

# THE SARMATIAN REVIEW

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## Born Under a Lucky Star



Richard F. Staar, Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and Ambassador for the United States (1981–1983) to the Mutual and Balanced Forces Reduction talks in Vienna, Austria. Photo courtesy of the Richard F. Staar Archives.

**The Sarmatian Review** (ISSN 1059-5872) is a triannual publication of the Polish Institute of Houston. The journal deals with Polish, Central, and Eastern European affairs, exploring the subject of their implications for the United States. We specialize in the translation of documents.

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## From the Editor

This issue contains an exceptionally large number of book reviews. Many of them have waited for publication for a long time. The lead review deals with one of the most remarkable living scholars in Slavic Studies: Ambassador Richard F. Staar, whose *Reminiscences* have recently been published. As the reviewer points out, Staar's work on Central and Eastern Europe has been of key importance in maintaining in the United States a balanced view of the region all the way into postcommunism.

*Our Take* essay takes on those who are willing to consent to a version of history of non-Germanic Central Europe presented by historians who have specialized either in Germany or (more likely) in Russia, or who have not studied the languages, and therefore histories, of the vast belt of nations between Germany and Russia. In this short introduction we do not presume to touch upon epistemological questions undergirding the problem of the "orientalist" point of view that prevails in American scholarship concerning the region. Yet the problem must be mentioned. *Our Take* cites several typical examples. While we recognize the inevitability of selection in presenting the facts of history, we also embrace the idea of an ongoing correction of

ideological distortions. The corrections we submit are contained in the books reviewed in this issue. The authority of some leading scholars would dismiss some of these books as marginal, second-rate, naive. We submit that, for verification of historical facts, there is no substitute to reaching for the authenticity of the disempowered.

M. K. Dziewanowski's sober book on Russia is ably reviewed by Professor Patricia Gajda. Given President Putin's apparent return to KGB methods of ruling Russia (Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation wrote about it in July 2003), Dziewanowski's vision of that country seems particularly relevant.

This issue also contains the sixth and final installment of Zofia Ptaśnik's *Diary*. Its closing paragraphs provide rich food for reflection about the historical responsibility of those who initiate chains of events that lead to such disruptions of life and civilization as those experienced by Mrs. Ptaśnik's milieu in Belarus.

In this issue we have reached a four-digit figure in pagination. When we decided to consecutively number the pages of *Sarmatian Review*, we did so with the idea of facilitating search in past issues. With the same concern in mind we decided to continue our four-digit pagination. The total number of previously published pages of *Sarmatian Review* equals approximately 2,000, including the years when we had separate pagination for each issue. Since our two-column pages equal about two book pages, we have published a total of 4,000 pages, or an equivalent of ten 400-page books. Congratulations and thanks to all our donors and supporters. **Δ**

# The *Sarmatian Review* Index

## **Russian and Polish productivity**

Projected Russian GDP in 2003: 388 billion dollars (Russia's population: 144.3 million).

Source: Steven Lee Myers, "Putin Tells Russians of Clouds With Reform-Plan Lining," *New York Times*, 17 May 2003.

Projected Polish GDP in 2004: 223 billion dollars (Poland's population: 38.3 million).

Source: Draft budget adopted by the Polish government 10 June 2003, as reported by AFP on the same day.

## **Foreign investment in Poland**

Drop in foreign investment in Poland in 2002 as compared to 2001: 15 percent, down to 6 billion dollars.

Foreign investment in Poland since 1989: 65.11 billion dollars.

Three largest foreign investors: France (20 percent of the total, or 12 billion dollars), the United States (8.7 billion dollars), and Germany (7.8 billion dollars).

Source: Polish foreign investment agency PAIZ, as reported by AFP, 15 April 2003.

## **Easter observances in Poland**

Percentage of Polish citizens who observe Lent: 90 percent.

Percentage of Polish citizens who try to go to confession during Lent: 78 percent.

Percentage of Polish families who spent less money on Easter preparations this year than last year: 47 percent.

Source: CBOS poll conducted in early April 2003, as reported by Michał Jankowski in *Donosy*, 17 April 2003.

## **Contract killings of MPs in Russia**

Number of deputies to the Duma (Parliament) assassinated in the last nine years: nine.

Source: Bernard Besserglik of AFP, 18 April 2003.

## **AIDS in Russia**

New estimate of the number of Russians who are HIV positive: between 500,000 and 1.5 million.

Number of Russians who are registered as HIV positive: 238,404.

The most numerous age group among those infected: persons between 15 and 30 years of age.

Estimated percentage of infections resulting from drug users sharing needles: 90 percent.

Source: Vadim Pokrovsky of the Russian Health Ministry, as reported by AFP (Moscow), 21 May 2003.

## **EU inequities in subsidies to farmers**

Percentage of subsidies received by farmers in current EU member states that will be received by Polish farmers under membership terms agreed upon at the EU's Copenhagen summit last December: 45 percent in the first year, 65 percent in subsequent years.

Source: AFP, 4 June 2003.

## **Russia's retreat from the far north**

Number of people who are supposed to be relocated from Yakutia, Kamchatka, Chukotka, and Evenkia to central Russia and the southern region of the Russian Federation: between 200,000 and 600,000.

Number of people who live in the 28 territories of the far north region comprising 60 percent of landmass of the Russian Federation: 10 million.

Percentage of exportable raw materials this region holds: 60 percent of Russian Federation's resources.

Amount of money the Russian government allocated for the resettlements: 29 million dollars.

Percentage of population lost by the Magadan region since the collapse of the Soviet Union: 66 percent, down to 229,000 people.

Source: Deputy Economic Development and Trade Minister Mukhamed Tsikanov, as reported by Bernard Besserglik of AFP, 30 May 2003.

## **Creating perceptions about Poland and the Czech Republic**

Percentage of eligible voters who voted in EU referendum in Poland and the Czech Republic: 58.85 percent in Poland, with 77.5 percent of voters saying yes; 55.2 percent in the Czech Republic, with 77.3 percent of voters saying yes.

Source: Czech Statistics Office, as reported by AFP, 14 June 2003; *Donosy*, 10 June 2003.

Titles in *New York Times* about results: "Czechs voted overwhelmingly" and "Czechs easily approve EU vote"; "Poles remain divided after endorsing Union" and "Poles vote yes to joining European Union."

Source: *NYT*, 10 and 14 June 2003.

**Gypsies, or Roma, in the Czech Republic**

Population of the Czech Republic in 2003: 10.3 million.

Number of Gypsies in the Czech Republic in 2003: 300,000.

Unemployment among Gypsies: 60 percent.

Unemployment in the Czech Republic overall: 10 percent.

Source: Jan Marchal of AFP, 12 June 2003.

**European Union realities**

Anticipated increase in EU population when ten new members join in 2004: 20 percent.

Anticipated increase in EU's GDP when ten new members join in 2004: five percent.

Source: Czech newspaper *Dnes*, as reported by AFP on 18 April 2003.

**Russian colonialism and demand for Russian literary production**

Print run of Russian monthly *Novyi Mir* (a flagship journal promoting Russian literature in the USSR and abroad, subsidized by the Soviet state) in 1990: 2,660,000.

Print run of *Novyi Mir* in October 2000: 13,300.

Source: *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature* edited by Neil Cornwell (London, 1991), p. 235.

**Public debt in the Czech Republic**

Czech public debt in 2002: 12.5 billion euros, or twice what it was in 1997.

Czech public debt as percentage of GDP: 30 percent, with 60 percent of GDP set by the European Union as an upper ceiling.

Source: AFP (Prague), 17 March 2003.

**Polish role in Iraq**

Size of zone administered by Poland in Iraq: 80,000 square kilometres, or 31,000 square miles.

Number of inhabitants in the zone: 3.5 million.

Source: Polish Defence Minister Jerzy Szmajdziński, as reported by AFP (Warsaw), 28 May 2003.

Number of Polish companies that put their names forward to help the postwar reconstruction of Iraq: over 500.

Number of Polish companies that succeeded in securing a contract: so far as we know, only one, Nafta Polska.

Source: Deputy economy and works minister Jacek Piechota on 16 April 2003, as reported by AFP on the same day; Polish TV News, 3 July 2003.

**Jews in Poland and England**

Estimated percentage of Jews in the population of Poland in 1600: 0.5–4 percent.

Estimated percentage of Jews in Poland in 1650 and 1764, respectively: 2.5–5 percent and 7–10 percent.

Source: *Tradycje polityczne dawnej Polski*, edited by Anna Sucheni-Grabowska and Alicja Dybkowska (Warsaw: Editions Spotkania, 1993), p. 203.

Estimated percentage of Jews in the population of England between 1290–1655: zero percent (Jews were expelled from England in 1290).

Number of years it was illegal for a Jew to live in England: 365 years.

The year Jews were readmitted to England: 1655, by Oliver Cromwell.

Estimated number of Jews who settled in England after that date: 250,000.

Source: Christian History Institute ([www.gospelcom.net/chi/DAILYF/2001/12/daily-12-14-2001.shtml](http://www.gospelcom.net/chi/DAILYF/2001/12/daily-12-14-2001.shtml)).

**Population decline in Georgia**

Decline in Georgian population between 1989–2002: 1 million, or 20 percent (from 5.5 million in 1989 to 4.4 million in 2002).

Reasons for the decline: emigration (700,000 persons emigrated to the Russian Federation) and low birthrate.

Source: Census carried out by the State Statistics Department, as reported by AFP, 6 May 2003.

**Russian ships in the Far East**

Percentage of Russian ships in the Far East that are registered under flags of countries that do not enforce ship safety rules, ecological protection, and international standards for crew pay and conditions: 70 percent.

The countries under whose flags Russian ships sail most often: Cambodia and Mongolia.

Source: Head of the far eastern branch of the Russian Seamen's Union Nikolai Sukhanov, as reported by AFP, 7 May 2003.

**Children's deaths in Russia**

Number of children murdered in Russia in 2002: 3,272.

Number of children injured or killed as a result of crimes or accidents in 2002: 94,000.

Source: Prosecutor General Nikolai Savchenko, as reported by *Russia Reform Monitor*, No. 1043, May 27, 2003.



## Born Under A Lucky Star Reminiscences

By Richard F. Staar. Lanham, MD - New York - Oxford (4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706): University Press of America, 2002. xviii + 214 pages. ISBN 0-7618-2381-6. Paper.

### James R. Thompson

**F**ew academics can claim to have made the contributions to their country that have been made by Professor Richard F. Staar. As associate director of the Hoover Institution for a critical twelve years, he helped make that organization serve the Soviet slaying purpose for which its founder had endowed it. These twelve years included the time when the Soviet Union was passing through a period of maximum vulnerability. He made of the Hoover Institution the intellectual center for scholars who wished to address the question of "What is to be done about the Soviet Union?" He brought numerous scholars to the Hoover for periods of research. From just one of his federal grants he was able to provide such visiting posts for 147 scholars. It appears likely that most of the anti-Communist scholars in the United States were helped, in one way or another, by Richard Staar. A modest and retiring man, Staar was probably never recognized as the godfather of the Hoover Institution orientation which so disturbed the academic left.

As a scholar, Richard Staar represents the best. In his works he has gathered facts carefully, painstakingly, and has drawn his inferences from reality rather than theory. His knowledge of the weapons capabilities of the Soviet Union and Russia, and the persons running their military machine, is enormous. He is *the* American specialist on these issues. A careful and encyclopedic researcher, Staar's language ability gave him easy access to Russian, German, Czech, and Polish publications. His ability to glean from them information of use to the defense of the United States is remarkable. All of his books and papers contain extensive tabulations, easy of comprehension but overwhelmingly difficult to compile. A key expert in Ed Meese's transition team for the Reagan administration, he served without remuneration of any kind, even for his travel expenses. His short list of

imperatives for America at that time is given on pages 94–95 of this book.

As Ambassador for the United States (1981–1983) to the Mutual and Balanced Forces Reduction talks in Vienna, Staar brought a level of understanding and insight that was essential during this period, fraught with danger but also opportunities for the Reagan administration. Staar's contributions were key.

This book appears as Richard F. Staar reaches his eightieth year. It is a fair retrospective of the events he has observed and his insights about the likely trajectories of what might happen given a variety of scenarios. An incredibly reserved man, Professor Staar consistently declines to give much information about his own personal history. For example, I had not known until reading this book that he is himself an American of Polish background. "Staar" sounds Dutch, and probably most of his colleagues assumed him to be a member of the WASP establishment. But Richard Staar is the son of a Polish revolutionary active in Piłsudski's underground activities who had emigrated to the United States in 1905. The elder Staar changed the family name and worked his way through university to hold faculty positions in engineering at both the University of Michigan and Case Western Reserve University. A true devotee of the ideals of Kościuszko and Piłsudski, the elder Staar returned to Poland after its freedom was regained in 1920 to try and do his bit for the new republic. Richard Staar was born in Poland in 1923. The family returned to the United States in 1924. The family had a predictable academic future as the elder Staar took a faculty position at the University of Michigan in 1924. But then the mercurial father took the family back to Poland in 1936, with ideas toward helping the Polish nation to progress economically.

Richard had to learn Polish from scratch, moving his teacher to tears with his essay in commemoration of the death of "Dziadek" [Piłsudski]. Richard found himself in 1939 as a culturally "betwixt and between" high school student in Warsaw when the Germans and Russians invaded Poland in September of 1939. The family was active in smuggling Jews to freedom through Lithuania (which was still free for some months after the invasion). Richard himself participated in one trip of the underground railway and returned to Warsaw, probably thinking the family would themselves leave Poland while the possibility still existed. This was not to be, as the elder Staar decided the family should weather the storm and do its bit in Poland.

Both Richard and his father were arrested by the Nazis, and it is amazing that the family survived the

war. Richard spent six months in Gestapo prisons including the infamous Pawiak facility from which few emerged alive. He spent the entire war in Poland in the status of one suspected (rightly) of aiding Jews. If there was any *intelligentsia* effort to help this young American of Polish background, the scrupulously generous in acknowledging any help Richard Staar does not mention it. It would appear that this young Polish American was invisible to them. Instead, the help, which was essential in his survival, was given by a couple of American Methodist missionaries, Hania and Gaither Warfield, who did so at the risk of their own lives.

The publication list of Professor Staar is impressive. He has authored or edited fifteen books and countless articles. On a personal note, I read his first book, *Poland, 1944–1962: The Sovietization of a Captive People*, in 1963 while I was a graduate student at Princeton. The user-friendly delineation of facts which characterize all Staar's works was an enormous help in preparing penetrating questions for the Polish People's Republic ambassador who gave a talk at Princeton arranged by the notorious Daniel Passent who was then visiting scholar at the university. This was a period in which few Americans knew (or cared) what had gone on in Poland during the war and subsequently, and Staar's revelations were somewhat at variance with the blatantly fictional narrative of the ambassador.

My only criticism of the book is that the author tells us too little about himself. Staar is an incredibly interesting person, and we need to know more about him than he relates. Perhaps, we need a biography to supplement his remembrances.

We have now passed to the new era of postmodernism and neoconservatism. The Hoover Institution has changed orientation under the influence of the Stanford faculty establishment. No matter. At the critical time when the Soviet Union could be brought down, the Hoover Institution, with the quiet guidance of Professor Richard Staar, showed how to get the task achieved. And the task was achieved. Δ

## BOOKS BOOKS and Periodicals Received

***Trytyk rzymski: medytacje* (The Roman Triptych: Meditations), by John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła).** Edited by the Rev. Józef Guzdek. Afterword by Marek Skwarnicki. Illustrations are copies of works by Michelangelo. Accompanied by a disk with a reading of the *Trytyk* by Krzysztof

Głobisz. Kraków: Wydawnictwo św. Stanisława BM (wydawnictwo@diecezja.krakow.pl), 2003. 40 pages. ISBN 83-88971-43-3. Available from <www.merlin.pl> for ZL20 plus postage. In Polish.

The book is a poetic meditation on the fundamentals of human identity. The first reflection it engenders is that Karol Wojtyła ennobles words by simply using them. All too often language imprints itself on our memory as spoken by people who merely react to life's situations or who try to manipulate each other. In contrast, Wojtyła weighs words carefully and wisely, and his saintliness purifies the meaning of the language he uses. He brings forth the full meaning of words from under the layers of trivial and vulgar usages.

Wojtyła employs an ordinary vocabulary and does not reach for refined expressions. He is not trying to be "original," but in spite of this the reader feels that the Pope's words will resonate through centuries. It takes a great mind *or* a great talent to restore dignity to language. Great poets like Zbigniew Herbert have done it, and so have some minor poets, such as Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna, although on a smaller scale. It is this restoration of meaning that is the *Triptych's* principal gift to readers, quite apart from the religious and philosophical message of the poem. Wojtyła restores our confidence in language, a confidence much shattered by recent theories that deny its ultimately mysterious and spiritual origin. He rescues words from fraudulent and hasty usage. He rebuilds our belief in words: while reading him, one does not have to be on guard for equivocation or finessing. One is reminded of the Gospel admonition that yes should be yes, and no, no. Wojtyła also brings home the old truth that language is like an instrument requiring a talented player. If it is handled by musical illiterates it produces cacophonies, but under the hand of a good player it reveals its fine possibilities.

When the Pope quotes the Latin sentence inscribed on the gate of the school he attended in Wadowice, *Casta placent superis; pura cum vest venite, et minibus puris sumite fontis aquam*, he sums up what is most valuable in Polish culture: an ability to return to the Source, to issue a call to mind the Source, to tell the world what really matters in life.

Wojtyła writes about the Book of Genesis and about Michelangelo, and he discovers connections between the two. What was said by an anonymous Jewish writer millennia ago was recreated through shape and color by an Italian Catholic in the sixteenth century. Wojtyła insists that they both speak the same language. He then tosses in another cluster of images, this time of the Polish mountains, and makes them resonate with the Word he

knows was there at the beginning, before it was made flesh.

The first part of the poem is a meditation on Creation by the Word, the Creation as verbalized in the Book of Genesis, or the Book of Beginnings, and by Saint John's Gospel. Zakopane and its environs, one of the Pope's favorite localities on earth, unfolds before our eyes. Allusions are made to the climb to Kalatówki where there is a small monastery nestled in the woods, and behind it, a hermitage. They are located in the wooded mountains crossed over by mountain streams. One imagines that the Pope recalled his visits to those places, and then wove the memories into the Book of Beginnings with its invocation of the spirit of God moving over the surface of the waters.

The second part ties the Book of Beginnings to Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. What was once expressed in words is now expressed in shapes and colors, with the addition of the final End, i.e., the Judgment Day. The Pope meditates upon the next conclave, and he assures the reader that God will point to the right person to be selected: *Omnia nuda et aperta sunt ante oculos Eius*, he reminds us. Human minds are translucent before the eyes of God, and it is impossible to finesse one's way to justification. The Pope reminds us of the original purity and preciseness of language to which we will eventually return.

The third part invokes the nomadic past of humanity as it speaks of Abraham following the Voice, telling him that he would become the father of many nations, and then demanding that Abraham sacrifice his only son. The Pope invokes Abraham's fidelity to the Voice and intimates the arrival of a different Victim, the Son of another Father.

As of this writing (June 2003), only the Polish original has been published. But numerous reviewers unfamiliar with the Polish language have already proffered their summaries of the poem. What many of them seized upon is a sentence discussing the Pope's own death. "He is speaking of his death! He'll soon die!" was the tenor of these comments. In our self-oriented culture, we expect people to treat their own passing as a matter of utmost importance. Yet the Pope does not mention his own departure in that way. He brushes it aside as a minor item, for he knows that the Church will go on and that the next conclave is a matter of course.

Altogether, a fruitful read. (sb)

***The Brief Sun*, by Robert Ambros.** No place: 1stBooks, 2002. ISBN 0-7596-9293-9. vi + 228 pages. Paper. \$17.50 on Amazon.com. The title of this excellent novel refers to the shortness of days in the Arctic where many Soviet labor camps

were located and where the first-person narrator, a boy of sixteen, was sent by Stalin in 1940, along with one million other Polish citizens, mostly Catholics deemed ideologically unreliable. From the Afterword we learn that the author's mother was one of the children abandoned in the Gulag, whereas his father's fate was similar to that of the main protagonist.

The plot is brisk, the narrative sparse and clear, and the events dramatic. Many characters are truly heroic, but the author manages to show their foibles and shortcomings. Thus they emerge as human, all too human, beings of flesh and blood rather than illustrations in a history book. The novel follows the nineteenth-century convention used, among others, by Stendhal of describing historical events as seen through the eyes of rank-and-file participants. Ambros succeeds better than anyone except Varlaam Shalamov (who, however, is too monotonous in large doses) in conveying the reality of the camps and the absolute misery of those who lived there. Like Auschwitz, the camps of Siberia were meant to squeeze as much work as possible from prisoners, and then let them die of exhaustion. The protagonist remarks that no Polish person over fifty survived the camps. Ambros's brief narrative excursion into Kolyma provides the best vignette I know of this hell on earth that the Russians created.

Hitler's attack on the USSR in June 1941 and his subsequent victories in Ukraine, Belarus, and western Russia prompted Stalin to release the surviving Polish political prisoners and urge them to enlist in the Polish Army to fight the Germans. The protagonist's trek from northern Siberia to recruitment camp in Buzuluk, Uzbekistan, abounds in blood curdling situations. His gradual discovery of what happened to his family is skillfully presented, and so is the Battle of Monte Cassino which again reminds one of Stendhal (except that Monte Cassino was bloodier than Waterloo). General Władysław Anders emerges as a tragic hero, and Winston Churchill as an utmost villain. As bodies are torn asunder and entrails hang on trees, the reader begins to wish for a love story that would redeem this men-only world of war, hard labor, Soviet brutality, and violence by the Nazis. The story does materialize. It seems that the author's novelistic skills kept developing throughout the novel and came to full fruition in its last section.

The eerie echoes of the Jewish Holocaust resonate throughout the narrative: "When I got to the camp, the other prisoners told me the guards on the trains wanted the older men to die; they were under orders not to help them. The Soviets did not want to feed men who



could not produce" (17). One remembers similar stories told by Jewish survivors. The side plot of the orphaned children who could not smile likewise reminds one of the survivors of Nazi concentration camps.

The novel is an easy read, and one wishes for its presence in drug stores, grocery stores, and at airport bookstores. One of the novel's strengths is the combination of speed and vividness with which the author describes battles, escapes, and travels where one misstep could lead (and often did) to loss of life. If you want to introduce an acquaintance steeped in blissful ignorance to the drama of the Second World War, you can find no better means than *The Brief Sun*. It is the best English-language "animation" of what really happened in the war and what historians of the victorious nations have failed to tell you. (sb)

***Discordant Trumpet: Discriminations of American Historians*, by Francis Casimir Kajencki.** El Paso, Texas: Southwest Polonia Press (3308 Nairn Street, El Paso, TX 79925-41226), 2003. ix + 116 pages. Photographs, index. Hardcover.

In the best of all possible worlds, it would not be necessary for Colonel Kajencki to act as the custodian of the reputations of Poland's most famous gifts to America: Thadeusz Kościuszko and Casimir Pułaski. This, alas, is not the best of all possible worlds, and the work of Kajencki is essential. Probably many of us noted the exclusion from the PBS series "Liberty" of Kościuszko's rearguard action from Ticonderoga to Saratoga, but we did nothing about it. Colonel Kajencki makes a hard copy record of such exclusions and pointedly asks "Why?" Without Kościuszko and his decimating harassment of Burgoyne's army, the American Revolution quite likely would have been lost. This fact was clear to General Horatio Gates, clear to Washington, not at all clear to all too many members of America's generally Polonophobic historical establishment. One has to ask, "Why is it fashionable to make Poles either invisible or fall guys?" It is not only minor historians who commit the sin. Kajencki shows that the Southern authority on the War between the States, Douglas Freeman, was an enthusiastic denigrator of Kościuszko.

Some will argue: "Look, there are so many towns, counties, and bridges named after Kościuszko and Pułaski. Kościuszko's statue dominates the West Point campus. Surely the contributions of these men can never be forgotten." But as Orwell reminds us, "Who controls the present controls the past." We have already seen the names of Washington, Jefferson, Lee stricken from schools and monuments due to perceived political

incorrectness. One of the books cited by Kajencki is of recent vintage and coauthored by three West Point faculty. The authors carelessly and unprofessionally disparage the character of Kościuszko by not bothering to check their facts.

Of particular interest is Kajencki's demonstration that American historians have smeared or ignored lesser-known Polish-Americans, such as Charles Radziminski, the surveyor of the boundary line between the United States and Mexico. Then there is the interesting case of Alexander Grzelachowski, a substantial figure in the American southwest whose contributions are more than a little sullied by an historian's casual (and unsubstantiated) references to his having run a brothel as an integral part of his general store in Puerto de Luna.

On the last page of Kajencki's book we are informed that the paper used has an expected life of at least 300 years. Given the way historical revisionism proceeds so ruthlessly, this time frame may be none too long. (jrt)

***Słuchaj mię Sauromatha: Antologia poezji Sarmackiej* (Listen to me, Men of Sarmatia: An Anthology of Sarmatian Poetry), edited with an Introduction by Krzysztof Koehler.** Kraków: Arcana ([www.arcana.pl](http://www.arcana.pl)), 2002. 244 pages. Hardcover. In Polish.

Polish seventeenth-century literature, both poetry and prose, is known as "Sarmatian" literature. It is not the kind of literature that wins literary prizes. It lacks refinement, and it lacks an addiction to doubt and skepticism so common in postmodern literature. Sarmatian literature's priceless asset is its sober reflection on our humanity, unvarnished and unadorned. Absent is the sophisticated packaging of later literature. The men and women of Sarmatia look at us as people who know the essentials of human life: birth and death, duty and selfishness, vanity and self-abnegation, the pleasures of the senses. Absent in Sarmatian literature are complications of human fate or epistemological agonies.

And there is no denying that Sarmatian literature takes a view of Muscovy that the Russians would dearly love to erase. To a Sarmatian, Muscovy had little to do with European civilization. It was a "rude and barbarous kingdom" to be viewed with pity rather than awe. Sarmatian attitude contrasts sharply with the "powerful brother" image the Russians have tried to build in Slavic countries in the nineteenth century, and also in the Soviet period. The Sovietized minds of some Polish intellectuals and the "intelligentsia" will find much to be uncomfortable about in this volume.



The book is organized by category rather than by author. The opening section consists of poems praising Poland and Slavdom (mercifully briefly). Part 2 contains a mix of religious and knightly poetry. Part 3 deals with coats of arms (we could have been spared). Part 4 glorifies the value system of Polish knighthood: God, honor, homeland. Part 5 returns to religious themes and their omnipresence in the life of Old Poland: here the religious calendar, and morning and night prayers, loom large. Part 6 enjoins the reader to practice the virtue of justice, and it contains meditations on the triviality of earthly life. Here the notorious Father Baka (rehabilitated by another poet priest, Jan Twardowski) makes his appearance. One suspects that most Poles know Baka from devastating critiques of his poetry rather than from poetry itself: a chance to dip one's fingers into it is given here. Parts 7 and 8 are eclectic and contain a miscellany of poems on political, social, and personal issues. It is to the credit of the compiler that he annotated the poems carefully and explained the meanings of words that disappeared from modern Polish.

Krzysztof Koehler's introduction summarizes the pluses of the Sarmatian legacy. In Koehler's words, Sarmatian poetry offers unforgettable existential experiences and a chance to visit a world that is the opposite of the pragmatic and result-oriented world of today; a world in which human obligations to God were taken seriously, although all too often they were more honored in the breach than in performance.

Sarmatian legacy is not all roses. Sarmatism left a legacy of anti-intellectualism which so mars the attitudes of the "traditionalist" part of Polish society today. The provincialism of some Polish "conservatives" means that they have largely written themselves out of history. One observes in Sarmatism a total blindness to the emerging Ukrainian nation, ignorance of German history, and a general inability to function outside the Polish milieu. This unconcerned attitude toward anything but Polishness bore poisoned fruit in years following the flowering of Sarmatism in the seventeenth century. Taking the American example, in the United States Poles are the largest Slavic ethnic group, yet they have produced a rather meager crop of intellectual publications. There are a few quarterlies initiated and managed by Americans of Polish background or by Polish émigrés, but their circulation is limited. There are numerous ephemeral periodicals, in English and Polish, but they fail to qualify as representative publications. There are some reasonably good publications in Polish, but they remain ghetto-oriented. Poles have produced no representation in the

general press. Perhaps a realization that an indifferent attitude toward one's intellectual heritage goes back to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century heedless view of the world could help present-day Americans of Polish background to realize that support for Polish intellectual enterprises is a *sine qua non* of a healthy ethnic community, and that song and dance cannot replace intellectual life. In that connection, Sarmatism also left a legacy of vanity which makes the Polish intelligentsia in Poland into an army of chiefs with no Indians.

Going back to the *Sauromatha* volume, the publishing house's lack of editorial work is all too visible. This too has its roots in the heedless ignorance of the necessity for public representation that originated in Sarmatism. In a way reminiscent of unlettered samizdat tomes in the United States, the *Anthology* has no index and there are no dates identifying individual poets, let alone the poems themselves. There is no attempt to place Sarmatian poetry in a European context. With a few exceptions, such problems are standard in Polish publishing. The publishers routinely put out volumes that look dilettantish by American standards. A competent copyeditor raises the cost of publishing, but many shortcomings could be eliminated by the publisher's insistence that authors provide their own indices and relevant data. (sb)

**Ostatnia twarz portretu, by Jerzy Narbutt.** A novel preceded by a poem by Krzysztof Baczyński. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Unia Jerzy Skwara (unia@cyberia.pl), 2002. 2d ed. 168 pages. ISBN 83-86250-29-1. Paper. In Polish.

So many books need not have been published. This is not one of them. Narbutt's writings are always nourishing. Amidst the dozens of books that are mailed to *Sarmatian Review* every year (alas, we cannot review them all), Narbutt's volumes are always welcome. The endorsement by the Rev. J. S. Pasierb states that "the book renders justice to the times that have been so horribly falsified by official historiography. Narbutt speaks in a personal tone of someone who lived and experienced these events, and this accounts for the book's piercing lyricism."

We regret that this volume was carelessly edited. There is no table of contents and no preface providing rudimentary information about the first edition of this short novel that appeared illegally in 1981 when Soviet-occupied Poland was under martial law.



## Over the Depths: First Sonnet

**Adam Asnyk (1838–1897)**

Fugitive wave of being in flux  
Ferries us over the cosmos' chasm.  
Futilely does our sight chase all  
That lies hidden under its crest.

Though lightning's flash should unveil  
an abyss unmeasured, horrid, dark,  
It's hard to gain it with glimpses  
Through the froth of visions that skim the surface.

Bent over the abyss in vain  
We grasp the picture of blackness  
For the fugitive wave, instead of ageless secrets of  
existence,

Discloses our own face from afar  
And our entire horizon covers itself  
With a shadow cast on the cosmos, the imprint of man.

**Translated by Alex Kurczaba**

The original can be found in Adam Asnyk, *Poezje zebrane*  
edited by Zofia Mocarska-Tycowa (Toruń: Algo, 1995).

## Russia in the Twentieth Century

By M. K. Dziewanowski. 6th edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003 xxvii + 424 pages. Index. Paper. \$53.33 on Amazon.com.

**Patricia A. Gajda**

M. K. Dziewanowski's new book is the sixth edition of a work formerly titled *A History of Soviet Russia and Its Aftermath*. As in earlier editions, the author links many facets of the modern Soviet state in a fundamental manner to the historical Muscovite Russian state, and persuasively argues his case that Marxist terminology cloaked even early Soviet policies that were, at heart, expressions of old-fashioned

Russian nationalism. In doing so, he reminds us of the Stalin-era Soviet film industry and its portrayal of the country's struggle against foreign imperialism in terms of heroic national defenders such as Alexander Nevsky. He shows how, for example, in Ukraine and Belarus the words "Russian" and "Russification" were banned when describing the emerging "Soviet nationality," despite the latter's obvious obligatory espousal of Russian language, literature, and history. In the last chapter, he comes full circle to observe the resemblance between post-1991 Russia and the late-seventeenth-century Muscovite state.

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***This book is a winner. It is a scholarly, clear, rational, and attractive presentation that can be comprehended at various levels.***

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Divided into three sections, the book first briefly examines the period of the earliest traditions of the Russian state and roots of revolution in tsarist Russia, proceeding to the crisis of the First World War with the revolutionary events that brought first the liberal provisional government and then the Bolsheviks to power. The second part, encompassing most of the book, deals with the new communist state and society from Lenin to Gorbachev under the title "Communist Russia." A concise and valuable third section, "Post-Communist Russia," examines the period from the August 1991 coup to the current Putin presidency on the threshold of the twenty-first century. The reader, always enlightened and never disappointed, is swept up in the well-told accounts, through twenty-six fast-paced and relatively short chapters.

This book has many virtues, not least of them Dziewanowski's engaging style that speaks articulately to a scholarly audience and simultaneously delights the lay reader. His nicely rounded account of the Russo-German relationship shaped at the time of the Rapallo Treaty in 1922 is fuller than others found in studies covering this same scope of time. Characters are colorfully described and further enriched by apt and pithy quotations: General L. G. Kornilov is described by his own former Chief of Staff as a "man with a lion's heart and the brain of a sheep," and Lenin declares, "We shall support the Provisional Government as a rope supports the hanged man." Throughout, the author weaves his story together with the historiographic debates over issues one might expect: the lasting effects of the Tatar "yoke," the explanation for Bolshevik victory in November 1917, Stalin as viewed by Soviet and non-Soviet historians. The appendix offers convenient and useful information about communist leaders, party

congresses, and ethnic components in the population along with a statistical survey.

Several imperfections mar this worthy publication. Too frequent use of some terms such as turning points, momentous events, balance sheets, and profound crises confer a kind of breathlessness upon the narrative that diminishes the credibility of a wonderful book. In the early pages, the use of racial terminology ("Slavic race," "Slavonic race," "Teutonic powers") is archaic and off-putting, while the frequent use throughout the book of "Russia" as a synonym for the USSR is inaccurate. Maps are well placed and informative, but their clarity could be enhanced with the adoption of more distinguishing keys. Chapter summaries are employed early in the book, but most introduce new material and are not really summaries; for most part their use is later abandoned. This is less a criticism of the author than the copy editor whose eyes should have caught these incongruities. Another more subtle problem of "packaging" of the text occurs when exceptionally superb material, deserving to be showcased, is packed into a chapter with unrelated material and given no recognition in the chapter title. Two examples: Chapter 5 deals with the aftermath of the Revolution of 1905, the several Dumas, and Stolypin's reforms. Into this mix is thrown an essay on the Silver Age of Culture, an absolute gem deserving of its own spotlight and billing. The same can be said of Chapter 9, "From War Communism to the New Economic Policy," into which is placed another gem of an essay composed of several facets of the NEP and culture: education, fine arts, literature, and performing arts.

This book is a winner. It is a scholarly, clear, rational, and attractive presentation that can be comprehended at various levels. For the more astute, the author's subtlety, sensitivity to symbolism, and ability to keep his eye on the many balls he has in the air enrich the reading experience. Just one example of the many uses of symbolism is the reference to the March 12, 1917, meetings in the Tauride Palace—the Petrograd Soviet in the left wing and the bourgeois Provisional Government in the right. A particularly good example of Dziewanowski's adroitness in observing various developments simultaneously as they are in motion can be seen in his analysis of the shaping and conduct of early Soviet foreign policy by two separate entities, the Communist International (Comintern) and the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (Narkomindel). General readers who are attracted to this subject will come away enlightened. Students who are fortunate enough to have this book among their assigned readings should be delighted. ▲

## Through the Poet's Eye The Travels of Zagajewski, Herbert, and Brodsky

By Bozena Shallcross. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2002. 190 pages. Index. Hardcover. \$27.95.

### Anna Czarnowus

Bozena Shallcross moves freely through various literary genres. Her object of study is the literature created by immigrant poets, or at least the ones who traveled extensively in western Europe (Adam Zagajewski returned to Kraków; Zbigniew Herbert never became an émigré). Zagajewski's *Another Beauty*, Herbert's *Barbarian in the Garden* and *Still Life with a Bridle*, and Josif Brodsky's *Watermark* are the collections of essays she focuses on. Even though the literary works in question can be identified as travelogues, they also have numerous associations with their authors' poems, a point stressed a number of times in Shallcross's book. Nearly all the statements referring to both the essays and the poems are supported by ample quotations, and all of them appear in good English translations.

The study reflects Shallcross's fascination with the interdisciplinary quality of contemporary culture and with intertextuality of various cultural phenomena, such as literary works and the visual arts. The idea of discussing together the essays written by the poets in question is quite original, especially when one bears in mind the specificity of their experiences. Shallcross focuses on the question of epiphany as it was understood by such modernist writers as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, even though there is only one reference to the former and no references to the latter in the book. The perspective adopted for the purpose of the study is ocular, since visual experience is the source of epiphany for the central and eastern European travelers to the part of Europe that remained free of Communist incursion. Their experiences are associated with travels to cities situated outside their part of the world which was then separated by the Iron Curtain. Shallcross's major premise is that "a correlation exists between the sensory experience of travel and the epiphanic perception of the visual arts" (xvi). Her definition of an epiphanic journey is presented as "a

dynamic and intensive moment of insight and motion produced by the interdependence of movement and works of art" (xvi). The uniqueness of the epiphanies described in the book is associated with the historical conditioning of the travelers. All of them experienced the feeling of disinheritance due to being excluded from access to and participation in Western culture for which they otherwise felt much affinity. Seeing became their *modus operandi*, and they adopted the attitude of a *flaneur*: Zagajewski is described as a selective observer, Herbert as a casual onlooker, and Brodsky as one immersed in the environment surrounding him.

The author of *Through the Poet's Eye* intends to present her objects of study through a "variety of interdisciplinary readings" (xvii), but to a certain extent her analysis remains methodologically indeterminate. Individual experiences are viewed from the perspective of the epiphany theory, but the entire concept seems to be slightly unspecified due to the thinness of the critical apparatus used in the book. She mentions, among others, S. T. Coleridge, William Blake, and Virginia Woolf as theoreticians of epiphany, but the book does not supply enough theoretical background associated with the topic. Shallcross seems to be more interested in the historical and political background of the poets' experiences. The following reference to Roman Ingarden's phenomenology is one of those few passages where theory is addressed: "Immediacy, intensity, and ecstasy combined with intuitive grasp of the pure essence of objects are the elements which constitute both [Zagajewski's] epiphanic and his phenomenological visions. Thus both forms of vision serve to define each other" (39). Such references to literary theory are rare even though the works of art in question are said to be analyzed in the context of art theory.

The urban epiphanies of Zagajewski are associated with Lwów/Lviv where he was born, with Kraków where he studied, with the United States where he traveled and lived, and with Paris which he chose for his abode. Not every city can be the site of epiphanic experience: Shallcross stresses the fact that some cities, such as Gliwice where Zagajewski grew up, cannot be the setting of such a phenomenon (but why?). The poet's epiphanies are described as object-related, and they are perceived in the context of his fascination with both Ingarden's philosophy and Vermeer's painting. Such a situation partly justifies Shallcross's neglect of theoretical background: Zagajewski himself applied a literary theory to his interpretations, and a reading of his essays in the light of a critical theory might be superfluous as he already placed his work in the context

of phenomenology.

Zbigniew Herbert is presented as a pilgrim (to use the title of a review by Andrzej Kijowski) relishing in the imaginative space supplied to him by museums and historical cities. *Barbarian in the Garden* and *Still Life with a Bridle* are analyzed in the context of the poet's biography, and specifically his state of being "caught between the implied Scylla of communist-ruled society and the Chabrydis of humanism in the West" (49). Shallcross carefully analyzes the metaphoric level of the two collections of essays and even provides the definition of epiphany valid for Herbert's essays: it is viewed as "an intense and ecstatic manifestation or realization of an otherwise ineffable truth, a realization that comes into being through the power of art" (44). The experience is caused by Italian and Dutch art, the former being associated with visiting places along with the hordes of tourists, and the latter with remaining a solitary pilgrim in the temples of art of the Dutch museums. It is innovative that Herbert's epiphanies are juxtaposed with Kasimir Malevich's art, with the implication that both the Russian artist's paintings and the Polish poet's travelogues embody the spirit of negative aesthetics.

Brodsky's *Watermark* is interpreted as "a treatise about mirrors and their hidden and unpredictable meanings," (104) and it is analyzed as a manifestation of the poet's fascination with the topic of the void. Petersburg and Venice are interpreted as the twin cities that are always present in the life of the poet. Being in Venice is the result of a choice consciously made by the poet, and it manifests his fondness for impersonation and masquerading. Venice is an "intertextual creation" (114), a city representing nothingness. Shallcross stresses the postmodern dimension of *Watermark*, pinpointing the topic of negativity as the element crucial for the understanding of Brodsky's poetry and prose. What is striking is the comparison she draws between the poet's *oeuvre* and modern painting, which was the domain disliked by Brodsky himself. Such passages make the book a remarkable piece of writing, since they provide interdisciplinary perspective for interpretation of the literary works in question.

Shallcross's views on works of art are far from orthodox. She does quote art historians when writing about the objects and places generating the poets' epiphanic experiences, but she also presents her own critical opinions instead of agreeing with every point that had already been made on a given subject. In that she imitates the poets she is writing about: according



to her, Herbert also walked away from traditional art history and combined his objects of study with the diversified texture of life. In other words, she accepts the canon created by the poets whose essays she analyzes. Shallcross's analysis takes into account the analogues to the works she focuses on and the differences between the individual essay collections. The subject matter of the essays acquires a wider perspective in her account, probably the most interesting of them being the comparison of *Watermark* with Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*: she sees Brodsky as the continuator of the tradition started by the Victorian thinker.

After reading the book it becomes clear why Shallcross chose these three authors. She presents the three collections of essays as belonging to the same tradition, one which includes the poets' relationships to Western culture. She states that "Herbert bridges the extreme poles marked by Zagajewski and Brodsky. His dark epiphanies . . . anticipate Brodsky's moment of a black vision" (99). The writers' feeling of dispossession is alleviated through Shallcross's study: she shows that their epiphanies have their roots in Western civilization from which the three poets felt themselves frustratingly excluded. ▲

## Regions of the Great Heresy Bruno Schulz, a Biographical Portrait

By Jerzy Ficowski. Translated by Theodosia Robertson.  
New York: W.W. Norton, 2003. ISBN 0393051471. 225  
pages. Hardcover. \$18.17 on Amazon.com.

### Danusha Goska

Writer and artist Bruno Schulz was born in Drohobycz, Austrian Poland, in 1892. The son of shopkeepers, Schulz, timid and frail, was sometimes called "the oaf" by his schoolmates. But his gift with words seduced listeners. In 1930 Schulz began writing to poet Deborah Vogel. She encouraged him to fashion these missives into book form. He did so; they became *Cinnamon Shops* (1934). Schulz's reputation rests on this and another short story collection, *Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass* (1937). This *oeuvre* has been classified, by turns, as surrealistic, modernist, or a precursor to magical realism. Schulz's subject matter is his unremarkable hometown. In his work, though, a

speck floating down from the sky can contain a human embryo, and a man can become a cockroach.

Although Schulz's work was praised by some of the best writers of the day, and although he won prestigious awards, he did not enter into a glamorous writer's life. He continued working as a schoolteacher. In 1939 the Soviets, and then, in 1941, the Nazis, invaded Schulz's hometown. His artistic talent was exploited by a Nazi officer. In 1942 this officer had a feud with another Nazi who, as part of this feud, shot Schulz dead.

Schulz's work was not translated into English until 1963. The World Cat lists twenty-five English language books devoted to Schulz as subject; in comparison, it lists nearly eight times that many devoted to his contemporary and compatriot, Isaac Bashevis Singer.

In 1942, an eighteen-year-old Polish student, Jerzy Ficowski, read *Cinnamon Shops* for the first time. Enthralled, he wrote to personally thank the author. After learning that Schulz was dead, Ficowski resolved to write about Schulz himself. In 1967, Ficowski's *Regions of the Great Heresy*, devoted to Schulz, was published in Polish.

Two factors render *Regions of the Great Heresy's* publication in English a cause for celebration. Schulz's own biography is one of world literature's most poignant; equally poignant is the story of the eighteen-year-old who successfully resolved to make this lost author's work known. Without Ficowski or someone like him, Bruno Schulz would probably remain little known outside Poland. Merely as a history of literary love, deserves attention. It recounts decades of travel, detective work, and hopes cruelly dashed and miraculously fulfilled. Ficowski assembled the scant surviving Schulz literary and artistic works and letters, and conducted interviews with persons who knew Schulz. *Regions* thus offers a narrative of heartfelt dedication and sacrifice more moving than that found in most biographical or critical works. Of course, we can also celebrate *Regions's* appearance in English because it makes the work and life of a writer who deserves attention more accessible.

*Regions's* structure varies. Some chapters offer sketchy but still factually informative and emotionally affective accounts of Schulz's life; others are devoted to literary criticism of Schulz's writing; still others accounts of Ficowski's quest. Material added to the original version addresses Yad Vashem's controversial 2001 removal of Schulz murals from an apartment in Drohobycz (now in Ukraine). The events of Schulz's life are not treated sequentially. Some events not mentioned in the main narrative find their way to an appended timeline. Schulz's acquaintances are given sketchy treatment. Deborah Vogel,

for example, is in and of herself “not of primary importance”; rather she is mentioned merely as a “muse for Bruno Schulz.” Though Schulz almost never left his hometown, he lived in the Austrian Empire, Poland, the Soviet Union, and under the Third Reich. These political addresses suggest the titanic world events that stormed around Schulz, shifting and erasing nations and populations, events that are given cursory treatment in *Regions*.

Ficowski’s commentary on Schulz borders on the worshipful. Schulz’s unique gift, Ficowski writes, was to reenter childhood itself and deliver it to his readers. With the perceptions of a child, Schulz’s vision penetrates beyond mere appearances down to the mythic essence of things, and communicates that essence to the reader. Ragamuffins are transformed into magical soothsayers; a merchant becomes a prophet. Not just persons, but every *thing* as well, quivers with life. Ficowski says that in Schulz’s worldview, it is within the pages of books that things acquire their life-giving, mythological essence.

Evidence of the strength of *Regions* is that it inspires the reader to yearn for more. After finishing *Regions* I wished that the very next book I could read would be a lengthy biography of Bruno Schulz, one that treated his life in chronological order, giving full play to this extraordinary narrative; a book that fleshed out the famous and obscure characters who had an impact on Schulz, from Tlujja, the town beggar woman, to Zofia Nałkowska, Schulz’s mentor and lover. I am eager to read criticism that dares to find fault with Schulz, however minor, and a thoroughgoing analysis that places him in relation to more familiar authors to whom he is frequently compared, including Franz Kafka and Marcel Proust.

I would like to read an essay that addressed ownership of Schulz’s works, a front-page issue since Yad Vashem’s appropriation of his murals. I would like to read insightful hypotheses about relations between Schulz’s psyche and his work. Also, the literally and figuratively in-your-face masochism of Schulz’s art is hard to ignore. I would like to read a writer who, in the context of a full biographical treatment, dared to discuss those masochistic themes in relation to powerful stereotypes of Jews as inferior physical specimens, a stereotype that Jews themselves worked to decommission, at least partly through Zionism. I would like to see an author dare further and courageously address Schulz’s highly charged final commission, as a creator of masochistic pornography for a Nazi.

Then there are the contradictions. Many an artist has fled his hometown and its responsibilities; in spite of his yearning to devote time to art, Schulz continued

for decades at a job that frustrated him in order to support indigent family members. He said of himself, “I stand remote from real life.” Ironical words from a man who lived through the First and Second World Wars. Ficowski quotes those who knew Schulz, assessing him as constitutionally inadequate to face reality’s demands, and yet he struggled for survival under the Soviets by painting images of Stalin, and under Nazi occupation as well. He was called cowardly, but he spoke with calm matter-of-factness to a Catholic Pole about the imminent “liquidation” of Jews, including himself.

For me, *Regions* came most fully alive, and communicated the most about Schulz, in its reproduction of Schulz’s letters. The main character of these letters is a Sabatini hero, a swashbuckler who strides across the page and the reader’s imagination with unassailable confidence.

*Regions of the Great Heresy* whets the appetite for further discussion of Schulz. Literature lovers, scholars of the Holocaust, of the history of Jews in Europe, and of Polish literature and history, would do well to celebrate the arrival of *Regions* in this new English language edition. Δ

## Spory o krytykę literacką w Dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym

(Debates on Literary Criticism in the Interwar Period) By Dariusz Skórczewski. Kraków: Universitas, 2002. 404 pages. Bibliography and Index. Paperback. Zł. 31.20. In Polish.

### Adam Fitas

Dariusz Skórczewski’s doctoral dissertation, now published as a book, is an innovative synthesis of the discussions on the theory and methodology of literary criticism in Poland between 1918–1939. It critically recreates the heated debates on the nature, functions, role, and criteria of literary criticism, many of which contributed to contemporary understanding of criticism. The topic is presented against a wide background of European developments in politics, philosophy, methodology of humanities, and religious affairs, thus providing the reader with a comprehensive insight into the most intensive period of the meta-critical discourse in the history of Polish criticism.

The author focuses on three basic aspects of the dispute. First, he discusses and interprets polemics about the status

of criticism compared to the position of literary scholarship on the one hand, and literature on the other. Skórczewski formulates the thesis about criticism as a distinct writing discipline situated between literary studies and literature and thus closer to the German tradition of narrow *das Kritik* rather than the English pattern of wide-ranging “literary criticism.” Second, he seeks to answer the question of how this new type of awareness regarding the unique character of critical discourse influenced the critics’ choices of genre and style, as well as their public function as mediators between authors and audience. In this part of his dissertation Skórczewski brilliantly demonstrates how critics managed to defend their autonomy in the literary life of the new Poland in spite of fierce attacks by the consolidated literary milieu that was hostile to scholarly criticism. Third, the author considers the struggles for criteria between critics representing different ideological orientations, such as Christian personalism, right-wing nationalism, progressive liberalism, and Marxism. Skórczewski argues that, based on Stanisław Brzozowski’s and Karol Irzykowski’s writings, the young critics of the so-called “1910 generation” such as Ludwik Fryde and Kazimierz Wyka established a new model of critical activity which blended two opposite approaches toward literary values: the esthetic (or “formalist”), and the ethical. The author interestingly shows how, by integrating the realm of “arts” with the sphere of “life,” literary criticism in Poland actually became a moral activity and a tool in shaping both the artists’ consciousness and society’s moral sensitivity. This in turn resulted in assigning to critics a role that, according to the Polish Romantic tradition, should have been played by poets.

The book concludes with a flash-forward of the conditions of postwar literary criticism in Poland, showing connections with as well as differences from what was achieved in the theory of literary criticism during the interwar period. ▲

## Selected Poems

by Adam Czerniawski. Translated with an introduction by Iain Higgins. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000. xviii+221 pages. ISBN 9057551063. CD included. Hardcover. \$65.00.

### Joanna Niżyńska

Adam Czerniawski (b. 1934) reached England in 1947 at

the age of thirteen after spending a “disturbed childhood” during World War II wandering through the Middle East. In Poland, the country of his birth, he is recognized as a poet, essayist, prose writer, and translator, but despite his active participation in the intellectual life of England, Czerniawski is known to English speakers almost solely as a translator of Polish literature. Czerniawski’s *Selected Poems*, therefore, reflects editor Spike Hawkins’ goal to “present collections of poems by significant poets whose work is not available in existing publications” in his new series, “Poets’ Voices.” This bilingual Polish-English anthology of Czerniawski’s work surveys his poetic development from his first volume of poetry, published in 1955, through his most recent works. The publication is accompanied by a CD of readings in Polish (by Czerniawski) and English (by Irena Czerniawska-Edgcumbe and Iain Higgins) and introduced by its translator, Iain Higgins.

As a translator, Czerniawski has made an enormous contribution, especially through his translations of Tadeusz Różewicz and, more recently, of Jan Kochanowski’s *Treny*. Nevertheless, he has never done himself the favor of translating his own poetic output. His seven volumes of poetry were all written in Polish (and published in Paris, England, and Kraków), and only a few poems were previously available in English translations (i.e., those included in Czerniawski’s own anthology of Polish poetry, *The Burning Forest* [1988], and additional poems scattered in such British poetry magazines as *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *Rialto*, and *Poetry Review*).

Reading Czerniawski’s poetry in this handy bilingual edition and listening to his poems gives one a sense that a gap in English translations long obvious to Poles has finally been filled. The organization of *Selected Poems*, however, is puzzling. The volume consists of six parts, but the selection seems somewhat arbitrary and follows neither a chronological nor a coherent thematic order. To add to the confusion, the editors do not consistently indicate the dates of the poems nor where they were originally published. Even though this volume does not allow one to trace Czerniawski’s poetic trajectory, nothing can diminish pleasure of encountering Czerniawski’s skillful and moving works in these very readable translations.

Consistently labeled in Polish criticism as a “poet of culture,” Czerniawski, like Czesław Miłosz, belongs to the category of writers who express their struggle with culture and history in profoundly personal terms. His poetry is marked by a return to mythological topoi (e.g., “Miłość” [“Love”]) and to such classical motifs as *ars longa vita brevis* (e.g., “Pamiętka” [“Token of

Remembrance”]). These returns, however, offer no consolation for the sense of historical and existential displacement; rather, culture tempts with the promise of aesthetic redemption (in this, Czerniawski also resembles Zbigniew Herbert) but ultimately agitates by bringing into the open that from which one longs to escape—the palpability of history, of “today, though somewhat far.” Czerniawski’s sense of history reflects both the experience of his generation and his own “obsessive memory [of an] annihilated childhood.” He comments, for instance, on the traumatic divide in his biography, “for those tainted with the consciousness of ‘other days’... biography falls into *before* and *after*.” He recalls the emotional impact of the outbreak of the war on the child that he was: “So not even a global picture of the September campaign, but simply stray scenes rooted in the memory of the child. They are enough. And who would have thought that already at that age it is possible to shoulder the humiliation of an entire people” (“*Mówią wieki, czyli co nowego w historii*” [“*The Ages Speak, or what’s new in History*”]).

These “stray scenes” seem to disrupt the impulse to escape into culture. The realization that culture offers no shelter manifests itself most straightforwardly in Czerniawski’s quasi-ekphrastic (“quasi” as the ekphrasis functions only as a point of departure for the personal) poems on paintings whose titles correspond to their visual counterparts. In these poems, the entire sphere of cultural history comes to be inscribed into the poet’s intermingled awareness of pain and desire for Arcadia. Thus, for instance, Jan Vermeer’s “A View of Delft” or Caspar David Friedrich’s “Girl at the Window” become “a palimpsest laid over a poem which in some places betrayed Arcadian elements, in others traces of the Passion” (“*Oczyszczanie starego wiersza*” [“*Cleaning an Old Poem*”]).

Just as culture negates what it promises in such poems as “Św. Sebastian” (“St. Sebastian,” where a painting of the redeemed Sebastian is transformed into a scene of wartime execution before becoming the “Hardened naked flesh decayed”), so nature simultaneously hides the horrific and betrays it in the most unexpected places. Thus, in “Bawaria 1956” (“Bavaria 1956”) an idyllic landscape only brings to the foreground the atrocities of the death camp while an orderly English landscape triggers “a moment”...in homage to those ignorant/of peace, those cut to shreds, thrown to the wall, whose ashes fall by night/on verandahs, lawns, flowerbeds” (“*W ładzie angielskiego krajobrazu*” [“*In the Order of an English Landscape*”]).

The disruptions of the seemingly “classical,”

discursive, and logopoetic (to use the Poundian category) in Czerniawski’s poetry also permeates its formal features. Without fixed metrical forms and full of unclear grammatical antecedents, sentence fragments, or titles which function as opening lines, Czerniawski’s “*Rzecz o poezji*” (“*Discourse on Poetry*”), clearly manifest the Norwidian tradition. No wonder Iain Higgins associates Czerniawski’s opaqueness with that of his American contemporary, John Ashbery, despite their dramatically different poetic backgrounds. For Czerniawski, poetry is a Protean tool that communicates only if one dares to handle the rawness of “words multiform and greasy vulgar and trivial/unpredictable golden lustful stubborn and harsh” (“*Lingua Adamica*”).

Higgins strives to be faithful to Czerniawski’s style and tone (including the use of British English to reflect the author’s environment), and those able to follow both the Polish and English can appreciate the consistency of his renditions (in some of which Czerniawski assisted). Occasionally Higgins’s choices are strange. One wonders, for instance, over the closing of the masterful “*Mirrors and Reflections*,” where Higgins renders the answer to the question “How to extricate oneself from the talons of reflections” as “don’t be yourself.” In Polish, the answer is “*być nie sobą*,” literally “*by being not-oneself*.” Generally, however, Higgins’s translations read smoothly and show respect for the original. Similar qualities come across in Higgins’s sensitive introduction to this generally laudable volume—would that the copyeditor had shown a similar respect and corrected the numerous typographical mistakes in the Polish text! ▲

## Political Borders and Cross-Border Identities at the Boundaries of Europe

Edited by John Borlund, Graham Day and Kazimierz Z. Sowa. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2002. 259 pages. Paper.

### Joseph A. Kotarba

The papers in this collection were originally presented in a workshop on cross-border relationships held at the International Institute for the Sociology of Law in Onati,



Spain. The Rzeszów Pedagogical University and the University of Wales Bangor jointly organized the workshop. The International Sociological Association provided financial assistance.

When I first read these acknowledgements, I was leery of reading the rest of the book. Books derived from scholarly panels are often comprised of disconnected, unrelated, and underdeveloped essays. My question as an American sociologist was: what meaningful intellectual, let alone empirical, link could there be between recent Central European experiences of borders, boundaries, and identities, and similar experiences in the British Isles? The answer is that, although the essays are a bit uneven, the links are definitely there. We get a glimpse of the generic social and demographic processes that guide the evolution of cross-border relationships. The book is especially useful in providing a European view on immigration for American scholars who focus overwhelmingly on migration issues in the Western Hemisphere.

Two of the editors, Graham Day and John Borland, argue in the introduction that the evolution of the European Union (EU) is sufficient cause to examine the notion of "modern Europe." The evolution of the EU has not, however, been even. Over the past few hundred years the countries of Central Europe have been pulled to the East and have found themselves under the influence of Russia, for better or, mostly, for worse. Thus, "Central Europe has suffered a tumultuous and bloody political history, during which frontiers have changed, allegiances have been tested, and identities have been uncertain and insecure" (p. 10). In contrast, the countries on the western edge of Europe have experienced more stability and considerably more economic and social development.

With the advent of the New Europe, all bets are off. As borders become increasingly formal and set populations, and therefore identities, do not. Minorities become visible, verbal, and often contentious. Migration continues, and in many different directions. This collection of essays leaves the reader with the impression, though, that the New Europe simply uncovers the ongoing complexities of fluid border and identity dynamics in Europe; the New Europe does not create these complexities.

Stanislav Andreski, a Polish sociologist living in Britain, provides a somewhat conservative portrait of migration from poor to rich societies. Professor Andreski makes the obvious point that people move to richer countries largely to improve their economic lot. He argues against the prevailing liberal viewpoint common in the United States which holds that immigrants contribute much more

to the economy of the receiving country than they cost in term of social services and depressed wages. Instead, he predicts that ecological constraints, such as the costs of pollution and overpopulation, will result in increasingly rigid barriers to immigration in western European countries like Britain and Germany.

As an American, I found the chapters by Drs. Stepień, Wierzbieniec, and Ślęzak fascinating because they illuminated the long-term conflict between Poland and Ukraine. For most of our lifetimes, a lazy mass media along with Communist hegemony have led us to believe that society and culture in the old Soviet Union were pretty homogeneous. These authors invoke the European sense of history to inform us that the great European powers Russia, Prussia, Austria, and Germany nurtured local conflict between Poland and Ukraine as a strategy of occupation. Consequently, it will take time and great effort to reduce remaining bad feelings between these two peoples.

In contrast, the demographic activity in the British Isles comes across as, well, considerably less interesting and less vital. Welsh nationalist thought? I guess I was expecting to read more (read something?) about the Northern Irish dilemma and South Asian immigration to Britain in a book on political borders and cross-border identities.

Good demographic research, like any scientific research, requires comparative analysis to generate useful theory. The present collection provides that comparison through Professors Bancroft's and Gordon's chapters on the Roma. The Roma provide a great case study because they are migrants par excellence, and they have been stigmatized and persecuted in many different ways. The Nazis tried to annihilate them, but they are resilient. To read about how they have been treated in Britain and the Czech Republic is to learn much about the border and identity processes in these two countries. During the Communist era, the Czech and Polish governments tried to assimilate the otherwise nomadic Roma by turning them into good, stable, socialistic workers. In contrast, British society has traditionally treated Roma as social outcasts susceptible to populist violence and ghettoization. In the 1990s, Czech officials attempted to solve the Roma problem by paying them to migrate to Britain, where they in turn were often treated as criminals for not arriving with the proper papers.

Bancroft very insightfully conceptualizes the Roma, or "Gypsy-Travelers" as they are known in Britain, as a paradox of modernity. On the one hand, Czech society rejects Roma because the Czechs do not want

to be identified with the allegedly primitive and unsophisticated migrants in their efforts to Westernize. On the other hand, Roma are functional to their hosts to the degree they occupy the Simmelian role of the *stranger*. The stranger is valuable because he helps the host establish cultural and cognitive boundaries denoting identity. We may not be sure who we are, but at least we know we are not like the stranger.

This book will be of use to American scholars who study migration and dominant-minority group relations. We can learn much from the European experience, the history of which is longer than ours. Comparative research like this can help elevate migration research to a higher and more powerful theoretical level. **Δ**

## World War II through Polish Eyes

By M. B. Szonert. Boulder-New York: East European Monographs distributed through Columbia University Press, 2002. viii + 399 pages. Hardcover. \$45.00.

### Theresa Kurk McGinley

This book contains one woman's history of the Second World War obtained by means of a lengthy interview collected fifty years after the events. The compiler of the history is Ms. Szonert, an attorney who for several years engaged the participant in this living history exchange. The strength of this work consists in its details which include primary documentation and photographs. *World War II through Polish Eyes* is a personal account of the Nazi and Soviet invasion and occupation of Poland, and the impact of that onslaught on one Polish family. Seen through the eyes of the young Polish woman Danusia, the story weaves an extraordinary account of recollection and commentary on the war as she experienced it. Danusia's connections to the historical events of the war is what makes this book stand out as a memoir. From the Katyn Massacre that claimed her first love to suffering the incarceration of her husband in Auschwitz, Danusia's history contains struggle for survival and attempts to outwit the enemy, whether Nazi or Soviet. Danusia is a vibrant spirit trapped between two oppressors and the world at large. She witnesses the burning of Warsaw, the frailty of life, and the frustration of the lack of order in a world changing quickly and inexplicably. Her family is shattered, and yet her spirit emerges stronger from the ordeal. Through all the death and destruction, Danusia

proves herself a fighter. She uses sheer pluck to combat the Nazis and Soviets in inventive ways, whether appealing for a photograph of her newborn child to be sent to her incarcerated husband in Auschwitz, or for the release for burial of the body of her father, murdered by the Soviets. Though some may consider these minor victories, Danusia took pride in being able to sometimes win in an increasingly hopeless situation.

Danusia recollects the deportations and atrocities committed by the invaders, retells the history of General Anders' Second Corps, the Warsaw Uprising, the loss of loved ones throughout the war including separation from her infant son. The book recounts small triumphs over the occupying force, and the bitter agony of being a minor actor in a large political arena which she was powerless to change. Criticism is heaped on the Allies, both England and the United States, and on the Soviet Union, all the while reflective of the irony of Poland's fate as an early ally.

The book excels in providing many historical details absent from accounts painted in broad strokes. The diplomatic controversy caused by the Katyn Massacre is fleshed out through stories and pictures, such as a haunting photograph of the Katyn Massacre memorial in New Jersey as a foreground to the smoldering ruins of the World Trade Center in New York City. The reader is sent on a journey through the horror of war. Throughout the book, "why?" questions are often directed to Danusia by her grandson, and she frequently reveals the frustration over how little most Americans know of the history of the Second World War.

Szonert does not shun controversy. In one chapter, the grandmother Danusia takes on the discussion stirred by the publication of *Neighbors* and analyzes the content to her horrified grandson. The "finger-pointing" between Poles and Jews is boldly addressed, all the while placing the reader in the chaos of war.

The book adds to a considerable collection of published memoirs of the Second World War, and although it presents historical information in flashbacks, the detail of the information is accurate. It is crucially important to assemble a collection of accounts and memoirs by Poles so that the historical record of the Second World War can be updated and corrected.

However, the narrative style of a grandmother instructing her grandchildren on Polish history and frequently moving from the present to the past is a bit cumbersome, and sometimes makes the reader feel as if he/she attended a history class in a high school. Commentaries on recent political events, such as the 2000 United States presidential election and the Florida vote controversy, detract from the overall power of the

work. To quote from the book, upon Danusia's hearing of the results of the U.S. presidential election, "Danusia stares at the TV with fear. . . . 'But I don't understand,' she says quietly. . . . 'To me this race sets a precedent to disregard the will of the people'." Though the author's frustration may be understandable, a commentary on the fraudulent "free elections" in postwar Poland would have been much more relevant.

The strengths of the book however outweigh the flaws, and Danusia's legacy is to remember the human price of war and the underappreciated contribution of Poles to Allied victory. Alas, official history is often written by scribes rather than by participants. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and reemergence of Poland as an independent state, corrections to the history of the twentieth century are to be expected and encouraged.  $\Delta$

## **Lying Down With Dogs A Personal Portrait of a Polish Exile**

By Mark Zygodlo. Foreword by Norman Davies.  
Chester Springs, PA: Dufour Editions, Inc. 2002.  
xii + 274 pges. Maps. Paper. \$16.95.

### **Maria Szonert-Binienda**

"Lie down with dogs, get up with fleas." This is a favorite proverb of the main character of this book, Bronek, a Polish soldier in the Second World War who settles down in Wales after the war. Although the story is about Bronek, it is also a study of the mind and heart of the author of this book, Bronek's son Mark.

The author tells his father's story based on recollections of their trip to Poland in the mid-1990s. Bronek dies soon after the trip. Out of grief and a deep sense of loss, the author sets out to write a portrait of his father. Although the portrait includes images from the years spent in Wales and from his early childhood in Chicago, the core of Bronek's personality is shaped by his formative years spent in Poland.

How much and what aspects of his Polishness was Bronek able to pass on to his son? An easy answer is out of the question. Polishness or, more generally, nationhood is a very fragile concept, replete with symbols and essentialist meanings. Additionally, to use Bronek's metaphor, he never described to Mark the dogs he had to lie down with, and so Mark was left with just the fleas as clues to where his dad lay. Mark struggles with these fleas throughout the text.

The easiest to identify are the Soviet "fleas." While visiting Warsaw with his father, the author hears details about the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. However, he learns about this historic event in two different ways. First, he learns from his father that Stalin denied the RAF planes carrying supplies for fighting Warsaw permission to refuel on the Soviet side of the frontline, thus virtually eliminating Allied support for this anti-Nazi insurrection. He also learned from his father that Stalin purposely stopped the westward advances of the Red Army, ordering Russians to sunbathe on the east bank of the Vistula River while waiting for the Warsaw Uprising to be crushed by the Germans. Later, he learns from a young Warsovian brought up in Soviet-occupied Poland that the whole uprising idea "was a mistake" because the Red Army was not able to get to Warsaw on time to give support to fighting Warsaw. The Warsaw Uprising was unnecessary and was yet another mistake of the Polish Home Army and the London Poles. Thus, the colossal losses and the destruction of the city were the Poles' own fault!

The Western "fleas" are painful too. Some of them are those of the author's father, but some of them are his own. Approaching Warsaw by car, the author wonders about "the relative primitiveness of the surrounding countryside" and dwells upon the all-too-frequent car thefts taking place in the country that was occupied by the Soviets for two generations. Although his observations are correct, he handles them in a way that reminds one of some prominent American and British historians engrossed in academic debate about the backwardness of Eastern/Central Europe. Such debates would be much more insightful if these prominent historians would trade with Poland and Poles, at least for a moment, their comfortable British or American geopolitical and personal positions.

Before the war, Bronek attended high school where most of the students were wealthy sons of the Polish gentry. "The rest were a few misfits such as myself [plus] a number of Jewish students. They kept themselves apart from the rest of the students," he recalls. In a laboratory class Bronek was asked to pair up with a Jewish student and the gentry group pressured him not to work with a Jew. He resisted the pressure and worked with the Jewish friend. When the Soviets entered Poland and put him to prison, he was released thanks to the effort of his mother and the help he received from the same Jew.

At one point Bronek says: "Knowing what I know now, knowing what happened to 90 percent of them I am ashamed of what I thought then, what was the normal attitude. But at the time we had no such insights. We resented them. We resented their success, their wealth, and. . . we resented them because they were even more

tragic than the Poles themselves.” Clearly, his father did not pass on to him any Polish anti-Semitism. Indeed, the author is strongly philo-Semitic.

But the most fascinating aspect of this book is the author’s search for his Polishness. As a son of a Polish expatriate and a British mother, he grew up in Wales with half of his family unreachable behind the Iron Curtain. He meets his Polish family and discovers his father’s childhood only as a grown-up man with a limited command of the Polish language. “Do you feel very Polish?” a cousin asks him halfway through his journey through Poland. “Not very, but pretty sentimental,” he replies.

This fundamental question does not go away. He struggles with his Polishness throughout the rest of the book. “What makes you Polish, Dad?” he asks. He finds the most powerful answer to this question in the writings of Stanisław Wyspiański and Pope John Paul II. That love for where we come from, physically and spiritually, makes us Polish.

The author struggles further with his own identity. “I look through my father tonight for the first time, [I look] directly into his past and realize how infinitely distant from it I am. The momentary insight brings me closer to him,” he observes. “I cried with a painful shock at the immense scale of the brutality and the loss. Sitting with my Dad I see clearly. . . his bitter loss and my own distance from it.”

His fascination with the Polish side of his family grows as the trip progresses. “How can you not speak Polish yet? Your father would have wanted you to,” someone observes. At Bronek’s deathbed, the author recalls his father starting a conversation with him in Polish and then laughing at himself. That recollection leads to a confession: “I wish to God I really could have spoken to him in Polish.”

The book makes one realize that treasuring and preserving what is best in our Polishness will strengthen us from the inside and ultimately help us better understand Poland’s history and Poland’s best interests. That awareness should help us find and eliminate all these fleas that have been bothering us for so long. Δ

## Poems by Kevin Hannan

### Alleys of Kraków

Soft, lean creatures strolling briskly  
arm in arm, laughing their innocence deeply into the sky,  
are mistaken  
for sprites, not the adolescent virgins of human race  
they must be.  
Apart, differently, prepubescent boys celebrate a robust beauty,  
free of unnatural aggressions

with which America proudly inoculates its own.  
The ancestors of this exquisite youth roamed these same paths  
before history.  
Still Indo-Europeans,  
the ancients never knew the martial expeditions  
that led their kinsmen afar,  
to the ends of Europe and halfway through Asia,  
and molded with their blood and conquests  
historical nations.  
Instead, they remained,  
from satisfaction or perhaps idleness,  
uncalculating,  
in their forests,  
tending beehives,  
celebrating groves and orchards,  
where their descendants  
romp gently.

*Kraków, 3 May 2002*

### Rome and Siberia

Two poles  
balance a magnetic field  
upon which is suspended, eternally, a state of mind.

One light and charm, the essence of the sun,  
whence history began.  
One dark, chill, frightening.

A duality  
imprinted upon each Polish soul  
qualifies the realities of Polishness.

*Bielsko-Biala, 29 May 2002*

## *Our Take*

## Writing Counterhistory in Non-Germanic Central Europe

Defining oneself in opposition to something is a sure sign of cultural insecurity and a wish for cultural recognition. The syndrome of “being against” is also deadly, and one hears complaints that Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians proclaim Otherness too insistently, and by doing so work toward their own exclusion. They remain “Eastern Europeans,” natives of a seventh continent inhabited by white people who have been colonized by other white people.



But is this situation avoidable? What is to be done when one's story is systematically edited out of history? What is to be done when history is painted in colors that one knows are false?

Americans of Polish background know that they are not represented in the historical narrative as taught in American schools. They are a minority made invisible, persons from "Eastern Europe," Catholics in a "Protestant country." Yet they are not eligible for minority scholarships set up by universities and colleges.

The Polish master narrative, and other Central and East European master narratives, run counter to the canonical history of Europe which is pitilessly blind toward those who did not succeed in *Realpolitik* but who nevertheless survived. This is both the glory and the burden of Polish history.

For Poles and for some of their neighbors, the nineteenth century was a century of insurrections and of economic, cultural, and demographic losses; a century of regress. For the rest of Europe it was a century of progress and successes. The praises of the 1815 Congress of Vienna reverberate in virtually every history textbook. Yet the Congress divided Europe between empires and strangled entire nations, prolonging the cannibalization of the largest of them, Poland. It mapped out the road to future tragedies for Ukraine. It tossed over Warsaw from Prussia to Russia, and it divided Polish territory in ways that forever doomed to failure the multinational Polish experiment, the Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian Republic whose kings were elected and who took seriously the idea of tolerance of diversity.

There is little sympathy for non-Germanic (and largely Catholic) Central Europeans in America's Catholic establishment. The English-speaking Catholic conservatives bemoan the First World War as a disaster that destroyed the allegedly moral "old order" in Europe. But ever since the 1830s, Polish Catholics were praying, with Adam Mickiewicz, for a "war of nations" that would restore their liberty and nationhood. The Great War liberated Central Europe from strangulation by empires. It made Europe's most Catholic nation, Poland, whole again. (It failed to do the same for Ukraine.) But the sympathies of American Catholics seem to lie with Protestant Prussia and Eastern Orthodox Russia rather than with the Catholic Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, or Hungarians.

Catherine the Great is generally considered a positive "Enlightenment" figure in American historical narrative: see the essay on her in Mark Kishlansky et al., *Societies and Cultures in World History*, 2 vols., (New York: Harper Collins, 1995). Poles see her as a despicable tyrant who bribed her way into French

"enlightened" circles while waging barbarous wars and suppressing dissent at home. In the part of Poland Catherine conquered, the Greek Catholic (Uniate) churches were closed and thousands of recalcitrant Catholics who refused to convert to Russian Orthodoxy were killed. Catherine of Russia and Frederick of Prussia planned and executed the partitions of Poland. The Enlightenment historians rewarded them both with the epithet "the Great." In the February 1994 issue of *First Things*, a neoconservative Catholic monthly, a certain Norman Ravitch stated in all seriousness that Catherine the Great invaded Poland "to put down anarchy and insure religious freedom" which Polish nobles suppressed. A bit like calling Ghenghis Khan a liberator of Christian Europe. The editor of the journal, Fr. John Neuhaus, did not consider it fit to comment. Like most Catholic notables in the United States, he is simply not interested in Catholicism east of the Oder River.

The 1919 Treaty of Versailles is another point of difference. It is often argued that the harsh terms of the treaty for the Germans resulted in the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany, which in turn led to the outbreak of the Second World War. *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years*, edited by M. F. Boemke et al. (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998) rehearses this well-known opinion. The tome concentrates on Western Europe as if the rest of Europe did not exist. Non-Germanic Central and Eastern Europe are squeezed into two articles (out of 26). One of them is modestly titled "The Polish Question," and the other lambasts Poland for her mistreatment of minorities. No article is devoted to German or French minorities, or to the mistreatment of the Irish by the English. While German financial hardships are lamented, no words of explication are wasted on the incredibly more difficult financial situation of Poland, and no one comments on the economic factor in the Polish treatment of minorities.

The Great War and the Versailles Treaty brought liberation to Central and East Europeans. It gave them breathing space and a chance to rebuild their nations. It enabled them to claim their identity. But the teachers of history in America routinely tell their students that the Treaty was a disaster because it left Germany angry and saddled with war reparations. Polish counter-history says that the Treaty allowed the sun of freedom to shine east of the German border. Ditto Czech, Slovak, and other counter-histories. The editing out of these peoples' histories became routine in the nineteenth century when the vast belt of nations between Germany and Russia did not show on the map. But the persistence of this editing out is remarkable, given the fact that

several European nations situated east of Germany rebuilt themselves in the twentieth century.

Or take Napoleon. In the English-speaking world, he is a villain: a Catholic (of sorts) and a rival of England, the conqueror of Prussia and Austria, and a wicked invader of Russia. For Poles, he symbolized hope. Poles fought for him not only in the Russian campaign, but virtually everywhere. The sort of desperate anti-*Realpolitik* action of those who had no choice.

Or the Second World War. American historians do not spend a New York minute pondering the fact that Poles fought against Nazi Germany *and* against Soviet Russia in the war. The vision of the war in American historical narrative is disarmingly simplistic: you were either on the side of the Allies, or you were siding with Hitler. The standard American understanding posits that there were two alliances, Nazi and anti-Nazi. You either sided up with Hitler (as did the governments of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia), or you were on the side of the Allies, as was France, England, America and Russia. This is history. Counter-history says: wrong. Poland fought *against* Nazi Germany and *against* Soviet Russia. Poland fought *against* two totalitarian powers. An anti-*Realpolitik* gesture but a necessary one, in Polish circumstances.

One reason why one does not see Polish names in prominent places in either right wing or left wing politics in this country is that inserting such persons' names (assuming they retain their vestigial Central European identity) in mainstream politics is like squaring the circle. To be in mainstream politics, one has to identify with mainstream history, including European history, whereas hardly any intellectual or politician who has Polish interests in mind can accept the version of history that laments the Great War as an unmitigated disaster and praises Soviet Russia for being a wonderful ally in the Second World War. If one yields to canonical attitudes in this regard, one ceases to represent Polish interests; if one tries to illuminate the Polish vision of history, one sticks out like a sore thumb amidst the conventionally-minded scholars and politicians. Zbigniew Herbert put it succinctly in his Letter to the Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudaev published in the April 1995 issue of *Sarmatian Review*:

We Poles experienced many defeats and humiliations. For decades and totally alone, we too struggled to win back elementary freedoms, the right to live in dignity, justice, and political security.

Like you, we fought in the deafening silence of the world that surrounded us. The governments of the rich, democratic and powerful states accused us of destroying the order of things, told us that we were bandits, that we were anarchists

who tried to destroy the balance of power in the world. We know all too well that the indifferent and well-fed people tend to see victims as criminals, and that they commiserate with the criminals, considering them victims.

Given the editing out of non-Germanic Central Europe from the American vision of history, it is easy to falsify historical details in countless small ways. Consider Jenny Diski's review of Herman Kruk's *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps 1939–44* in the 22 May 2003 issue of the *London Review of Books*. In discussing the life of Menachem Begin, Diski edited out a crucial period of Begin's life, the period that involved Polish generosity, Soviet duplicity, and a lack of recognition of either by mainstream historians. Like other Zionists, Begin was accepted into the Polish Army (formed by the surviving Polish political prisoners of the Gulag) *despite* pressure from Russian authorities not to accept Jews. The vicissitudes of war took the Polish Army to Palestine where Zionist Jews defected and formed their own Jewish units to fight against the British and, eventually, against Arabs. Instead of pressing charges (defection in wartime brought court martial and the death penalty), the Polish command generously allowed the Zionists to pursue their own objectives. Menachem Began never recognized Polish generosity, indeed he badmouthed his Polish colleagues whenever an opportunity arose, despite the fact that he owed them his life twice. He is a good illustration of the saying that no good deed goes unpunished. And of course Ms. Diski blithely follows official history in editing out of Begin's life its Polish Army component.

Can one learn Polish counterhistory in the United States? Last time we checked, Norman Davies' *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 2 was priced at \$134 on Amazon.com, while Lawrence Goodwyn's *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland* was out of print, used copies selling in the \$100–\$215 range. Both books were published by university presses that do not usually price volumes of comparable length and popularity in so high a dollar range.

Yet Polish counterhistory provides a healthy corrective to standard history textbooks. The postmodern world needs reminders that counterhistories continue to be written, and history's dialectic assures us that they will be absorbed into the master narrative. Telling stories situated within unconventional parameters can be a source of deep satisfaction, and listening to them can provide a salutary antidote to the deadening influence of stereotypes. ▲

***Lives Remembered***

## **Death by a Thousand Cuts A Polish Woman's Diary of Deportation, Forced Labor and Death in Kazakhstan: April 13, 1940–May 26, 1941**

**Part Six**

**Zofia Ludwika Małachowska Ptaśnik**

Translated by Leszek M. Karpinski  
Edited by John D. L. McIntosh, with assistance  
from Bogdan Czaykowski and Kenneth Baulk

(continued from the April 2003 issue)

**Tuesday, March 25, 1941**

Such an unusual moment—I'm left alone in our small room which seems to serve as a gathering place for our Polish colony all day long. Taking the opportunity of my rare privacy I washed myself a bit more thoroughly. . . . Lately I have not been feeling too well, suffering from enteritis or gastritis. I keep finding blood and mucus in my stool. Today I feel a bit stronger owing to kindhearted Hania who sent me wheat meal and barley. When one is sick, there is not much to choose from: there is only whole meal flour. I bought 3 oz. of butter for 5 rubles, Kazakh-style bread for 4 rubles and 3 eggs: 12 rubles are gone on account of my sickness. Again I have grown as thin as before the *khleboborka* [harvest].

A Kazakh has opened the door and is standing staring at me as I write these lines. I recall the time when I was a young girl and Kazik [a cousin admirer] stood in the doorway of my room looking at me, though I never said a word.

**Friday, March 28, 1941**

The old Mrs. Orłowska paid us only a short visit because a horse cart waited to take the voters back home. She asked me to write to Mrs. Hałaczowa's sister to notify her about the death.

**Tuesday, April 1, 1941**

With a little luck, for the holiday [Easter], I may receive three parcels if Mrs. Irgerowa sends hers. Receiving parcels gives us great joy and immense help. Everything from the parcel finds a use, even the piece

of rag in which it is wrapped. . . . If I had lots of money, I could improve my nutrition with good tasting Kazakh wheat bread for 4 rubles, milk, eggs and butter. To get all these one would need not 70 rubles but 270 rubles. Notwithstanding all this, I feel uneasy that I have more than the Szkudłapskis who, for some days now, have been eating food without any fat flavoring. I keep sharing with them suet, pork fat, and flour: however, I have so little for myself and must take a good care of my thinning scraggy body. There are moments that I feel weak and dizzy, seeing black spots in front of my eyes. Twice a day I eat dumplings made of dark flour in water with a touch of fat. If I use more fat, my stomach starts troubling me.

At noon I made patties with some fruit jam and had a cup of coffee – oh how good it tasted, but what kind of nutrition is it? It differs so much from the food I had for half a century. Dairy products, vegetables, fruit, honey, everything tasted so good and there was always as much as one desired.

Hania writes that people are disheartened with heavy taxes, forced duty, providing labor to the state without pay, quotas of meat, grain, etc. People have high expectations for change. Thirty farmers from Szczepoty were taken forcibly to dig entrenchments. Father Gumowski [the local priest] was ordered to pay 2000 rubles in income tax; 700 rubles from his farm and 105 lbs. meat. People say that priests in Lwów [Lviv] earn their living by delivering wood, coal, etc. as they need this additional income to pay for food and taxes.

**Easter Sunday, April 13, 1941**

Here we are commemorating the saddest anniversary of our deportation. Also, forty years have passed since the death of Helunia, my dearest older sister, whom I lost in my childhood. I have not even received a letter from Mieczek.

It's the time of *roztopka* [thaw] and the roads are dangerous. A few days ago a horse drowned on the road to Rudnik. Yesterday, right here on the farm, our *solkhoz* [?] Kratoiaz's cow nearly drowned. Horse carts sent to Aktyubinsk ten days ago from this farm and the 4th Farm to bring a shipment of flour still have not returned. Riverbeds that are normally dry all year long are now a mass of water roaring menacingly across the roads and steppe tracks. Yesterday people were saying that Mr. Silberman's body was seen floating down our little stream. He died on February 3rd in a frightful *buran*. Józef was horrified by the thought that it might be his duty to bury him. The body floated quickly away. Truly nobody recognized him. When will Mrs. Orłowska be found?



I often think that if I could die here, it would be a less painful blow to Mieczek. During this past year he must have become more independent of his mother, although he keeps assuring me in his letters how much I mean to him. I recall how much he looked forward to Easter last year with the yeast cakes, cold meats etc. from Dobrowolski. I wonder if Marysia [Baum] will prepare a traditional Easter breakfast. Customs and traditions are so important for a child. My Winia, my poor soul who is buried alive in prison, what are you doing on this holiday? Will we ever see again Maryś and Marysia, Dzida, and Hania, whose Easter [Orthodox] is coming in a week? I think about all of them with deep longing. I feel apprehensive about Maryś and Marysia [Bladye]. What does the future hold for them? I wrote a card to Marysia, but is it going to reach her? Will I get an answer?

Maria received a loaf of bread from Rudnik. I bought Kazakh bread for 4 rubles and 10 eggs for an exceptionally cheap price of 6 rubles from Koralova who badly needed money, selling them for the same price as in Aktyubinsk. Each of us got 3 oz. of butter for 4 rubles per person. All these things were placed in a box that served as a cupboard for our provisions. A piece of plywood, placed on a bedside table and kitchen table, is used for rolling, with a bottle, the dough for dumplings. As an exception, today we made pierogies stuffed with *kasha* which were cooked by the Szkudłapskis. Józef said prayers and blessed our food in Latin, sprinkling it with holy water brought with them from Częstochowa in Poland. Instead of Holy Communion, we drank a spoonful of holy water. Then we shared a wedge of a boiled egg (unfortunately it was not well cooked), and then started our Easter breakfast. I painted on Easter eggs "Hallelujah 1941" and also everyone's name. For coffee I provided half a pint of milk and the Szkudłapskis' dessert consisted of a dried fruit stew, very good plum jam and pierogies. During the past two days, Maria whitewashed our room and Janka neatly scrubbed it. The bricks that covered a third of the window were removed. Even a small yellow curtain was hung up to celebrate the holiday. The day is cloudy and gray, just as the mood in our souls. I have a feeling that if I allowed one tear to be shed, others would follow in a profuse stream and it would be impossible to contain myself. Why stir up everybody's feelings?

#### Thursday, April 17, 1941

From early morning, everyone around was very agitated. Józef, with a driver, went to fetch the body of Mr. Silberman, which was found 5 miles away. We were

told that his brother has been notified and asked to come here.

The steppe is showing more of the black soil and is slowly drying out. In the last few days oxen are let out to graze on the old grass which is starting to protrude from the snow. There is no more fodder for them on the farm.

On April 15 I received lots of mail: a letter from Mieczek dated March 30, from Irka [Kamieńska] with attached notes from my aunt [Edmundowa Kamieńska, Irka's mother-in-law], and Jaśka [Popiel]; also two letters from Maryna [Poziombko]. Mieczek received his quarterly school report card showing marks of 4 good and 8 excellent. At the end of the school year students will face final exams and even now they are very apprehensive.

I believe that Mieczek has no reason to be afraid. Jaśka [Popiel], who is the same age as Mieczek, writes that Mieczek is the great darling of all his teachers who praise him as a person showing good manners and upbringing. Irka also tells me about Mieczek, saying that he has grown from a boy into a student who now has a man's voice that I would not recognize. He is already sprouting a mustache. She assures me that Mieczek is living up to all my hopes. If only I could see him!

There is continuous trouble and sickness at the Kamieńskis. Poor nutrition and lack of massage has weakened Stefan's leg so much that he can barely walk. Earnings from his work in Janów are minimal. He had the flu, which he passed to my aunt [his mother]. When Irka goes to the diner where she works as a waitress, and Jaśka to school, the very old lady, her mother-in-law, must take care of her grandchildren with the help of a part time housekeeper. Since Christmas the children have been well, but Jola has a swollen gland and Ewa suffers from a hernia caused by extreme loss of weight. Poor little Irutka!

Krzysia Wilczyńska got married; Ula Ross has a son. People get married even in these hard times. Maryna writes that she was sick with St. Anthony's fire on her face. Her son cannot get rid of a cough. Her husband was sent to the forced labor camp and he is not allowed to write to her. Poor Maryna complains that the local air is the cause of all her ailments and that she is homesick for our home. When are we going to see it? Mieczek had a dream about my return but it may remain only a dream.

#### Friday, April 18, 1941

It was only this morning that Józef finally brought Mr. Silberman's body back to the farm. Last evening the oxen pulling the cart stopped and refused to move



any further. He had to leave the body on the road not far from here. Today Mr. Silberman's body, with his face down as he was found in the steppe, rests in a small room where Mrs. Ciesielska used to live. When I asked the *palivod* [field boss] why he was not turned with his face up, he answered that "*maie mordu pobitu*" [his mug is beaten up].

Yesterday we had a visit from Mr. Nosowicz, son of a police inspector in Nowogródek. He now works for the Department of Highways in Novorossiiskoye. He was sent here to secure or dismantle bridges, but even before he arrived, the water had already washed them away. While at the 5th Farm, he met the Wilczkiewiczzes. He told us that the people over there live in extreme misery. In the last two months they have been given only 33 lbs. flour and there is no fuel. The Wilczkiewiczzes and Mrs. Wittmanowa are sick in bed.

Mr. Żurowski died in March in the Aktyubinsk Hospital where he was being treated for frostbite to his feet. His wife and daughter are left alone. Gehenna of the Polish nation!

### Sunday, April 20, 1941

"The inclination of the human heart is evil from youth."  
"As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease" ( Genesis 8:21-22).

This was God's pronouncement after the flood. Both Janka and I read the Bible that was given to Kuba Kostkiewicz and his wife, Zosia, at their wedding by Father Fedorowicz from Brody. His mother left some things with the Szkudłapskis when she was looking for a safe place. She now lives peacefully with her brother Tadeusz in Pogwizdowo, while the Holy Scripture is here with us. Truly, it is Zosia, her only child, and the in-laws who are there because Kuba is a POW somewhere.

Today is Ruthenian Easter [Eastern rite]. What is Hania doing?

### Sunday, April 27, 1941

In the evening I made a trip into the steppe and collected two buckets of *kiziak* which I emptied under our window for drying. Mrs. Tatarenkova called me and I noticed a group of people around a cart. Kazachenko had returned from Sarsai and paid the outstanding two months salary to Kanen, our local teacher. And to my great happiness, Kazachenko also brought Janka and me 50 rubles sent by Mrs. Matuszewska from Żółkiew. I collected the money and went once again to the steppe to gather more *kiziak*. When I returned, I told our young people that I found the money in the steppe. They

believed my story. Tadzio got indignant, "why are you showing money in the presence of Kazakhs, maybe you wish to give it back?" I answered: "Of course, but only if the owner is found." He continued: "And who are you going to inform, the *upravlaiushchii* [chairman]?" Tadzio continued: "You know very well that he will keep the money for himself." Finally, I told them the truth. Now we all rejoice knowing we have money to buy flour. Today I bought 3 oz. butter and half a pint of milk. I am afraid that malnutrition may get me into the same misery as Tadzio and Józef with their night blindness that causes them trouble seeing after dark. The most tragic is that normally they have excellent distance vision. Mrs. Tatarenkova said that the best remedy for night blindness is cooked liver; it cannot be raw or half-cooked. When it is cooked and still hot, one has to cover one's head with a kerchief and inhale the vapors for a while and then eat the liver. The results are immediate. Night blindness must occur frequently among the local population. Mrs. Tatarenkova's brother, her son, and Kazachenko had it when they served in the Red Army.

Yesterday the late Mr. Silberman's younger brother arrived here to find out what happened and collect his things. He left empty-handed because the *solkhos* who had taken everything into his safekeeping was not around and Altespai, the present store salesman, at whose place Silberman spent his last night, was nowhere to be found.

### Thursday, May 1, 1941: *Prazdnik* [Holiday]

Today I received two cards from Mieczek dated April 8 and 14, and from Hania and Filip from April 7. Mieczek has again not received any news from me for a long time. He writes that he reads many books dealing with nature and geography that he borrows from the school library. The beginning of April was so warm that people were walking outside without coats, but on April 8, snow fell again and the Easter Holiday was cold with a wet thaw.

[Hania's letter] from the village tells me that the fields are wet and no work has begun, in addition there is a shortage of people in the village. 150 men and women have been taken forcibly to dig defense trenches on the border. People in Szczepłoty complain and many are sick. They hope to see us coming back home. Filip informs me that many apple and pear trees were destroyed by the deep freeze of the past winter. Hedge rows are still standing, but fences are strewn left and right; the same happened to barn walls, dividers in the granary, and lofts. If only I could return, even to the

worst conditions, but to live on my own and work for myself, it would be better than living in a corner under a strange roof. Here I am so often exposed to the stinging remarks of callous youths to which I try to turn a deaf ear. I am not sure if I can gather myself to go to the steppe looking for *kiziak*. For the past few days we have already started to collect *kiziak* for next winter. "We expect the best but are prepared for the worst," as my late Father had written down as good advice for his "Farmer's Ten Commandments."

Hania wrote that Mr. Jaworski, the mill manager, is in big trouble because thieves broke in through a window and stole the heavy leather transmission belt from the meal grinder. This has always been my worry, as it is impossible now to find a belt of so high a quality.

### **Sunday, May 4, 1941**

We are on our way to the work gang. Skinny oxen barely pull the carts loaded with wheat through deep mud. We stopped for a break and the oxen were unhitched and allowed to graze freely in the steppe. Thank God! I had a very unpleasant incident with a Kazakh driver. When we were some 2 miles from the farm, he ordered Janka to get off his cart and also threw off our bundles. Our bundles were picked up by people from another cart driven by Ablizh. At this time I was still allowed to continue on the cart. However, when the road became worse, he urged me to get off. I tried to explain that I do not have proper shoes to wade through the mud. I even offered him cigarettes so as to be left in place. The Kazakh simply started to push me off and I was barely able to get down. My God, what I have to go through in my old age! From my childhood I was treated with respect. Maybe the Bolsheviks are doing us a great service. Who would, of one's own accord, part with their wealth? They freed us from that ballast; in Christ's words "it is easier to thread a camel through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to reach heaven." If there is no return to Poland, let us hope that the wait to get *there* is not too long.

### **Thursday, May 8, 1941: St. Stanislaus Day**

Here is a short account of the miserable days in the work gang. One May 4, I shuffled along the remaining 5 miles through deep mud. At the work gang quarters we are squeezed into a common worker's room. My bed is in the corner but the place is full of men walking and talking: a horrible stench hangs around.

In response to Janka's begging, the *palivod* [field boss] gave us permission to move to the same hut on wheels in which we lived last year. It's also used as an

office. We feel content to have our own corner with a table and bench. The night was cold and I slept in my undershirt and quilted jacket.

### **[Last] Monday:**

We did first some work in the yard loading seed wheat into sacks. Then we cleaned around the diner and carried hay and tumbleweeds to the kitchen. It started to rain. In the evening Janka was appointed as *zapravchik* [fuel specialist] instead of Józef who, because of his night blindness, is not able to work in the evening. Tadzio works as a *pshichepchik* [helper] on a tractor until late at night. Janka gets very upset when he does not come back at a regular time. She runs around asking people to look for Tadzio who, with his bad eyesight, cannot find his way home in the darkness. This time he got lost and it was only late at night that the tractor driver found him and brought him back home.

### **[Last] Tuesday:**

I was sent out to the field to gather sunflowers together with their stems and roots for fuel. I enjoy being all alone in the steppe in tranquillity all around me and no talking. I arrived late for supper but immediately was sent as a *pshichepchik* on a tractor. I ride on a five-ridge plough with three pulverizing iron harrows. My task is to lift and clean harrows that are too heavy for me. The tractor driver sent me back to the work gang quarters to fetch a shovel for scraping earth off the plough. I told the *palivod* [field boss] that I am not fit to do this kind of work, and although he ordered me back, I went to gather sunflowers. Again in the evening I faced a big fuss. I must work as a *pshichepchik*.

### **Today, May 8, 1941:**

Tadzio and I woke up a bit late and again there is a big fuss — "*liudi rabotaiut a vy spite*" [people are working and you are sleeping]. There was no breakfast for us, and I was threatened with a report to Novorossiiskoye. I do not care any more about this dog's life.

I went to the tractor, but both Tadzio's and mine were undergoing major repairs. I was sent with this report to Kozachenko, gave it to him, and hid myself in my corner of our hut.

Yesterday I received letters from Mieczek and Marysia [Baum] dated March 16 stating that 100 rubles have been sent to me, although it still has not arrived. They are expecting to see me in May. I'm losing all hope! Courses that Janek [Baum] was teaching are finished. He has lost his job. Maybe something will

come up in June. They are worried because there are great expenses to be met.

Everybody seems to find comfort in the hope that spring will bring something better and all the deported people will come back. If they only survive!

For my stomach problems I ate yesterday's patties. I have tea leaves but no water.

#### **Thursday, May 15, 1941: with the seeding work gang**

A very sad day! For the first time in my life nobody remembered my holy patroness's day of St. Zofia. My dear Winia, you have always taken such good care of your sister—a gift of elegant lingerie, boxes of chocolates, cakes, and sumptuous dinner served at a table decorated with flowers. . .

#### **Monday, May 26, 1941**

Finally, I received a letter and card with good wishes from Mieczek, and a very warm note from Marysia Baum in which she confides that both she and Janek have become accustomed to Mieczek so much that it would be very difficult to live without him. When I return I must move in with them!

Besides that, a letter from Hania arrived and a card from Maryna. At the Post Office in Sarsai there are two money orders for 117 rubles waiting for me. Also, Maria has finally found a buyer who is offering 300 rubles for my brooch. So much good news!

I do not wish to share the tragic fate of Mrs. Orłowska who was found after three months in the river. Her body was in a state of total decay and was immediately buried in a ditch without any coffin. I heard that Mrs. Orłowska's daughter, Zdzicha, cried desperately when her mother was found and buried. Now she has accepted her mother's death and her face shows peace.

#### **[Note written in a different hand]**

*Unforgettable grief for the late Zofia Ptaśnik, in exile, July 25, 1941, Siberia.*

*Maria Szkudłapska*

#### **[Also added by Maria Szkudłapska]**

*I dreamed a dream at dawn about the late Zofia Ptaśnik: I saw her holding a loaf of bread for 10 Groschen [Polish coins]. The bread was snow-white, perfectly well baked. I admired the bread and especially its glowing whiteness.*



## **Letters**

### **Polish businessmen**

I would like to correct a misstatement of fact in the interview with Andrzej Wajda published in the April 2003 issue of *Sarmatian Review*. On p. 962, Mr. Wajda says that Ryszard Krauze is the owner of the Optimus company. This is incorrect. Optimus is owned by Ryszard Kluska, while Ryszard Krauze owns the Prokom Software SA in Gdynia.

*Dariusz Skórczewski, Rice University*

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Zofia Ptaśnik was a Polish housewife deported by the Soviets to slave labor in Kazakhstan in 1940. She died of malnutrition and overwork in 1941.

James R. Thompson is Noah Harding Professor of Statistics at Rice University. His twelfth book, *Models for Investors in Real World Markets*, was published by John Wiley in 2003.

## Thank You Note

to those who donated to the *Sarmatian Review* Publication Fund: Mr. Jim Burns; Mr. Stefan J. Ginilewicz; Professor Richard J. Hunter; Ms. Jadwiga J. Henderson; Mrs. Janina Kowalczyk and Mr. Ryszard Kowalczyk; Mr. Leonard M. Krazynski, outgoing Polish Honorary Consul in Houston, and Mrs. Diane Krazynski; Mr. Chester Kurk and Mrs. Krystyna Kurk; Drs. Martin and Aleksandra Lawera; Ms. Aurellia Sobczyk; Mr. Stanley J. Wlodarczyk and Mrs. Stella Wlodarczyk; Dr. Zbigniew Wojciechowski, incoming Polish Honorary Consul in Houston, and Mrs. Grażyna Wojciechowski; Mr. William J. Zoltowicz and Mrs. Karen R. Zoltowicz.

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## Announcements and Notes

### Join PAHA

Polish American Historical Association (PAHA) seeks new members. Membership in associations such as PAHA is essential to keep the Polish American discourse going. To ask for membership forms, write to Dr. Karen Majewski, PAHA, St. Mary's College, Orchard Lake, MI 48324.

### Kosciusko, Mississippi

will celebrate the Revolutionary War Patriot Thaddeus Kosciuszko on October 13, 2003. On that day 220 years ago, American citizenship was conferred on General Thaddeus Kosciuszko. Citizens of Kosciusko, MS (pop. 7,500) seek donations to cover \$64,500 in design and sculptor fees for a monument to Kosciuszko. Their address: Kosciuszko Attala Community Foundation, 124 North Jackson Street, Kosciusko, MS 39090 (tel. 662-289-2981). Regardless of whether you send a donation or not, a trip to Kosciusko on October 13 is worth considering.

### Slavic minorities in Germany

The Sorbian minority in former East Germany has a new website in five languages including English and Polish: <<http://www.sorben.com/ski/>>.

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