys slept. Gerwazy awoke and tried to break free; but he was bound and stretched upon his rapier. Looking up, he saw by the window a band of armed men clad in green uniforms and short black shakos. One of them, girt with a sash, was directing the ruffians with the point of his sword. “Bind them! Bind them!” he whispered. On the floor all around, the jockeys lay trussed up like sheep. The Count was sitting up, unbound but disarmed. Two rascals with gleaming bayonets stood over him. Gerwazy recognized them at once. Muscovites!

But the Warden was no stranger to such straits. Many a time had he found himself bound hand and foot and always he had managed to set himself free. Being uncommonly strong and resourceful, he had ways of bursting his bonds; and so, contriving to save himself, he shut his eyes and pretended to sleep, all the while stretching his arms and legs by degrees. He breathed in, and shrank his belly and chest to smallest size. Like a molting snake drawing its head and tail into itself, he proceeded to tense and relax his body in rhythmic succession. Thus did Gerwazy the long become short and stout. The bonds began to stretch and even to creak. But no use; they refused to snap. Dismayed and ashamed, he turned over, buried his face in the ground and, shutting his eyes, lay still as a log.

A battery of drums rolled, slowly at first, then steadily faster and with greater insistence. At this signal the Muscovite officer left the Count and his jockeys confined under guard in the great hall. The rest of the nobility he led under escort to the manor house where another company of yagers stood waiting. To no avail did Baptist sulk and squirm.

The staff officers were stationed in the courtyard. Among them was a large throng of armed noblemen, including the Podhajskis, Birbaszes, Hreczechas, and Biergels, all friends and kinsmen of the Judge. They had

received word of the raid and come to his aid; the more willingly as they had long had a bone to pick with the men of Dobrzyn.

Who had summoned the Muscovite battalion from the villages? Who so quickly mustered the gentry from the neighboring settlements? Was it the Assessor? Was it Jankiel? All sorts of rumors made the rounds, but no one knew for certain, either then or later.

By now the sun had risen. Blood red, dull-edged, and rayless, it glowed among the murky clouds like a horseshoe in the smithy's coals. From the east a stiff wind blew up, driving the racks like jagged lumps of ice. Each passing cloud sprinkled a chilly drizzle. No sooner did the pursuing wind dry the rain than another heavy moisture-laden cloud scudded up; and so by turns the day was cold and wet.

Meanwhile, the Major ordered his yagers to haul down logs from the woodpile by the house and hew out semicircular notches along their length. This done, he bade them thrust in the captives' legs, place another log on top, and nail the ends together so that the two beams clamped down on their ankles like the jaws of bulldog. Finally, the Major had the prisoners' hands bound behind their backs with cords. To add to the nobility's torment, he had his men strike off their caps and tear off their cloaks, robes, and even their taratalkas and tunics. Teeth chattering in the growing cold and rain, the nobility sat ranged in rows, confined in the stocks; to no avail did Baptist sulk and squirm.

Neither the Judge's interposition on the nobility's behalf, nor Sophy's tearful appeals, nor Telimena's pleas for clemency had any effect. True, Captain Nikita Rykov felt moved by the entreaties, for even though he was a Muscovite, he was a decent fellow at heart. But what could he do? Major Plut was a man to be obeyed.

The Major, a Pole by birth, hailed from the village of Dzierowicz. Christened Plutowicz (or so it was rumored), he had converted to Orthodoxy and russified his name to Plut; and a scoundrel he was indeed, as so often happens when Poles turn renegade in the service of the Tsar. All this time he stood by, hands on his hips, pipe in his mouth, turning up his nose at the people bowing before him. At last, registering a surly reply with a thick plume of smoke, he stalked off to the house.

Meanwhile, the Judge continued to mollify Rykov. Taking the Assessor aside, he consulted with him as to how they might settle the matter without resort to court; above all, he wished to forestall any intervention by the authorities.

"Sir!" said Captain Rykov, approaching Major Plut. "What use are all these prisoners? Shall we drag them before the court? Much grief it will inflict on the nobility, and there's not a kopeck in it for us. Come now, Major, we had better settle the matter here and now. The Judge will repay us for our trouble, and we shall simply say we popped in for a visit. This way the goat will be safe and the wolf satisfied. Remember the Russian saw, 'All's possible that's prudently done.' Or this one, 'Broil your portion on the Emperor's skewer.' Or this one, 'Harmony's better than discord.' Come, sir, tie a good knot and stick the ends in the water. We'll make no report, and no one will be the wiser. 'God made hands to be greased.' Now there's a Russian saw!"

But the Major rose to his feet and snorted with anger. "Rykov!" said he. "Have you gone mad? This is the Tsar's service, and service isn't chumship. Stupid old Rykov! Have you taken leave of your senses? 'Release these troublemakers' in times of war like these! Hah! You Polish lords! I'll teach you rebellion! Hah! You rascally noblemen of Dobrzyn! I know you well! Let the scoundrels enjoy a good soaking! (And looking out the window, he gave out a roar of laughter.)

Why, that same Dobrzynski sitting there with his coat on—hey, you there, tear his coat off!—picked a quarrel with me last year at the masquerade ball. Who started it? Why, him of course, not me! 'Show the thief the door!' he yelled, as I was engaged in a dance. Being then under suspicion of pilfering from the regimental till, I was greatly put out. Anyhow, what business was it of his? There I was dancing the mazurka when he shouts 'Thief!' behind my back, and the nobility chorus 'Hear! Hear!' after him. Insulted me, see? Now I have the rascal in my clutches. 'Hey, Dobrzynski!' I says to him. 'So the goat comes to the cart, eh? Now you'll see what's what, eh Dobrzynski? You're in for the switch.'"

And, bending over, Plut whispered in the Judge's ear:

"So, Judge, if you want to get off lightly, it'll run you a cool thousand rubles per head, in cash. A thousand rubles, Judge; that is my final word."

The Judge tried to bargain with him, but the Major refused to listen. Once again he began to stride up and down the room, trailing thick clouds of smoke like a rocket or firecracker. The women went begging and weeping after him.

"Major!" said the Judge. "So you take the matter to court. Where's the gain? No battle was fought. No blood spilt. So they helped themselves to chicken and smoked goose. All right, then, they shall make restitution

according to the law. I will not lodge a complaint against the Count. A neighborly squabble! That is all it was.”

“Ever read the Yellow Book?” asked the Major.

“What yellow book?”

“Better than your Book of Statutes,” Plut replied. “Full of words like ‘Siberia,’ ‘gallows,’ ‘noose,’ and ‘knout,’ aye, the book of martial law, which stands proclaimed throughout Lithuania. Your courts are worthless now. According to the wartime decrees, your prank will earn you a stint of hard labor in Siberia at the very least.”

“I shall appeal to the Governor,” retorted the Judge.

“Appeal to the Emperor if you like,” said Plut. “You know very well that when the Tsar consents to affirm a sentence he is as likely to double the penalty. So, by all means, Judge, launch an appeal. If need be, I shall find something to pin on you too. That spy Jankiel, whose movements the authorities have long been watching, is a tenant of yours, bides in your tavern, eh? If I cared to, I could arrest the lot of you on the spot.”

“Arrest me?” said the Judge. “You would dare? Without orders!”

Just as their exchange was turning into a lively dispute, a new guest drove into the courtyard. A bizarre, tumultuous entrance! Announcing the cortege like a ceremonial runner came an enormous black ram, its brow bristling with four horns. One pair was hung with bells and curled about its ears; the other pair stuck out sideways with small jangling brass balls tied to the ends. After the ram came a herd of cattle, followed by sheep and goats; and behind these rolled four heavy-laden ox-wagons.

There could be no mistaking the arrival of the almsman priest. The Judge, knowing his duty as host, stood at the door to greet the guest. The almsman rode the leading wagon. His face was half-hidden by his hood; but they soon recognized him when, riding past the prisoners, he turned to them and made a sign with his finger. Equally easy to recognize was the driver of the second wagon: old Matthias, the Switch, disguised as a rustic. The nobility raised a cheer as soon as he hove in view. But he only said, “Stupid fools!” and silenced them with a wave of his hand. The Prussian, clad in a threadbare capote, drove the third wagon, while Zan and Mickiewicz brought up the rear in the fourth.

Meanwhile, seeing the dire straits of the Dobrzyn nobility, the Podhajskis, Isajewicz, Birbaszes, Biergels, Wilbiks, and Kotwicz, felt their old animosities cool. Though terribly prone to ructions and quick to take up

the cudgels, the Polish nobility are not vindictive. And so, running over to Matthias, they sought his advice. He marshaled the entire host around the wagons and bade them wait.

Meanwhile the Bernardine entered the house. Though he still had on his old habit, he was barely recognizable; so much had his demeanor changed. Normally somber and pensive, he now bore his head high, and his face beamed like a jolly mendicant friar’s. Before speaking, he gave out a long, hearty laugh:

“Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Good morning! Good morning! Ha! Ha! Splendid! Well done! Some hunt by day, but you, officers, hunt by night. A fine bit of hunting! I have seen your game. Oh, pluck ’em; pluck ’em, I say! Peel the skin off ’em! Put the bit in ’em; our nobility’s a restive steed. Major, I congratulate you for bagging the young Count. A plump morsel! Moneybags! A man of pedigree! Do not let him out of the cage without having him cough up three hundred ducats. And while you’re about it, spare three groats for my abbey and me, for I am always praying for your soul. As I am a beadsman, I give serious thought to the state of your soul. Does not death snatch even staff-officers by the ear? As Baka wrote, ‘Death rends purple by the yard, thrusts lustily at satin, snips linen as handily as she clips heads, cowls, and army serge.’ Aye, Old Mother Death’s an onion, says Baka. ‘She wrings tears from the eyes and snatches all to her bosom. None is spared, nor sleeping tot, nor carousing sot.’ Aye, Major, today we swill, tomorrow we rot. Nothing is ours but that which we gulp down today. Judge, is it not time we broke our fast? I take my seat at the table and bid you all join me. Major, what say you to beef collops and gravy? Lieutenant! What’s your idea? A bowl of punch perchance?”

“Indeed, Father,” agreed the officers, “high time we ate, and drank the Judge’s health!”

The household gaped at Robak, wondering whence came this new bearing and show of mirth. The Judge issued orders to the cook. They brought in the beef, bottles, punch, and sugar. Plut and Rykov pitched into the victuals with such gusto that within half an hour they had dispatched two-dozen collops and half-drained a prodigious bowl of punch.

At last, replete and jovial, lolling back in his chair, Plut pulled out his pipe, lit it with a banknote and, wiping his breakfast from his lips with the tip of a napkin, turned his mirthful eyes to the womenfolk.

“Now, pretty ladies,” said he, “You shall be my desert! By my major’s epaulets, after a breakfast of stewed beef

there is no better relish than a chat with pretty ladies such as yourselves. Eh, pretty ladies? A round of cards? *Vingt-et-un*? Whist? Or what say we dance a mazurka? Eh? By Beelzebub! Strike me dead if I ain't the finest mazurka dancer in the regiment!"

Saying which, he leaned forward closer to the ladies and puffed out clouds of smoke and compliments by turns.

"Yes, let's dance!" cried Robak. "When in my cups even I, a monk, am not averse to tucking up my habit and dancing a mazurka. But look you, Major, here we sit drinking, while your yagers stand frozen to the bone outside. Carousing's carousing! Judge, send out a keg of vodka! The Major will not mind. Let our brave yagers enjoy a tippie!"

"Indeed, why not?" said the Major. "But I don't insist."

"Make it a keg of pure spirits," whispered Robak to the Judge. Thus, while the merry staff tiddled in the house, the troops outside went on a spree of their own.

Captain Rykov drained cup after cup in silence; meanwhile, the Major both drank and paid court to the ladies. At last, itching to dance, Plut threw down his pipe and seized Telimena by the hand; but she promptly tore herself free. So he went up to Sophy and, bowing unsteadily, begged her for the pleasure of a mazurka.

"Hey, Rykov, stop pulling at your pipe! Put it away, I say! You're handy with the balalaika. See the guitar there? Pick it up and play us a mazurka! As Major here, I'll take the top of the dance."

The Captain picked up the guitar and began tuning the strings. Once again Plut tried to entice Telimena into a dance.

"I give you my word as Major, dear lady, Call me no Russian if I lie. May I be a son of a bitch if I lie. Ask around, if you do not believe me. The officers—indeed the whole army—will bear witness that in the Second Army, Ninth Corps, Second Infantry Division, Fiftieth Yager Regiment, there is no mazurka dancer equal to Major Plut. So come, little lady, do not be skittish or I shall have to serve you out, officer-style."

And saying this, he sprang up, seized Telimena by the hand, and planted a loud kiss on her white shoulder. Instantly, Tadeusz leapt up from aside and gave him a resounding slap across the face. Kiss and slap rang out in rapid succession like a brisk repartee.

Thunderstruck, Plut rubbed his eyes. "Rebellion! Rabble rouser!" he roared, pale with rage. And drawing

his sword, he made for Tadeusz with murderous intent. But the priest drew a pistol from his sleeve.

"Shoot, boy!" he cried. "Shoot like the blazes!"

Tadeusz seized the small-bore from his hand, took aim, and fired. The shot went wide, though it stunned and blackened the Major with powder. Rykov leapt up, guitar in hand. "Rebellion! Rebellion!" he cried; and he made a rush at Tadeusz. But at that moment, the Chief Steward, who was sitting across from the two officers, swung back his arm and let fly. The blade whistled through the air between their heads and struck home even before they saw it flash; it hit the bottom of the guitar and went straight through the box. Rykov dodged smartly aside and so narrowly escaped with his life. But that brush with death gave him a terrible fright.

"Yagers! Rebellion! By thunder!" cried he and, drawing his sword, he backed away toward the door.

Suddenly, the nobility burst in from the other side of the room; in through the windows they swarmed, rapiers drawn, with Switch at their head. Plut made a dash for the hall; Rykov followed. They yelled to their soldiers for assistance. Three yagers standing nearest the house responded to the call. Three gleaming bayonets protruded through the open doorway; behind them inclined three black shakos. With Switch upraised, back pressed against the wall, Matthias stood by the door like a cat lying in wait for a rat. He swung a terrible blow. He would have trimmed all three heads from their necks, but weak eyesight or perhaps an excess of *Èlan* caused the old man to execute an untimely swing. Before the necks could show themselves, he smote on the shakos and swept them off, and Switch came clanging down on the bayonets. The Muscovites drew back. Matthias tore after them into the courtyard.

There the confusion was even greater. Soplica's men were vying with one another to free the Dobrzynskis from the stocks. They tore apart the beams. Observing this, the yagers seized their muskets and raced to the scene. A sergeant charged into the midst of the nobility, running Podhajski through, wounding two others, and firing on a third. The nobility took to their heels.

All this happened close to where Baptist sat fastened. Already his hands were free and ready to do battle. Raising himself up, he lifted his arm and, screwing up his long fingers into a ball, brought down his fist on the Russian's back. The resulting blow was so hard that it rammed his forehead into the musket firelock. The hammer clicked, but the blood-soaked powder failed to ignite. The sergeant pitched full length on his musket at Baptist's feet. Bending

over, Baptist seized the weapon by the barrel and began flourishing it like a sprinkling brush. Whirling it round, he smote two privates at once across the shoulders. A corporal caught a resounding blow across the head. The rest of the yagers took fright and backed away from the stocks. Even so did Baptist raise a whirling roof over the heads of his brethren.

They broke open the stocks and cut the captives' cords. No sooner free than the nobility dashed to the almsman's wagons where they helped themselves to rapiers, sabers, broadswords, scythes, and muskets. Matthias Watering Can found two blunderbusses and a bag of shot. Pouring a handful of powder into his own firearm, he passed the other, loaded, to Sack, the son of Baptist.

More yagers appeared on the scene. A fierce melee ensued. The nobility found themselves unable to cut and slash in the press; neither could the yagers fire their muskets. They battled it out hand to hand at close quarters. Steel set on steel, notch for notch. Blades shattered. Bayonet clanged on saber. Scythe broke on sword-hilt. Fist met fist. Arm met arm.

But Rykov made smartly with a number of his yagers to where the barn abutted on the fence. There he took his stand, calling on his soldiers to give up the disorderly combat, for it was plain that unable to use their muskets they were falling beneath the enemy's fist. His own inability to open fire infuriated him, but there was no way of telling the Poles from the Muscovites. "*Stroysya!*" he roared (which means "fall in!" in Russian), but in the din no one heard the command.

Meanwhile, not adept at close-quarters combat, old Matthias fell back. Left and right he flailed, clearing a space for himself. Here, with the tip of his Switch, he sheared bayonet from barrel like a wick from a candle; there, swinging lustily, he cut and jabbed. So wary old Matthias retired to open ground.

A seasoned old Gefreiter, the regimental instructor and grand champion of bayonet combat, pressed him the hardest. Gathering his strength and drawing himself in, he gripped his musket with both hands: right hand over the lock, left hand midway up the barrel. Twisting and turning, he began to leap up and squat down, now dropping his left arm and thrusting forward with his right like a striking snake, now drawing it back and resting it on his knee. Thus, twisting and prancing, he bore down on Matthias.

Taking stock of his adversary's skill, old Matthias rammed his spectacles over the bridge of his nose with his left hand and, grasping his sword with his right, held

it close to his chest. He backed away, eyeing the yager's every movement. He feigned a lurch as if the worse for liquor. The Gefreiter, sure of victory, made a sudden lunge forward. To reach the retreating Matthias he was forced to rise and thrust with his weapon to the full extent of his right arm. Such was the weight and momentum of the musket that he lost his balance. And here Matthias rammed his sword-hilt in between the bayonet and the barrel, swung the musket into the air and, bringing Switch down, took a slice at the Muscovite's arm. Then, swinging lustily again, Matthias split open his jaw. Thus fell the finest *fechtmeister* of all the Russias, knight of three military crosses and four-time medal winner.

Meanwhile, by the stocks, the nobility's left flank was on the verge of victory. There fought Baptist, clearly visible from afar; there, weaving in among the Muscovites, ran Razor. The latter clove torsos, the former cracked skulls. Even as that field-engine, that brainchild of German masters which we call a thresher and yet it doubles as a chaff-cutter, for, having flails and blades, it both cuts the straw and thrashes the grain—even so did Baptist and Razor work as one, wreaking murder on the enemy, one from above, the other from below.

With victory now assured, Baptist quitted the scene and made for the right flank where a new peril threatened Matthias. An ensign, seeking to avenge the Gefreiter's death, was harrying the old man with a long spontoon (something between a pike and ax, now obsolete in the infantry though still used in the navy). The ensign, a young fellow, was weaving nimbly about. Every time his adversary knocked aside his weapon, he stepped out of reach. Matthias tried to fend him off. But his attempts were useless: unable to wound him, he could only parry his thrusts. Already the ensign had grazed his arm. The ensign was even now raising his pike and poisoning himself for the downward stroke, when, Baptist, seeing he would never reach Matthias in time, stopped in mid-stride, swung his weapon, and sent it hurtling with bone-shattering force at the yager's legs. The ensign dropped his halberd and slumped to the ground. Again Baptist charged. A host of the nobility followed; but scattered units of yagers from the left flank pursued them. And so a fresh skirmish began to rage around Baptist.

To save Matthias, Baptist had sacrificed his weapon. The deed almost cost him his life. Two strapping yagers jumped him from behind, seized hold of his hair with their four hands and, bracing their legs, began to tug at it as wherry-men pull on the taut halyards of their vessel. Baptist lashed out backwards with random punches. No

use! He began to keel over. Catching sight of Gerwazy fighting close by, he cried out, "Jesu Maria! Pocketknife!"

Sensing Baptist's plight by the sound of his voice, the Warden whirled round and swung down the blade of his thin sword hard between Baptist's head and the yagers' arms. With cries of terror they recoiled; but one hand remained entangled in the hair, hanging there and spurting blood. Even so, when a young eagle seizes a hare with one set of talons, while anchoring itself to a tree with the other, the hare in a frenzied struggle rips the bird apart, so that one claw remains in the forest, while the other, dripping blood, is borne off into the fields by the hare.

Free once more, Baptist surveyed the ground around him. With hands outstretched, he cast about, shouting for a weapon, all the while raining down a storm of blows with his fists. He held his ground, keeping close to Gerwazy's side. At last, in the młłÈe, he caught sight of his son Sack. The boy was aiming his blunderbuss with his right hand; with his left, he trailed a knotty fathom-long tree mounted with knobs and pieces of flint. (None but Baptist could have lifted the club off the ground.) Seeing his cherished Sprinkling Brush, Baptist seized it, kissed it, leapt in the air for joy, and, whirling the club over his head, promptly imbrued it in blood.

Vain to sing of the wondrous feats he went on to perform; of the havoc he wrought on every side. None would believe the Muse. Neither did anyone believe the old woman who, from her vantage point on Ostra Brama's parapet, saw the Russian General Deyov enter the city of Wilno with a regiment of Cossacks; as they swung open the gate, a townsman by the name of Czarnobacki slew Deyov and put the entire regiment to rout.

Enough to say that everything came to pass just as Rykov had foreseen. The hampered yagers fell before the stronger foe. Twenty-three of them lay dead in the dust, another thirty or so lay groaning, covered with wounds. Many fled into the orchard or the hops. Some ran to the river; others bolted for the house, seeking refuge among the womenfolk.

The victorious nobility dashed off, shouting with joy, some looking for kegs of spirits, others plundering the enemy for booty. Only Robak refused to share in their triumph. Until now he had taken no part in the fighting (canon law expressly forbids a priest to fight), but he had imparted expert advice and made a complete circuit of the battlefield. With a look here, a hand signal there, he

put the fighting men on their mettle and urged them onward. Now he was calling the men to join him in a strike on Rykov and clinch the victory. In the meantime, he dispatched a runner to the Captain, informing him that if the yagers laid down their arms, he would spare their lives. Should they delay, he would have them encircled and cut down to a man.

But Captain Rykov was far from asking quarter. Mustering the half-battalion around him, he cried, "Ready!" With a clatter, the yagers shouldered their loaded muskets. "Aim!" he cried. A long line of barrels flashed upward. "Commence firing!" he cried. One after another, the men discharged their guns. One man fired, another loaded, still another stood at the ready. Bullets whined, firelocks crashed, ramrods thudded home. The line resembled a wood louse with its thousand gleaming legs all beating at once.

But strong spirits had addled the yagers' brains; they aimed poorly and fired wide. Few inflicted wounds, and scarcely one killed his man. Nevertheless, two Matthiases fell wounded and one Bartholomew went down to the dust. The nobility, replying sparingly with their few harquebuses, were eager to attack the enemy with their swords; but the older men restrained them. Meanwhile, bullets whizzed thickly around them, hitting some, driving others back. Before long the musketry cleared the yard, and now there were balls rattling the manor windows.

All this time, Tadeusz had bided indoors where his uncle had ordered him to guard the womenfolk. On hearing the battle take a turn for the worse, he raced outside. The Chamberlain (his valet Thomas having fetched him his saber at last) ran after him. Without delay, he joined the nobility and took his place at their head. Raising his saber, he sallied forward; the nobility followed. The yagers allowed them to approach then raked them with a hail of lead. Isajewicz was killed on the spot. Wilbik and Razor fell wounded. Robak and Matthias, standing at opposite flanks, halted the charge. Dismayed, the nobility looked around and began to fall back. Observing this, Captain Rykov decided to mount a final strike; to sweep the courtyard clean and storm the house.

"Prepare to attack!" he ordered. "Fix bayonets! Quick march!"

Instantly the line of soldiers thrust out their muskets like a rack of beamed antlers. Heads lowered, they marched forward, quickening their pace. Powerless to stem the advance head-on, the nobility fired from the flanks. By now the yagers had cleared half the courtyard.

"Soplica!" shouted the Captain, pointing his sword at the manor door. "Lay down your arms or I shall burn you out!"

"Burn away!" replied the Judge. "I'll fry you in the flames."

O Soplica Manor! If your lime-daubed walls still stand beneath the lindens, if the local nobility still gather there to feast at the generous board of their neighbor, Judge Soplica, then surely they must raise a toast to Matthias Watering Can, for without him the Manor would be no more.

Until now Watering Can had shown little proof of valor. Although he had been the first to break free from the stocks and retrieve his cherished blunderbuss and a bag of shot, yet he had been loath to join the battle. He always insisted he could never trust himself on an empty stomach. And so, going over to a vat of pure spirits standing nearby, he scooped the liquor into his lips with his hand. Only when he had adequately warmed and refreshed himself did he right his cap, seize his blunderbuss from between his knees, ram home a charge, sprinkle the pan, and take a survey of the battlefield. He saw a wave of gleaming bayonets dashing over and scattering the nobility; thither he swam, to meet that wave. Head down, he plunged through the dense patch of grass in the middle of the courtyard where the nettles grew; and there, signaling to Sack with his hand, he lay down in wait.

All this time, Sack had been standing guard with his own loaded blunderbuss outside the house where his beloved Sophy lived. Though she had spurned his attentions, he still loved her dearly and would fain have sacrificed his life for her.

As the yager line marched into the nettles, Watering Can squeezed the trigger. A dozen shards of lead poured out of the wide mouth of the blunderbuss, raking the Muscovite line. Sack unleashed a dozen more. The yagers fell into dismay. Panicked by the ambush, the extended line huddled up into a ball and pulled back, abandoning the wounded to Baptist, who promptly dispatched them with his Sprinkler.

It being now too far to return to the barn, Rykov, fearing a drawn-out retreat, made smartly for the garden fence. Checking his company in their flight, he drew them up again, this time changing the formation. Out of a single line he formed a triangle with its apex projecting forward like a wedge and its two sides extending back to the garden fence. He did well to do this, for just then a

body of horseman came bearing down upon them from the castle.

The Count, confined in the castle until the guards panicked and fled, had ordered his men to mount up. Hearing the detonations of the musketry, he urged his horsemen into the firing line, himself at their head, his steel raised aloft.

"Half-battalion, open fire!" roared Rykov.

A fiery thread ran the length of the line of leveled muskets as the pans ignited and three hundred whining bullets sped from the blackened barrels. Three riders fell wounded, another lay lifeless in the dust. The Count's charger took a bullet and tumbled to the ground, bringing the Count down with him. Gerwazy, seeing the yagers training their guns on the last male representative of the Horeszko clan (albeit on the distaff side), gave out a yell and ran to his aid. But Robak, standing closer, shielded the Count with his body and took a bullet intended for him. Pulling the Count out from under his mount, he led him away, all the while ordering the nobility to spread out, to take better aim, to save ammunition, and to seek cover behind the fence, the well, and the cowshed. As to the Count and his horsemen, a more auspicious occasion would soon present itself.

Tadeusz understood Robak's plans and executed them to perfection. He took cover behind the wooden well and, since he was sober and skilled in the use of a double barrel (he could hit a *zloty* piece tossed in the air), he wreaked slaughter on the Muscovites. One by one, he picked off the officers. With his first shot he killed the sergeant major; then, discharging one barrel after the other, he brought down two more sergeants. Here at a gold braid he aimed, there into the midst of the triangle where the staff-officers stood. Fuming with rage, Rykov stamped his foot and gnawed at his sword knot.

"Major Plut!" he shouted. "What is to become of us? At this rate, there will be no one left to take charge of the men!"

In an access of fury, Plut called out to Tadeusz:

"You, Pole! Shame on you for hiding behind a piece of wood! Are you a coward? Come out in the open! Fight with honor as befits a soldier!"

"Major!" Tadeusz replied. "If you are such a brave knight, why cower inside a ring of yagers? I fear you not! Come out from the fence. Did I not slap your face? I am quite ready to engage you in combat. But why continue with this bloodshed? The quarrel is between us. Let sword or pistol settle the matter. Cannon, rapier, choose your

weapon. Refuse, and I shall pick you off like wolves in a pit!”

With that he fired off another round with such accuracy that he felled the lieutenant standing next to Rykov.

“Major!” whispered Rykov. “Go out and fight this duel! Avenge the earlier slight to your honor. If someone else kills this nobleman, you shall never wash away the disgrace. You must lure him into the open. Since firearms will not do the job, then at least stick him with a rapier. Old Suvorov used to say, ‘What pops is for sops; the trick is to stick ’em.’ So, Major, go out into the field; otherwise, he will pick us all off. See? He’s taking aim again.”

“Rykov, old friend!” the Major replied. “You’re the expert with the blade. Go out yourself, my boy; or I tell you what, I shall send out one of our subalterns. I am Major after all. I cannot desert my soldiers. The command of the battalion belongs to me.”

Hearing this, Rykov took up his sword and stepped boldly out into the open. He called on his men to cease firing then flourished a white handkerchief. They offered Tadeusz his choice of weapon. Upon deliberation, both men agreed on blades. Since Tadeusz carried no foil, they were forced to find him one. Even as they were engaged in this search, the armed Count ran up and interrupted the talks.

“Mr. Soplica!” said he. “With all due respect, it was the Major you called out! But I have an earlier grievance against the Captain here, for it was he who broke into my castle . . .”

“Our castle, you mean!” cut in Protazy from behind.

“He is the one who broke in,” continued the Count. “He and his band of robbers. He—I recognize Rykov—ordered my jockeys bound. Now shall I punish him as I did those brigands on the crag the Sicilians call Birbante-Rocca.”

All fell silent. The firing ceased. The two armies watched as their leaders met on the field of honor. Rykov and the Count advanced, facing sideways, each menacing the other with his right arm and right eye; then, doffing their hats with their left hand, they bowed courteously. (An honorable custom this: the principals exchanging greetings before proceeding to slaughter.) Then, engaging their foils, they clashed. Thrusting right leg forward and flexing the knee, the two knights lunged and parried in turn.

But Plut, seeing Tadeusz directly in front of him, conferred quietly with Gefreiter Gont, the finest marksmen in the company.

“Gont!” he whispered. “See that gallows’ bird over there? Lodge a bullet under his fifth rib and I’ll give you four silver rubles.”

Gont drew back the hammer of his rifle, put his eye to the sights, while his faithful comrades covered him with their cloaks. He took aim, not at the rib, but at Tadeusz’s head. He fired; the bullet struck home—almost! It went clean through Tadeusz’s hat. The youth spun round; at once Baptist made a rush at Rykov. Crying foul, the nobility followed. But Tadeusz shielded Rykov, and the captain, falling back, regained the safety of his ranks in the nick of time.

Once more Lithuania and Dobrzyn went on the attack in a spirit of amicable rivalry. Their old differences put aside, they fought like brothers, each urging on his comrade. The men of Dobrzyn rejoiced at the sight of Podhajski prancing before the yager line and mowing it down with his scythe. “A Podhajski! A Podhajski!” they cried. “Forward, Lithuanian brothers! Hurrah! Hurrah for Lithuania!” The Skoluba clan, seeing the valiant and wounded Razor raise his sword yelled in reply, “A Dobrzynski! A Dobrzynski! Long live Mazovia!” Thus urging one another on, they sallied forth against the Muscovite. Robak and Matthias were powerless to hold them back.

While the nobility mounted this frontal assault on the yager company, the Chief Steward quit the battleground and made for the garden. Protazy padded warily beside him, listening intently to his orders.

In the garden there stood, towering over the fence that formed the base of Rykov’s triangle, an enormous old cheese dryer made of beams lashed crosswise in the shape of a cage. Several dozen gleaming white cheeses lay drying inside it, and all around them swung bundles of drying herbs, sage, blessed thistle, cardoon, wild thyme—in short, the full store of herbs comprising the Steward’s daughter’s domestic pharmacy. The upper structure measured three-and-a-half sazhen across, and the entire thing rested like a stork’s nest on a great pillar of oak, which, being old and half-rotted, leaned at a precarious angle and was in imminent danger of giving out. The Judge had often been advised to dismantle the decaying building, but he always said he would sooner repair it than take it down, or at least erect it elsewhere; as a result, he put off the business to a more favorable time. In the meantime, he had the old pillar propped up with two



supports. Thus buttressed, the unstable structure reared above the fence, overlooking Rykov's triangle.

Armed with stout spear-like poles, the Steward and the Court Usher made their way stealthily toward this cheese house. Through the hemp behind them followed the bailiff mistress and a kitchen boy—a small lad, but strong as they come. On reaching the spot, they thrust their poles into the top of the rotted pillar, then, swinging from the pole-ends, began pulling down with all their might. Even so do wherry-men, thrusting out from the bank with their long poles, heave their grounded vessel into deeper waters.

The pillar gave way with a crack. The dryer tottered and keeled over with a crash on top of the Muscovite triangle, crushing, maiming, and killing the men with its freight of beams and cheeses. On the ground where the yagers had stood lay a mass of timbers, bodies, and snow-white cheeses imbrued in blood and brain matter. Rykov's triangle lay shattered into bits. In no time Sprinkling-Brush was inside it, raining down a storm of blows. Razor flashed. Switch slashed. Still more of the nobility came swarming out of the house; and from the gate the Count set his horsemen on the scattered foe.

Only eight yagers and their platoon sergeant continued to put up a resistance. The Warden made a rush at them. They stood their ground. Nine barrels stood aimed at a point right between the Warden's eyes. Gerwazy charged blindly into the line of fire, whirling Pocketknife in the air. But the watchful priest ran across his path, dropped down, and knocked the Warden's feet from out under him; both men fell to the ground the instant the platoon fired. The fusillade had barely whistled overhead when Gerwazy was up again and diving into the smoke. In a flash he had hewed off two heads. The yagers fled in dismay; but the Warden tore after them, laying into them with the flat of his blade. They dashed across the courtyard. Gerwazy came close on their heels. They ran into the open barn. Gerwazy went after them, disappearing into the darkness, there to resume the battle. Through the open doorway you could hear groans, yells, and a storm of blows. Before long, all was quiet. Gerwazy emerged, alone, his blade dripping with blood.

By now the nobility held the field and were engaged in pursuing, cutting down, and sticking the last of the scattered yagers. Only Rykov remained. He fought on, swearing he would never lay down his arms. But at last the Chamberlain approached and, raising his saber, addressed him in a solemn tone:

“Captain! You will not stain your honor by accepting quarter. Brave, hapless knight! You have given proof of your valor. Give up this useless struggle. Lay down your arms before we disarm you with our swords. Your life and honor are safe. You are my prisoner!”

Won over by the gravity of the Chamberlain's tone, Rykov bowed and surrendered his naked sword, which dripped to the hilt with blood

“Brother Poles!” said he. “My misfortune was in not having a single cannon! Old Suvorov put it well. ‘Remember, comrade Rykov,’ he used to say. ‘Never venture against the Pole without a field-piece!’ What can I say? My yagers were drunk. Plut let them swill. Oh, that Major Plut! He has caused enough mischief for one day. He will answer to the Tsar, for he was in command. As for me, Chamberlain, I will be your friend. ‘The better the shover, the better the lover,’ says a Russian proverb. Aye, Chamberlain! You Poles tussle as well as you guzzle. But, please, no more pranks on my yagers.”

Hearing this, the Chamberlain raised his saber and ordered the Court Usher to announce a general pardon. He bade them tend the wounded, clear the field of the bodies and, after disarming the remaining yagers, take them captive. Long they searched for Major Plut; but he had plunged deep into the nettles and was playing dead. Eventually, he came out of hiding, but only after the battle was well and truly over.

Thus ended the last armed foray in Lithuania.

(to be continued in the next issue)



Reconciliation between the Horeszko and Soplica families, by Michał Andriolli. Public domain.

## Fetishism of the word

**Ferdinand Anthony Ossendowski**

A traveler and scientist who personally knew several members of Tsar Nicholas II's government, Ossendowski spent the years of the October Revolution in Russia and Siberia. Below we reprint chapter 24, parts of chapter 25, and the Conclusion of *The Shadow of the Gloomy East* (*Cień ponurego Wschodu: za kulisami życia rosyjskiego*, Warsaw 1923), translated by F. B. Czarnomski (NY: Dutton, 1925, pp. 187–190, 196–198). In January 2008, *SR* reprinted chapter 22 of the same book dealing with Witte, Stolypin, and Goremykin. Ossendowski's texts combine a keen sense of detail with an ability to generalize, and they offer a view of Soviet history based on eyewitness experience. Except for a few spelling changes nothing has been added or taken away from the text. Some of the Asian localities we have not been able to identify: their spelling was left unchanged. The "Engelhardt" mentioned in the text possibly was Vasilii Engelhardt, a scientist and historian who died during the Great War. *Ed.*

A revolution can never be contained within the frame designed for it for a given moment, but rushes on in its impetuous course. The Tsar abdicated the throne in his own and in his heir Aleksei's name. Then came those painful moments when he saw those who "worshipped" him while he was emperor turn their backs on him. The hideous spectacle of the debasement, cowardice, and vulgarity of the aristocracy caused universal disgust. Only a few persons of subaltern positions remained with the imperial family to the very end, sharing their tragic suffering until the end.

The first revolutionary government of Prince Lvov and the second government of Kerenskii's cultivated mysticism and fetishism of the word.

"And the Word became flesh," says the Scripture.

But the word of Lvov, Miliukov, Kerenskii, and of the thousands of revolutionary orators remained a word which passed without an echo. It was a pitiful picture of the impotence and wretchedness of the Russian intelligentsia.

Till at last the flesh came.

Bolshevism came, drowning the monarchists in a sea of blood, issuing new passwords founded upon the destruction of Russia.

The Commissars of the People, Dzherzhinskii, Volodarskii, and Pavlunovskii of the Cheka offered the bloody hecatomb, murdering all who believed in the great powerful Russia, in the return to the old order. Special detachments of Finns, Letts, Hungarians, Germans, and Chinese were at their disposal, and for

their protection against the efforts of "counter-revolutionaries."

Sailors of the fleet, inflamed by propaganda, hewed down their officers with axes, tore them to pieces, drowned them in the sea at Vyborg till their bodies formed dams. They broke up and robbed their ships, and sold the machinery, guns, and scrap metal on the markets in the capital and in Finland.

Blood flowed in streams, covering with a scarlet veil the "bloodless" revolution which was dreamt of and discussed at the British Embassy in Petrograd.

The new lord, Bolshevism, achieved great things during the five years, while throwing out to the civilized countries lofty slogans, bold, new words, and dazzling them with its energy, alacrity, and determination.

It conquered its enemies with the armed hand, destroyed Russia till she was laid bare, dying, imbued with blood; it changed the political configuration of Europe; on the ruins of monarchism and socialism it founded a new empire. Only its ruler needs not one crown, but five, or sixty-three. . . Full-fledged autocracy is being floated upon the sea of social-communistic slogans that remain an empty sound.

Europe, enchanted, listens to the wonderful song of words—fetishes—and does not perceive the spreading licence, disease, famine, and death, remains deaf to the cracking of human bones devoured by human beings, does not look into the caves of the Cheka, does not want to understand that everything in Bolshevism is and will remain as of old, although the scenery is changed, and sometimes the names and even the persons are changed.

Bolshevism rolls on like a ball of snow, and threatens, not only through the propagation of its slogans, but through millions of hungry, despondent men grown wild whom it can throw against the West; threatens through "awakened Asia" where the conflagration is already blazing. The flame will have abundant food: eight hundred million men who gnash their teeth and clench their fists, while treacherous Bolshevism and Communism, concealing its true face, whispers:

"Forward against the white man! Away with Christian civilization! We are on your side!"

Now they do not whisper it only; they proclaim it aloud and gravely in Tibet, India, Mongolia, and China. The Circassians, the Kalmyks, the Djungars, the Buriats and Tatars, the chieftains of the valiant Chinese Chunchuzes, sing songs of this day of revenge. I listened to the gloomy lays breathing horror in the plain of Kaidam, on the slopes of Bogdo-Ulu, in the forests of Tauan-Ola, and the waters of the Hwang Ho.

This is the aim of the hapless “great” Russian revolution, the revolution of nomads, suicides, wizards, witches, and various other fiends, and almost apocalyptic monsters. It ended in a genuine counter-revolution: Bolshevism, a movement directed against socialism, nationhood, and civilization, ultimately leading somebody, unknown as yet, to the throne of the Tsars of a new dynasty unprecedented in its autocracy.

Whom? Perhaps a new Great Mogul, Ghenghiz-Khan or Tamerlane. . . And he will be for Christian civilization an Antichrist, black or red, an antithesis of the evolution of the spirit and of progress, the first harbinger of the approaching doom of mankind.

That terrible shadow coming from the east has happened more than once before in the history of mankind, and has been always gloomy, like autumnal night, like the soul of suicide.

#### CHAOS

The policy of the Soviets, which was always and is still directed toward the ruin of family, church, morality, and society, has conquered. . . .

The children, corrupted by Bolshevik agents, have become their parents’ enemies. They do not see much of them, but they often serve as secret agents of the Cheka, spying upon their kin, overhearing their conversations which they report to the blood-stained judges of the Cheka and other institutions of a similar character. . . .

Terror, famine, disease, a struggle for existence baffling all imagination have demoralized the whole Russian society. The educated man has become degraded, has let himself go, has again approached the state of primitive nomad who only fights for his crumbs of bread, and is even unable to find sustenance for his own family that has broken up completely, if not physically, then certainly morally.

The workmen, allured by Soviet promises, have ceased to work and have joined the Red Army. When, later on, they wanted to return to work, they had lost the habit, lost the skill, and could not find the workshops amid the general decay, when everything fell into utter ruin. The peasant ceased to till the soil till, confronted by hunger, he was driven with his family into the towns, where he swelled the cadres of hungry men dispossessed of their class, without work, without profession, without a tomorrow, and without hope.

It was they who killed their children for food, it is their peasant women-mothers who, with their starved and enfeebled babes pressed to their bosoms, drowned themselves in the rivers. It is the declassed peasants

who form robber bands, who are as the locust migrating from east to west and from north to south in search of bread, in search of life.

#### CONCLUSION

Today, when I look back upon the long term of my quest across the most savage and most cultured countries of the Asiatic East, I behold clearly its gloomy shadow cast aslant over the most momentous phenomena of Russian life. I perceive distinctly the danger threatening Christian civilization from the East, but not from the real East, which endures in its mystic reverie or its hallowed majesty, defending its culture and independence against the pernicious influence of the newcomers. I perceive the menace of the East, in whose vanguard marches the Russian multitude of Mongolia half-breeds, followed by swarming hosts of utterly despondent Asiatics, burning with hatred, demoralized and revolutionized by Soviet diplomatists, with the bloodstained gold taken from the murdered, broken off the sacred images and crosses, carried away from temples of learning.

In such moments of fear of the East my mind recalls the cynical words of Engelhardt, one of the more distinguished Russian publicists, with which he depicted the coming destinies of Russia:

*We are an anarchic, Tatar people, recognizing only the superiority of physical strength, of the armed force, of the mailed fist, of the whip! When we refused to pay taxes, the Government gave us spirits, made us drink everywhere, on each step, even in the streets. We paid our taxes by drinking. When we refused to be cultured people, refused to send our children to schools, the pastor denied to baptize, to marry, or to bury us, and the policeman flogged with the lash father and mother for resistance; we refused to give conscripts to the army, whereupon an officer came with a detachment and shot and bayoneted us. Then we became good citizens and patriots: we paid taxes into the Treasury of Mother Russia, we became enthusiasts for education, we went to defend Tsar, Faith, and Fatherland.*

*Today all has collapsed like a house of cards. We are the freest of all the peoples in the world! Now we may ourselves plunder gold, teach the bourgeois to sweep the streets or to scrub the floors, we can battle in the streets of our own cities caroling: ‘Let the three of us attack courageously yon man, for victory is good to drink after the stress of the laborious day!’*

*We shall exist as long as there will be anything left to be torn to pieces.*



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**Mówimy po polsku!**

**Letters****Gender of *Ostrów Mazowiecka***

Although the better know Ostrów Mazowiecki has accustomed Poles to assigning the masculine gender to "Ostrów," a town about 100 kilometers east of Warsaw is called *Ostrów Mazowiecka*, i.e, its gender is feminine. "Ostrów" here means "my Ostrów," or a kind of ladder used by Kurpians in Puszcza Biała to climb trees. In my letter published in *Sarmatian Review* in January 2012, you incorrectly changed the gender from feminine to masculine.

*Jerzy Mioduszcwski, University of Katowice, Poland*

We stand corrected. *Ed.*

**Thank You Note**

*Sarmatian Review* and the Polish Institute of Houston are grateful to those readers who support the journal over and above the price of subscription. Without them, it would be difficult to continue publication. Donations to *Sarmatian Review* and its publisher, the Polish Institute of Houston, are tax deductible. If you are associated with Exxon, please let them know about your donation and they should provide matching funds. Here is a list of recent donors:

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**John Guzowski's "Writing the Polish Diaspora" blog**

(<http://writingpolishdiaspora.blogspot.com>) is an ongoing commentary on Polish American poets and writers.

See also Guzowski's *Lighting and Ashes* blogspot (<http://lightning-and-ashes.blogspot.com>): wartime Germany as seen by its victims working as slave laborers in the Third Reich.

A related and NEW site: Bagnowka (<http://www.bagnowka.com/index.php?m=ww>) shows pictures taken by German soldiers in WW2, as well as the aftermath of the German Nazis' criminal dream.