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Strzelecki Monument



This statue by sculptor Jerzy Sobociński of the Polish explorer of Australia, Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki (1797–1873), was unveiled in Jindabyne, Australia, on 14 November 1988. Strzelecki arrived in Australia in 1839. He explored vast areas of New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania discovering gold, silver, and coal deposits. He climbed Australia's highest peak which he named "Mount Kosciuszko." He carried out soil analysis, measured the elevation of mountains, and collected and identified many fossils and minerals. He contributed greatly to the knowledge and development of Australia. Photo by Edwin Dyga.

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Our Take

A Polish moment?

British journal *Quarterly Review* (established in 1809 and boasting such contributors as Sir Walter Scott and Charles Lamb) was recently revived after ceasing publication in 1967. Its editor Derek Turner seeks potential readers among nonaligned conservatives of the English-speaking world. The summer 2011 issue includes a long essay on Poland's potential place in the Western conservative movement by Edwin Dyga, "Eastern promise—why the West needs *Mitteleuropa*." Mr. Dyga, an Australian, challenges the stereotype (entrenched among Western conservatives) of non-Germanic Central Europe being a no-man's land, a place where wars occur but nothing else. Secularization and contempt for tradition are rampant in the West, he argues; Poland resist this trend more successfully than English-speaking countries, and may provide support for those who wish to reverse it. Poland is the "military

heavyweight"(14) in the region in spite of recent problems. Poland is also the world's best litmus test with regard to Russia, whose history and tradition make it a dubious partner for the West. One should add that Poland has a thriving conservative press (the bimonthly *Arcana* leads the way), and has quite a bit to offer intellectually.

New Oxford Review, an energetically highbrow American Catholic monthly, published in its July-August issue a pioneering article on Catholic Poles and the American Catholic hierarchy ("The Polish Catholic Experience," by Raymond T. Gawronski). Fr./Professor Gawronski focuses on the shabby treatment Poles received in Milwaukee, WI, and elsewhere, from the hierarchs of the American Catholic Church. Polish fidelity to the Church has scarcely been acknowledged, while the magnificent churches Poles built in Midwestern states were the first to go on the auction block when American bishops needed money. The bishops not only offered no support for the teaching of Polish in parochial elementary schools in areas of high concentration of Poles but, on the contrary, attempted to uproot Polish traditions and "Americanize" Polish immigrants. It does not take much intelligence to understand that the uprooting of national traditions often leads to the uprooting of religious life as well. Perhaps some bishops will draw conclusions from Fr. Gawronski's analysis? Let us hope so.

The fall 2011 issue of *Slavic Review*, a prestigious Slavic journal that can make or break a Slavist's career, published as its lead article a text by Elżbieta Ostrowska arguing that the relationship between Poland and the partitioning powers (as well as the Soviet Union

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Sarmatian Review Data

Shale gas in Poland

Estimated amount of shale gas in Poland: 5.3 billion cubic meters, or more than in any other European country. Period of time during which Poland would not have to import gas if shale gas is extracted: 300 years.

Estimated number of years necessary to make exploitation of shale gas in Poland technologically feasible: 5-10 years.

Source: <wpolityce.pl>, accessed 5 September 2011; South Baltic Gas Forum, 5–11 September 2011 in Gdańsk (<<http://www.gasforum2011.com/keynote>>), accessed 5 September 2011.

Readership of political weeklies in Poland in July 2011

Uważam Rze, a center-right weekly (136,900 copies sold); *Gość Niedzielny*, a Catholic weekly (134,300 copies, 1.2 percent increase as of July 2010); *Polityka*, a postcommunist weekly (134,200 copies, a loss of 6.2 percent); *Wprost*, moved leftward under new ownership (125,900 copies, increase of 17.9 percent over 2010); *Newsweek Polska*, an imitation of the American weekly (116,100 copies, increase of 2.4 percent over 2010); *Gazeta Polska*, radically rightist (66,900 copies sold, increase of 9.5 percent over 2010); *Przekrój*, a continuation of a communist weekly (39,300 copies, a loss of ca. 20 percent); *Przegląd*, 23,100 copies, a loss of 4.8 percent; *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a leftist weekly, 19,900 copies, increase of 0.2 percent.

Source: Magdalena Lemańska, “*Uważam Rze* liderem tygodników opinii w lipcu,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 21 September 2011.

Victims of communist terror in Soviet-occupied Poland after the Second World War

Number of people the communist secret police arrested, interrogated, and/or imprisoned in the 1940s and '50s: 5 million, or 20 percent out of the then-population of 24 million Poles.

Number of persons murdered by the secret police in Soviet-occupied Poland between 1945–1953: according to historian Bogusław Kopka, “it is impossible to give exact numbers. Farmers were often killed in wooded areas, and victims of pacifications and massacres were buried in nameless graves. A certain number of people were also handed over to the Soviet NKVD; they never returned. It is estimated that the number of victims runs into many tens of thousands.”

Source: Piotr Zychowicz, “The secret police in Soviet-occupied Poland was fully controlled by the Soviet NKVD,” an interview with the Institute of National Memory historian Bogusław Kopka,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 September 2011.

Russian ethnic outflow from the seven republics of the North Caucasus continues to accelerate

Size of the ethnic Russian population in the North Caucasus in 1989 and 2011: 26 percent and 12–15 percent, respectively.

Size of the indigenous ethnic population in North Caucasus in 1989 and 2002: 66 percent in 1989 and 80 percent in 2002, with a projected further percentage growth in 2011.

Decrease of ethnic Russian population in the republics of Chechnya and Ingushetia since 1989: 94 percent smaller now than then.

Source: Valery Dzutsev, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 8, no. 197 (26 October 2011).

Polish Catholic missionaries in Turkmenistan in the twenty-first century

Number of Christian (including Catholic) churches in Turkmenistan in 2011: none.

Fate of the Catholic church in Ashgabat constructed before the October Revolution: levelled by the Soviets.

National background of the Catholic community in Ashgabat: Polish (descendants of Poles deported to the gulag by the Soviets).

Number of Catholic missionaries in Turkmenistan: two, both of them Polish priests.

The most prominent citizen of Turkmenistan of Polish background: Walenty Tyszkiewicz (<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia/401/212tysz.html>).

Source: www.oblaci.pl (accessed 4 October 2011).

White-on-white colonialism, postcolonialism, and population growth (granted, it is only a sample of one)

Decline in the population of Ireland between 1840 and 1960: from 8.3 million to 2.9 million.

Source: Nicholas Eberstadt, “Five Myths about the World’s Population,” *Washington Post*, 6 November 2011.

The little-mentioned growth of the six largest American banks between 1995–2010

Nominal value of assets of the six largest American banks in 1995 and 2007: 17 percent and 63 percent of American GNP, respectively.

Source: Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio in an interview on “This Week,” 25 April 2010; reprinted in www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2010/apr/27/sherrod-brown/six-largest-banks-getting-bigger-brown-said/.

Poland: Strategically Active or Passive?

Walter Jajko

With Poland's release from communist captivity and its subsequent accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, its strategic situation was transformed and seemed to have improved dramatically. Poland's security is in reality not what it appears to be. Rather, Poland's security situation, in my estimation, has deteriorated and is likely to deteriorate further. As this situation becomes painfully obvious, Poland will have to decide whether it will remain strategically passive or become strategically active.

NATO, which is the basis for Polish security, is steadily weakening.

It is ironic that just as Poland joined NATO, the Alliance, having simply outlived the Warsaw Pact, weakened in its strength and in its will. Starkly put, despite the legal obligations of treaty commitments, Poland cannot be assured of NATO's—really the United States'—steadfast commitment to its security in all circumstances, particularly in response to the new ambiguous tools of threats, for example in economic warfare and cyberwar. Yet this US guarantee was precisely the indispensable singular protection that Poland sought as a guarantee of its independence when it joined NATO. Despite the parlous state of NATO's defense capabilities and determination, and notwithstanding the rhetorical pronouncements of the current NATO Secretary General and the reassurances of the US State and Defense Departments, it seems to be politically incorrect to admit this fact publicly. Nevertheless, Poland needs to accept this depressing but realistic appreciation as the undeclared factor motivating its security policy. Poland needs to pursue its own security actively, independently in some ways if necessary. It must be understood that this would be a high risk policy.

There are three disadvantageous strategic developments which Poland must mitigate or compensate for, although by itself it does not have the power to eliminate them. First, the US is determined to establish a permanent strategic relationship with Russia. Whether or not the US and the Europeans

understand, such a relationship, if realized, would subordinate Europe to a dependent status with Russia. (Parenthetically, the US's suicidal pursuit of China's friendship would render even this relationship secondary and perhaps inconsequential.) Second, NATO is lapsing into a progressive, wasting decrepitude and most probably cannot be rejuvenated. The European Union, another institutional foundation of Europe's security (and therefore Poland's security) is also slowly collapsing economically and politically, again ironically while Poland holds its presidency. If the Eurozone collapses and then the European Union loses its economic viability, only Germany in the medium term will prosper. However, Germany's long term prosperity is questionable because of its demographic trends, which mirror those of all Europe. The European Union's economic stasis will, of course, weaken NATO's political and military strength. These two developments, in the US and Europe, mean that the foundations of Poland's post-Cold War security are slowly sinking. Third, Russia's leadership is deliberately and with malice aforethought reconstructing the Russian Empire, albeit with means different from its two predecessors and in a form to accommodate current conditions and sensibilities, and on a less costly basis. In October 2011 Putin announced that Russia would begin an effort to construct an Eurasian Union including the former Soviet "Stans," Belarus and, most importantly, Ukraine. Most dangerously for Poland specifically, Russia still adheres unwaveringly to its contention of its privileged position in Eastern Europe.

The Poles should press for a redefinition of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty.

In the United States for the past two decades Democratic and Republican Administrations have subordinated American interests in Eastern Europe and American support for Eastern European interests to the pursuit of a strategic partnership with a supposedly democratizing Russia. The so-called Reset Policy is the latest expression of this years-long, self-delusionary pursuit. Arms control agreements amounting to US unilateral disarmament and the modification of US missile defense emplacements in Eastern Europe because of Russian objections serve to weaken US and NATO defense capabilities and resolve. These agreements also do not address contemporary forms of threats such as economic pressures for political ends and cyberwar. So long as Russia does not adopt and operate on Western principles and values, a US strategic

partnership with Russia is a chimera. Agreements on more limited subjects do not contradict the fundamental difference between Russia and the US and cannot lead to a strategic partnership. Notwithstanding these facts, the United States will continue to pursue Russia, when necessary in preference to and to the detriment of Eastern Europe's interests.

In the current international system... [there exist] subtle and ambiguous instruments of aggression against countries. . . that can be employed to undermine the sovereignty and plunder the patrimony of states.

At its core, Russian policy on key diplomatic and defense issues is consistently and reflexively anti-Western, and on these key issues Russian policy is expressed in non-negotiable differences. This will certainly not change for the better with the strengthening of Putin's power over Russia. Russia will not democratize, certainly not in our time. Russia perforce may have been a European power by virtue of its overweening and aggressive strength and its penchant for self-aggrandizing intervention into Europe, but Russia has never been a European country culturally and historically, as several prominent and respected Russian historians, including the great George Vernadsky, have contended. Even in the twenty-first century the Russian State explicitly and emphatically rejects the principles and values of the West and glories in this rejection. It is worthwhile to recall a historical truth: Russia can be of Europe or in Europe or over Europe only when it is in Poland or over Poland. And Russia is most content when it has Poland.

Since the end of the Second World War, one of the geopolitical foundations of US power has been NATO. In fact, it was NATO that made the US the paramount European power for half a century. The Russians have repeatedly declared their intent to expel the US from the Continent and replace the US with themselves and NATO with a pan-European security system, thereby becoming de facto the paramount European power. In the meantime, almost a quarter century after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russians still claim a special sphere of influence over all of the former Warsaw Pact states. According to official Russian diplomatic declarations, these still are Russia's ambitions.

NATO, which is the basis for Polish security, is steadily weakening. Only the United States is meeting the defense budget targets set by NATO, 3 percent of GNP (Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence. Press Release. North Atlantic Treaty

Organization, Public Diplomacy Division. Communique PR/CP(2011)027, 10 March 2011. Table 3, p. 6.). Furthermore, on the Continent even Germany and Britain are in the process of drastically cutting forces and equipment, and therefore core capabilities. Both have already expressed their unwillingness to deploy their forces out of area. The other NATO members are in worse and worsening shape. The potential volunteers for any future coalition of the willing and able are all becoming conscientious objectors. The recent Libyan Intervention demonstrated that the European Allies cannot intervene, much less impose their will even in third-world Libya without the indispensable and substantial participation of the US. Libya showed both the failure of US leadership and the failure of Europe without US leadership.

During the past few years Poland has been building an historically unprecedented cordial relationship with Germany, due chiefly to German investments in Poland. Yet, during these same years, Germany has demonstrated that it is prepared to compromise politically with Russia over economic matters, such as natural gas deliveries. Neither Germany nor France, supposedly the two strong powers on the Continent, are particularly strong in confronting Russia. Italy, Greece, and Turkey, NATO partners of Poland, also have shown their willingness to accommodate Russia.

The effects of European weakness in will and wallet will be exacerbated as a domestically oriented and economically weakened American Administration turns its national security policy attention from the Continent to China. The US, because of its debt, deficit, and declining economy, is likely to cut US forces in Europe to the bone. It is these forces that are the visible sign of the US commitment to Poland's security. What US forces will remain will be only those elements necessary to support the transit of the declining number of US operating forces to the Middle East. Thus, stationing a US Air Force fighter squadron in Poland even on periodic temporary deployments, as has been proposed, is unlikely. Standing, capable, and ready military forces are essential as weight backing a country's or an alliance's diplomacy. Cumulatively, the defense cuts in the US and on the Continent will weaken the force of Western diplomacy and influence. To strengthen the arm and spine of the Alliance, perhaps the time has come for a conservative Pole to be selected Secretary General of NATO.

Although there is no foreseeable danger in the future of Russia resorting to military force against Poland,

there are in the current international system other more subtle and ambiguous instruments of aggression against countries. These can be employed to undermine the sovereignty and plunder the patrimony of states. Various financial and commercial tools can beggar or blackmail a country. One has only to recollect the repeated price gouging and denials of service of natural gas throughout Europe in the past few years by Gazprom, which is an instrument of the Russian Government. Additionally, there are the media campaigns, deceptions, and political warfare conducted for long-range strategic objectives to inculcate false knowledge, condition attitudes, and influence policy based on an incorrect understanding of reality. Compounding this danger are the clandestine intelligence and covert programs undermining states. A newer and growing threat to policy, intelligence, defense and industrial, commercial, and financial infrastructures is cyberwar. We only have to recollect the organized Russian cyber attacks of a few years ago that brought the Estonian banking system to a halt for two or more weeks and caused large economic losses.

With the obliteration of the distinction between war and peace in the twentieth century, the new means of aggression, and Russia's hostile posture towards the West, the time is long past due for NATO to redefine and reaffirm Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty. This article commits all the signatories of the Treaty to come to the aid of any member who is attacked. In this era it is unlikely that a state will attack a neighbor openly with armed forces across their common border. Rather, ambiguous and unattributed aggression is conducted, using the sophisticated measures of economic, social, psychological, informational, and political warfare. In order to meet the needs of NATO's member states to cope with these new threats, Article V ought to be redefined. Poland, which occupies the exposed flank of Europe and whose immediate neighbors have suffered such attacks, ought to take the lead in this enterprise.

Ukraine is the geopolitical key to a rebuilt Russian Empire. During the past score of years, the US wasted the proverbial golden opportunity in Ukraine. The US and NATO Europe should have had a stronger hand in Ukraine, more forceful diplomacy, and an extensive and strong covert action program to secure Ukraine for the West. Ukraine, after all, was once part of the West under the old tripartite Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*). Before the current pro-Russian government came to power in Kyiv, Ukraine had

declared its intention to join both the EU and NATO. The US and Europe could have done much more and more effectively to shore up the competing and feckless politicians in Kyiv, instead of bemoaning the chaos and watching them fritter away the independence of their country. The interminable, petty bickering over small change in the *Rada* (the Ukrainian legislature) ought to be a lesson for Poland's domestic politics. But Western prevarication, prejudices, and perspectives, old conceptions and old thinking and, frankly, lack of understanding and fortitude coupled with distractions elsewhere would not combat the pernicious effects of seventy years of systematic Soviet inculcation of evil. The US and Europe, and indeed Poland, ceded what should have been a primary geostrategic rampart of the West. This cession was a loss of incalculable strategic consequence.

The *Kresy*, Poland's historical eastern borderlands, are still important to Poland's security. It is astonishing and disappointing that Poland itself did not do more to keep Ukraine on the Western side, because it is Poland alone that has an acute and accurate appraisal of the criticality of Ukraine and the strategic position of all Eastern Europe *vis-à-vis* Russia. Poland's insufficient activity in Ukraine is particularly astonishing because of the open, active, and useful activities Poland has conducted on behalf of the democratic opposition in Belarus. If Ukraine had moved Westward, Belarus would have likely followed. These developments would have cut Russia off directly from Europe and solidified Poland's geostrategic position. These developments also would have left Russia geographically and historically where it belongs.

There is another issue of great potential danger about which the US, NATO, and Poland have kept their shameful silence. This issue is Kaliningrad or, more properly, Königsberg or Królewiec, an imperialistic anachronism. The issue is even more shameful because the territory is named after the bolshevik Kalinin, one of the signers of the death sentence on the Polish prisoners in Katyn and the other Soviet Russian death camps. The territory so named is an affront to Poland and another example of Russia's un-Western ways. At the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union unilaterally incorporated this territory, comprised of the northern half of the former East Prussia, some 5,830 square miles, simply by right of conquest. Half of prewar Poland, all of Sub-Carpathian Rus, and large parts of Romania were not sufficient to satisfy Soviet Russia's acquisitiveness for foreign lands—a blatant

indulgence of Russian imperialism. After the Russians seized East Prussia, they expelled the inhabitants, replaced them with colonists, and shut the land to the outside world as a closed military zone. The territory now houses an army garrison, several air bases, and the headquarters of the Russian Baltic Fleet. Most recently, the Russians have added a brigade of marine infantry to their Kaliningrad garrison. The Russians have also deployed their most modern long range air defense missile system in the territory. What is significant about this deployment is the system's combat radius which covers the Baltic states and Poland. Because of the need for land transport to Kaliningrad from Russia through Poland and the Baltic States, use of the transit routes raises accompanying issues which the Russians exploit frequently to pressure the transited states. The Russians also frequently violate the Baltic states' air space in flying to and from their colony. More importantly, the Russians in recent years have several times threatened to station tactical nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad in retaliation for NATO developments that they did not like, including in 2008 short-range surface-to-surface missiles in the exclave and SS-27 strategic missiles in Russia itself aimed at Poland in retaliation for the *proposed* stationing of US-NATO air defense missiles in Poland. It is very likely that the Russians have stationed large numbers of nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad, notwithstanding any public declarations or denials of theirs. Kaliningrad is a direct and ever-present threat, like a loaded gun, pointed at the heart of Europe, especially Poland. The Russian occupation of Kaliningrad is not a case of *beati sunt possidentes*. Russia has no right or claim historically, demographically, culturally, or legally to this ancient land. One should recall here Matejko's famous painting of *Hold Pruski*, The Homage of Prussia. There is no good reason for the Russians to continue to occupy this land and every good reason for Europe to oust the Russians from it. Poland should break the West's silence on this danger.

There is more that Poland could do to improve its security. Poland's membership in the Višegrad Group ought to continue, although it has resulted only in limited usefulness. The quartet's power is simply too limited in scope, interests, and influence, and its cohesion is too unstable. Poland ought to mobilize and lead "new Europe," all the states of Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea to strengthen NATO and to act as a united bloc on foreign policy, defense, and economics equal to "old Europe." Poland as the

pivot of Eastern Europe is in a position to be the leader of "new Europe"—if it wants to be.

Poland's internal political cohesion could strengthen the realization of its geopolitical strategic interests. Polish patriots ought to protect Polish political and intellectual life against the persistent, pernicious influence of alien agents in academia, the media, politics, and the several components of the national security establishment who propagate disinformation, discord, and disunion in the interest of states inimical to Poland. The Polish Nation in the postwar period was strongest when a Polish Pope electrified Polish patriotism and Polish piety. Polish patriots should take heed that the more Poland becomes like Europe in the sense and sensibility of the European Union, the more Poland will depart from its unique spirit. The communists sought to kill Poland's soul; European moral relativism too could kill Poland's soul. Moral relativism affects more than personal character and personal behavior in daily life. Moral relativism can deform and displace the correct and realistic understanding and judgments of leaders and the public that are necessary to deal with the challenges and problems in foreign and security policy. Essentially, moral relativism, certainly in security affairs, can compromise and jeopardize Poland's independence. Poland needs to look to the best in itself, its character, its history, its traditions, its values, its uniqueness. These qualities need not only to be preserved but to be encouraged and strengthened. To sustain its soul and its security, Poland has to remain what it was: the *Antemurale Christianitatis*.

The Polish American Community's (*Polonia's*) unrelenting pressure on the State Department and the United States Congress to withdraw the outrageous ethnic discrimination against Poland in the issuance of visas is an essential effort. Having the President issue Proclamations and the Congress pass Resolutions commemorating Kazimierz Pułaski, Tadeusz Kościuszko, and the Third of May Constitution (*Konstytucja Trzeciego Maja*) are important and laudable ways to sustain the Polish heritage in America. However, there is much too that the *Polonia* and its several major organizations can do to support Poland's security. Strong lobbying on behalf of Poland's strategic issues would be more consequential. All of the *Polonia's* organizations should combine to pressure Congress and the Executive, the Democratic and Republican Platforms especially in the current US Presidential Electoral Campaign, and the Polish *Sejm*

and government in support of the hard issues of Poland's foreign and defense policies: for example, secure US and Polish support for more radio and television broadcasts into Ukraine and Belarus; promote expanded close cooperation of Poland with the US Intelligence Community; lobby for the stationing of some US armed forces in Poland, particularly an Air Force fighter squadron, homeporting a US Naval warship in Gdańsk, and the conduct of combined exercises in Poland of US special forces with Polish special forces; press for a redefinition of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty; campaign for a conservative Pole to be chosen as Secretary General of NATO; lobby in the US, at NATO, and in Ukraine for Ukraine's membership in NATO; support regime replacement in Belarus; obtain the Central Intelligence Agency's support for a Polish covert action program in Ukraine; and mobilize a diplomatic campaign to expel Russia from Kaliningrad. Polonia consists of many voters; why should they not be mobilized in support of the hard issues of Polish security?

Poland, preferably with the support of the United States, ought to take the initiative to confront the difficult strategic challenges of its security and not merely accept the efforts of others, however friendly and well-intentioned, to set the fundamental conditions of its security. I contend that Poland has no other choice. ▲

The above article is based on the Address to the Polish American Congress delivered at the Annual Thanksgiving Dinner in Washington, DC, in November 2011.

Bloodlands

Europe Between Hitler and Stalin

By Timothy Snyder. New York: Basic Books, 2010. 524 pages, Maps of the Bloodlands from 1918 to 2010, ISBN 978-0-465-00239-9. Hardcover, \$29.95.

James E. Reid

A whole world that had been lovingly and carefully assembled now lay in ruins.

"The Blind Mirror," Joseph Roth on Galicia

The betrayals, history, and terror of the war-torn lands of Europe that lay between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union have concerned Timothy Snyder for some time. In the May 2003 issue of *Past & Present*, he published a focused examination of "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943." There he described the shifting allegiances and paths to genocide in a theater of the Second World War that

is not as well known as it should be, and whose places, such as Galicia, Volhynia, and Lwów/Lviv lay in the heart of the heart of these killing fields. His article made clear the need for a more complete history of the people who were executed, starved, and murdered across the area where the greatest number of noncombatants died before and during the war. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* is that history.

Bloodlands is grounded in deep scholarship, and its broad scope, impact, and the resultant shifts in and coordination of historical perspective and knowledge all recall the significance of the three volumes of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, whose gulags the Snyder book references. *Bloodlands* is not a history of the military casualties of war, but of the lesser-known state policies of deliberate murder and starvation of civilians, and the summary execution of prisoners of war.

Snyder's Introduction to *Bloodlands* lays the groundwork for how this devastation occurred. He begins with the tremendous changes in state power relations that occurred following World War One before moving forward to the vile responses of Hitler and Stalin during and after the Great Depression: Hitler's national socialism and Stalin's genocidal socialism. He also presents Hitler and Stalin's common interest in the rich resources in the breadbasket of Ukraine, in the heart of the Bloodlands. Recognizing the complexity of the shifting borders in the Bloodlands for his readers, he provides six maps of this area in the preface and introduction. Numerous detailed maps, unfortunately not indexed, appear throughout the rest of the book. They present countries and cities whose former names have disappeared.

Bloodlands opens with "The Soviet Famines." As Stalin's collectivization of Ukraine brings famine and death by starvation, this deeply deluded ruler blames the catastrophes on the peasants themselves instead of apprehending that his *diktats* are directly responsible for the deaths. By 1932 in Ukraine a peasant's "possession of food was presumptive evidence of a crime," usually punishable by death. As mass starvation increased cannibalism occurred. "Roving bands of cannibals" hunt for unprotected children. Some families even cannibalized their own children and weaker members of their families. Snyder draws on a number of sources in Polish for this difficult chapter and throughout his book, one of which is *Głód i represje wobec ludności polskiej na Ukrainie* (*Starvation and Repression of the Polish Population in Ukraine*) by the prolific Polish writer (and Roman Catholic priest) Roman Dzwonkowski. Summarizing what is now

known with more certainty, Snyder estimates that 3.3 million people died from starvation and hunger-related diseases in Soviet Ukraine in 1932–1933. He concludes this chapter by quoting Western intellectuals and leaders such as Arthur Koestler, *New York Times* reporter Walter Duranty, and former French prime minister Edouard Herriot, whom the Soviets fooled into believing that the starving Ukraine was one big happy Potemkin village.

“Class Terror” covers the parallel rise of Hitler’s SS (Schutzstaffel), and Stalin’s OGPU (*Ob’edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*) which delivered state terror in the Soviet Union, most famously in the show trials of the 1930s. Snyder describes Professor Paweł Wiczorkiewicz’s work on the military show trials as “a fundamental work on the military purges.” Here again, Snyder reminds us of the Western intellectuals and leftists who were drinking Stalin’s Kool-Aid about a vast global conspiracy threatening Soviet promise. In both of these chapters he singles out George Orwell for providing an alternate and more accurate version of history. An introduction to the betrayals in these military purges is presented in Nikita Mikhalkov’s film *Burnt by the Sun*.

Bloodlands then proceeds to more familiar ground as it lays out the rapid shifts by Hitler as he began persecuting and killing German Jews, and Stalin’s similar attacks on Ukrainian Poles and Soviet Jews. These genocidal similarities preceded the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the subsequent attacks that Poland fought alone. The progress of *Bloodlands* is clear from a number of its succeeding chapters: “Final Solution,” “Holocaust and Revenge,” and “Resistance and Incineration.”

Bloodlands does not contain stories of individuals of Polish, German, and Russian background who were faced with the impossible choice of possibly saving themselves by betraying Jews, Ukrainians, Russian kulaks, and Poles into the hands of murderers. It does, however, make perfectly clear how grave the result of each of these individual choices was. Some of these many stories have been told in diaries (Victor Klemperer, David Sierakowiak), memoirs (Primo Levi), and in Hans Fallada’s recently translated novel, *Every Man Dies Alone*. Snyder’s focus, however, is on the overview of how the machinery and bureaucracy of unimaginable suffering and death became the everyday experience of millions.

Bloodlands echoes the prescient warning in 1919 by John Maynard Keynes in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. There Keynes predicted that if the terms of the peace after World War One punished the nations

who lost, “nothing can then delay for very long that final civil war between the forces of Reaction and the despairing convulsions of Revolution, before which the horrors of the late German war will fade into nothing, and which will destroy, whoever is the victor, the civilization and the progress of our generation.”

In often similar magisterial language, Timothy Snyder has exhaustively chronicled the horrific systems of mass murder in Germany and the Soviet Union that preceded and coincided with the war that Keynes feared. Snyder’s book is a full and meticulous recovery of the history of how the entire peoples and their culture in the bloodlands were systematically obliterated. By his estimates, there were 14 million noncombatant deaths here. The Nazis killed 10 million prisoners of war and civilians, 6 million of whom were Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Those who cooperated with Stalin killed 4 million prisoners of war and civilians. Confronted by the appalling numbers of the dead, Snyder’s writing is committed to clarity and restraint, with both the right distance from and a clear focus on the horrors he presents. Without these qualities, the histories in *Bloodlands* might otherwise prove to be a challenging read. With them, *Bloodlands* is a necessary book. Absolutely necessary. He concludes with a chapter devoted to “Humanity,” and his hope, in the final lines of this book, “for us as humanists to turn the numbers back into people.” May his hope be fulfilled.▲

Personal Reflections on *Bloodlands*

Europe between Hitler and Stalin

Raymond Gawronski, SJ

“Spigau” she used to say in her Polish pronunciation of a German word, but I could never find it anywhere, and along with it, the number by which she was called at “Appell” in the camp. Two decades after the war, my mother destroyed the documents I remember seeing, the “Arbeitsbuch fuer Auslaender” with the eagle and swastika on it, the “P” for Pole: the memories of those days were too painful, the nightmares. Most of the tales of my childhood—her tales, the tales of other family and friends—were of such places, camps and invading armies, Stalin killing my godmother’s Latvian father, my grandfather being labeled a “kulak” and condemned (along with his “kulak” family) for deportation “east,” the horizon of the stories outlining the silhouette of the blonde Czech girl hung by the Germans for espionage. Dresden and

the Warsaw Rising, Auschwitz and Pawiak, people with numbers on their arms and people who trembled when the sirens were tested in Brooklyn. They are all dead now, and all I had left was the word “Spirgau” which I could not locate.

And then it occurred to me (perhaps triggered by “Speer Boulevard” in Denver): in German, it would be something like “Speergau.” A word typed into the computer, and sure enough there it was: “Spergau Concentration Camp”—near Leipzig, just as she said. Somewhere on the border of labor and death.

All these stories had their origins in what Timothy Snyder calls “The Bloodlands”—those lands between Berlin and Moscow where the modern social experiments of Hitler and Stalin were enacted. Although I was raised with stories steeped in horror, *Bloodlands* was too much even for me: I simply had to stop reading it for weeks at a time, and the very thought of reviewing it is difficult. But it is a book that must be read and digested, a very significant book that knits together what otherwise are discordant chunks of history, many of which are totally unknown in our culture, and presents a circle—indeed, multiple circles—of hell right in the heart of the twentieth century.

The “Killing Fields” of East Central Europe simply boggle the mind, and behind them, the profound confusion that the tens of millions of poor souls who lived in those countries at that time experienced. We in the United States and Western Europe are especially ignorant of this world, where the bulk of the fighting of the Second World War took place.

Behind the horrors of the twentieth century lie the imperial ambitions of Germany and Russia, and, in both cases, their refusal to recognize the legitimate existence of other nations between these monoliths. It began with the collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union, where the hunger caused by the collectivization was turned into starvation by politics. Snyder counts five million people intentionally starved to death most in the Ukraine, where the Ukrainian peasants were singled out for genocidal punishment and then something approaching a million people were killed in “the Terror.” Among those killed in the Terror, the chief target were Poles living in the Soviet Union [see Tomasz Sommer, “The Polish Operation: Stalin’s First Genocide of Poles, 1937–1938,” *Sarmatian Review*, XXXI/3, September 2011, 1618–1625, *Ed.*]. So it began in the 1930s.

After the dual invasion of Poland, both invaders killed several hundred thousand Polish citizens, focusing on the intellectual and leadership classes. The Katyn massacre of over 20,000 Polish officers is now

increasingly well known; less well known is the deportation of about a million Polish citizens by both Germans and Soviets. In the case of the Germans this was done in order to begin clearing the ground of Slavic people for German settlement.

After the German invasion of Hitler’s former ally the Soviet Union, the pattern of horror in the occupied Eastern lands became an interweaving of what Snyder calls “belligerent complicity”: massive partisan activity, encouraged by the Soviets, countered by German reprisals. Here Snyder counts more than 300,000 people killed in such reprisals.

One of the most shocking revelations of Snyder’s book is Hitler’s originally planned “colonial demodernization” of the Soviet Union and Poland that would take tens of millions of lives, while the eastern plains of Europe would become an “agrarian domain of German masters.” The “Hunger Plan” was for thirty million people to be starved to death in the winter of 1941–42, diverting food to Germany. There was to have been a seven-week “lightning victory” over the Soviet Union, leading to the deportation of Jews from Europe, then the East was to be colonized by German colonists. “The Holocaust overshadows German plans that envisioned even more killing. Hitler wanted not only to eradicate the Jews; he wanted also to destroy Poland and the Soviet union as states, exterminate their ruling classes, and kill tens of millions of Slavs. . . . If the German war against the USSR had gone as planned, thirty million civilians would have been starved in the first winter, and tens of millions more expelled, killed, assimilated, or enslaved thereafter”(ix). Although never realized, these plans “supplied the moral premises of German occupation policy in the East”(ix-x).

There was no lightning victory, and the German leadership had to scale down their plans, killing about ten million people. A million people were “purposefully starved in besieged Leningrad and more than three million Soviet prisoners of war died of starvation and neglect” (416). As war went on and labor was needed, prisoners were used as forced laborers. Because of the turn of the war, the plan for mass killing had to be delayed, but the plan for colonization was never abandoned. It was, in fact, the “Final Solution” that the Nazis were able to implement.

Nazi Germany had far fewer Jews than its eastern neighbors—less than 1 percent of the German population when Hitler came to power in 1933—and many had left by the time of the war. About one-quarter of 1 percent of the German population was Jewish by the beginning of the Second World War. Snyder insists

that the bulk of the genocide of the Jews of Europe happened *in situ*, in the east, where the majority of Europe's Jews lived. The German forces moved in and simply slaughtered resident Jewish populations; those in ghettos were executed later, in the death factories that were created later in the war. In a bizarre twist, the Nazi leadership actually viewed the death factories as a "humane" way to exterminate the Jews, contrasted with the original plan of death by starvation (258).

Far from relativizing the horror of the Jewish Holocaust, placing the genocide of the Jews in the context of the "liquidation" of other groups actually heightens the pathos, the simple, devastating fact of the total programmatic attempt to exterminate entire communities. Words fail. "Of the fourteen million people deliberately murdered in the Bloodlands between 1933 and 1945, a third belong in the Soviet account" (x). These fourteen million people were "all victims of a Soviet or Nazi killing policy. . . but never casualties of the war between them" (x). In the midst of such mind-numbing horror, Snyder attempts to keep in mind that we are reading about human beings, individuals, with stories, lives, faces. This humanizes, but also serves to increase the horror of it all.

To do any justice to this very nuanced study and to the intricate webs of human death, one would have to simply read this book. It is a tale of relentless horror, from the beginning of the Soviet famine and terror, through the horror of the Nazi racial utopia and its perversion of Western civilization, through the Soviet "victory" that really meant that one of the monsters crushed the other, but the horror, and the monster, continued.

Snyder's sensitivity to the various peoples involved, their own motivations, situations, histories, relations, is remarkable and highly praiseworthy. His reflections on subsequent inflation of numbers by nationalist groups is sober and needed. His sympathy for the peoples of the Bloodlands inclines him to be justly critical of Great Russian chauvinism as regards the mosaic of peoples in the Soviet Union. This in itself makes for very interesting reading, the hijacking of statistics by Russians at the expense of Ukrainians and especially of Belarusians, since it is in Belarus that the highest percentage of deaths occurred. Snyder's criticism of Germany is relentless and unsoftened by many humane considerations. German racial policy toward easterners was clearly the frequent source of massive horrors, with a long history of racism behind them. Snyder walks a tightrope of deepening concern for the Jewish Holocaust and a most moving presentation while situating it within the suffering of

other surrounding communities: I believe he accomplishes this very difficult task well.

Curiously, in his final reflections he notes that "for Germans who accepted Hitler as their Leader, faith was very important. The object of their faith could hardly have been more poorly chosen, but their capacity for faith is undeniable. . . devotion and faith did not make the Germans good, but they did make them human" (400). G. K. Chesterton once wrote that someone who did not believe in God would believe anything: is this not what happened in the societies of modern Germany and Russia in which traditional Christianity was rejected, and the human capacity for faith found itself reaching for idols?

When he describes the assault on the Polish intelligentsia, Snyder, a bit surprisingly, characterizes it as an assault on "the Enlightenment." In his view, the attack on the intelligentsia "was an attack on the very concept of modernity, or indeed the social embodiment of Enlightenment in this part of the world" (153). In 1939 the Soviets and the Germans "invaded Poland together, and carried out a policy of de-Enlightenment" (415). Yet he notes that a German interrogator "had ordered an old man to be killed for exhibiting a 'Polish way of thinking'" (154). Surely there is an incompatibility between these two statements, as well as a lack of understanding of what makes Poland Poland.

It is true that the intelligentsia of Poland would have prided itself on strong Enlightenment roots and in that sense have been "modern." But it was not because Poland had an "enlightened" intellectual leadership that it did not become the monster state—nor did it ally itself with either of the monster states at its borders. In fact, the roots of the ideologies of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union very much emerged from that modernity that so hated this "reactionary"—and Catholic—state and mindset in their midst. The Bloodlands were the lands of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, what has emerged as the modern European homeland of Roman and Uniate Catholicism, as well as of religious Judaism. It is a strange irony that the author of this excellent book appears to seek to defend the values of an Enlightenment that, by striking at the roots of the intellectual faith of Catholic Europe, led to a totally unbalanced understanding of the human being and produced the monsters of the mass collective egos, incarnate in the idols that were Hitler and Stalin. The traditionally religious people who found themselves caught between these monsters of modernity and a traditional European leadership still

somewhat rooted in the sanity of ancient philosophy and theology saw them for what they were and remained sane. When the Soviet Union finally collapsed, it was around the figure of Pope John Paul II, representative of ancient Christianity in fruitful dialogue with modernity and gratefully mindful of its Biblical roots that the uncompromised intellectuals rallied. ▲

Ex fumo in lucem

Barokowe kaznodziejstwo Andrzeja Kochanowskiego

(*Ex fume in lucem*: Andrzej Kochanowski's Baroque Homiletics) **By Anna Nowicka-Struska.** Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press (www.wydawnictwo.umcs.eu), 2008. 247 pages. Index, bibliography. ISBN 978-83-227-2915-1. Paper. In Polish.

Joanna Kurowska

This is a study of a series of funeral sermons delivered by the seventeenth-century Carmelite preacher Andrzej Kochanowski. For purposes of comparison, the study also deals with homiletics of several other Carmelite preachers. Nowicka-Struska maintains that while displaying many characteristics typical of the genre, time, and culture in which they were created, in many ways Kochanowski's sermons are exceptional. Her approach is twofold. She discusses the sermons from the point of view of a literary scholar and while doing so, weaves in the cultural and historical background of the Polish Baroque. This discussion constitutes the book's main corpus (chapters 1–3). Since sermons represent a religious type of writing, the closing chapter of *Ex fumo in lucem* discusses the various aspects of Carmelite religiosity.

The theme of death looms large in Baroque artists' works, and thus the topic (funeral sermons) seems well chosen. Nowicka-Struska evokes not only the main tenets of seventeenth-century mentality and cultural topoi in their particular Polish setting, but also an entire gamut of historical, social, religious, and psychological details. The first chapter briefly discusses the history of funeral sermons, focusing particularly on those that appeared in print. We are reminded of the traditional structure and function of a funeral sermon (*docere, laudare, delectare*) and learn interesting details regarding their publication. While connecting funeral ceremonies with the Baroque's overall fascination with the theater, Nowicka-Struska argues that the seventeenth-century *pompa funebris* was in fact a performance that involved the deceased (typically someone from the social elite), the preacher, and his

audience. Such a performance reflected many aspects of seventeenth-century society including culture, religion, and history. In the context of the funeral as part of the *theatrum mundi*, Nowicka-Struska discusses a number of rhetorical and literary characteristics of the sermons themselves, such as the use of visual effects and the dialogue, formulaic expressions, voice, and gestures.

The second chapter focuses on correlations between history and Carmelite preaching, particularly the ways in which the latter employed historical sources. Nowicka-Struska first outlines the fundamental and fascinating problem of historical evaluation, then discusses the main influences that conditioned such evaluations in the seventeenth century. We are reminded of the epoch's turbulent history (the Swedish wars and Khmelnytsky's uprising), of the Polish *szlachta*'s conservative outlook regarding politics and culture; of Sarmatian myths about the origin of Poles and their historic role; and finally, in the context of the post-Trent developments and Counter-Reformation in Poland, of the Sarmates' beliefs regarding Poland's role as the *Antemurale Christianitatis* and "Gate to Europe." As Nowicka-Struska demonstrates, all these developments found their echoes in Carmelite funeral sermons, whether as a ground for social criticism or as an opportunity to reinforce and foster the Sarmates' view of history. This chapter also explores the presence in sermons of such topoi as the opposition between the "Golden Past" and depraved present; the notions of history being God's playground and of God toying with human fate; as well as the Baroque's favorite notion of the vanity of history and individual human life. Finally, in this chapter Nowicka-Struska discusses the parenetic aspects of the sermons, especially the role models for male and female members of the *szlachta* and aristocracy, both lay and consecrated.

In the third chapter Nowicka-Struska tackles various aspects of the Carmelite sermons' aesthetics and style. While discussing applications of the baroque conceit in religious writing, she shows the sources from which Andrzej Kochanowski derived his conceits including nature, astronomy, astrology, mythology, the Bible, fine arts, architecture, and literature. While the sermons are described as sources of information regarding social mores in seventeenth-century Poland, the only customs mentioned in this part of the book are culinary ones. A large part of the chapter discusses various rhetorical figures employed in the sermons. Chapter 3 seems less well organized and occasionally repeats material already discussed in earlier parts. For example, while discussing the employment of literary motifs by

Andrzej Kochanowski and other Carmelite preachers, Nowicka-Struska returns to topics already covered such as the theatrical aspects of funeral sermons, the significance of the printed word, and the Baroque's preoccupation with *vanitas*.

The closing chapter focuses on Carmelite religiosity. Here the author demonstrates to what extent Andrzej Kochanowski's sermons diverged from those of other Carmelite preachers. However, here her methodology becomes somewhat unclear; the reader is not sure whether she writes this part of her book from the point of view of a literary scholar, an anthropologist of religion, or a religious person. For instance, the previous chapter ends with the following sentence: "Kończąc [ten] rozdział. . . wypada podpisać się pod niepodważalnym słowem Biblii, siebie uznając za filologicznie grzesznego autora" (Concluding [this] chapter. . . it is proper to endorse the indisputable veracity of the Bible while declaring oneself a philologically sinful author) (188).

Overall, Anna Nowicka-Struska's book is a rich source of information about seventeenth-century Carmelite sermons, their authors, and the milieu from which they emerged. As such, it is recommended for scholars studying European literature in general and European Baroque in particular. ▲

MORE BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

Więszego cudu nie będzie, by Zdzisław Krasnodębski. Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2011. 427 pages. Index, Bibliographical Note. ISBN 978-83-62628-06-3. Paper. In Polish.

A collection of essays—most of them previously published in Polish periodicals—on issues vital to contemporary Poland. The first section compares the European Union and Barack Obama's America. In spite of shortcomings, America wins the comparison while the author wisely observes that in many ways American social habits are closer to the Polish than to German or French. America has not thrown away patriotism, love of liberty, and religious belief, three features that are also prominent in Poland. The second section contains essays on issues of Polish history such as the Warsaw Rising, and includes a useful survey of changes in the understanding of liberty in Europe and the United States. Krasnodębski points out that individual freedom is possible only when a national group lives in a free state. This position, also held by British politologist Margaret Canovan and, according to Krasnodębski, by Liah Greenfeld, is being elbowed

out of public view in many ostensibly "free to all" public fora. Then come essays about heroes, prestige, myths old and new, tolerance and its implications. Section 2 ends with an essay on subtle forms of discrimination against Poles in German and American academia and mass media.

Section 3 deals with religion and politics in the contemporary world. Krasnodębski deconstructs the Enlightenment falsifications of the role of Christianity in European civilization. He writes about the acknowledged philosophers of modernity, from Voegelin and Strauss to Heidegger and Carl Schmitt. This section demonstrates that Krasnodębski's easy essayistic style has deep grounding in philosophy. He repeatedly stresses that in matters of religious belief Poland is an exception in Europe and can only be compared to the United States where being religious is also taken seriously in social life and in politics. In contrast, the laicization of Western Europe is now so deep that Polish migrant workers' churchgoing habits evoke amazement in citizens of countries where Poles go in search of jobs.

Section 4 deals with problems of modernization in Poland. This ambiguous term requires explanation, and Krasnodębski provides it. Unlike in section 3, here he quotes mostly Polish thinkers. Section 5 gathers Krasnodębski's articles on literature, and section 6 deals with universities.

The book is a compendium of contemporary thought. It mentions numerous popular philosophers and sociologists of the twentieth century. A good percentage of them hail from Germany, a country that has usually stood ready to provide verbalizations and explanations of the phenomena that were sometimes beyond the understanding of the individual human mind (e.g., Hegel's theory of history). While these verbalizations often issued from plain ignorance of data (German opinions about Poland), they gained wide recognition. Krasnodębski provides an admirable introduction to all these voices while damping the enthusiasm of the naive believers in the demise of the national state. (SB)

Report o zagrożeniach wolności słowa w Polsce w latach 2010–2011 (Report on dangers to the freedom of speech in Poland in 2010–2011), issued by Stowarzyszenie POLSKA JEST NAJWAŻNIEJSZA ("Poland Comes First" Association). Warsaw: SPJN, 1 October 2011. 69 pages. Endnotes, Addendum on lawsuits. In Polish; chapter 1 and Addendum available in English.

The *Report* charges that owing to the monopolization of power by the ruling party (Platforma Obywatelska), Polish courts, television, and press exclusively promote an interpretation of the social and

political situation in Poland that is flattering to the present government. Members of the opposition are seldom invited to explain their views on state television; when they are, they are vastly outnumbered by commentators praising the government. In addition, television presenters display an obvious bias in favor of the ruling party. The Polish courts, where a number of former communist judges still maintain their positions, pass sentences on government critics and burden them with fines beyond their capacity to pay. Former dissident Adam Michnik and the powerful and monied press conglomerate Agora with which he is associated are singled out as particularly opprobrious. The Addendum lists the lawsuits that Michnik has initiated against those who criticized him and the Agora. There were thirteen such lawsuits between 2001 and 2008; the defendants included not only politicians but also respectable scholars such as Professor Andrzej Nowak of Jagiellonian University, Professor Andrzej Zybertowicz of the University of Toruń, and poet Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz. Some of these lawsuits are still ongoing, but those on which the court has ruled have invariably favored the plaintiff and imposed punitive fines on the defendants. (JB) ▲

Mitteleuropa Blues, Perilous Remedies

Andrzej Stasiuk's Harsh World

Terrence O'Keefe

PART 2

(continued from the September 2011 issue)

By the late 1990s Stasiuk was willing to show his hand without benefit of fictional transformations. His survey of the broader region's pulse and life takes the form of a series of short essays called *FADO* published in an English translation by Bill Johnston in 2009. *FADO* records two types of journeys—one the repeated geographical forays to nowhere, which give rise to meditations on memory and loss, the other a quizzical to-and-fro interrogation of what might be labeled the “dialectical” relationship between technologically and economically advanced societies and the more backward regions of Europe, that is, the West and the East. In Stasiuk's view the field of these interactions constitutes an almost metaphysical map of reality, with the map shifting with each tremor of change that modernity brings. We from the West invade. They from the East absorb, deflect, or retreat, keeping some of the “old map” intact. In this game of back and forth, of exchange of opportunities and illusions, he has settled one matter in his mind—neither side has much of a spiritual advantage, though he would like to bestow just this on “Europe's losers” (the East).

Stasiuk begins his wanderings through the small towns and remote country and mountain regions of southeastern Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania (ah, mysterious, magical Transylvania! still contested by the latter two nations), Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania like a charged-up Polish Jack Kerouac. He's on the road again, like he was as a hitch-hiking teenager, driving like a demon through the dark, comfortably embraced by the night sky and immense blackness of invisible (yet imagined, even well known) landscapes. Such lonely trips take him back to the anxious joy of our distant ancestors prowling through the night, with their wonderment under the stars as they scan the horizon for the flickering fires of another human settlement, where comfort or death, enticement or dread, await men on the move.



Cover page of the *Report* on the freedom of speech in Poland.

At the beginning of the book's second essay the Kerouac comparison is made explicit, with Stasiuk calling his logs of numerous journeys a "Slavic *On the Road*". He begins with a whirlwind of almost pointless activity, driving for the sake of driving, stopping at small, dingy, isolated towns to soak up their limited daily rounds and the wise immobility of their sluggish inhabitants, whose dedication to existence for its own sake he admires. Some of these towns exhibit the skeletal remains of failed industries, usually abandoned mining centers where the extraction of wealth from the ground leaves behind nothing but desolation, economic hopelessness, big holes, and thick palls of mineral dust. Stasiuk notes that the local Gypsies find these surroundings perfectly acceptable; there will be more on Gypsies later. He ends his road trips in a very small, quiet place, the mind of a ten-year old boy, *his* mind retrieving the past. From Kerouac he has become transformed, most improbably, into a Slavic Proust, searching for lost time, the most cherished moments of his young life, when he spent summers with his grandparents on a farm on the outskirts of a sleepy Polish village. These passages are touching, lyrical, demonstrating his gifts as a prose poet.

He arrives there through a succession of steps. Each step is a short chapter in the book. There are some side excursions, into the region's literature, for example. All the time he is gradually circling in on himself. But we should begin where he does, with the broader picture of a region and its inhabitants. The place dearest to his heart is where he lives, in the mountains of a fictive nation he thinks of as "Carpathiana," which follows the long arc of that mountain range through several countries and half a dozen nationalities. He can drive six hundred miles through the chain and wind up sitting next to someone who smells exactly the same as his neighbors at home. The comforting scent is a mixture of cattle, cheese, sweat, tobacco, dirt, wood, and leather (and here I can imagine the West availing itself of another business opportunity, marketing a commercial cologne named "Shepherd's Brawn") and it pleases him greatly, as does the indifference of the various locals to nationality, their character and outlook being far more determined by vocation and the hard requirements of survival in poor places. To Stasiuk they are interchangeable "Carpathians" and almost interchangeable with their livestock, man-cow-goat-sheep hybrids.

But he raids the valleys and flatlands too. And a few cities. It is the cities that give rise to his reading of the nature of the ongoing exchanges between Europe's

East and West, returned to in several essays. Here is his summing up of life in Budva, a Montenegrin coastal resort town that comes across as a combination of gaudy carnival and flashy casino patronized by Western wannabes and men who imagine themselves as slick mobsters as depicted in cheap Italian films:

The whole place—the beach, the boardwalk, and the resort—everything is immersed in a solution of restless stroboscopic light and electronic pandemonium. This is how Budva imagines modernity and the big wide world.

The inhabitants and patrons of such places (there are enclaves like this in every large and small city in the region), especially their youth, have taken everything that is glitzy and meretricious from the fabled West—loud rock music, disco dance halls, adolescent male clothing styles, stiletto high heels, real and fake gold chains, "gangster style" *in toto*—and assume they have taken a step into "modernity." They are definitely not reading Proust, Joyce, Musil or Calvino (not even Gombrowicz or Kiš or Stasiuk), nor listening to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Dvořák, Janaček, Górecki, et al., nor harboring a desire to see the Louvre, nor even visiting their own historic sites to sample the architecture and painting of the late medieval or Baroque periods. It's our trash they want, not our treasures, and they may be right in thinking that our trash represents the predominant trend of life over where we live as well. This fondness for our unworthiest detritus is pervasive—Stasiuk finds it not only in urban pockets of robotic nightlife but even in small towns, where teenagers disport their "Western parody" in whatever social space is left to them, be it ever so humble a venue as the illuminated parking lot of a local gas station, where they drink stale beer, engage in adolescent jive and gesticulation, and are harassed by cops. It's a grim scene.

You won't get a full picture of metropolitan life in Stasiuk (he moved from his home city of Warsaw to the Low Beskid mountains in southeastern Galicia, where he has lived for more than two decades). After all, Prague, Brno, Bratislava, Ljubljana, Budapest, Zagreb, and Kraków, just for starters, offer many charming and rewarding sights and sounds, "high culture" as well, and people (Slavs! Hungarians!) actually live, work, and dream productively in these cities and in their summer cottages in the countryside. This life is not alluded to; it is positively avoided. Stasiuk is more inclined to offer brief glimpses that emphasize the overlapping historical time zones that might still be encountered in the region's big cities,

especially in the Balkans—a horse-drawn cart with iron wheels and cheap junk dangling from its sides met among the streaking Mercedes on a road exiting a city, or a migrant field hand trudging through a downtown square in rubber boots, with a scythe over his shoulder, looking as if he stepped out of a Callot print, seemingly oblivious to the impressive sights of modernity. He walks out of the past, through the present, and right back into the past. Stasiuk is an impressionist of shiny steel and glass erupting through a mosaic of rust and decay. Romania is where Stasiuk sees the most jarring simultaneities of historical time zones and their physical instancing in a jumble of domestic and commercial building styles, each apparently at home with, or indifferent to, its neighbors. To him this gives the country a special savor, as does its final piece of the Danube, an estuary of teeming flora and wildlife that strikes him as positively prehistoric.

Of course Romania is also home to a large, indigestible Gypsy population. Stasiuk's Gypsies are the paradigmatic "they" who move through our (European) time and space without coinhabiting it with us, a people indifferent to the charms, promises, and culture of Europe. Stasiuk finds this admirable because their own presumed ideas of time and space (properties that belong to no one, therefore everyone, and are there to be used as needed to get through the day) appeal to him—"existence for its own sake." They live on our castoffs and cleverly improvise their shantytowns from such discards, sheer junk—yet it is enough to keep them happy (or melancholic in a dramatic way), living in temporarily appropriated wastelands, committed to a way of life that believes, because property is theft, that theft is a perfectly respectable way of acquiring the little property they need to survive. Are they primitive Marxists, uncontaminated by theory but imbued with a dialectical relationship with Europe's trajectory toward a settled, dull, wasteful existence or, better, sophisticated anarchists? They seem to be something like this to Stasiuk. And they are highly emotional. Strong emotions, no matter how irrational or upsetting their consequences in action (a heroic drinking match, a brawl over a woman or an insult to one's ancestors) are the only thing left to eastern and central and southern Europeans (primarily Slavs) with which to counter what Stasiuk imagines will be the fate of the region's people: to become a cheap and shabby imitation of Western Europeans (in his argot, "old Europe's" citizens, whom he imagines as deracinated and unhappy, or happy for all the wrong reasons, in their present incarnation).

About those side excursions into literature, where we get away from small-town stranded souls and hardy, taciturn mountain men: Stasiuk does not hesitate to praise fulsomely those writers whom he admires above all, Danilo Kiš and Miodrag Bulatović. Kiš, whose mother was a Serb and whose father was a Hungarian Jew who "Magyarized" the family name of Kon (Kohn, Cohen, Cohn, etc.), is well known. Kiš was born in Subotica, in the northern Vojvodina region of old millennial Hungary. Before the rearrangements of 1918 the city was known as Szabadka, and a portrait of it in the late Habsburg years exists in the Hungarian Dezső Kosztolányi's odd and soulful novel *Skylark*. Bulatović (whose name is new to me), a Serb, hailed from a remote border district of northern Montenegro. These are Stasiuk's two poles of excellence. The historical melancholy of the one and the surrealistic frenzy of the other appeal to Stasiuk, who notes that Bulatović's intense, mannered "unreality"—that is, a sort of magic realism with an unrelenting poetry of violence—presents life as it is in this part of the world more accurately than Kiš's measured and formally constrained writing. Stasiuk's brief chapter on Bulatović quotes a passage that describes a vicious, maiming brawl among men who represent each of the broader region's nationalities (Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Serbs, Albanians, Bulgarians, and others), and the level of violence and pitch of obscene curses outpaces what might be seen and heard in a film by Quentin Tarantino. As Stasiuk sees it, Bulatović's recurrent theme is homelessness, whether it be experienced in one's natal locale or in the diaspora of Serbian and other Eastern émigrés (often existential "thugs on the road"—shades of "Saint Genet" here) and the ceaseless yearning that goes with that condition. At a gloomy Kiš conference in Belgrade he observes that the security police have been activated to protect poets and literary critics from the prospective wrath of citizens offended by writing that does not confirm their most cherished beliefs—myths—about themselves and their homeland. Concerning these beloved legends of the collective self, in the essay "Parody as a Continent's Means for Survival," Stasiuk probes their origins, their utility as a response to the West, and their staying power:

Did London, for instance, allow itself to think that the hell of the Balkans was not an exotic tribal affair but a tragedy just as European as that of Coventry in 1940 and 1941?

These questions may sound like complaints, but they are not. They only speak of the West's provincialism that leads it to perceive the rest of the continent as a failed copy of itself. In the meantime the East takes from you only what it

needs. It takes appearance, mask, and costume. . . If the West was parochial, then we practiced something that might be called pathological cosmopolitanism. We lived in our cities and countries in appearance only, because for us they were fictitious entities. They did not exist in and of themselves. Real life happened elsewhere, in the West. Our world was unreal. We had to make it so because otherwise we would have had to despise it. Attempts to render our world more real resulted in sorry expeditions into an idealized past, or a hazy millenarianism that proclaimed the imminent arrival of a miraculous hybrid—the three-headed dragon of social equality, universal prosperity, and absolute freedom.

I note here that “real life happened elsewhere” is very close to the title of a 1973 Kundera novel, whose central character, a despicable state-approved poet and police informant, can achieve emotional satisfaction only in his daydream life as a comic-book style superhero who rescues alluring young women. (This novel, *Life Is Elsewhere*, is moreover one of Kundera’s most direct fictional assaults on the Czech tradition of poetry, conceived by him as the literary counterpart of adolescent male fantasies and strategies of avoiding social embarrassment and its attendant feelings of inadequacy, all leading to behavior and attitudes that are embodied in his concept of “lyricism.” In Kundera’s youth this led to “lyrical communism,” the enthusiastic collaboration of the poet with the hangman in the interest of making the New Man.)

Stasiuk is what we what we might call an anti-Kundera, the latter being a Slavic writer who left his home region and enjoyed the rare success of adapting to a foreign place and culture so thoroughly that he now writes in French, a true cosmopolitan who believes that literary fiction must aim high at a notional standard of “world literature.” (Like Čapek’s possible influence on Stasiuk, there may be a link between some of Kundera’s work and Čapek’s writing from the 1930s. Both *Life Is Elsewhere* and Kundera’s French novel *Identity*, deal with a question—what is the “self” that we so firmly believe in?—that was at the center of Čapek’s *Three Novels* alluded to above. Going forward in time, *Identity* may also be an unacknowledged source of inspiration for David Foster Wallace’s well-known “tricky” short story about the confusions of identity, “Oblivion.”)

Kundera’s migration is quite different from that of Poland’s Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, who became Joseph Conrad, once a boy who yearned for a life on the broad, deep oceans. To get there he had to go through the process of becoming a member of the nation that was acknowledged to be the mistress of the sea (Kundera himself may believe that France is still

the mistress of reason and writing). Writing about such a life in the partitioned Poland of Conrad’s era made little or no sense; the longed-for adventurous setting and all of its high-seas literary tropes had been taken over by England and America.

Kundera’s migration is quite different from Stasiuk’s prospects too. Stasiuk will not only not be bolting for Paris or London, but presumably also avoiding a return to residence in his home city of Warsaw, unless his commitment to life in the Carpathians wavers for reasons unknown. As we will see below, he’s veering into Germany on occasion, and someday he may make a raid on Russia—these being the two negatively-charged poles that his homeland is wedged between. And, against Kundera’s notion that communism created an artificial cleft between the West and Central and Eastern Europe, effectively removing a dozen or so nations from the European cultural map, Stasiuk, in a 2007 interview with a French newspaper made a point of refusing to

separate Europe from the ‘Europeanism’ of communism. After all, communism is a purely European reality. [This may surprise the Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese, Cubans, and Ethiopians, among others, in whose lands communism arrived as a weapon of nationalism and anticolonialism, then entrenched itself as a system of rule with local monarchic and imperial precedents. *T. OK.*] It is here that it was first conceived, and it was indeed here that it was put to the test. It cannot be said that ‘you had communism and we had Europe.’ This is one more iron curtain in the European consciousness—the belief that communism was elsewhere. It was here, with us in Europe, and in this sense it is part of the same national heritage as the Renaissance, the Baroque, the chateaux of the Loire Valley, etc.

My comments in brackets suggest a certain parochialism in Stasiuk’s pronouncements. That aside, I find it difficult to contest his observation, intuiting that Kundera’s proclamations on the matter are really in the nature of a mea culpa for the “lyrical” procommunist excesses of his own youth. He and many others chose a path that darkened rapidly, and they regretted it soon enough, but the path remains a European one nonetheless, just as communism was a European import into half-European, half-Asiatic Russia. Disowning communism from a nation’s history, making it into an exotic and alien disease introduced by foreigners, is pointless and dangerous.

This hypothetical argument between two Central European authors of different generations and experiences bears some discussion. It is not odd that Kundera and Stasiuk—who are writers, after all, not

politicians or diplomats—can be viewed as spokesmen for these opposing points of view, given that along with political and economic domination the USSR went to extremes to export an all-pervasive “Soviet culture” to its satellite states. The battles waged by intellectuals and artists in Czechoslovakia—and by people from all walks of life who favored jazz, rock-and-roll, and blue jeans—against the system during the years after the mid-1960s were referred to as “the politics of culture.” There is no doubt that the creation of the eastern bloc satellite states was accomplished through force and fraud and that it was designed to serve Stalin’s and the USSR’s needs. The situation is well summarized by Tony Judt in his panoptic period history, *Postwar*:

The effect of the Sovietization of eastern Europe was to draw it steadily away from the western half of the continent. Just as Western Europe was about to enter an era of dramatic transformation and unprecedented prosperity, eastern Europe was slipping into a coma: a winter of inertia and resignation, punctuated by cycles of protest and subjugation, that would last for nearly four decades. It is symptomatic and somehow appropriate that during the very years when the Marshall Plan injected some \$14 billion *into* Western Europe’s recovering economy, Stalin—through reparations, forced deliveries and the imposition of grossly disadvantageous trading distortions—extracted approximately the same amount *from* eastern Europe.

In this argument Kundera seems correct about the deliberate Soviet excision of its subordinates from Europe, while wrong about just how “alien” and non-European the whole phenomenon was. The ideological fiction advanced for this isolation was that it was to protect the new states from contamination of their socialist purity by the crass and aggressive West; the simple reality was the creation of a military buffer zone for the USSR. For there is also no doubt that that many European intellectuals—western, eastern and Mediterranean—joined or supported the Communist Party with the idea of playing a “leading role” in the utopian transformations of society that the Party alleged it would bring about; or that some factions of socialist and other workers’ parties willingly merged with *the* Party (many were, of course, dragooned into line).

Communism was a pan-European phenomenon capable of sending out tendrils into Latin America, Africa, and Asia, much as Europe had earlier sent out its agents of colonialism. Stasiuk sees this, the European roots and development of communism, in a clearer light. In the twentieth century’s era of violent political swings, a veritable ideological pressure cooker, strange turns of events happened—Czechoslovakia had

actually been the only functioning democracy in the region throughout the interwar era, and its cultural ties to the West were also strong, yet its population more or less voted the Party into power in 1948, enthusiastically enlisting in the collective effort to “build socialism.” A decade after its leaders established one of the most dogmatic and inflexible Stalinist regimes, the former enthusiasts began to have second thoughts. I also note that the communists’ political kinship with the several varieties of fascism that abounded in the region during the interwar years gives the lie to the idea that it was entirely an imposition by outsiders, as witnessed by the ready postwar transfer of specialists and security forces from the fascist/Nazi to the communist parties. This was not true of Poland, and the widespread sources of potential Polish resistance to Soviet rule probably accounted for more Russian concessions there concerning the Catholic Church and collectivized agriculture than elsewhere in Central Europe. In the interwar period politics within the European communist parties, including the small Western ones, had also been brutal and totalitarian, marching in lockstep down self-destructive pathways to the beat of Moscow’s trumpets and drums. This took place at a time when Stalin had no actual purchase on the continent and no leverage other than control of that versatile capitalist tool, Party funds that he used to subsidize European communist parties. Stasiuk acknowledges this history of local complicity, while Kundera limns it as the product of a totally forced estrangement from an idealized Europe in which east-west differences were insignificant or disappearing until the Red Army arrived on the scene in 1944–45.

The subtextual theme of this argument relates to the very old battle between Westernizers and Slavophiles, with its deep roots in both Russian history and literature. Turgenev and Dostoevsky are the most illustrious antiphonal voices of this debate that goes back to the time of Peter the Great. The pan-Slav movement of the nineteenth century in both Russia and the smaller Eastern Orthodox nations (Serbia, Bulgaria) also had advocates within the Slavic minorities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where it took on nuances qualified by local conditions. Those Czech nationalists who looked toward Russia as the nation with which they would federate or amalgamate in some vague manner (a minority opinion and desire) still tended to be political liberals whose pan-Slav enthusiasm was undermined by serious reservations about the social and political backwardness of tsarist society. Even Masaryk, with his strong pro-Western orientation,

played the pan-Slav, pro-Russian card briefly during 1917, but quickly withdrew it when he came face to face with conditions in Bolshevik Russia. In truth, “Russia” had been a rhetorical threat used to soften Austrian resistance to Czech autonomy, just as pan-Slav sentiments were a counterweight and response to the heady pan-Germanism of Germany and the Germans of Austria and its crown lands of Bohemia and Moravia. In Hungary the actual and rhetorical foe of pan-Slav sentiment was that nation’s program of Magyarization, its attempt, in its own mind, not to be swamped by a sea of Slavs. Looking in the opposite direction, Slavic writers in the Dual Monarchy were attracted to France as much by the idea of Paris as the “anti-Vienna” and “anti-Budapest” as they were by any magnetic appeal of French literature. For some, especially Serbs and Bulgarians, Moscow fulfilled the same role.

Like the preceding generation of Czech intellectuals (an exception being the Anglophile Čapek), Kundera represents the side of the argument that looked to the West in general and France in particular for political support as well as cultural models and influences. The French orientation had something to do with the fact that the Czechs (but not the Slovaks) shared a hereditary enemy, Germany, with France. Looking back from 1945 it was clear that France had lost its patronage credentials due to its role in the Munich settlement of 1938 (thus the abrupt turn toward Russia of many former Czech liberals in 1945; Anglophilia suffered the same fate for the same reason). This had been a two-way street, with Czech modernists and surrealists achieving considerable recognition in France during the 1930s. The Czech literature of dissent from the mid-1960s onward also found a welcome home away from home in France. Kundera found a literal home there (and is greatly resented by his old colleagues for “deserting” their cause and becoming a “cosmopolitan aesthete”—as an emblematic nationalistic Czech poem has it, if you leave your homeland, you, not your homeland will be the loser).

Pan-Slavism in Poland was almost non-existent, given the eastern half of that nation’s subjugation by Russia after the partitions of the eighteenth century. It was as unacceptable as pro-German sentiment, and far more unacceptable than pro-Habsburg sentiment in Austrian Galicia where the old Polish nobility, the active political class, had been ceded considerable autonomy. With Poland’s strong attachments to the “First Rome” as represented by the Catholic Church, the messianic “Third Rome” rhetoric of Russian Slavophiles held no attraction. It is also germane here

to mention the fact that before the eighteenth century Poland was a Great Power of northern Europe, an expansive multiethnic state that tiny Brandenburg-Prussia and disorganized Russia had reason to fear (just as they feared Sweden at the peak of its bellicosity), though the polarities of dominance-subordination have been reversed since then. The post-1790s realities led to an attendant altered Polish frame of mind—“the Polish complex”—a feeling that its inevitable fate is to be a beleaguered society trapped between two menacing giants; this is a status with cultural as well as political dimensions. Poland’s historical ties to France (once again as a counterweight to Prussia and Austria, then to a unified Germany) is one of many factors that placed it squarely in the Westernizing camp.

The foregoing historical digression is necessary because Central and Eastern European novelists have tended to write works strongly pervaded by an awareness of both ancient and recent history. And their particulars lead to the conclusion that, although Stasiuk may be some kind of Slavophile, his outlook departs considerably from the older meanings and implications of that term. Nonetheless his views on Slavic suffering (which allegedly induces a vibrant emotional life) echo those of many Russian pan-Slavs who thought of the Russian people as downtrodden but beautiful souls akin to the suffering Christ. This perspective is familiar to readers of Dostoevsky’s novels where “the little people” (serfs, peasants, urban workers, petty officials) display a beatific style of suffering and Christian humility that is allegedly *sui generis* to Russian society and that contrasts favorably with the rampant individualism and materialism ascribed to a corrupt West. Yet Stasiuk’s position does not really partake of this idea of the innate nobility of the poor and humble of the Slavic lands—for him that is a conceit exploded by history and by the penchant of the downtrodden to misbehave just like everyone else when given the opportunity. It is obviously a complicated position informed by contemporary conditions and *ad hoc* arguments that fulfill his own emotional needs. Perhaps we should just take him at his word—having once been one, he is fond of “losers” and he finds them heavily concentrated in his part of the world. Certainly Slavic peoples have suffered (as has the rest of humanity), but the wisdom that is to be taken from this is that suffering and decline are inevitable and natural aspects of life, something that, as Stasiuk intuits, the current consumerism borrowed from the West is at great pains to deny.

These old cultural controversies and rhetorical battles among intellectuals aside, if Stasiuk ever leaves his mountain lair, he might be enticed to settle on those undramatic plains of central Poland. The final chapter of *FADO* is titled “Tranquility.” It is a loving picture of life on his grandparents’ farm, where he spent the summers of his late childhood and early youth. It is a place where there is no trash, because nothing is wasted; the material world is wrung out and winnowed because everything can be adapted for survival, for use. The cleverness of these adaptations of worn-out objects is the soul of rural wit in action. Above all, the stillness and silence of the place impressed themselves upon his mind:

The world was composed of an infinite amount of time and material reality. It barely contained any people or events, ordered according to the rules of dramaturgy. In the shade, on long July days, in the silence, everything happened at the same time. Images were suspended in space, able to last forever. Sometimes they broke from the pressure of the air, but then they reassembled themselves. It seemed to me that I could easily return to what had been an hour or even a day or two before. And I believe I did so all the time. Perhaps I even found my former self, busy with what had been occupying me earlier?

Today I have the feeling that back then I was experiencing something like eternity. Exactly that. Grace had been conferred upon me. . . . I felt I was alone in the world, and this brought me joy. Beneath the dark night sky, amid the smell of cattle, somewhere at the end of the world, I was more aware of my own existence than ever before or ever again.

That is the quiet end of Stasiuk’s journeys, for the moment. It illustrates his progress from poetry through jarring prose fiction to essay, a not uncommon path and one that in his case yields nonfiction writing charged by his poetic and fictional talents. What about the book’s somewhat odd title, the name of a kind of Portuguese song? At some point Stasiuk is being driven along the Albanian border with Macedonia. The car is a battered, rusty taxicab, and its driver tunes his radio to a local station playing Fado, an incongruous music that induces in Stasiuk the thought that the Portuguese countryman and small town dweller are also living in a time warp similar to the one he encounters over and over during his peripatetic jaunts through the Carpathians and the Balkans. They must be, to his mind, otherwise why would they have such a music that is saturated with deep emotions, Gypsy conceits of betrayed love and vengeance, songs bemoaning one’s miserable everyday plight? Without understanding the

song’s words, Stasiuk and the driver are certain of the music’s meaning, inherent in its tonalities, melodies and rhythms. It is “their kind of music,” lamentational, entirely suited to Balkan notions about the fate of small, desperate people resigned to their condition as an inevitable and eternally recurrent form of existence.

FADO reads extremely well in English. There are no hitches, and when an oddly formal or rare word turns up in colloquial speech (“plafond,” “helve,” “misericord”), I assume it is there in the original. Therefore, all praise to the translator, Bill Johnston, described in a brief endnote as “the leading translator of Polish literature in the United States.” If *Nine* and *FADO* are typical of his results, he has earned the encomium. And congratulations are also due to the Dalkey Archive Press who, with their usual intrepid and adventurous eclecticism, have supplied the reader with a compact, handsome, well made paperback that can go anywhere. These material qualities of the book make me laugh with derision over the pretensions and presumed portability and convenience of Kindle, i-Pad, and all other such “literary” grotesqueries. If this comment offends any juvenile reader—real or older, yet arrested developmentally—who consumes his or her literature and life through such an electronic device, well then, good, it is meant to. On this issue I am obviously a Luddite.

White Raven and *Nine*, especially the latter, belong to the approach known as “urban realism” (a term customarily preceded by “gritty”). Some Eastern and Central European critics and literary theorists acknowledge this manner of writing as capable of mounting a meaningful indirect critique (indirect because it was compelled to eschew overt political references) of both social reality and the dull utilitarian requirements of officially sanctioned writing in the old communist bloc. In the early transitional stage of “the changes” it was seen similarly as a vehicle for a cultural critique of the new system. But there are other critics who argue that this approach is irreparably flawed because it shares some of the fundamental formal presuppositions of the older sanctioned literature; on this account alone it is dismissed as not really “new writing.” In this view, realism portrays society in a straightforward, consensual manner devoid of an ironical attitude toward writing itself. This presumption is no longer allowable in the minds of such critics. Just as bad, it often serves extraliterary purposes (e.g., the building of the state, the building of socialist man, the building of national consciousness, the advancement of reforms or of an ethical scheme). Novels written in

this older style can paint portraits of society and individuals either positively (optimistically, as desired by the political hierarchy) or negatively (pessimistically or skeptically, as detested and disciplined by that hierarchy), while their authors share with their political masters basic ideas about the social value of writing and the utility of conventional realism. Therefore much of the “literature of dissent” that deviated from and opposed the official perspective about existing social reality (which was highly fictional in itself, a situation that allowed a clever writer the opportunity to parody it by taking it at its literal word) presumably shared “epistemological principles” with that perspective even though it was hostile to and skeptical about the official version of what socialist society was and might be. Theory-oriented critics view this as a failure.

The way out of this is alleged to be postmodernism (or “metafiction”), freely available to all after the changes that began in 1989. Certain writers from the region are hailed as full or partial postmodernists, for example, the Czechs Jiří Kratochvíl and Jáchym Topol, the Slovaks Pavel Vilikovsky and Peter Pišťanek, and the Hungarians Péter Esterházy and László Krasznahorkai, among many others. Perhaps surprising to outsiders, even the smallest Slavic language communities, e.g., Slovakia and Slovenia, have critical factions that participate in fierce contemporary theoretical and polemical wars over postmodernism and its discontents. In fact, the real surprise would be if younger writers from the region did not avail themselves of postmodernist techniques (some of which revive elements of 1930s surrealism) in order to distinguish themselves from the preceding generation of writers. Tadeusz Konwicki’s *A Minor Apocalypse*, published quasi-legally in 1979, is certainly a Polish novel influenced by the theories and practices of postmodernism, lagging behind its Western counterparts by only a decade or so. It has a narrator as authorial voice who interjects social and artistic observations freely; seamless merging of gritty urban realism itself with surrealistic fantasy to create a satirical portrait of Poland’s dismal state; gallows humor; a hopeless ending that resolves nothing; meditations on the value and viability of writing; and so on. It may very well have been on Stasiuk’s mind at the start of his vocation (rather than “career”) as a writer. *Tales of Galicia* also incorporates some of these by-now standard postmodernist practices, but this is to be expected as part of the broader patterns that affect (and occasionally afflict) writers of literary fiction at the present time, though writers may be far less

dependent on rigorously honoring the conceits of postmodernism than critics and theorists are. On the other hand there are conspicuously theory-driven writers in all of Europe’s tongues. Placing Stasiuk or any other author into one or the other of these categories seems a nugatory academic exercise, often restricting criticism to taxonomy and acrobatics with specialized terminology while it skirts issues of comparative value and quality. Few readers, after all, take up a book in order to see if it fulfills the requirements of current critical theories.

Stasiuk is one of our most recent *Mitteleuropa* novelists, a regional classification he seems to accept without objection. Unlike Kundera, he does not appear to yearn for a reincorporation of Eastern and Central European life and letters into an expanded, comprehensive “West,” because he considers their disparities as the necessary yin-and-yang embrace of a self-divided entity. He might also reject the illustrious Czech émigré’s exhortation to make all serious writing aspire to a standard demanded by the canons of an assumed “world literature.” He is much more modest in this respect, and he views East-West dissonances not as a temporary aberration but as a tension based on real differences grounded in history and in the longer survival of older, more natural ways of life in the backwaters of the east (with an idea of nature as lovely, violent, and unpredictable in a way that many humans find satisfying). From the point of view of producing writing that is descriptively and psychologically vivid, the “regional framing” of some of his tales does not really matter (*White Raven* could have taken place in numerous blighted pockets of Appalachia, and *Nine* in New York, Chicago, Liverpool, or Mexico City). His achievements rest upon the energy and subtlety of their telling. Turning fifty in 2010, he has a way to go on his path, and it seems that he has more than enough stamina to stake out new ground. More of his writing should be translated into English, especially those works that have resonated in contemporary Germany: *Dukla*, written in 1997 and translated as *Die Welt hinter Dukla* in 2002; a play from 2004, *Noc* (“Night,” with its intriguing subtitle “A Slavo-Germanic medical tragifarce”); and *Dojczland* (“Germany”), essays about his travels there published in 2007.

Dukla, in close proximity to the nameless village of *Tales of Galicia*, is the place of the just mentioned collection of essays of the same name. Its nearby military cemeteries are also scenes of contemplative nocturnal visits by Stasiuk in *FADO*. He is fond of cemeteries and their old religious day of honor, All

Souls' Day, for reasons that give an insight into his general feelings about life (a phrase I am sure he would prefer to *Weltanschauung*). As he put it in a piece published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in 2006:

This is an archaic, primitive public holiday. . . . Once a year we light small fires at the places where we have buried our dead so that they will exist forever and we can find them again. They are the best proof of our existence. What would mankind be without its ancestors? This is an absurd question. And so once a year we mark these places with light so that the black, empty, infinite universe knows that our little battle against it continues, against its nihilism and its indifference.

The origins of the graveyards near Dukla belong to the histories of the two world wars, in which substantial campaigns occurred in attempts to capture the Dukla Pass, the least difficult mountain passage from Galicia into Slovakia. Western readers are mostly unfamiliar with these now obscure battles, but they were on a scale and of a ferocity to deserve mention. They left behind legions of ghosts of many nationalities. The eastern fronts of the First World War (Germans and Austro-Hungarians against Russians to the east and northeast, and against Serbs and Romanians to the southeast) receive scant coverage in British, American, and French histories of the war. At the war's outset the tsarist army flooded Galicia (in the event overcoming the Austrian counterpart of Verdun, the supposedly impregnable fortress complex at Przemyśl), and was pushed out only after a period of three year's fighting that was every bit as attritional as the war on the western front. Complicating local feelings, Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks fought and died in both of the opposing armies, as did Croats and Serbs on the war's southern fronts (I point out in contradiction to the popular rumors of the day that Jews of all of these nationalities also served in the respective armies of the Central Powers and the Allies). Thirty years later similar events occurred. The battle of the Dukla Pass in the autumn of 1944 pitted an invading Russian army, with a small complement of Czechoslovakian army-in-exile troops, against a resolute German defense. The offensive was supposed to be coordinated with the Slovak National Uprising (crafted by a tenuous alliance of local communists and nationalists) against the Tiso government and its German overlords, but by the time of the battle the uprising had dissipated its force and its partisans were on the run in the mountains. The Germans threw five good divisions into the gap (half the number on duty in the Normandy sector on D-day), and the seven weeks' long battle resulted in more than 45,000 men

killed on both sides and double that wounded and missing. In the West we have to comb through specialized military histories replete with operational details of little interest to the general reader to find even a scant record of these events. One recent exception to this is Norman Davies's *No Simple Victory*, with its comparative charts and tables that show that in the European theater the Second World War was won and lost on the eastern front in a way hard to dispute. The battles loom large in local memory, though their graveyards, unlike those in the West, have fallen into decay.

Anyone who tries to pinpoint Dukla's location on the Web will soon encounter websites devoted to the 1944 battle's memorials in the mountain pass. And he or she will also encounter a host of websites that cover something of a lacuna in Stasiuk's portraits of Galicia—the missing former occupants of the sprawling network of towns and larger cities with heavy, even preponderantly Jewish populations, including Dukla, the whole splayed-out world of Jewish rural and urban life that vanished between 1939 and 1945, never to be restored.

The post-1945 adjustment of borders removed from Poland all but a few of the Ruthenians, Ukrainians and Belarusians who inhabited interwar eastern Galicia and its fringes in large numbers. Compensatory expansion to the west caused the flight and then the forced removal of the Germans of the old East Prussia (occupied by Russians), West Prussia (Pomerania), Poznań, Gdańsk, and Lower Silesia. Though now “missing” from the region, these people and the nearby Slovaks are mentioned in three of the four books discussed here. Prewar Polish Galicia's other group of “others,” the missing Jews, are not, with one brief exception. In *White Raven* the fugitive gang spends a night with an old Ukrainian living in an isolated farmstead (his sick wife is not seen, only heard moaning as she sleeps in a room which is half a stable, her man perhaps considering her a species of livestock). The man reminisces about the Second World War years, referring to Hitler as a splendid Herod who scourged the Jews and praising the Germans as “real soldiers”—they wore beautiful uniforms and were paragons of organization and efficiency, unlike the Polish and then Russian troops who moved through the area. And the Jews? All murdered, but still cursed in his own mind, which entertains the fantasy that even their corpses and ghosts are capable of vile deeds, pulling innocent passersby into the graves he believes the victims so richly deserved and roaming the land at night to cause

mischievous. After one of the group walks over and silently slaps the man, they all ignore the event, resume their places, and go on drinking vodka.

Poland, the land with the most missing Jews, was also the land where “anti-Semitism without Jews” figured prominently in communist public life during the peak years of postwar Stalinism which disguised its motives and goals by the code-word “cosmopolitanism,” as has been described by, among others, Kiš in his essay “Variations on Central European Themes”. Anti-Semitism has been a working tool of national identity construction and chauvinism in this part of the world for at least two centuries, and the communist leadership took full advantage of this when trying to defray criticism of its own spectacular failures. There are some surprising exceptions to this form of forging a national identity, including, in interwar Poland, the ideal political schema of Marshal Piłsudski, who might be described plausibly as “an authoritarian of the left” favoring a multiethnic state based on civic loyalty, not unlike the ideal of the most progressive of the Habsburgs whom he had served at one time.

In a Polish writer of Stasiuk’s generation and provenance, the missing Jews must be only a pale apparition, something like a rumor of a lost era’s different way of life that included a different set of fears and hatreds. Like faded black-and-white photographs of people who are neither countrymen nor kinsmen, they no longer have an emotional purchase on the unlovely present or on the locals’ imagination that has its own heroes, victims, and villains from the war years and the long, dreary communist era. As the local Everyman might put it, “What’s all this fuss about the Jews—millions of us were killed and dispossessed by Hitler and Stalin too.” The last of the locals who either hounded Jews or protected them or who were willfully blind to or fatalistic about the era’s murderous events will soon be dead. A small village’s Greek Catholic church with its gloomy-radiant icons might be rebuilt, and might even become a scene of worship for Slavic neighbors from the east who drift through—truck drivers, tradesmen, immigrants. But not a synagogue. Who would attend its services?

As to the Germans and Russians who managed to make life hell more than once in this part of the world, Stasiuk’s oft-quoted remarks to the German newspaper *Die Welt* in March of 2007 express an attitude that will certainly damn him with any politically sensitive Nobel Prize judge (i.e., all of them) who might consider his work. As the English summary of the interview informs us:

In an interview with Gerhard Gnauck, Polish writer Andrzej Stasiuk explains how Poles feel about Russians and Germans: “I fear the Germans and the Russians; I despise them and I admire them. Perhaps it is the fate of the Poles to obsess about their own position within Europe and the world. Being a Pole means living in complete isolation. Being a Pole means being the last person east of the Rhine. Because for Poles, Germans are like well-constructed machines, like robots, while Russians are somewhat like animals. Our proximity to southerly neighbors in Slovakia offers little consolation.”

Does this publicly declared animus (with its willful elision of those other unloved Slavic neighbors, the Czechs) mean that his favorable reception in Germany is part of that nation’s continuing self-criticism over the earlier Prussian role in the partitions of Poland (not likely) or the fresher, brutal events of 1939–1945? Masochism or reflective penitence? One hopes the latter, but perhaps neither. Perhaps it is evidence of a new German live-and-let-live outlook, or just as possible, the indulgence of a “wild, exotic creature from the East” by citizens of a staid and unadventurous country dedicated to material prosperity (just the kind of country that all of Germany’s twentieth-century enemies hoped it would become, so there is little sense in complaining about the historical and cultural outcome). Whatever its basis, Stasiuk may someday reciprocate the gesture of acceptance. Regarding political life in his own nation, a subject treated only through indirection in his fiction, his querulous fondness for the Kaczyński twins (now only one of them left) who dominated Poland’s political life during the last decade, shows his temper—to him they are “tired old babies” whose combinations of admirable, surrealistically comical, and vindictive traits express their inner conflicts and authentically represent his homeland as he sees it stumbling from one unsatisfactory way of life to another equally vexing one. He would not ask for anything more, or less.

BOOKS QUOTED

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Letters

More Details about the Soviet Genocide of Poles in 1937–1938

I appreciated the article on Stalin's Genocide of Poles by Tomasz Sommer (*SR*, vol. 31, September 2011). Many horrible details were not mentioned in this article, and for the sake of historical memory I would like to record the following:

1. In 1937 my parents' acquaintances in Bielsk Podlaski (Poland) received a letter from their relatives in Mohylev (USSR) containing the following words in broken Russian: "Ne pishite do nas tak chasto" [do not write to us that often]. This seemed puzzling, but today we know why they wrote this. It was their way of telling their relatives that they did not expect to live much longer.

2. In December 1944 my family and I lived in Ostrów Mazowiecki (Poland). The Soviet summer offensive was over, the front stopped at the river Narew. The winter was severe, and our small town was crowded with trucks and soldiers.

As usual in the evening, a voice from behind the door was heard: "Pozvol'te perenochevat!" [allow us spend the night here] It was an offer we could not refuse. After the first glass of vodka the Soviet officer said: "My name is Kochanowski, the same as that of your poet [Jan Kochanowski]. I was a Pole, but now I am a Soviet soldier and a Soviet patriot. When I was 17 I joined the Komsomol." From the emotional and disjoint sentences a tragic story emerged: "I did it to save my father. I fell on my knees before the 'Tsar' begging for my father's life." These words I remember with great accuracy. He said that it was then that he became a Soviet man.

Fifty years later, I learned what happened to his father. I read a book by Jewgenii Gorelik *Kuropyty. Polski ślad* (Kuropyty: the Polish trace) (Warsaw, 1996). It contained a list of people shot at Kuropyty. On page 231 I read the following:

"Kochanowski, Adolf, son of Onufry. Born in 1883 in Wołkowicze estate, the district of Minsk. Profession: engineer at the Minsk Telephone Station. On 28

November 1937, by decision of the NKVD Committee of the USSR and Prosecutor General of the USSR, sentenced to death for spying for Poland. Shot on 15 December 1937 in Minsk. Rehabilitated 24 December 1957."

Jerzy Mioduszeński
University of Silesia at Katowice

On Polish democracy, Wojciech Jaruzelski, and the Catholic Church

I am really glad that the April 2011 issue of *Sarmatian Review* included a review of *The Origins of Modern Polish Democracy* (edited by M. B. B. Biskupski, James S. Pula, and myself, and issued by Ohio University Press in 2010). A history of democracy in Poland is a very important topic that deserves to be the subject of many books and serious discussion. I am disappointed, however, with the fact that the review, written in an unfriendly or even hostile tone, includes several untrue statements and is, in my opinion, unfair.

Let me support this opinion with several examples taken from the part of the review devoted to one of the chapters I contributed to the book: "In his [Wrobel's] balanced and well informed description of the most important political events in Poland between 1989 and 2004," writes the reviewer, Professor Andrzej Nowak, "there are striking mistakes such as calling Porozumienie Centrum 'Wałęsa's party' in the 1992 elections. Porozumienie Centrum was formed by the brothers Kaczyński and at that time, it was already in open conflict with Lech Wałęsa" (283). This is, of course, true, yet the problem is that, on page 283 I am writing about the 1991 parliamentary elections. This date appears clearly in the text and the entire section is subtitled "1991 Parliamentary Elections."

A similar situation occurs in the penultimate paragraph of the review. "It is hardly possible to analyze the real problems of Polish democracy after 1989," continues Professor Nowak, "without paying attention to the phenomenon of post-communism." This is true again, but why does the reviewer suggest that I have ignored this problem? On page 310, there is an entire section entitled "Post-Communism."

Finally, here is the way in which Professor Nowak deals with quotations. "Piotr Wrobel states the following: 'The Church was considerably strengthened . . . by the policies of General Jaruzelski who granted various favors to the Catholics' (312). This is followed by Nowak's comments about falsification of history and similar sins. My original sentence, without omissions, runs as follows: "In the late 1970s and the

1980s, the Church was considerably strengthened by the election to the papacy of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła and by the policies of General Jaruzelski, who granted various favors to Catholics.”

Nothing is perfect and our book may include some mistakes, but the question remains: did Professor Nowak read our book too quickly or did he review it in a biased way?

Piotr J. Wrobel
University of Toronto

Professor Nowak responds:

I hope that Professor Wrobel has decided to correct several factual mistakes which I named in my review (though he discreetly did not mention them in his a bit “unfriendly and even hostile” reply). However, I am disappointed that his answer does not tackle the most important problem which is pointed out in my review. Professor Wrobel really did write that “in the 1980s the Church was considerably strengthened by. . . [among other factors] the policies of General Jaruzelski, who granted various favors to Catholics.” And he did not mention any of the numerous examples of priests who were killed under General Jaruzelski’s regime. This is an incontrovertible fact, one difficult to trivialize for many who lived under General Jaruzelski’s regime and remember not just Father Popiełuszko’s death, but also extremely brutal police repressions aimed at such leaders of the underground Solidarity movement as Father Kazimierz Jancarz in Kraków-Nowa Huta, Father Stanisław Małkowski in Warsaw, Father Henryk Jankowski in Gdańsk, and so many others all over Poland (not to mention the “mysterious deaths” of Fathers Sylwester Zych, Stanisław Suchowolec, and Stefan Niedzielak—all “incidents” connected to the so-called Fourth Department’s of the secret police (SB), or the political police of General Jaruzelski’s regime. All these repressed priests were some of the most important leaders in the fight AGAINST the communist regime (so much praised by Professor Daniel Stone in the introductory chapter) and for DEMOCRATIC change in Poland. One could overlook these crucial facts while reading this multidimensional and in so many ways valuable book that I reviewed.

Andrzej Nowak
Jagiellonian University and Polish Academy of Science

On Andrzej Bursa’s poetry

We are grateful to see our book reviewed. As they say in show business, bad publicity is better than none. On the other hand, faint praise can be worse than none at

all. We lament the fact that Professor Beata Tarnowska’s review of our translations is so negative. Surely she could have found one stanza to praise.

First, we do not understand why the reviewer refers only to me by name but never acknowledges Professor Ablamowicz by name for her contribution as cotranslator. It’s understandable that when commenting on my introduction the reviewer refers only to me since I am the sole author of that text, but when discussing our translations Tarnowska fails to credit (or blame, in this case) Professor Ablamowicz for her work. Perhaps this is due to simple carelessness or a lack of experience on the reviewer’s part, but if repeating both names takes up excessive space in the review, Professor Tarnowska could have mentioned both of our names early on and subsequently referred to us as “the translators.”

Professor Ablamowicz and I are disappointed that the review is not more balanced. Professor Tarnowska never awards us credit for something we did well, but she devotes much attention to our (mis)translation of *flechta* / *flechtów* / *flechtach*, a word that does not exist in the Polish language. We speculated that this word might be an example of a German word imported by Poles during the mid-twentieth century. None of the Poles we know on either side of the Atlantic, including one Polish linguist, was able to fathom its meaning. I myself contacted the poet’s son to ask him to check the spelling in his father’s original handwritten text just in case it was a misprint. Because the poem’s subject involves a sheath knife, blood, the pulse, and violence, we speculated that *flechta* might be derived from *fleische*, the German word for “flesh.” Subsequent research on our part now suggests that a Polish equivalent for this word could be “splot” – the word for “braid,” “plait,” “something woven or tangled up,” “entanglement.” “Intricate design” is another option, but this paraphrastic English phrase is rather clumsy and doesn’t fit all three uses equally well. Furthermore, the English term “whorl” suggested by Tarnowska refers chiefly to the wrinkled skin on one’s fingertips that produces the swirled design in fingerprints. If the knife is “shiny,” why would it be blemished with “whorls”? We admit that our translation of “flechta” and the lines in which it appears could be more metaphorical, as is also the case with the poem’s closing line “Ukradkiem z rdzy wycieram nóż / I między bajki wkładam.” We are aware of the Polish idiom echoed in this poem’s closing line: *włożę to między bajki*—“That’s a bunch of nonsense” / “That’s a cock-and-bull story.” We debated whether to follow the idiom or

stick to the literal. In the former case the word “fairytales” would be lost, whereas in the latter, more literal, version the theme of childhood, naive illusions, and lost innocence would be reserved. These themes arise in other poems by Bursa and echo another popular Polish saying that makes reference to fairytales: *życie nie jest bajką*—“Life is not a fairytale.”

In my theory of translation fidelity to meaning and tone along with semantic accuracy should take precedence over rhyme and meter. A translator’s job, it seems to me, is to try to bring the reader closer to the “guts” of the poem’s meaning and feeling, the poet’s vision and sensibility. While in the process of “Englishing” a translation I try to duplicate aspects of a poem’s formal “exoskeleton” as much as possible, I refuse to take liberties with or, worse yet, distort the original meaning and feeling for the sake of a pleasant jingle and chime. Like other modern translators, my methodology and aesthetic is influenced by Ezra Pound’s theories of prosody. The paucity of rhyme in English leads me to rely on assonance and internal rhyme rather than exact rhyme.

Having said that, I am fully aware of the liberty we took with the phrase “*klaszcze w takt stopy fryzjera*,” which literally means: “the barber claps his feet in time [to the music which is playing on a nearby radio].” We deliberately experimented with “taps” instead of the literal “claps” in order to make the poem more accessible to the English-speaking reader on both the semantic as well as visual level. In this context “taps” refers to the jerky up-and-down motion of the barber’s feet as the music plays on the radio. It does not refer to a sound of feet tapping. If we chose the literal “clap” I could imagine readers asking why would someone who has hanged himself “clap” his feet from side to side? Wouldn’t his feet be jerking up and down instead of sideways? After all, just a moment ago the man kicked out the stool or chair that he was standing on, so wouldn’t the natural reaction be to try to regain his footing? It seemed to us that the poem’s grotesque irony would be stronger if the closing image showed the hanged barber tapping his feet to the beat of the music rather than using his feet to applaud to the music’s beat. After all, in a previous line the speaker observed that the barber was “dancing” to the music playing on the radio—first a samba and then a waltz. In retrospect we regret that we took this liberty with the original language and inadvertently rewrote the line, making the hanged man tap his feet instead of clapping them together. However, elsewhere in her review

Tarnowska complains that our translations are too literal!

Kevin Christianson and Halina Ablamowicz
Tennessee Technological University

Professor Tarnowska responds:

There are different approaches to the theory and practice of translation stemming from diverse cultural backgrounds. I believe the poem to be an organic entity, therefore dividing it into “form” and “meaning” seems to be an artificial action carried out solely for the purpose of analysis and interpretation. Translators can certainly adopt another point of view and concentrate on semantics only. Such an approach may be partially justified by the fact that the use of rhyme is not as steeped in English poetic tradition as it is in Polish verse. However, in cases of such poems as Andrzej Bursa’s “Wisielec”/“The Hanged Man“, built of an elaborate web of rhymes and bouncy rhythms, focusing on the non-too-sophisticated meaning results in squandering its most crucial elements. When the poem “dances” itself, should we deprive it of rhyme and rhythm, namely all the elements that constitute its core? The decision belongs to the translators. Should they try to translate the poem by sacrificing the formal features thus creating an inadequate and poetically inferior version? Or should the fact be accepted that the poem is possibly untranslatable? It is an all-but-unsolvable dilemma.

As to the issue of being first too literal and then too liberal: I believe there is no lack of consistency in the opinion presented in my review. No other solution is available to the translator but to maneuver between fidelity to the meaning and striving for poetic mastery. The translation should not be overly descriptive and literal when the substance of the poem can be conveyed in a more concise way. Moreover, it would be ideal to not veer away from the original unless necessary.

Undoubtedly, every discussion of translation might be enlightening for both the translators and the reviewer. A critical tone does not imply a lack of esteem for the translators’ general achievements. The endeavors undertaken by Professor Kevin Christianson and Professor Halina Ablamowicz to promote Bursa’s poetry in the English-speaking world deserve recognition.

Please accept my apologies for having mentioned Professor Ablamowicz’s name in the introductory part only.

Beata Tarnowska
University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn

About the Authors

Raymond Gawronski, SJ, is Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Denver Theological Seminary and author of, among others, *Word and Silence: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter between East and West* (1995).

Walter Jajko is Brigadier General, U.S. Air Force (ret.) and former Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Oversight (1994–1998). He is Professor of Defense Studies at the Institute of World Politics, Washington, DC.

Joanna Kurowska, PhD, is a published poet and writer; she teaches at the Summer Workshop of Slavic and Eastern European Languages at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Terrence O’Keeffe was trained as an anthropologist and worked as a research scientist studying non-human primate behavior. His nonfiction book *The Posthumous Lives of Colonel Redl* is forthcoming.

James E. Reid is a Canadian writer and editor. His work also appears in *Vallum: New International Poetics* and the *Pacific Rim Review of Books*.

Announcements and Notes

2011 Polish Writers Abroad Award goes to Janusz Ihnatowicz

The Society of Polish Writers Abroad gives yearly prizes to Polish writers residing and publishing outside Poland. This year, the Prize was awarded to Father (Professor) Janusz A. Ihnatowicz of the University of Saint Thomas in Houston for his poetic works. The Prize consists of a certificate and an amount of money that varies from year to year. Fr. Ihnatowicz is a member of the Advisory Board of *Sarmatian Review* and has been a faithful supporter of the *Review* since its inception. Needless to say, we are delighted. More about the Prize and the Society can be found at <<<http://zppno.com/nagroda-literacka,8.html>>.

Score one more for *Sarmatian Review*

We are pleased to inform our readers that the number of places on the Web where *Sarmatian Review* can be read has significantly increased. A PDF version of ALL issues of *Sarmatian Review* starting with 1988 (before that year, our journal was titled *Houston Sarmatian*) can be found at Rice University’s

institutional repository (<http://scholarship.rice.edu>). This is a site “where the university’s intellectual output is shared, managed, searched, and preserved,” to quote the Web page of Rice’s digital scholarship archive. The address <<http://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/21840>> leads you to Central and East European Studies where issues of *SR* are neatly arranged. Our Web address (www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia) continues to be valid for current issues and for archives going back to 1992, but Rice’s digital scholarship archive contains electronic versions of our journal in PDF format that go back to 1988. Δ

A Polish Moment?

(continued from Page 1628)

in the twentieth century) bore every sign of colonialism. Perhaps this way of looking at things will help invalidate some of the absurd opinions about postwar Poland that still circulate among American Slavists.

Thanks to the indefatigable Allen Paul, a Katyn Conference took place in Washington, DC, in fall 2011. The participants included members of Congress and representatives of Polish organizations. A call was issued to Russia to finally fully open the Katyn archives rather than handing out select documents at Russia’s convenience.

Altogether, a nice crop of Polish-oriented articles and events. Can one speak of “the Polish moment” in these turbulent times, hoping that these events will have a follow-up appropriate to their potential? Δ

Thank You Note

Sarmatian Review and the Polish Institute of Houston are grateful to those readers who support the journal over and above the price of subscription. Without them it would be difficult to continue publication. Donations to *Sarmatian Review* and its publisher, the Polish Institute of Houston, are tax deductible. Here is a list of recent donors:

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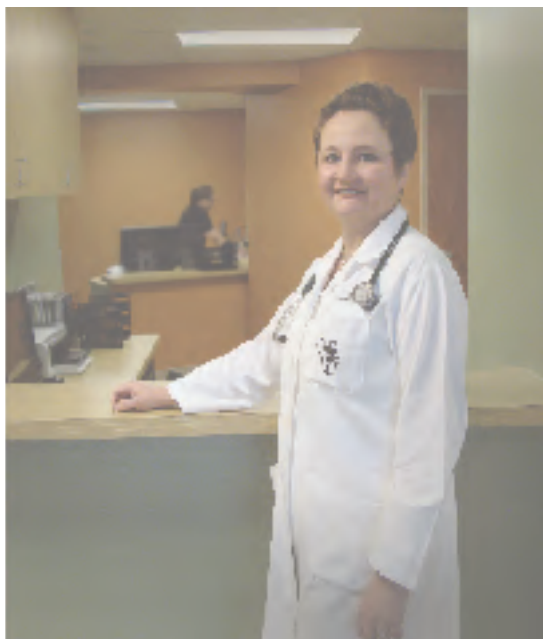
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Children's Literature

***The Boy Whose Name I Will Not Tell You and the Bees*, by Danuta Zamojska Hutchins.** Storm Lake, Iowa: Culanco Publications (hutchinsd@bvu.edu), 2011. 77 pages, illustrations, dictionary of advanced words. ISBN 19-0-9640400-2-6. Paper.

A delightful story for children by the *Sarmatian Review* reader. A little boy overhears the bees criticizing his napping grandfather. The boy talks to the bees about his grandfather's farm animals. To find out what the bees promise read the story. In addition to fun, the child to whom you are reading will learn "grownup" words that will build up his/her vocabulary. A dictionary of difficult words is included. For preschoolers and first graders.

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