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Is Republicanism Still Possible?



Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Professor of Sociology at the University of Bremen, at a lecture given on 20 March 2003 to the Workshop for Sociological Analysis, a graduate student group in the Department of Sociology at Warsaw University.

Photo by Gorazd Wojciechowski courtesy of WSA.

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From the Editor

Professor Krasnodębski's most recent book excerpted in this issue is a ringing defense of Polish Republicanism. Krasnodębski sees Republicanism as being closer to the modern understanding of the relationship between state and individual than the political system that resulted from the Round Table agreements in 1989, or the political systems that gained favor in Prussia and Russia in the eighteenth century. Krasnodębski points out that the Polish system involved principles similar to those which informed the writings of the Founding Fathers of the American Republic: the responsible and free citizens select amongst themselves a representative (called president in America, king in Poland) whose task is to execute the will of society while observing natural law. Thus laws are not a compromise between conflicting interests but an expression of the will of the community united for the common good.

Krasnodębski's book belongs to those important works which outline general tendencies and movements, and as such can be compared to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1838). It is obvious that in outlining tendencies stretching over many centuries and involving millions of people minute documentation cannot be provided,

and instead condensed experience of the thinker is brought to bear. It goes without saying that thinkers of Krasnodębski's caliber have proven their mettle in studies that are possessed of a more complete documentation.

Professor Krasnodębski's thesis—that much in the recent attempts to “amend the Polish Republic” went wrong, and that the mistakes were largely due to disregard for the Polish Republican tradition and servility to the continental liberal tradition—is profound and important, and it has already generated discussion in Poland starting with the essay by Bronisław Wildstein in *Rzeczpospolita* (17 January 2004). Krasnodębski's book echoes Lawrence Goodwyn's thesis in *Breaking the Barrier: Solidarity Labor Movement* (1991). He maintains that the ability of Polish workers to self-organize and debate was similar to the way debates were conducted at the Polish *sejmiks* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

At the same time, it is important to remember that Professor Krasnodębski is a scholar and not a politician, and his way of dealing with the subject is that of a scholar and not a politician.

Krasnodębski writes about Poland's intellectual assets: its history of Republicanism and its collective memory of a *Res publica* which is the Poles' common good. It will take many books such as Krasnodębski's to bring this portion of history to the attention of Western scholars.

Professor James R. Thompson's comments on Poland's situation in the European Union soberly assess the growing national egoism of EU's largest members. Thompson also outlines a possible realignment of alliances in Europe. ▲

Partitions of Poland and the value of the Polish zloty

Loss of value of the Polish zloty between 1650–1750: 50 percent.

Devaluation due to: depreciation of the silver content.

Scholarly works dealing with this development: none to our knowledge.

Source: Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), Appendix 1.

Composition of the original multinational division in Iraq under Polish command

Poland, 2,500 soldiers; Holland, 3,200; Italy, 1,130; Spain, 1,321; Ukraine, 1,644; Bulgaria, 480; Kazakhstan, 27; Romania, 205; Hungary, 441; Slovenia, 82; Latvia, 103; Lithuania, 45; Mongolia, 174; Thailand, 886; Philippines, 177; Dominican Republic, 300; El Salvador, 360; Honduras, 360; Nicaragua, 120.

Source: UPI, 1 August 2003.

Ukrainian language returns

Number of Ukrainian-language schools in Kiev in 2003: 500.

Number of Russian-language schools in Kiev in 2003: 8.

Proportions of Russian-Ukrainian schools in the Crimea: exactly reversed, 500 Russian-language and 9 Ukrainian-language schools.

Source: AFP, 19 November 2003.

Russia's external debt

Russia's external debt as of July 2003: 159.1 billion dollars (an increase since previous year).

Source: AFP (Moscow), 24 October 2003.

Violent death rates in the former USSR

Russia: 221 per 100,000, or the highest in the world; Ukraine: 149 per 100,000, or second highest in the world, followed by Kazakhstan (119 per 100,000). Violent deaths include murders, suicides, automobile and other accidents.

Source: France's National Institute for Demographic Studies, as reported by *Russia Reform Monitor*, no. 1092 (7 November 2003).

Contract murders in Russia

Number of contract murders by organized crime in Russia in 1999 and 2003, respectively: 3,300 and 26,000.

Source: UPI (Moscow), 20 January 2004.

Book seizures in Russia

Number of the FSB-seized copies of Aleksandr Litvinenko's *The FSB Blows Up Russia*, a book alleging that the Russian secret police agency was behind the 1999 apartment building bombings that killed more than 300 people and helped spark military intervention in Chechnya: 4,400.

Place where the book was printed: Latvia.

Circumstances of seizure: taken away from delivery truck as "anti-state propaganda."

Source: NEWSru.com, as reported by Jonas Bernstein in *Russia Reform Monitor*, no. 1107 (30 December 2003).

Popularity of political parties in Poland

12 February 2004 *Rzeczpospolita* poll results concerning approval rates for Polish political parties: the ruling leftist alliance SLD-UP, 13 percent; League of Polish Families, 13 percent; Law and Justice Party, 13 percent; Peasant Party, 6 percent; Self-Defense Party, 17 percent; Civic Platform, 28 percent.

Source: *Rzeczpospolita*, 12 February 2004; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 13 February 2004.

Polish wages in 1989 (under Communism) and in 2003 (in free Poland)

Number of bread loaves one could buy for the average monthly wage in Poland under communism and today: 1017 and 1570, respectively.

Same figures for sugar: 490 lbs. vs. 1148 lbs; ham, 58 lbs. vs. 136 lbs; TV set, 0.2 vs. 1.5; car, 0.02 vs. 0.06; gasoline: no change; services: much more expensive today; food: the percentage of wages spent on food has decreased considerably.

Source: Bohdan Wyżnikiewicz, Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową, as reported by Lena Białkowska in *Donosy*, no. 3643 (5 January 2004).

Polish and Mexican GDP, or what Communism bequeathed to the next generation

Size of the Polish GDP per person in 2002 and 2004: 4,570 and 5,487 dollars.

Size of the Mexican GDP per person in 2002: 5,910 dollars.

Source: Lena Białkowska in *Donosy*, no. 3678 (23 February 2004); World Bank data (www.worldbank.org/data) as of 1 March 2004.

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German defense cuts and shift from territorial defense to overseas peacekeeping in 2004

Amount by which German expenditures on defense are to be cut in 2004, as announced by German Defense Minister Peter Struck: 33 billion dollars.

Planned decrease in the number of troops in the Bundeswehr: 35,000, down to 250,000.

Planned divisions among this quarter-million: 35,000 to be designated as “intervention” troops, 70,000 as “stabilizing” troops, and 137,000 as support troops.

Source: UPI (Berlin), 14 and 18 January 2004.

Russian military corruption

Standard size of necessary bribe to military officials to acquire the status of a conscientious objector: 800 dollars.

Amount of bribe money necessary to avoid military service altogether: 5,000 dollars.

Source: Moscow branch of the Soldiers’ Mothers Committee, as reported by *Russia Reform Monitor*, no. 1114 (January 21, 2004).

Government spending in EU and US as percentage of GDP

Government spending in the European Union and the United States: 48 percent and 34 percent of GDP, respectively.

Source: Robert J. Samuelson, *Newsweek*, 9 February 2004.

Increase in Russian arms exports

Amount of money Russia received for its arms exports in 2003: 5 billion dollars.

Rate of increase in the Russian arms exports over the last several years: one billion dollars per year.

Source: Andrei Belyaninov of Rosoboronexport, Russia’s state arms-exporting agency, as reported by *Russia Reform Monitor*, no. 1116 (28 January 2004).

Baku-Ceyhan pipeline

Cost of the Azeri-Turkish oil pipeline that will carry Azeri oil and bypass Russia: 3.6 billion dollars.

Source: Associated Press (Moscow), 7 February 2004.

Percentage of oil Poland consumes that is imported from Russia: 95 percent.

Polish hopes associated with the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline: the weakening of dependence on Russian oil.

Source: *Donosy*, January 2004.

Russian President Putin’s assessment of the significance for Russians of Communism’s demise

Putin’s description of disintegration of the USSR made in a speech launching his presidential campaign on 12 February 2004: “It was a national tragedy.”

Source: *Gazeta* <www.gazeta.ru>, 12 February 2004.

Russian GDP vs. its natural resources

Russia’s ranking in terms of the estimated wealth of its natural resources: second in the world.

Russia’s ranking in terms of its GDP: 84th in the world.

Source: Head of the National Audit Authority Sergei Stepashnin, as reported by UPI, 18 February 2004.

Further AIDS increase in former Soviet republics

Former Soviet republics that are in the greatest danger of AIDS epidemic: Russia, Ukraine, and Estonia.

Estimate of the number of Russians infected by the year 2020: between 5.4 million and 14.5 million.

Projected population losses as a result: between 3.9 and 12 million people by 2025 (in one scenario), or at 5 million and 13 million by 2020 (in two World Bank scenarios).

Source: United Nations Report, as reported by UPI, 18 February 2004.

Size of the Internet

Number of the U.S.-registered domain names on the Internet: 30 million.

Source: Reuter’s News Service, 5 February 2004, as reported by *Houston Chronicle* on the same day.

It has been printed—it must be true

Ethnic background of the population of Houston, Texas: 25.3 percent black; 30.8 percent “Anglo” (includes Central European non-Germanic ethnics); 37.4 percent Hispanic.

Source: President of the Houston Police Officers’ Union Hans Marticiuc in *Houston Chronicle*, 11 February 2004.

Ethnic background of the population of Houston, Texas: 17 percent black; 49 percent “Anglo” (includes Central European non-Germanic ethnics); 29 percent Hispanic; 5 percent Asian.

Source: Lynn Ashby in *Greater Houston Weekly*, 11 February 2004.

Democracy at the Periphery

This text is a translation of the first chapter, and portions of the third and tenth chapters, of Zdzisław Krasnodębski's *Demokracja peryferii* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria (www.terytoria.com), 2003. 351 pages. Paper. In Polish. Translated by permission by the *Sarmatian Review* staff.

Zdzisław Krasnodębski

Chapter 1. The failure of a certain project

In the thirteenth year of postcommunist transformation Polish democracy is in crisis. It is not that the democratic institutions themselves are threatened, or that a possibility of replacing democracy by some other political system is being considered. Rather, the crisis has to do with the perceived significance of democratic institutions and their legitimacy, which in turn influences their functioning. While Poles can congratulate themselves on getting rid of Communism and building a democratic system, their success is only partial. The quality of Polish democracy is worsening, while the opposite was expected. The warnings come from many directions. On March 9, 2002, Janina Paradowska stated in *Polityka* that "since 1991, Polish politics have been deteriorating at a remarkable speed." Echoing the Sejm Speaker, she pointed out that "a village drinking bar appears to be an oasis of peace, good manners, and personal refinement by comparison with what is going on in the Parliament. The Sejm has become a place of unprecedented aggressiveness, vulgarity, intolerance, and ordinary ignorance." In his remarks on "how we lost Poland," Tadeusz Kowalik, a noted left-wing economist, remarked that "twenty years after the appearance of Solidarity and twelve years after the fall of Communism, [Poland] has produced one of the least just social systems the European continent has known in the second part of the twentieth century" (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 23–24, 2002). Rafał Ziemkiewicz, a right-wing journalist whose economic views differ significantly from Kowalik's, asked whether the Poles deserve independence. He refused to answer this question with an unequivocal "yes" and instead noted that "one can observe a pathology in virtually all areas

of public life. . . . Among these pathologies the most significant seems to be the atrophy of a sense of common good. The Poles feel that they have been given independence owing to some incomprehensible collusion of the country's elites, and they are unable to value that gift sufficiently" (*Rzeczpospolita*, April 12–13, 2002). Cezary Michalski maintains that "thirteen years after the symbolic breakthrough on 4 June 1989, Polish politics is in demise. We are the first country in Central Europe . . . to have arrived at a one-party system" (*Życie*, June 7, 2002). In Michalski's opinion, the fate of Polish democracy will be decided by the new and deepening class divisions between those who have succeeded in finding a place for themselves in the new system, and those who have not.

The commonly accepted notion of modernity, influenced by Max Weber, discounts the role of Catholicism, of the Renaissance, and of the European South.

These and other observers see different reasons for this state of affairs and they offer different solutions, but they all agree in their negative assessment both of the political elite and of society at large. Until recently, our major political commentators (all of whom belong to the circle of "Polish Liberals") considered such sweeping criticism to be "an insult to the Third Republic." Today all commentators, whether from the right or from the left, admit that the pathologies are deep and real.

Among ordinary citizens the degree of trust in elected representatives is low. There are good reasons for this. The state of affairs in the country indicates that these political representatives are not sufficiently qualified to govern, and their behavior is motivated by rules that have little to do with those obtaining in countries where the rule of law prevails. While in healthy democracies the conflict of interests and using public office for private good and self-enrichment are punishable by law, in Poland they are often regarded as a manifestation of an enterprising spirit and of remarkable political skills. Economic scandals erupt on a regular basis. While murders and banditry are not common in Polish political life so far, they do happen with increasing frequency. Many politicians are uncomfortable even with that extremely watered-down form of "lustration" of former Communists that became law in 1997; they work to water it down further. The vast number of cases where prosecution has been stopped or where criminals have not been found does not increase the public's trust

in the meting out of justice. Even less encouraging is the fact that politicians and economic entrepreneurs seem to have trouble with the law only after they had “lost their political support,” to use an expression recently coined in Poland. The Polish IRS remains amazingly unable to collect proper taxes. Some observers express fears that freedom of the press is being chipped away, while public television has almost reverted to being a government mouthpiece (see the report on this in *Rzeczpospolita*, May 13, 2002).

Poles and Germans held very different attitudes toward the Republican tradition.

All this indicates that we are not talking about accidental occurrences. Rather, it appears that we are dealing with a systemic fault of Polish democracy. Needless to say, this is contrary to the hopes we had when Communism fell. Our ambitions were just the contrary.

In this book I would like to show that to some extent, the situation indicates the failure of a certain model of Polish democracy and of the political philosophy that lies at its foundation and legitimizes it. I would name this model “Polish Liberalism.” It was articulated by a vast majority of the Polish intelligentsia and it has dominated Polish intellectual life since 1989. The expression “Polish Liberalism” would certainly be accepted by the creators of this model. “Polish Liberalism” was more than a political program, because political programs are by definition numerous at any time. This was almost a political religion where political decisions and programs metamorphosed themselves into absolute moral rules. To those that subscribe to this model—and I repeat, its adherents are the majority of the Polish intelligentsia—any discussion or questioning of this model has been treated as heresy.

To articulate this model, one had to reject another “political religion”: one expressed by the Solidarity labor movement in the early 1980s. The project called “Polish Liberalism” grew out of the self-destruction of the political thought of the political dissidents clustered around *Solidarność*. It is this rejection of Solidarity ideas rather than personal likes and dislikes, external circumstances and exigencies of political life that contributed to the present deep crisis.

Of course, in the meantime various political proposals and counterprojects have arisen, but they did not manage to become generally known for a variety of reasons. Over the last ten years or so, the project of “Polish Liberalism,” or the Polish understanding of democracy, seemed the only one worth considering. I

do not deny its apparent virtues. Nor do I question the good faith of many among those who formulated and refined it, and then defended it; I do not deny them the right to society’s respect. I am deeply convinced however that these definers of a new “political religion” made us bypass the opportunities which we had acquired after Communism ended. The articulators of “Polish Liberalism” are now glaringly absent in the Sejm and in the central institutions of our government. These were the people in whom Poles placed their hopes in 1989. Now they are absent from the political scene. Power is in the hands of the postcommunists, and the strongest opposition is the anarchistic and populist movement *Samoobrona*.

The Polish fight for independence was not just a fight for national independence. It was also a fight for the restoration of the Republic destroyed by absolute rule.

My argument here is based on the assumption that ideas have consequences, that the ways in which people think are not just the epiphenomena of their material interests; that ideas are not merely ideologies screening the real mechanisms by means of which society functions; and that ideas can help shape reality. Not everything is “objectively predetermined,” and the present state of affairs is not merely a product of the logic of history or of the layout of power and violence. In my philosophical and sociological papers I have tried to flesh these ideas out.

This failed project I am writing about has not been presented in any systematic way, of course. It can be pieced together out of the fragmentary and often transitory writings of many authors who have often rephrased their thoughts in contradictory ways. Needless to say, many people subscribed only partly to this project whose foundation is, I repeat, a certain understanding of democracy. Thus I am trying to point to an implicit project present in public discourse of the Third Republic. I am trying to articulate a certain way of thinking about democracy which, I postulate, has been erroneous. For the sake of discussion I might have presented this project as more coherent and consistent than it has been in reality. And of course, my goal is not to criticize the spokespersons for this project but rather the model itself and the way of thinking which created it.

The cornerstone ideas of this project have been moral pluralism, neutrality of the state in matters of morality, a conviction that the Polish transformation is of necessity derivative rather than self-generated, and a

belief that quick modernization (including cultural transformation) should be a fundamental goal. This was accompanied by a suspicious or at best reserved attitude toward the national tradition and by an effort not to carry decommunization too far. Among the missing elements in this project were an emphasis on social solidarity, democratic participation, national unity, and the common good. The rights of the individual vis-à-vis the state and vis-à-vis the political and cultural elites have not been respected; indeed, respect toward the individual (however modest his or her intellectual capacities or accomplishments might be) has not been observed. Polish Liberalism proposed a “privatization” of ethical norms and rules; they were relegated exclusively to private conscience. At the same time, Polish Liberalism did not pay much attention to the rule of law and the rules of public conduct that should be obligatory for everyone, without any exceptions. The end result seems to be that Polish democracy fell into the hands of those whose civic consciousness has not been awakened or exists only as an archaic remnant. Nor has Polish Liberalism paid attention to the problem of forming identity and collective memory in a positive manner. It idealized relations between states in first world countries and in the European Union, and it failed to draw consequences from the peripheral (borderland) location of the Polish state. While the Polish Liberals talked about Western Liberalism, its understanding and reception have been selective and superficial. In many cases, these Liberals remained unaware of Liberalism’s dilemmas or of its present day transformations.

At present Poland faces enormous challenges. Membership in the European Union will obviously not solve all the problems—in fact, it will itself create new problems. The Polish answer to the new and old challenges will ultimately decide whether Poland will manage to tear itself away from the magic circle or impotence and colonial dependency. Unfortunately, today we already know that Poland will enter the EU in a considerably weaker state than we had hoped. It is this weakness rather than the membership itself that evokes anxiety about the future liberty and sovereignty of Poland.

Chapter 3. The paradoxes of Polish Liberalism **(excerpts)**

Polish Liberalism was strongly influenced by the fear of “fundamentalism” which prevented Poles from articulating a theory of democratic Liberalism suitable for their country, and from initiating a public debate about other theories of state organization. There was

also a fear of nationalism which gave birth to a refusal to hold any discussion about the problems of tradition, communal identity, and collective memory. The desire to integrate former Communists into the political life of the country went hand in hand with a refusal to demand an accounting from them and thus to discriminate between truth and falsehood. This lack of discrimination was taken to be a fundamental principle of democracy. Finally, the desire to limit the role of the Catholic Church in Polish politics led to assigning the Church a place outside the public square.

Polish Liberalism paid no attention to the problem of forming identity and collective memory in a positive manner. It idealized relations between states in first world countries and in the European Union.

Thus Polish political Liberalism assumed the burden of the same paradox which historian Jerzy Szacki noted with regard to economic Liberalism, and the dissonance between Polish reality and the Liberal ideas led to its simplification and radicalization. Yet Liberalism, with the exception of the Nietzschean and postmodern versions of it, does not demand that we abandon “practical reason” and prudence in public affairs; it merely restricts their scope. But the version of Liberalism that emerged in Poland in the late 1990s has been both radical and free of some of Liberalism’s traditional ingredients.

For instance, the concept of justice evoked little interest among Polish Liberal theorists, even though Liberals worldwide have been debating it ever since John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* (1999) appeared. Which Polish Liberal has ever asked whether Polish democracy is just, or has upheld the idea that in the long run, social and economic inequalities ought to bring advantages to the least privileged members of society? Those posing such problems would have been labeled populists or even Communists: “social justice” or “justice” in general seemed to belong to the worn-out terminology of the past. Indeed, in contemporary Polish public discourse the concept of justice belongs to the least popular and most neglected, if not outright suspect, cluster of ideas. While in the United States in particular the idea of justice is tightly woven into the understanding of the just state that takes care of its citizens, in Poland no one wants to hear about it at the time when “reform” means withdrawing the state’s protection from its citizenry.

Thus political Liberalism in Poland is not modeled on either classical Liberalism (which was not founded

on relativism or pluralism) or on Liberalism as articulated by Rawls where a major role is played by the ideas of equality, justice, and morality. Let us remember that according to Rawls, social consensus transcends constitutionality and legality in that it becomes a moral consensus. In contrast, Polish Liberals represent the views of some postmodern Western intellectuals. Their idea of open society is a society that is not only culturally diverse but also culturally unfocused, one that does not possess a common unifying political culture. This is an interesting position, and it is often brilliantly articulated; but it plays only a marginal role in Western European political practice. Strictly speaking, it is not a Liberal but a radically leftist position. It is a product of a marriage between Liberalism and leftist thought, a kind of postmodern Liberalism that I will discuss in Chapter 7 titled "The final disappointment."

The goals of the Bar Confederacy (1768) had something in common with the goals of the American Revolution.

The paradox of Polish Liberalism is also grounded in a lack of understanding of contemporary Liberalism in the West where cultural universalism has generally been rejected. John Rawls's popular conception of Liberalism was essentially a hypothetical and debatable reconstruction of America's political culture. This kind of Liberalism is not metaphysical (theoretical) but political (practical). In contrast, the majority of present-day Liberals in Poland maintain that in East Central Europe there has never existed a political culture conducive to and supportive of liberal attitudes. Jerzy Szacki notes that as far as East Central Europe was concerned, "[L]iberalism appeared in a place that was totally unprepared for it" (Szacki-Tusk 14). Adam Michnik expressed the same idea even more forcefully: "We entered . . . democratic culture without possessing a political culture that is foundational to a democratic order. It is as if a barbarian from the bush was suddenly placed in front of a computer" (Michnik 375). If the situation were as Michnik described it, our Polish Liberalism would of necessity be "metaphysical" and not "political." It would have to assume that Liberal rules should prevail everywhere on earth including "the bush." Such a stance is self-contradictory, for Polish Liberalism rejects any references to the laws of nature or laws of reason, proclaiming instead relativisms of all "truths."

From Michnik's opinions it also follows that if society was "unprepared" for Liberalism, it should be

changed, and changed quickly. Here another contradiction emerges: the state is supposed to be neutral vis-à-vis the citizenry, yet it is somehow assumed that it should educate society and make it fit for Liberal democracy. The state is also supposed to supervise education. In other words, it is supposed to be neutral yet it cannot be neutral or minimalist, and not only because it has to transform the economic sector but also because it is supposed to "educate" the majority into being Liberals.

The society is supposed to learn how to look at itself in a certain way. In Roman Graczyk's words, "[w]e are looking for what unites all citizens who are full-fledged participants in this [democratic] order. In the epoch of religious pluralism, a particular religion cannot constitute a platform where all of us meet. What then can religion contribute to the ethos of a democratic state? In my opinion, its contribution can be positive only when it is perceived by its very adherents as a contribution to a community that is by its very nature pluralistic" (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 12–13, 2000).

This sounds almost like John Rawls; however, Rawls makes an appeal to "the fact of pluralism" rather than declaring that we live in an epoch of religious pluralism. *Gazeta Wyborcza's* spokesman's task is difficult because he realizes that if truth were told, Polish society is not at present "multidenominational and pluralistic." At most, one could wish that it became so, and agree with Rawls that in conditions of institutional guarantees of lawful freedom, pluralism would eventually develop. So far, however, the majority of Poles perceive Poland not as a pluralistic and polyvalent community but as a nation state, just as most Germans, French, and Americans perceive their countries as nation states without denying minorities their political, religious, and cultural rights. It seems likely that this Polish majority may regard the attempts to transform Polish society into such a pluralistic group to be an attempt to force the will of a minority upon the majority. One can lament the convictions of the majority, but one must not deprive it of its right to legislate its opinions. In public debates, of course, one can try to disqualify one's opponents, and cast doubt on their competency and their civic ability. But to do so is neither Liberal nor democratic. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the majority against which these opinions are voiced does not look kindly on the minority's efforts to be entirely "neutral" and thus in tune with the declared "neutrality" of the state.

Of course, this pedagogical attitude of the [enlightened] minority toward the unenlightened majority is not totally new in Liberalism. Liberals have

often looked at society as the source of evil. Nor have they always been “antistatist.” In his book *After Liberalism*, Immanuel Wallerstein notes that “[f]rom the outset, liberals were caught in a fundamental contradiction. As defenders of the individual and his rights vis-à-vis the state, they were pushed in the direction of universal suffrage, the only guarantee of a democratic state. But thereupon, the state became the principal agent of all reforms intended to liberate the individual from the social constraints inherited from the past. This in turn led the liberals to the idea of putting positive law at the service of utilitarian objectives” (Wallerstein 83).

While Western European Liberalism was nurtured by a distrust toward those in power, the post-1989 Polish Liberalism shaped itself under the influence of a deep distrust of the elite toward a society deemed immature.

In extreme cases the Liberals were ready to compromise freedom and democracy to advance Liberal goals. Stefan Kisielewski was not an exception in this regard. Let us remember that John Stuart Mill emphasized that only the philosophically mature individuals are entitled to hold the view that the only excuse for diminishment of liberty of the individual is to prevent harm done to others; and that despotism is a legitimate method of ruling barbarians, under the condition that the goal is to improve their fate and that the rulers visibly advance toward that goal. Mill further suggested that only when the people are capable of reforming the state in the course of free discussion among equals can the despotic rule be removed. But who decides when and where this point has been reached?

If, as the Polish Liberals say, the most pressing problem is a lack of preparedness of Poles for the democratic state, then it has to be noted that they have not been debating the various aspects of Liberalism but the negative features of Polish society. The central question in recent Polish debates has been, is Polish society able to put Liberal values into practice? Shoved aside was the question of what kind of Liberalism should be implemented and what kind of democracy should be built in Poland. One thing was taken for granted from the beginning: participatory democracy was out of the question because it was illiberal. While Western European Liberalism was nurtured by a distrust toward those in power, the post-1989 Polish Liberalism shaped itself under the influence of a deep distrust of the elite toward a society deemed immature.

I am not saying that there have been no reasons to mistrust the society. Many outside observers have noted that Europeans from the East dwelled too insistently on matters of culture and identity, which [in Western discourse] were associated with illiberal nationalism. In my earlier writings, I too emphasized the inevitability of alienation, a possible loss of identity, the importance of pragmatism, and the importance of compromise (Krasnodębski).

It is possible that the left-liberal writers such as Adam Michnik contributed to the fact that nationalism did not take hold in Poland, that Poland did not become a confessional state, that the Communists were not lynched, that democratic freedoms were not curtailed, and that the rights of minorities were not violated. However, the cost of mistrusting society has been high. First, the left-Liberal press created an impression that the former Communist elites have been better prepared for Liberalism than the former ranking members of the Solidarity labor movement; or, to use the language of the 1980s, that it was “society” rather than “the government” that turned out to be an obstacle in the building of the Liberal order. I emphasize again that a critique of Polish society was justified to some extent; however, it led to destructive results: it disfigured Polish Liberalism both in theory and in practice. Even more importantly, it violated the balance between democracy and Liberalism.

Chapter 10. *Res publica* as a common good **(excerpts)**

Thus the post-1989 reformers failed to harmonize necessary emendations with the Polish tradition and with the Polish collective identity. According to Shmuel Eisenstadt, the researching of ways leading to modernity should take into account the process of transformation and the formation of collective identities.

What was the Polish road to modernity like? Which factors influenced the Polish collective identity? It is virtually impossible to characterize this identity without invoking the historical narrative. Certainly a strong element—much stronger than was the case with neighboring Germany—was the tension between ethnicity and the political contract, as based on the experience of the First Republic (+1795). Although one could maintain that the idea of the state understood as ethnicity won, the victory was never complete, and the remembrance of the old *Res Publica* remained as an ideal and a yardstick for the present, and as a counterbalance to the modern nation state.

As a result, the state in modern Poland has been understood as a *Res publica*, as a final result of the self-organizing of citizens. This vision was strengthened by the partitions of Poland. Related to this understanding of the Polish state is the perception of the right to cogovern and the principle of equality as a foundation of community life.

Another characteristic of Polish political culture has been its attachment to symbols formed during the fight for independence, and a disproportionate participation of intellectuals in political life. This participation is even greater than in France where it has likewise been strong. The third ingredient of Polish political culture is Catholicism; however, unlike in Spain where it was associated with absolute rule, Polish Catholicism has had a gentry Republican (*szlachecki republikanizm*) tinge.

A rather minimal knowledge of Polish affairs is characteristic of Western political philosophers and historians of ideas.

At the end of the eighteenth century, a German observer and the then-happy subject of Catherine II of Russia, thus described the Polish political system considered at that time to be anarchistic and anachronistic: "It is assumed [in Poland] that members of society have concluded an alliance in order to protect individual liberty and property, and that communal consent forms the basis of that alliance. Its conditions are the laws of the country. These conditions include regulations that protect both the individual and the society, and therefore are binding upon both. The individual has to submit to them because he himself and his equals agreed to uphold them, and society can act only in agreement with them . . . The citizens freely elect their king as a symbol of the alliance they concluded among themselves. The king is supposed to execute the will of society, or the laws of the country, and he represents the majesty of society" (Schulz 76).

This German writer considered this kind of system to be as outrageous as the frivolous customs of the Warsaw aristocracy. For him, Russia and Prussia represented real order. But from the point of view of the twenty-first century, the ideas on which order was based in the Polish *Res publica* do not seem absurd: to understand the state as a form of self-organization of society does not seem outrageous at all. The same could be said about other features of Polish Republicanism: the civil rights of individuals, limited as they were at that time to aristocracy and gentry; avoidance of extreme solutions; striving after compromise; and tolerance of minority religions. It goes

without saying that these rules were put to practice in an imperfect manner, and some of them were abandoned altogether in the declining years of the First Republic. Later critiques centered on the nobility as the sole possessor of full political rights. But as we know from present day scholarship, the harsh fate of the peasantry was sometimes overstated in Polish and non-Polish historiography (Żaryn 295–325). It certainly was incredibly better than the fate of slaves in the United States, a country which in the opinion of many thinkers represented the ideal Republic. . . .

It therefore does not seem preposterous to say that the Polish political tradition is more in tune with modern ideas of the state than the Russian tradition of *samoderzhavie* or the Prussian tradition of a supervisory state (*Obrigkeitsstaat*). The road from Polish "anarchism" to modern democratic "polyarchy" is shorter than from Russian autocracy or from the Prussian militaristic state. Let us illustrate this by a quote from Klaus Zernack's *Russia and Poland*: "During the 1907 population census in Russia, Tsar Nicholas II described his occupation as 'the master of the Russian lands'. In Poland, this kind of thinking might have been characteristic of Polish rulers a thousand years earlier, when the Polish state was in its babyhood, but in Russia it was typical until the very end of tsarist rule" (Zernack 535).

Unlike in Spain where it was associated with absolute rule, Polish Catholicism has had a Republican tinge.

Even the most severe critics of the First Republic cannot deny the extraordinary attachment to liberty of its citizens. It was exceptional in eighteenth-century Europe. Aleksander Brückner wrote: "It was a great achievement of the nation to be the only country on the [European] continent upholding the idea of liberty in a milieu of absolute monarchs. As every nobleman wielded his sword in defense of liberty, Poland surpassed every other world 'republic', however, this love of liberty had little self-discipline and, in disregarding the needs of the state, it mutated into anarchy" (Brückner 384).

It is customary to seek the failure of Polish Republicanism in that anarchy, in the decline of the public spirit, and in corruption. Indeed, in the seventeenth century, the most important features of the "anarchistic" *Res publica* were "decentralization of sovereignty" and a lack of vigorous centralized state administration. However, while asking to what extent

the downfall was caused by the political principles which the Polish

Res publica adopted—the central government’s weakness and electability of kings—one should also ask to what extent the downfall was precipitated by a decline of political culture, by social problems, and by economic marginalization of this part of Europe.

It is easy to criticize the Polish Republican model today as historians seem to agree that in Central and Eastern Europe, enlightened absolutism should have been a necessary step in the formation of the modern state. The influence of this view can be seen in Polish historiography as well. This historiography seeks the reasons for the fall of the First Republic in its inability to transform itself into an absolutist state. The reforms undertaken in the late eighteenth century are seen as an attempt to strengthen the rule of the king and to centralize the state. However, in Wojciech Krieger’s view, one should not see in these reforms an attempt to usher in absolute rule (Krieger 42). Rather, the goal was to amend the *Res publica*. The Constitution of 3 May 1791 clearly preserves noble liberties and the leading role of the Catholic Church among Poland’s religious denominations. The reforms were modeled on the American and British system, and not on the neighboring absolute systems which, in the eyes of the Polish representatives of the Enlightenment such as Stanisław August Poniatowski or Thaddeus Kościuszko, were neither modern nor in tune with the spirit of the times. The reforms undertaken were meant to activate the developmental potential of the political system of the First Republic.

Thus the late eighteenth-century reforms should not be viewed as a victory of the Enlightenment over “Sarmatian” and Republican traditionalism. The 1791 Constitution preserved many elements of the latter in its moderate approach to issues. Even though the Constitution introduced hereditary monarchy, the idea of electability of kings was not entirely rejected. It should also be remembered that in Poland of that day political divisions did not necessarily run the way they did in some other European countries. While defending gentry freedoms, the gentry camp did uphold the idea of liberty as opposed to absolute rule, and the Republican enemies of reforms supported the French and American Revolutions. Seweryn Rzewuski, a participant in the Targovitsa Confederacy, was overjoyed when he heard of the fall of Bastille; he also admired the American Revolution. Casimir Pulaski, a participant in the [supposedly reactionary] Bar Confederacy, also participated in the American

Revolution. Apparently the goals of the Bar Confederacy had something in common with the goals of the American Revolution. It is not an accident that the ideas of liberty were best preserved among the impecunious Polish gentry [of the nineteenth century]. It was this class of people that most effectively supported national risings against the absolute rule of foreign monarchs.

The state in modern Poland has been understood as a *Res publica*, as a final result of the self-organizing of citizens.

The fall of the *Res publica*, like the fall of the Republic of Venice, did not signify the demise of the idea of Republicanism. The United States was the most prominent country where Republican ideals flourished. Were it not for the expansionism of Poland’s neighbors, these ideas would doubtless have continued to develop and would have assumed modern forms in Poland as well. German historian Michael M. Müller wrote: “In fact, it was the gentry-oriented Polish Republic, so loudly condemned in the political writings of the eighteenth century as anachronistic and ossified in its feudal backwardness, that showed in its own way that it was the most capable of constitutional modernization” (Müller 9).

The opinion of the Polish leftist intellectuals who write about the same subject is diametrically different. Andrzej Mencwel writes the following: “*Res publica*’s declining heritage was an outrageous anachronism ready to be placed in a museum” (Mencwel 15). Janusz Majcherek concurs: “The citizen nation of the gentry *Res publica* achieved one thing: the loss of independence. It also effectively stopped its own civilizational development. While selfishly defending its political supremacy, it did not allow the middle classes to develop and stubbornly supported anachronistic and feudal economic relations. As a result, serfdom was abolished by foreign monarchs, and the multinational and multid denominational middle classes could develop their productivity only under the partitions” (Majcherek 42). This interpretation is shaped by Marxist terminology, yet it has been accepted by the new Polish Liberals as an uncontested element of the intellectual and social history of Europe. While under Soviet Marxism the final chapter of this interpretation consisted in the liberation of the proletariat, in the postmodern version of Liberalism it consists of liberation of the individual from any limitations or

obligations. If one looks at history this way, Poland's republican tradition becomes very black indeed.

However, recent scholarship suggests that this interpretation is erroneous. It is not at all certain that the "continental road" to the development of the modern state should be declared universally beneficial. To use Max Weber's language, the *Anstaltsstaat* is characterized by bureaucratic and legalistic methods of solving conflicts, and thus by a strict division between state and society (Breuer 80–82). Thus it creates its own problems. In contrast, in the Anglophone areas of the world self-organization of society has been more advanced, and separation between the state and the social, religious, and economic spheres has been much less strict. The administration of such states preserved many features of the epoch when the notables and the *dilettanti* were in power, yet these English-speaking states are no less modern, in fact, just the opposite. In order to correctly interpret the Polish political tradition one has to compare it with this Anglophone tradition. It may then become apparent that the Polish *Res publica* was too "Western" for the geographical area in which it was located.

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***Solidarność* was not a Liberal movement but a Liberty-oriented Republican movement possessed of some characteristically Polish features of Republicanism.**

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The Republican ideas originally came from Italy. They radiated, as it were, onto the European continent. Alois Riklin remarks: "There is talk about *translatio imperii*. There is also a certain kind of *translatio* of Republicanism. In the late sixteenth century the light of Republicanism went out in Italy. But it was passed on to other countries, primarily to Holland, England, Scotland and, later, to North America" (Riklin 100). The fact that the author did not mention Poland which for several centuries held up that light is the result of a rather minimal knowledge of Polish affairs that is characteristic of Western political philosophers and historians of ideas. And, as indicated earlier, in Poland the native Republican tradition is undervalued because it is usually viewed from the perspective of Liberal ideas and the sociological modernization theories. Thus Andrzej Walicki offers another negative assessment: "The Republican and democratic tradition existed in Poland but it was not grounded in capitalist economy or in an individualistic and liberal set of values. Poland was not transformed by the Puritan work ethic, and its nation-building elites (first the nobility and later the

intelligentsia) did not acquire 'bourgeois' characteristics such as entrepreneurship and thrift; they did not learn to accept the fact that individual economic entrepreneurship is a high calling, and they did not respect its achievements" (Walicki 32).

Certainly the author is right to some extent. However, he also uncritically accepts the idea fostered by Max Weber that it was the Puritan work ethic that precipitated capitalist modernization, and not, say, aristocratic and noble striving for luxury and conspicuous consumption, as maintained by Werner Sombart (Lehmann 94–108). The generally accepted vision of modernity, influenced by Weber, also discounts the role of Catholicism, of the Renaissance, and of the European South, and it disregards such phenomena as the "religious capitalism" of the Middle Ages. There is also a general tendency to reduce complex historical phenomena to their economic ingredients.

The moral focus

For a long time, the Polish Republican tradition served as a point of reference for Polish political discourse. The gentry *Res publica* and its idea of the nation as the subject of sovereign will can hardly be removed from Polish collective memory. In *Poles and Germans: 100 Key Concepts*, Michael G. Müller compared the decline of two republics, the Polish *Rzeczpospolita* and the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. He pointed out that Poles and Germans held very different attitudes toward the old Republican tradition. In contrast to Poles, Germans "did not experience the end of their republic as a catastrophe, and did not remember it in these terms" (Kobylińska and Müller 43).

The recollection of gentry Republicanism was a major reason why Poles survived the period of partitions. The Polish fight for independence was not just a fight for national independence. It was also a fight for the restoration of the Republic destroyed by absolute rule. The memory of the Polish Parliament, or Sejm, has been a key ingredient of Polish historical consciousness. Literary historian Richard Przybylski writes the following in his book on the literature of the postpartitions Classicism: "The classics had no doubts that the holy mystery of eternal Polishness resided in the parliamentary form of government. . . . The Parliament was the Polish Holy Grail. . . . Another gift which eternal Polishness offered to the nation in the years of 'Its Royal Highness *Res publica*' was the set of values sustained by the old gentry culture, and especially by the literature of independent Poland"

(Przybylski 388). It was this tradition of parliamentarism that made Poland different from its occupiers: "Prussia had its Great Soldier, Muscovy had its Great Harlot. We had the Great Sejm" (Przybylski 100).

Several contemporary thinkers have reemphasized the role of Rome and Italy (especially during the Renaissance) in shaping modern culture and politics, and have demonstrated the erroneousness of the idea that Republicanism dates back to the Reformation and to Enlightenment Liberalism.

Unlike their German counterparts, the Polish Romantics considered the parliamentary spirit to be a crucial part of Polish identity. Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz speaks of Adam Mickiewicz's political stance as Republican in the full sense of the word: "In *Master Thaddeus*, Mickiewicz showed himself as a resplendent heir to the spiritual legacy of the First Republic. Facing the danger from the Empire that was built on the enslavement of peoples, one whose entire history was a story of the enslavement of souls and bodies of men, Mickiewicz took the stance of a citizen of the First Republic" (Rymkiewicz and Poprawa 15–16).

The Polish Romantics saw the Polish conflict with Russia in terms of a fight for the soul of the Slavic world; they saw it as a conflict of two contradictory political visions, Polish Republicanism on the one hand and Russian autocracy on the other. . . . Mickiewicz saw the history of Poland as a history of various gatherings whose moral center, like the center of the Poland, was the Supreme Parliament, or Sejm (Mickiewicz X:307). He emphasized that Europe did not understand the Polish political system and considered it orderless and anarchistic; but Europe was taking a wrong path, the path of materialism, pedantic scholarship, formalism and anti-realism—in other words, the path of modernity (Mickiewicz X:312). Mickiewicz believed deeply that the future European order should take a good look at the Polish Sejm. The Sejm, the *arché* of the Polish laws and traditions, was eventually to become a pan-European institution. It is hard not to notice here the germ of the future Strassburg Parliament. Mickiewicz also thought that Polish parliamentarism was superior to the American variety because it combined liberty and faith: "The Poles should remember that American Republicanism is not sufficiently rooted, and that we are waiting for European Republicanism, an all-

embracing Republicanism based on the Christian moral ideals" (Mickiewicz VI:206).

The Republican element has remained a vital part of Polish self-perception in spite of the ethnicization which occurred as a result of partitions and to some extent as a result of the deliberate policies of the occupying nations. And the tradition of gentry Republicanism eventually broke away from the idea that only one estate was entitled to identify with the *Res publica*. Professor Rett Ludwikowski rightly noted that "Polish democracy before the November uprising of 1830 was a 'democracy of the gentry' only in the sense that most of the leaders of the movement were of noble birth and that, temporarily, they were ready to admit that the nobility's leadership was necessary. The assumption that democracy cared only about the gentry's interests and did not recognize problems of other social groups ridicules the very thesis of the emergence of a democratic movement in this period. . . . [T]he democratic movement did not jeopardize the interests of the nobility or gentry, but neither did it try to protect these social groups" (Ludwikowski 103, 104).

In Poland the gentry culture became a common national good, somewhat like the bourgeois culture in Germany, and it cannot therefore be declared to be the property of only one estate (Tenbruck). It became *the* representative Polish culture, just as the bourgeois culture became *the* representative German culture (excluding Austria of course). In certain regions of the country the gentry preserved until the Second World War such characteristics of the old Republican culture as attachment to tradition, love of the land, religiosity, and a set of social norms (Krawczak). Later the gentry-affiliated intelligentsia became the carrier of Polish culture. Until 1939, the intelligentsia culture combined the milieus of petty bourgeoisie and landowning nobility, thus broadening the cultural base. Especially after 1926, the intelligentsia culture became a synonym of the national culture (Ihnatowicz 654). . . . It is significant that one-third of Polish writers during the interwar period claimed family relationship with the landowning class, while in reality that class constituted only one percent of the Polish population (Tazbir 108). Thus cultural continuity was preserved. In Czesław Miłosz's words, "the entire. . . culture of [pre-war] Wilno as a social milieu was a consecutive effort of the same social class whose sons founded the Philomat Society and attended Philaret and *Promieniści* picnics

under the oaks of the Ponary Mountains: the petty and middle gentry of the Grand Duchy” (Miłosz 210).

As is well known, such critics of the intelligentsia and its culture as Professor Józef Chałasiński accused it of elitism, social isolationism, and leaning toward a caste society (Chałasiński). While this criticism has its merits and continues to be relevant, it bypasses the social value of this intelligentsia culture. According to Janusz Tazbir, the old Polish gentry traditions “are the strongest elements of our political culture, and they form the historical basis of all antitotalitarian strivings and actions [in Poland]” (Tazbir, *Kultura szlachecka* 234). Tazbir points out that the features of the Polish national character that evoked criticism in the eighteenth century turned out to be virtues in the twentieth: “In the radically changed historical conditions the shortcomings of the gentry sometimes became its strong points. . . often conservatism became an attachment to the past and to national traditions, and the old opposition to centralized rule and dislike of absolutism manifested themselves in the antitsarist and antiimperial attitude (Tazbir, *Kultura szlachecka* 75). The opposite was also the case: humanism and progressivism mutated into servility and collaboration.

Solidarność and the Republican tradition

The political ideals of the Solidarity labor movement are in many ways a continuation of this Republican tradition. It is not by accident that Lech Wałęsa said: “In the [Gdańsk] Shipyards, we existed without a State, we lived in a free republic where order was created by ourselves” (Wałęsa-*Solidarność w ruchu* 194).

Solidarność was not a Liberal movement but a Liberty-oriented Republican movement possessing some characteristically Polish features of Republicanism. Its point of contact with Liberalism was the central question of freedom of the individual—therefore, *Solidarność* was in no way collectivist—but its understanding of that freedom was specifically Polish: *Solidarność* members understood that individuals in Poland cannot be free while they as citizens of Poland are dependent on the Communist political power. This perception remained crucial even though at that time the Communists were almost transforming themselves into Liberals, they were modernizing the country, and were ready to allow the individual society members to become rich.

But *Solidarność* neither wanted nor was able to take over political power. To regain liberty meant first of all to demonstrate that society had a will of its own that was at odds with the will of the Communists. The

crucial point was not that political power was to be agreed upon by means of negotiations, but that workers’ strikes forced that Communist power to include in the new rules the possibility of contestation of arbitrary decisions of that power. The now-criticized features of Polish democracy—numerous conflicts, quarrels, protests, and demonstrations—can also be seen as manifestations of the vitality of Republicanism (of course not in its extreme and populist forms). What is characteristic of Republicanism is not just consensus but contestation, or the freedom to register one’s disagreements with laws and rules.

In Hannah Arendt’s opinion, under the influence of absolutism which preceded it, the French Revolution absolutized the concept of the nation as a new sovereign that stood above the law.

The members of *Solidarność* were aware that freedom of the individual is possible only when all citizens are free, and that freedom is not only, or not primarily, an ability to pursue one’s own private desires within the framework of a state that is fully neutral in matters of social and moral choices. Freedom was understood as freedom from the arbitrary will of the Communists, as a possibility to contest and control the dealings of the Communists even if their political power could not be entirely eliminated.

Polish scholars have noted that “*Solidarność* possibly had more in common with gentry Republicanism than with the modern majority rule. Its mechanism of reaching decisions reminds one of the Polish *sejmiks* [local parliaments] of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Item: a factory would elect representatives who would then join a circle of representatives of the entire region. Then the region selected its own representatives to represent it in the Central Council. This was similar to the way the MPs were selected in Old Poland. Each delegate came to the Council with instructions received at regional meetings (just as in the old Polish *sejmiki*). Democratic voting was valued, but unanimity even more so. Fierce local patriotism was typical of the labor milieu at that time; for its part, the Central Council was careful not to impinge on local identity and local interests. The country (“*Solidarność*”) thus could function only as a federation of regions. Democracy could function only if all participants supported it” (*Solidarność w ruchu* 145–147).

Similarity between the Solidarity labor movement and the old gentry *sejmiks* was noted also by foreign observers and scholars such as Norman Davies,

Timothy Garton Ash, and Martin Malia. However, the authors of the above-quoted work consider the ways of Solidarity to be examples of civilizational backwardness. They are joined by Andrzej Walicki who asked, “did not Solidarity represent an unconscious acceptance of the traditional Polish and now-archaic conception of the nation, that is to say, seeing the nation as a gigantic community with almost familiar features; as possessed of not only political but also moral characteristics, and thus capable of near-unanimity and directness in making decisions about its own fate? In spite of its clearly different objectives, the socialist ideal of the ‘moral and political unity of society’ strengthened this conception of the nation. Its roots are in the old gentry ideas of the nature of the national community” (Walicki 36).

Thus Walicki lumps together socialist theory and the idea of the Republican political community as expressed in the Solidarity Movement. He also is convinced that the understanding of liberty manifest in *Solidarność* was an expression of civilizational backwardness. Such opinions result from adopting an unnecessarily contracted point of view stipulated by dogmatic Liberalism, one reduced to the views of Benjamin Constant and Isaiah Berlin. If one adopts such a view, everything that is not “negative freedom” or everything that is not “modern liberalism” amounts to collectivism.

A revival of the Republican idea

In the twenty-first century socialism ceased to be capitalism’s serious rival, and consequently the ways of thinking about society also underwent a change. In this situation one observes a revival of the Republican idea and of the Republican model of democracy. While it once seemed that it was archaic and as such to be definitively rejected during the formation of the new liberal concept of freedom, the historians of political ideas have demonstrated that its influence has been stronger than previously assumed (Skinner 114). Without understanding the role played by Republican thought it is impossible to understand either the genesis or the functioning of present-day democracy. Republican thought remains a part of the Western tradition even though it has been neglected and overshadowed by Liberalism in recent times. Its “underground” presence remains strong.

The United States was built on Republicanism. The idea of a free Republic with Roman and Italian roots lay at the very foundation of the country (Pocock). In John Pocock’s opinion, the American Revolution was not so much a manifestation of revolutionary

Enlightenment as an achievement of the Renaissance. Only recently did the idea of Liberalism and the welfare state replace the idea of the Republic (Sandel). Furthermore, the United States continues to perceive itself as a democratic Republic rather than simply as a democracy. In contrast, in Poland Liberalism has been perceived as standing in opposition to the welfare state, that is to say, of the new and liberal (in the contemporary meaning of the word) understanding of the common good in a mass democracy. This central idea of [a welfare state-oriented] contemporary Liberalism has never been of interest to the Polish Liberals, either those market-oriented or those with leftist leanings who care “about the soul.” These Polish Liberals surrounded the religious and ethnic minorities with their care, but not the poor or those who have not been able to adapt to the postcommunist economic system. They have treated this last category of “losers” as if they were superfluous people who deserve extinction (Majcherek 249–252 and 267–270).

In the West one hears with increasing frequency the opinion that Liberalism’s domination has led to a disintegration of the public sphere. The negative results of the neutralizing influence of Liberalism have evoked various attempts to revive the Republican tradition (Sandel). Among the participators in this project there are thinkers such as Quentin Skinner who reconstructed a neo-Roman theory, or John Pocock who analyzed civic humanism—he called it “classical Republicanism”—and its continuation in the Anglo-Saxon tradition as represented by [Austin] Harrington; or Philip Pettit who outlined a contemporary model of Republicanism on the basis of historical studies. While these writers interpret the Republican tradition in diverse ways, they have reemphasized the role of Rome and Italy (especially during the Renaissance) in shaping modern culture and politics, and they have demonstrated the erroneousness of the idea that Republicanism dates back to the Reformation and the Enlightenment. In contrast [the very influential] Max Weber refused to assign to the Italian Republics a significant role in the historical development of Europe and instead exclusively credited the northern European cities.

Almost forgotten before 1989, Hannah Arendt, who is considered today to be a conservative critic of Liberalism, enjoys an increase in popularity. Arendt maintained that the Founders of the United States were true heirs of the ancient tradition of Republicanism. She contrasted democracy and Republicanism, and she expressed her distaste for mass democracy where

citizens are replaced by private individuals and where political principles became social “values.” In a democracy the collegiate spirit withers away and is replaced by public opinion; reason becomes subservient to passions, and the will of the people does not go through the sieve of a system of representation. In Hannah Arendt’s opinion, the French Revolution is an example of the prevalence of the democratic spirit over the Republican one, whereas the American Revolution demonstrates just the opposite. Under the influence of absolutism which preceded it, the French Revolution absolutized the concept of the nation as a new sovereign that stood above the law. In contrast, in America there existed a political tradition of a self-limiting democracy: the people were formed by organizations and institutions, and were accustomed to self-rule within the limits of and according to the precepts of the law. In obvious ignorance of the Polish tradition of Republicanism, Arendt maintained that before the American Revolution the European parliaments exercised only advisory and not legislative powers.

Jürgen Habermas also returns to the idea of the Republic. He maintains that there exist two competing normative models of democracy, Liberal and Republican. The latter’s advantage is that it holds on to the “radically democratic” idea of a society’s political self-organization by the debating citizens, and it does not reduce common goals to a compromise of the conflicting private interests. But in Habermas’s opinion, this is an excessively optimistic option because it makes the democratic process depend on the citizens’ virtue (Habermas 283). Habermas offers another model, one based on his theory of discourse. This model is supposed to combine ancient freedom with the modern one, private autonomy with public autonomy, negative freedom with political freedom. [In Habermas’s opinion] this is possible because of their mutual dependence. One might say that this model of democracy introduces elements of Republicanism into contemporary Liberalism, but instead of treating the citizens as a collective subject that finds its center in the state (as was the case in classical Republicanism), it treats society as a centerless network of all kinds of institutionalized discourses. The “subject” of this self-organizing legal community disappears in the manifestations of subjectless communication (Habermas 291).

Zygmunt Bauman likewise postulates that the proper answer to the crisis of liberal democracy and of politics in general is the idea of Republicanism. Like Hannah Arendt he pits the idea of the Republic against the idea

of the nation, but unlike Arendt he maintains that both the Republican idea and the idea of the nation were born in the French Revolution so highly criticized by Arendt. They remain related even though in fact they stand in opposition to each other. The Republic stands for a break with the past and a new beginning; it signifies the common good. In contrast, the nation represents particularism, ties to the past, the bonds of tradition. The nation allows one to “exit” freedom, whereas the Republic represents a road to freedom. In contemporary liberal democracy nationalism and the Republican idea compete with each other and develop their own separate ways (Bauman). The Republic “exits” the nation state as it were, it liberates itself and assumes a pure form. However, Bauman does not make clear how this can be reconciled with his general thesis that we live in times of ambivalence.

The Polish answer to the new and old challenges will ultimately decide whether Poland will manage to tear itself away from the magic circle or impotence and colonial dependency.

From the above it appears clear that the idea of the Republic enjoys popularity [among thinkers] on the left side of the political spectrum. This does not mean that Republicanism is a leftist idea. In its leftist version Republicanism becomes associated with subjecting everything to political negotiations; politics becomes voluntary, and prepolitical ties are rejected. But the old version of Republicanism did not proclaim the idea of such an autonomy. Republican virtue was assumed to develop in the context of tradition thanks to which, as Alasdair MacIntyre has shown, it is possible to have substantive rather than purely formalistic ethics. This kind of Republicanism is based on a belief in the natural order of the world that is not man’s doing. In the old Republics the political order was also a moral order that maintained its relationship to the eternal order. It is not by accident that the contemporary leftist Republicans reject the very concept of virtue.

They also, and wrongly, promote antagonism between the nation and the Republic. Originally the nation was only a new designation of Republicanism. This can be seen in the Polish example which has played a significant role in the reflections on Republicanism and nationalism, mainly thanks to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s writings. His *Considérations sur le gouvernement de la Pologne* (1771) is often dismissed by contemporary Polish political analysts as nonsensical musings, but this work has recently been

rediscovered in the West. The relationship between the Republic and the nation has attracted particular attention. David Miller, one of the few contemporary intellectuals who perceives the positive aspects of nationhood and the nation state, has observed that some commentators see in Rousseau's treatise a turning point between the Republicanism of *Du Contrat social* (1762) and the later nationalistic doctrine. Miller declares himself in favor of the view that nationhood served to at least partly replace patriotic loyalty toward the city state as a basis of Republican citizenship (Miller 87).

In the Republican sense, the concept of *demos* does not entail a contradiction between democratic citizenship and identification with a specific historical nation (Przyłębski-Rusconi 91–98). Yet when constitutional patriotism becomes a subject of discussion, it is often forgotten that *demos*, or the political nation, is not simply a group of voters or inhabitants of a constitutional state. *Demos* is held together by something more than the common political framework; it is a political entity not in the narrow sense but in the sense that it constitutes a political nation.

Nor is Republicanism necessarily an enemy of religion. Certainly Polish Republicanism was not like John Pocock's "citizen's humanism"; it did not break away from a Christian vision of the world. During the Renaissance the Polish nobleman was not only a *homo politicus* but remained a *homo credens*. His Catholicism did not clash with his idea of the Republic. It was a peculiarity of Polish Catholicism, and one forgotten in European historiography, that it was not joined at the hip with absolutism (as was the case in Spain, Germany, or France) but rather with the freedom-oriented ideology of the Polish nobility (Schramm). The same could be said about the period of Catholic Reformation that used to be called Counterreformation.

One should also mention that treating Catholicism and the Enlightenment as absolute opposites invites many questions. By and large the Polish representatives of the Enlightenment were not freethinkers (Kriegseisen 37–38). Those who make the claim that they were should remember the first article of the 3 May 1791 Constitution which made Catholicism the dominant religion in the Polish *Res publica*. Furthermore, among the leading reformers of the Polish state there were many Jesuits and graduates of Jesuit colleges. These facts can serve as a confirmation of Helmuth Plessner's statement that the Enlightenment and Catholicism might have showed hostility to each other but they met on common ground because the Enlightenment was a secularized version of

Catholicism (Plessner 76). In Catholic countries a strict division between the internal and external spheres, or between the individual and the state, has not occurred. According to Plessner, it was this division that caused the atrophy of the public sphere and was one of the causes of the "German catastrophe." ▲

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The Entry of Poland into the European Union

Moving the Center to the Periphery

James R. Thompson

The entry of Poland into the EU in May of 2004 is more important than simple outsourcing to a cheap labor market. French farmers have already done everything possible to keep Polish agricultural products from entering into the European market. The imposition of ISO 9000 standards* on an economy devastated by fifty years of Communist and Nazi occupation will, naturally, be well beyond the ability of Polish agriculture to readily come into compliance. The same can be said of Polish manufacturing. As one intimately connected with quality control regimes, I am well aware of how vacuous vetting for ISO 9000 can be. Such vetting always requires one commodity that Poland greatly lacks: ready cash.

Kwaśniewski is emerging as a master of Realpolitik.

The reality is that artificial barriers have been abuilding for years within the EU against Polish goods. Subsidized Danish butter and cheese compete in Poland with nonsubsidized Polish dairy products. Polish foods are stopped from entering the EU on the most preposterous of pretexts. At one point, for example, Polish cherries were not admitted into the EU lest the "health" of the French and Germans and Dutch be subject to the dangers associated with this fruit. And the dangers are only real because they are claimed to be so.

After Poland is admitted to the EU, artificial "quality control" vetting will be used to replace the simple embargoing which has kept many Polish goods out of EU markets for some years. The inefficiencies of French peasants will not be relaxed willingly. We recall that when French *Beaujolais* wines were criticized by a leading French wine magazine, the French winegrowers sued the journal into bankruptcy. Poles need not expect better treatment from the French dairy farmers and orchard growers.

Companies from the old EU will be exempt from artificial barriers as they build assembly plants and



factories in Poland. Indeed, this has already taken place. The kind of *maquiladora* organization, whereby American manufacturers have portions of a manufactured commodity built across the border in Mexico, is already in evidence in Poland.

Sooner or later the trickle-down principle will work to raise the standard of Polish living to that associated with the older members of the EU. There is a long way to go. Unemployment in Poland is over 20 percent. When discouraged workers who no longer enter the statistical base are included, another 10 percent might well be added. For these people the standard of living is worse than it was under the Communists.

The peripheral countries of Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain are Poland's natural allies in the EU.

How will the entry into the EU help the unemployed from the one-factory villages (where the one factory was allowed to perish in the early 1990s as per the advice of such experts as Harvard Professor Jeffrey Sachs)? Faced with unemployment among its own membership, EU labor leaders are not excited about bringing in Polish workers. Germany has for years preferred hiring Turks rather than Poles, apparently thinking that the similarly cultured Poles would be more inclined to stay after their work contracts expired—a big mistake, for Germany now has a large permanent minority of Turks and Kurds. For the near term future (seven years in the case of Germany and Austria), the terms of entry to the EU specifically exclude the ability of Polish workers to migrate to Germany and most of the other large players in the EU. So much for Poles becoming citizens of a United States of Europe. All citizens of the EU are equal, but some are more equal than others.

The Metternichs of the EU have thought all this out rather carefully. Yes, Poland can get into the EU, but in the immediate future the rights of Poles will be very different from those of French, Germans, or British. It is as though Poles had to be excluded by statute from many of the rights for which they had joined the European Union in the first place.

There is an old story about a poker game in a small Southern town near an Army training camp. Noticing one of its new recruits wandering into the house where the game was on, a kindly sergeant cautioned him, "Son, don't you know this game is crooked?" The private responded, "Sure, sarge, I know it is crooked. But it's the only game in town." The analogy for the Poles is painfully real.

Of course, justice would dictate that Poles be treated better than this. After all, Poland was the country that stood up to Hitler and Stalin. But Poland had allies in

1939—Britain and France—whose help against Hitler was minimal and who were perfectly content at Yalta to see Poland delivered into forty-five years of brutal Soviet bondage. Given its historical experience, the current deal for getting into the European Union should be viewed as relatively generous.

So Poland enters the European Union with a weak hand. However, the hand is being played by a strong poker player—Aleksander Kwaśniewski. No Józef Beck, trusting the hearty good fellowship of his European "allies," Kwaśniewski is emerging as a master of *Realpolitik*. The old EU buddies made a concession to Poland and Spain concerning voting in the European Parliament. Subsequently, it occurred to the Germans and French that this had been a mistake, a mistake which they invited Kwaśniewski to allow to be taken back in the spirit of European good fellowship. The Poles and the Spaniards politely refused, all in the spirit of European good fellowship.

There is a new political alignment coming in Europe.

The Germans and the French decided not to join the Americans in their invasion of Iraq. They did so in a fashion which was most embarrassing to the Americans. The French and Germans assumed the Poles and Spaniards and Italians would follow the lead of the European big boys. They were wrong. The Poles sent a brigade to Iraq in support of the Americans. The Spaniards and Italians also joined the "Coalition of the Willing." There was little doubt that Kwasniewski was no more enthusiastic about the Iraqi adventure than Polish public opinion polls indicate the average Pole is. And it is also true that Kwasniewski was painfully aware of how little aid Poland had received from America in the post-Communist age. Kwasniewski has no illusions about George Bush. He simply took pages out of Machiavelli and acted rationally.

Before Poland was taken into the EU, the Germans had a phrase for some of the other members, the PIGS. This was an acronym for Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain, countries regarded as a kind of EU Third World. These are Poland's natural allies in the power game within the EU. Historically, these countries have been defenders of European civilization against invasions from the East, whether Persians, Saracens, Turks, or Muscovites. The putative leader of this periphery group is Italy. Already Berlusconi has moved in the direction of setting up a coalition within the EU to counter the power of France and Germany. Like the Spaniards and

Poles, the Italians have pointedly joined with the Americans and British in their Iraqi adventure.

There is a new alignment coming in Europe. The situation of the Poles is going to be tough for years to come. Their hand of cards is not the strongest. And the game dominated by the Germans and the French is hardly a fair one. But the game is exciting, and for the first time in 200 years Poland is a player. Perhaps most importantly, Poland seems to have abandoned its traditional strategy of the glorious failure and adopted that of the achievable though gritty success. ▲

* ISO standards are international quality control standards which determine whether a product is allowed to be imported to the EU.



BOOKS Received

***Dwa bunty [Two rebellions]*, by Jerzy Narbutt.** Edited with an introduction by Waldemar Żyszkiewicz. Katowice: Unia (unia@cyberia.pl), 2003. 159 pages. Paper. In Polish.

A collection of essays by one of Poland's foremost essayists. Many had been published in various cultural and political periodicals, and all are characterized by Narbutt's supreme ability to walk the middle of the road, avoiding any kind of fanaticism/extremism and holding fast to a Thomistic and soberly Catholic *Weltanschauung*. Those addicted to the dialectic of history will find some of the essays simplistic or one-sided, but even they will not be able to put the book away until they read it from cover to cover. Narbutt's books generally command this kind of attention. One may disagree with them, but one cannot stop reading them. What a talent, and what a sober mind.

The two rebellions referred to in the title are the rebellion against authority accomplished during the Reformation, and the rebellion against reality accomplished by modernist and postmodernist philosophers. Narbutt thus joins philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Jacques Maritain, and Mortimer Adler in his rejection of subjectivism. He encourages mutiny against the postmodernist paradigm which rejects the very notion of value and such traditional values as heroism, moral probity, and sacrifice.

The genre favored by Narbutt is the short essay, the kind initiated by Montaigne in the sixteenth century and practiced in western and central Europe until the nineteenth century; it later morphed into feuilleton and newspaper column. Accordingly, Narbutt's meditations are titled "On appearances"; "On contempt"; "Conscience"; and so forth. They read extremely well and make wonderful bedtime reading.

***Oboz pracy w Świątobłowicach w 1945 roku: dokumenty, zeznania, relacje, listy*, edited by Adam Dziurak.** Warsaw: Institute of National Memory and Committee Investigating Crimes against the Polish Nation, 2002. ISBN 83-915983-6-5. Index, tables. 247 pages. Hardcover.

A collection of hard data concerning the concentration camp set up in Soviet-occupied Poland by its Soviet-appointed authorities in 1945. The camp's commander, Salomon Morel, emigrated to Israel in 1992. The Polish government has sought his extradition for years, unsuccessfully so far. He is accused of crimes against humanity for which there is no statute of limitations.

In addition to original reports, lists, and documents written by camp officials, the volume contains several dozen depositions of survivors. The depositions contain detailed descriptions of beatings and brutalities by the camp authorities. While most of the camp's inmates were German, about one-third were Polish, and their "crime" was being anti-Soviet. Some American citizens, such as Wanda Langer, died there, and children as young as one year of age were incarcerated. The Świątobłowice concentration camp operated for nine months. It was closed by the order of the government, and prisoners were shipped to other prisons and camps. Out of the estimated six thousand men, women, and children incarcerated there, one-third died in the camp. Those who survived were intimidated to the point of keeping silent about the conditions in the camp throughout the period of the Soviet occupation of Poland. The depositions contained in this book were given in the 1990s when the Soviet army was out of Poland.

Other Books Received

Trzecia część, by Krzysztof Koehler. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie (www.wl.net.pl), 2003. ISBN 83-08-03400-4. 81 pages. Paper.

A new volume of poetry by a poet once associated with the bruLion group.

Parafia Ostrowca Świętokrzyskiego, by Rev. Tadeusz Lutkowski. Sandomierz: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 2001. 118 pages. Numerous photographs, documents, and notes. ISBN 83-7300-066-6. Hardcover.

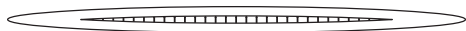
This finely composed history of the St. Michael Parish in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski begins in 1597. Of interest is a recorded diary of the persecution and harassment which this one parish had to undergo in Communist times in Soviet-occupied Poland.

Universitas Studiorum Silesia Anno MMIII, edited by Zbigniew Kadłubek. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego ul. Bankowa 12B, 40-007,

Katowice, Poland), 2003. 168 pages. Paper. Bilingual in Polish and English.

A well-prepared university catalog, American-style, minus the actual list of courses. Would that all Polish universities distributed this kind of catalog. This one, was published in 1,000 copies and was printed on expensive paper, so it is not easily or freely available. Wish the paper were worse and the distribution more generous. *Rocznik Polskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego na Obczyźnie*, 2001/2002, edited by Krzysztof Rowiński. Vol. XLV. London: PTNO (238–240 King Street, London W6 0RF), 2003. 509 pages. In Polish and English, summaries in English.

Articles by Polish emigré scholars on a variety of topics. This Polish Scholarly Society played a significant role among those post-World War II emigrés who could not return to Soviet-occupied Poland.



Poland's Transformation

A Work In Progress

Edited by Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, John Radziłowski, and Dariusz Tołczyk. Studies in Honor of Kenneth W. Thompson. Charlottesville, VA: Leopolis Press, 2003. 295 pages. Paper. \$29.95.

Beata Płonka

As one of the authors of the book notes, “even during the decades of Communist rule, Poland was never quite like the other countries within the Soviet orb” (A. E. Dick Howard), and in many respects it still remains a peculiar case. What made Poland special in the post-World War II period was its firm resistance to the rudiments of Communist ideology, such as forced atheization of the society and collectivization of land—ideas that made their way into all other countries of the Soviet bloc. Poland was the sole exception. Perhaps because of these peculiarities, in the 1980s the impetus for political change took many by surprise: the strongest anticommunist movement of 10 million Solidarity members and the negotiated end of Communism set up an example for other countries of the region.

For those who seek to understand Poland in its prolonged transition period, this compilation of articles by Polish and American experts provides an exhaustive

overview of the country's politics, law, economy and culture. It is indeed an exemplary collection among books recently published in English. The volume covers crucial points of the Polish Revolution and the meanders of modern Polish politics after consolidation and legitimization of power assumed by anticommunist opposition.

A comprehensive introduction to the roots of the Polish anti-Communist uprising in the 1980s is provided by a respected historian, Wojciech Roszkowski. A thorough study of the new Polish constitution and legislation system is provided by both Polish and American specialists. While Zbigniew Stawrowski and Krzysztof Jasiewicz view both critically, the system is applauded by American law expert A. E. Dick Howard. Other important elements of the postcommunist world, such as corruption, civil society building, the role of the Catholic Church, as well as the still-troublesome question of property restitution, are likewise considered. The country's geopolitical position and its relations with Russia and the European Union occupy much space, and references to the United States' history in the writers' essays make Polish situations more comprehensible to American readers. Two complementary overviews of Poland's international policies are provided by a Polish historian, Jerzy Holzer, and a Polish-American historian, John Radziłowski. Readers who have been exposed to debates over the country's modern history will find familiar concerns analyzed here: Poland's peripheral position in Europe, the extremist views of certain social groups, and their theories of modern European history. Marek Jan Chodakiewicz's colorful description of shades and fractions in Polish postwar politics and of the national perception of history makes for particularly good reading. Polish literature in the new market-driven world is described by Dariusz Tołczyk.

After fourteen years, one would expect the transition period to be over, especially after the introduction of the radical “big bang” reforms and the outburst of popular enthusiasm for a new political and economic course at the beginning of the 1990s. While most systemic changes have already been introduced, the hardship imposed on the society created a heavy burden that slows down the transformation. Societies that adapt to new systems more slowly than their political and economic institutions find themselves at a disadvantage at the time of change. Despite the general belief that there will be no return to the old system, the Poles often feel lost in the new reality, and as sociologist Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński points out, “a sense of relative

deprivation appears to prevail among the masses which leads to popular pessimistic assessments, both in regard to the country's future and concerning the individual's place in the society." Thus we find that overall Polish self-criticism and low self-esteem manifest themselves in surveys and publications in the postcommunist period.

Many of Poland's problems in the area of economy, culture, and politics are shared by the country's neighbors, of course. Yet Polish collective memory expects beautiful results instantaneously. With just a few prominent exceptions, Polish post-1989 culture seems to confirm the thesis that more beautiful songs are likely to be composed in prison. Δ

A Concise History of Polish Theater from the Eleventh to the Twentieth Centuries

By Kazimierz Braun. *Studies in Theater Arts*, vol. 21. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003. 476 pages. ISBN 0-7734-6791-2. Hardcover. \$139.95.

Mark F. Tattenbaum

I recall that when I was Professor Braun's student, he once stood before his class of sophomores and juniors and asked for a definition of "theater." Some brave students offered their opinions of what exactly the phenomenon of theater amounted to. Having allowed the students to roam freely for a while, Professor Braun concluded the discussion by saying that "Theater is an artistic and democratic process of communication between actor and audience, where each side contributes to the exchange." He stressed that it is a two way process, the actor depending on the audience and audience depending on the actor. He let this concept work its way into the minds of his students. Then he asked the next question, "What do you know about the history of the theater?" Hands sprung up but no one was able to give an exhaustive answer. After listening to his students' suggestions, Braun provided a simple yet elegant answer: "The history of the theater is the history of productions."

In his most recent book, Braun provides us with much more than a compilation of productions and dates of productions, although this information is also included.

He begins his exploration of the theater of the land of his birth by first examining the early history of Poland.

Unlike America, Poland has been a land that has suffered at the hands of its invaders. As a result of the constantly changing political climate, the Polish theater was, from the outset, an important part of Polish life and history. Unlike its American counterpart which historically has been appreciated for its entertainment value, Polish theater has been a force for political and social change within the Polish society. As the roots of the Polish theater are uncovered, the history of the Polish people is revealed as well. The stage becomes the social and political consciousness of the nation, shaping public opinion and calling its citizens to action. In times of turmoil and great despair it has been a unifying force that has galvanized the citizens against their oppressors. Braun outlines the history of Poland and then fleshes out the details of the growing nation by tracing the development of the theater and all of its actors, directors, and writers. The history is completed by a detailed examination of the various theaters and theater milieux along a time continuum beginning at the eleventh century. As Braun progresses through the ages, he examines all areas of Polish theater history, its response to the various invading forces, and the attempts of a society to cling to its unique identity.

In the later chapters of the book Braun himself becomes a part of the history he deals with. He draws upon his first hand experiences in the Polish theater and provides the reader with an eyewitness' account of the theater milieu's struggle to survive the times of the national catastrophes, first from the Nazi and German domination from the West and then the invasion of the Soviets from the East. He describes some of the horrors endured by the Polish theater artists in the twentieth century. Beyond these fully documented horrors was the determination of the Polish artists to keep the flame of a free Poland alive. Braun details the work of the underground theater movement and the efforts, mostly unknown here in the West, of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland to keep the Polish theater alive. Owing to a different profile of theater entertainment in America, most Americans cannot comprehend the nature of the penalties imposed by the communist regime on what it considered to be dissidents. Braun explains the risks taken by those theater artists who chose to cooperate with the Soviet-controlled Communists and details their careers through their rise in "Socrealism Theater," as well as their eventual fall from the favor of the communist party. The final chapters of the work detail the rise of the

Solidarity Labor Movement, the waning and eventual collapse of communism, and the challenges and changes that the Polish theater has had to grapple with at the end of the twentieth century.

This *History* is illustrated with tables and timelines that further clarify and detail the growth and development of Poland as a nation and its theater milieu. Additionally, Braun has included a "Hall of Fame of The Polish Theater Artists." This section includes fifty drawings, photographs, and descriptions of the artists and their productions, many from the author's private collection. Also included is a geopolitical map detailing the partitioning of the nation by invading armies and the dates of these incursions.

For student and scholar alike, this is a remarkable work. Beginning students will find this well-structured volume an excellent introduction to Poland's theater history. Established scholars will find historical information unavailable elsewhere. The volume is fully annotated with bibliographical references for each chapter, with sources in English and Polish. There are two indexes, one of names and the other of plays, adaptations, scenarios, and collective creations. ▲

My heart crushing the chisel,
The chisel the rock, and now I possess you, power!
I possess you, penance!

Wherever I step, you pulsate like a living stream,
Vibrate like the organ,
And in my sleep I often see
Trees flowing through you.

But in your mane of golden sparks
Bloody mugs welter at night,
The ruddy jackals, manlike hammers,
Swords and the stares of beasts.

From them there grow in you at night
The twisted boughs of corpses' arms,
Black specters and dead hearts in graves
That lie to hearts.

And thus I have you, sacred river,
Am like a branch that's grown into you,
O soiled river, of clouds conceived,
That cannot be read by an oar.

November 26, 1942

Polish War Poetry

Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński (1921–1944)

Translated by Alex Kurczaba

Holiness ("Świętość")

O you my inscrutable river,
I conceived you in marble slabs of light
And in the wood of fragrant pines,
With the chisels of oars.

I led you from the mighty mountains
From spaces full of voices
Where cataracts' knives shred snow
And songs rang forth like brass.

I peeled you off the portly apples
And with the hail's seed from clouds
I led you from plant stalks by a move of hand
Like skeins of glare.

I chiseled you out, I prayed you out

Lullaby ("Kolysanka")

Fear not the night — it locks out
flying trees and bird tones
in the indiscernible dusky music
forged in space - golden demons
who sprinkling phosphorus amid the glare
rise white, azure, pink
rise in funnels of yellow sand
raise their heads sculpted in clouds,
Fear not the night. The cosmos' drops,
animal herds guard its fluff;
in it open your eyes, then you'll feel
beneath your palm birds and quiet horses,
you'll grasp the forms that while passing
unknown through you — you will become.

Fear not the night. It's I who lead it
this living stream of transformation,
shining spirits, animals' processions,
which I enchant by name of forms.

Lay in the cradle your welled up eyes,
your body on the wings of the demons of light,
then you'll swim through me like a leaf

fallen into the tiger's warm purr.

December 21, 1941

The Spring ("Źródło")

For Barbara

Raise your head like the spring
from it color will rise
and the naming of things
and the flow of seasons.

See, all is fulfilled,
time poured to the brims
and heaven sated with heat
like a golden fount.

And you can fulfill all
anew and conceive
spectacles in clouds
spouting for your eyes.

And everything you recall
will be deaf as the time
upon which as upon your body
your spirit shall swirl.

For to love means to create
to conceive in storm's hue
a sculpture of bird and star
in the marble of red afterblaze.

For you I'll open a golden heaven
in which a white thread of silence
like sounds' enormous kernel
will burst to live
with little green leaves
lakes' song, dusk's play,
till birds' whizz shows
its milky core

For you I'll transform the solid earth
into soft roe's fluid flow
Out of things I'll lead shadows,
that will stiffen like a cat,
fur sparkling they'll furl everything
into storms' color, little leaves' hearts,
the rains' gray plaits.

And the air's flaying streams
like smoke from an angelic thatch

I'll turn for you into long alleys
into the songlike fluid of translucent birches
till like a cello they play
sorrow — the climbers' rose lights
hymn of bees' wings.

Only take out of these my eyes
the painful glass mirror — image of days
which roll white skulls
through burning meadows of blood.
Only alter this crippled age,
cover the graves with the river's robe,
wipe from hair the battle dust,
The black dust
of these angry years.

June 15, 1943

The originals can be found in Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński,
Utwory zebrane, vol. 1. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie,
1994.



Theology (All Saints' Mass)

Michael Quilty

For Jakub Bachorz — who died in 1985, at age 3 months, as a result of a mysterious post-industrial poison.
March 1942

Rain in Poland: template of tissue and weathering,
age.
The frame of culpability rising from the grey: at my
side
Jola kneels towards innocence,

her clasped adolescent faith seeking that state of
knowing
what we cannot know. Wind, priests, psalms
crackling through loudspeakers sensing time's
indelible bolt.

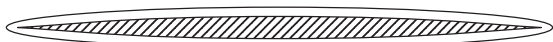
Candles in yellow flutes, flowers revered and
blowing,
a hallowed morn behaving like the ghost of
familiarity—earth, sleet, and flesh.

Beneath this white stone an infant brother
imprisoned by his country's blood. Solemnity acting
on its own,

depriving humanity of any cause, complicity.

Jola lowers her eyes, doesn't notice the light
between the clouds behind an altar,
the flickers of dampness from the tombs of the
living.

Rain in Poland, age: template of skulls and follicles.



Letters

Jerzy Zawieyski and Catholicism

It is misleading of Christina Manetti (in her article “*Tygodnik Powszechny* and the Postwar Debate on Literature in Poland,” *SR*, January 2004)—and of many others—to say that Jerzy Zawieyski converted to Catholicism. Manetti writes: “One prominent ‘catechumen’ who had converted to Catholicism during the war was the playwright Jerzy Zawieyski.” However, Zawieyski (1902–1969) was christened in the Catholic Church in 1902, or more than forty years before World War II. By the time he was two years old, Zawieyski was symbolically initiated into the Franciscan Order. One of his childhood photographs shows him wearing the habit of St. Francis. It would be more accurate then to speak of Zawieyski’s return to Catholicism.

It is also misleading to call Zawieyski solely a playwright, however useful it might be to my research project on his plays. He was an accomplished novelist and non-fiction writer, as well as a playwright, dramaturge, actor, and theatre instructor. In this context, it is helpful to remember that many of Zawieyski’s contemporaries, including his friend, Zbigniew Herbert, looked up to him as the only established Polish writer who, in protest against the Stalinization of Polish culture, consistently refused to have his books published and his plays performed between 1949 and 1956. No other established Polish writer remained silent for so long, so steadfastly and, yes, so heroically.

*Halina Filipowicz, University of Wisconsin,
Madison, Wisconsin*

Dr. Manetti replies:

I would like to thank Professor Filipowicz for providing readers with more information about the writer Jerzy Zawieyski.

My comments were based on my reading of Zawieyski’s diaries, his writings in *Tygodnik Powszechny* and other publications, and his colleagues’ memoirs. More recently, the correspondence of Zbigniew Herbert and Jerzy Zawieyski from the years 1949–1967 has also been published (Biblioteka Więzi, 2002).

Elsewhere in my book-length manuscript on the Znak group, which is not a work of literary history, Zawieyski figures quite prominently. In discussing his activities in parliament as part of the Znak Circle after 1957, I focus on the dramatic moments in 1968 when he courageously addressed the Sejm in defense of students and culture after the March events.

It was my hope that this would help expose English-speaking audiences a bit more to the many faces of this relatively little-known—though fascinating—figure of Polish twentieth century history, both literary and political.

Review polemic

As a longtime reader of *Sarmatian Review*, I was disappointed to read Dr. Danusha V. Goska’s tendentious and highly inaccurate review of Marek Chodakiewicz’s book *After the Holocaust* (*SR*, XXIV:1, January 2004).

First, Chodakiewicz does not deny the existence of anti-Semitism in Polish society nor in the Polish anti-Communist resistance as the reviewer suggests throughout the review. To the contrary, he provides many examples and shows in some detail how the Polish resistance often erroneously attributed the actions and opinions of Jewish Communists to the Jewish community as a whole. However, he rejects the dominant paradigm that all Polish actions and all Jewish deaths were caused by this single factor.

The notion that postwar Jewish deaths may be attributable to something other than ingrained Polish anti-Semitism did not originate with Chodakiewicz, but was proposed by other scholars, including David Engel who challenged the oft-cited figure of 2,000–3,000 postwar Jewish deaths. What Chodakiewicz does is greatly add to our picture of that complex period, showing how simplistic judgments about Polish behavior and motivation do not stand up to scrutiny. He finds that there was no single explanatory category into which postwar Jewish deaths can be neatly placed.

This is done through detailed analysis of many cases, which required intensive research in heretofore rarely used archives.

All of this seems to be completely lost on the reviewer, who dismissed the substance and the real point of the book with a brief and somewhat contemptuous paragraph. Goska ignores the utility of in-depth research to particularize about each case of violence. She is more comfortable with stereotypes still in place precisely because there was no research for fifty years on these issues. One wonders about the qualifications of a reviewer who supposedly reads an entire book that paints such a nuanced picture and decides that the point of the book is to prove that "antisemitism had nothing to do with Polish murder and persecution of Jews."

Thereafter, the review devolves into a long sermon in which the reviewer confuses her own feelings for thoughts, even brings in discussion of the Los Angeles riots (which are excused as retribution for white racism rather than described as the criminal acts they were). For example, she feels the need to inform us that "The Holocaust was, *inter alia*, a wake-up call to Western Civilization. 'Antisemitism is a bad thing,' the Holocaust said, loud and clear." While we may applaud the reviewer for her amazing discovery of the previously ignored downside of anti-Semitism, this does not constitute a serious engagement of Chodakiewicz's book. Moreover, Dr Goska insults our intelligence when she suggests that *After the Holocaust* resembles some anti-Semitic websites she found with a Google search.

The reviewer attacks Chodakiewicz for using the terms "Poles" and "Jews" as too mutually exclusive when she herself has spent an entire review using the same terms, especially castigating "Poles" as anti-Semites. Jewish Communists, as Chodakiewicz shows, placed themselves beyond the Polish (and Jewish) pale by rejecting their own religion, ethnicity, and nationality and espousing an internationalist identity (at least during Stalinist times). This same judgment applied to Polish Communists as well. It was customary to put ethnic Polish Communists beyond the pale of Polishness for they were perceived as traitors and, hence, as having rejected Polishness (as understood by tradition of the struggle for independence and liberty). Hence all Communists were not considered Polish, and not just Jews. It was a moral distinction and not a racist one.

Goska's biggest complaint with the book, is a lack of "psychological perspective." However, this is

irrelevant to the purpose and goal of the author's research. Chodakiewicz himself warns us against using such reductive terms, sensibly pointing out that crimes were committed by individual people, not groups.

The problems of Polish-Jewish relations during and after the Holocaust and in the context of Nazi and Communist occupations deserves serious research and not psychobabble and the rhetorical gymnastics of academics who try to take the "correct" political stance on every issue. Goska's formula is one in which serious research is replaced by touchy-feely pablum that makes everyone feel good but which never addresses the underlying issues. If certain Poles or some Jews collaborated with the Nazis or Soviets against their neighbors, historians have a duty to unearth as many facts as possible and debate them in an open and honest way without issuing *a priori* apologies to the sensitive souls who might feel hurt or who wish to play the eternal victim for personal or political gain. It is precisely the game of victim politics and the psychobabble that this review pushes in place of careful analysis of the book's strengths and weaknesses that constitute the major impediment to the good research that would allow Poles and Jews to speak the "truth in love" to each other and to themselves. I hope in the future that your fine publication will seek out more qualified and serious reviewers for such important works.

John Radziłowski, St. Paul, Minnesota

Dr. Goska declined to reply.

Correction

In the last paragraph of my article, "Polish Catholicism: A Historical Outline" (SR, XXIV:1, p. 1015), a typographical error changed the plural into the singular. A sentence in the last paragraph should read, "Those individuals are frustrated that the Church, which led the Polish nation to victory over determined enemies, now faces in the consumerism and hedonism of the West a more treacherous enemy."

Kevin Hannan, University of Łódź, Poland



Polish Working Class Poetry**David Spencer****Polish Easter**

In the shape of a Cross on the wall
 leaves from the palms of Palm Sunday
 are nailed, as if to ward off spirits.
 Baskets of food to Easter Mass
 like offerings to a temple.
 The procession bends down
 At the end of the mass
 To kiss the wound
 In the side of the Crucifix.

Polish Gothic

Tall brick buildings, with attics and basements,
 brown brick buildings, built in the 30s
 surround the god, Steel Mill,
 engulf the church, St Michael's Cathedral,
 towering like a medieval castle over a peasant
 village.
 South shore tracks of the Illinois Central,
 olive drab metal with tan rattan seats
 clunking, jolting through South Chicago
 83rd Street to Roosevelt Road Station,
 its steep zig-zag wooden stairs blackened with age.
 Get up in the morning, work in the Mill,
 go home when you're through, or go to the tavern.
 Get up in the morning, work in the Mill,
 rise and kneel in the Church on Sunday.

About the Authors

Zdzisław Krasnodebski is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Forschungstelle Ostmitteleuropa at the University of Bremen, Germany. He is a frequent contributor to *Znak*, *Rzeczpospolita*, and other leading Polish and German periodicals. His numerous books include *Max Weber* (1999) and *Postmodernistyczne rozterki kultury* (1996).

Alex Kurczaba is Associate Professor of Polish at the University of Illinois-Chicago and a noted translator of Polish poetry.

Beata Płonka is a politologist at the Jagiellonian University. Her PhD dissertation, completed in 1998, dealt with EU foreign policy toward Central and Eastern Europe, 1989–1994. She is the author of two

books and numerous articles in Polish and English periodicals.

Michael Quilty's poems have appeared in such Canadian journals as *The Fiddlehead* and *The Antigone Review*. He attended graduate school at the University of New Brunswick before accepting a job at the IBM.

David Spencer is a civil servant in the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Treasury Department, as well as a graduate in history of Indiana University.

Mark F. Tattenbaum is in the Ph.D. Program in American Studies at SUNY-Buffalo. In 2002 his movie, "Views From a Gas Mask," took 1st place at the 35th Humboldt International Short Film Festival in the under-five minutes category.

James R. Thompson is Professor of Statistics at Rice University and author of eleven books including *Statistical Process Control: the Deming Paradigm and Beyond*, 2d edition (New York—London: Chapman & Hall, 2002).

Thank You Note

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