

THE SARMATIAN REVIEW

Vol. XXXV, No. 2

April 2015

Zbigniew Romaszewski: RIP



Zbigniew Romaszewski (1940–2014) at home in Warsaw. Courtesy of Trzecia Strona Publishers
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The Sarmatian Review (ISSN 1059-5872) is a triannual publication of the Polish Institute of Houston. The journal deals with Polish, Central, and Eastern European affairs, and it explores their implications for the United States. We specialize in the translation of documents. *Sarmatian Review* is indexed in the American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies, EBSCO, and P.A.I.S. International Database. From January 1998 on, files in PDF format are available at the Central and Eastern European Online Library (www.ceeol.com). Subscription price is \$21.00 per year for individuals, \$28.00 for institutions and libraries (\$28.00 for individuals, \$35.00 for libraries overseas, air mail). The views expressed by authors of articles do not necessarily represent those of the Editors or of the Polish Institute of Houston. Articles are subject to editing. Unsolicited manuscripts and other materials are not returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed and stamped envelope. Please submit your contribution electronically and, if requested, send a printout by air mail. Submissions and Letters to the Editor can be emailed to sarmatia@rice.edu, with an accompanying mailing return address. Subscription checks should be mailed to *The Sarmatian Review*, P. O. Box 79119, Houston, Texas 77279-9119. *The Sarmatian Review* retains the copyright for all materials included in print and online issues. Copies for personal or educational use are permitted by section 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law. Permission to redistribute, republish, or use SR materials in advertising or promotion must be submitted in writing to the Editor.

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Web Address: www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia

Alternate Web Address: Central and East European Online Library ceeol.com under Periodicals United States *Sarmatian Review*

Archival Web Address: <http://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/21840>

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Sarmatian Review Data

Quote of the year

“If Crimea is Russian, then Russia itself is Mongolian . . . and should return most of its territory to Mongolia and Kazakhstan.”

Source: Belarus president Aleksandr Lukashenko, as quoted by *Belarus Digest*, 15 October 2014
<<http://belarusdigest.com/video/lukashenka-if-crimea-russian-then-russia-itself-mongolian-belarus-video-digest-19774>>, accessed 18 December 2014.

The value of the Russian stock market vs. the value of Google, Exxon, Microsoft, and Apple

Monetary value of the entire Russian stock market (including, among others, Gazprom, Rosneft, and Sberbank) in mid-December 2014: 325,038 billion dollars.

Monetary value of Google in the same period of time: 336,092 billion dollars.

Monetary value of Exxon, Microsoft, and Apple in the same period of time: each of these had a higher monetary value than the entire Russian stock market.

Source: *Die Welt*, 17 December 2014.

Oil and gas sales as Russian sources of revenue

Percentage of total Russian export revenues that came from oil and natural gas in 2013 (the most recent year for which statistics are available): 68 percent.

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration posted 14 July 2014,
<http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=17231>, accessed 25 January 2015.

February 2015 data on Russia

Percentage of foreign gas imports that comes to EU from Russia: 30 percent.

Inflation in Russia in 2014: 11.4 percent, according to Russian Central Bank.

Annual consumer price growth on 26 January 2015: 13.1 percent.

Value of ruble at the end of January 2015: 69.95 rubles to the dollar.

Forecast by Economic Development Minister Alexei Uliukaev of GDP contraction in 2015: 3 percent, if inflation does not exceed 12 percent.

Estimated capital flight in 2015: 115 billion dollars.

Source: Kenneth Raposa, “Russia’s Central Bank Makes ‘Risky Move’ as Economy Suffers From Ukraine Crisis,” *Forbes*, 31 January 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenraposa/2015/01/31/russias-central-bank-makes-risky-move-as-economy-suffers-from-ukraine-crisis>, accessed 1 February 2015.

Wealth and poverty in Poland

Number of persons in Poland in 2014 who could be described as either well to do or rich: ca. 878,000.

Monthly income deemed sufficient to assign people to this category: 7,100 zloties or ca. 2,000 dollars (January 2015 exchange rate).

Poland’s place among other EU countries based on household wealth: 23 out of 28.

Average household wealth in Poland vs. EU average: 23,200 dollars vs. 153,600 dollars (note: wealth includes state pensions and real estate).

Source: Portal <wgospodarce.pl>, 11 January 2015 (<http://wgospodarce.pl/informacje/18031-enklawa-dostatku-w-polsce-jest-878-tys-osob-zamoznych-i-bogatych-w-ciagu-roku-przybedzie-ich-ok-60-tys>).

Wealth comparison between Poland and Germany

Private wealth in Germany consisting of cash, bonds and shares, bank deposits, and insurance policies: 9.3 trillion euros.

Private wealth of one hundred richest Poles: 25 billion euros.

Private wealth of the remainder of the Polish population: no figures given, but according to Credit Suisse in 2013 an average Polish household was four times poorer than an average Greek household.

Source: Editorial “Niemcy bogaci jak nigdy dotąd,” <wpolityce.pl>, 2 February 2015, accessed on the same day; Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, www.diw.de/english, accessed 18 February 2015.

Capital transfer from Poland

Amount of money firms transferred out of Poland in 2014: 15 billion euros.

Capital transfer from Poland by foreign firms in the past: in 2013, 17 billion euros; in 2012, 15 billion euros.

The sum transferred from Poland since 2004: ca. 120 billion euros.

Source: Portal Forsal.pl <http://forsal.pl/artykuly/853464.transfer-kapitalu-z-polski-za-granice-zmalal-po-raz-pierwszy-od-2008-roku.html>, accessed 21 February 2015.

The state of bureaucracy in the Civic Platform government

Number of government officials and the sum total of their salaries in Civic Platform Poland in 2013: 1,927,230 and 92,897.82 million zloties, or ca. 29 billion dollars.

Source: Portal Demokracja bezpośrednia, http://db.org.pl/INCLUDE_BLOG/upload/124ec21fab5930dce5e393683dfe414.png, accessed 29 January 2015.

Increase in paper use while digitalizing

Percentage increase in 2013 in the use of paper in the Polish Ministry of Administration and Digitalization under the Civic Platform government: 90 percent.

Source: portal <forsal.pl> as reported by <wpolityce.pl> <http://wpolityce.pl/polityka/223012-informatyzacja-za-rzadow-po-psl-zuzycie-papieru-wzroslo-o-90-procent> accessed 29 January 2015.

The war in Ukraine and change in religious allegiance

Percentage of Ukrainians who consider themselves Eastern Orthodox, according to May 2014 opinion poll by Razumkov Center: 70 percent.

Percentage increase in membership of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate during the war year: from 26 percent to 32 percent of all Orthodox faithful.

Percentage decrease in membership of the Ukrainian Orthodox-Moscow Patriarchate during the war year: from 28 percent to 25 percent.

Source: Maksym Bugriy, "The War and the Orthodox Churches in Ukraine," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (The Jamestown Foundation), vol. 12, no. 30 (18 February 2015).

Decline in Russian gas exports to Europe

Percentage drop in 2014 in Russian exports of natural gas through the Nord Stream pipeline which runs from Russia to Germany across the Baltic, as compared to 2013: from 98 million cubic meters to 45 million cubic meters, or over 50 percent.

Percentage drop in total Russian gas exports to Europe between 2013 and 2014: 9 percent, the fourth consecutive year of a decline.

Percentage of export revenues Russia derives from natural gas shipments: 12 percent.

Expected fall in gas prices in 2014: 35 percent, a loss of at least six billion dollars for the Russian government.

Source: Nick Cunningham, "The EU may finally be breaking free of Russia's energy grip," *Business Insider*, 23 February 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-eu-may-finally-be-breaking-free-of-russias-energy-grip-2015-2>, accessed on the same day.

Decline in value of big Russian firms in 2014

Total loss in value of one hundred largest Russian publicly traded firms in 2014: 47 percent, down to 431 billion dollars.

Gazprom's losses: -45 percent, to 55.33 billion dollars.

Rosneft's losses: -54.5 percent, to 36.8 billion dollars.

Lukoil's losses: -36.3 percent, to 33.5 billion dollars.

Aeroflot's losses: -78 percent.

Firms that gained in value: Oleg Deripaska's aluminum firm Rusal (131 percent gain) and diamond mining company Alros (2.8 percent gain).

Source: RIA Rating Agency, as reported by *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 February 2015, <http://www4.rp.pl/artykul/1181132-Coraz-mniej-wartosci.html>, accessed on the same day.

Polish high school students declared among the best in computer literacy by International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS)

Ranking of Polish high school students in computer literacy in November 2013 (results announced in November 2014): they received 537 points, as compared to students from the Czech Republic (553 points), Canada (547 points), Australia and Denmark (each received 542 points), Norway (537 points), and South Korea (536 points).

Data about competitors: 60,000 students from 3,300 schools in 21 countries participated. Poland was represented by 2,870 students from 157 schools.

Source: Portal <wpolityce.pl>, <http://wpolityce.pl/lifestyle/222807-polscy-gimnazjalisci-gora-naleza-doswiatowej-czolowki-pod-wzgledem-kompetencji-komputerowych>, accessed 5 February 2015.

Zbigniew Romaszewski (1940-2014)

A Life in Human Rights

Eric Chenoweth

I first came to know about Zbigniew Romaszewski while working for the Committee in Support of Solidarity, based in New York. The Committee was established by Polish opposition veterans Irena Lasota, Jakub Karpinski and several others who were in the United States, either as exiles or by circumstance, on December 13, 1981. In the early morning hours of that day General Wojciech Jaruzelski imposed a martial law regime on Poland. In fact, Jaruzelski invoked the constitution's provision for *stan wojenny*, a state of war, a provision intended to rebuff external invasion. At the time, however, the provision was employed to destroy the threat to communist rule posed by Solidarność (or Solidarity), which had arisen in August 1980 to unite Polish society in an independent trade union and social movement. Not having any clear constitutional justification, Jaruzelski effectively declared war on the Polish people, unleashing tanks, soldiers, truncheon-wielding riot police, water cannons, and all other weapons in the police state's arsenal to destroy Solidarity. Unlike Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, where the Soviet Union had to invade to brutally quell rebellions, in Poland Jaruzelski acted as a Soviet satrap, using Poland's own military and police forces to reimpose firm communist rule.

The Committee in Support of Solidarity was created the next day and I, a young American-born trade union activist and lone non-Pole, became the director. One key part of the Committee's mission was to chronicle the vast human rights violations being perpetrated by the government of Poland: tens of thousands rounded up in internment camps, tanks rolling over resisting workers (we documented more than 100 killed), soldiers occupying factories, police closing universities, students taken to

prison, protestors mowed down by water cannon and beaten by riot police. A long black night had fallen on Poland after sixteen months of unheard-of freedom in a communist country, freedom brought about by a unique movement allying workers, students, intellectuals, farmers, and artists. It was a movement born from years of human rights work by, among others, Zbigniew Romaszewski and his wife and partner, Zofia.

In August 1980 in Poland, millions of workers joined together in the largest and most consequential national strike in the annals of international trade unionism.

The Committee's other job was to shine light not just on the regime's repression but also on Solidarity's organized resistance to martial law. The Romaszewskis were among hundreds of activists and leaders who had escaped arrest and were busy putting into place the plans the Solidarity movement had made for such a circumstance. Workers and others were actively resisting martial law through strikes, demonstrations, wearing outward manifestations of support for Solidarity such as pins—an act subject to three years' imprisonment, recreating underground union structures at all levels, distributing clandestine publications, and organizing other acts of opposition to the regime. Zbigniew Romaszewski was an initial member of the Regional Coordinating Commission of the Mazowsze (greater Warsaw) region, one of the temporary underground structures of Solidarity organized according to its territorial structure.

Zbigniew and Zofia Romaszewski were also behind one of the more daring acts of early opposition to martial law, Radio Solidarność, a series of renegade broadcasts that used temporary transmitters set up on rooftops to override the main state broadcasts with fifteen to thirty-minute programs that included announcements by national and regional Solidarity leaders in hiding, information about worker resistance and the fate of those arrested and detained in internment camps, and other

independent news in a period when state propaganda was trying to convince the Polish nation that it had been utterly defeated and that it was hopeless to resist. Radio Solidarność, broadcast in every major region of Poland, offered tangible proof of the lie that martial law had destroyed the workers' movement. Indeed, the broadcasts helped to organize important national protests (such as lighting candles in windows at a specified time on the thirteenth of each month, Italian strikes and work slowdowns, and other actions that helped reinforce for Poles the social bonds they had recreated through years of political opposition had survived. The Committee in Support of Solidarity's busy documenters, translators, and editors who published reports of all the dramatic events taking place in Poland discovered that even more than demonstrations and clandestine union structures, Radio Solidarność was one of the more important proofs for American politicians and opinion leaders that the union movement was not destroyed.

Aside from the technical challenge of acquiring transmitter equipment and recording the programs, the broadcasts required semiguerrilla tactics, with close calculations for the activists who set up the transmitters on rooftops in order to escape the immediate police dragnet deployed to find and disarm them. Unfortunately, the police grew increasingly adept not only in catching the activists who set up the transmitters but also in closing in on the organizers. Zofia Romaszewski and several activists were arrested in early July 1982, and Zbigniew Romaszewski later that month. They were charged with "continuing union activities after December 13, 1981, and disseminating false information through the broadcast of Radio Solidarność about the political situation in Poland that could incite unrest and riot." At the conclusion of their famous trial held in February 1983, Zofia received a sentence of three years' imprisonment and Zbigniew a term of four and a half years, while eight other defendants received sentences of one to three years. Despite this setback, Radio Solidarność continued to broadcast, although with less frequency, and an even-more audacious TV Solidarność was launched. The Committee in Support of Solidarity reported all

of the trial proceedings. What struck me most at the time were the statements of the two main defendants and their colleagues. They all displayed an easy defiance and assurance. They were not backing down in the face of impending imprisonment. In his speech, Zbigniew Romaszewski told the court of the moral bankruptcy of communism, asserted that the judges lacked legitimacy, and promised further resistance by a society "that had taken a step forward in August 1980 and [was] not stepping back." The Radio Solidarność trial added to the Romaszewskis' growing legend.

Today, we view everything as inevitable: Solidarity, 1989, the fall of the Soviet Union. In August 1980, nothing was inevitable. Each worker acted without knowing what the consequences would be.

After a life engaged in struggles for human and worker rights, including twenty-two years as the longest-serving elected senator in Polish history, Zbigniew Romaszewski died unexpectedly of a stroke in February 2014 at the age of seventy-four. His life spanned the twin totalitarian occupations of Poland of the twentieth century and Poland's reemergence as an independent, democratic country after 1989. He and his wife Zofia, who survives him, did much to make that happen and their efforts are worth recounting as a major contribution to anticommunist opposition and democratic activism.

Both were born in 1940 and survived the Nazi occupation: Zbigniew in a concentration camp where his father was killed; Zofia in hiding as her parents, one Jewish, participated in the Home Army resistance. They grew up during the dark postwar Stalinist era in which Polish communists, backed by their Soviet overlords, entrenched totalitarian rule in the newly created Polish People's Republic. At the time, communism appeared unchangeable and, as recounted by Czesław Miłosz in *The Captive Mind*, most intellectuals succumbed to its dictates. Zbigniew and Zofia never did. They both grew up with a deep understanding of

human rights and of the heritage of Polish freedom, learned in the privacy of their homes from families who had lived in independent Poland between the world wars and who had survived the terrible conflagration of World War II.

In the mid-1960s they both chose to study physics at Warsaw University—science was one way to escape and transcend political ideology. There they fell in love and formed a lifelong partnership to advance human rights and freedom—a love story and partnership that mirrors those of Andrei Sakharov and Yelena Bonner in the Soviet Union, and Vaclav and Olga Havel in Czechoslovakia.

By the summer of 1976 they had already been active for several years in Poland's opposition movement, taking part in the 1968 student protests, signing letters and the petition to change the constitution of the Polish People's Republic, forming opposition study circles and publishing samizdat. It was in 1976, however, that they began to make a distinctive mark by organizing support for workers brutally repressed for spontaneous strikes in Radom and Ursus. The Romaszewskis traveled forty-three times to Radom that summer to get legal assistance for arrested workers, monitor the court proceedings of those charged, and raise material aid for the repressed workers and their families. Zofia described the thinking behind their actions in an interview for the Bush Center's "Freedom Collection:"

These were mostly people who never had any runs with the courts, with any criminal past, they knew nothing about these things, and they were completely helpless in the face of the machinery of coercion in Poland. So, they did not know such things, as what is a defense attorney, where you get one, how do you apply for a food parcel, for mail [privileges of prisoners to send and receive mail], for a jailhouse visit—they were entirely helpless in this whole context. . . .

You know, any movement can become organized and be effective when it has some form of protection. What I mean is, when people are able to organize in such a way, where there is a component of empathetic solidarity, protection, and where people know that it is one for all and all for one—

that you yourself would go to prison for another—that is very important.

The June strikes and repressive aftermath sparked the creation of a unique group, the Workers Defense Committee or KOR, that would help end the pattern of failed worker rebellions in communist Poland and other communist bloc countries by helping to bring together intellectuals and workers in united opposition to communist rule. Initially composed of thirteen veteran opposition intellectuals, KOR openly set out to overcome the regime's (up to then successful) ruling strategy of atomizing society and keeping different groups not only apart but at odds. It was this strategy that had set workers against students and intellectuals during the 1968 student protests and that had kept intellectuals and students from joining workers in the 1970 strikes on the Baltic coast that were brutally suppressed by police. KOR, which grew to thirty-three members including the Romaszewskis, became a key instrument for building the future Solidarity movement.

During the heady events of 1989 to 1991, what was clear was that the fall of communism was the result of millions of people rising up to determine their fates.

Some in KOR were elder statesmen of Polish opposition whose role was to craft and endorse proclamations, denounce the government for violating the Helsinki Accords, or develop manifestos and resistance strategy. Others organized underground publishing houses that aimed at putting out banned literary and scholarly books. Others, like the Romaszewskis and Jacek Kuron, joined by his wife, Danuta, to name a few, undertook the organizing and active defense of workers who were fed up with government-imposed price increases and wage controls, the tyranny of enterprise directors, and the social and workplace manipulation engineered by communist-controlled trade unions.

The experiences in Radom led the Romaszewskis to create the Intervention Bureau

of KOR, a not legal but more formal means for defending citizens' rights. In taking on this large task, the Romaszewskis and others built a broad network of helpers who educated workers in international labor rights, documented human rights violations, found lawyers to defend workers arrested or fired from their jobs, traveled around the country to monitor judicial proceedings and bring assistance to families of imprisoned workers, advised families on how to ensure that prison authorities honored the rules for family visits, and generally made sure that workers knew they were not alone in their struggle against the communist Leviathan. Based on the Intervention Bureau's documentation, Zbigniew and Zofia launched the Polish Helsinki Commission, which produced a famous comprehensive report to the 1980 Madrid Review Conference of the Helsinki Final Act.

The work of the Romaszewskis, KOR, and other colleagues was history in the making. Their efforts helped convince more and more people that they were not alone and that they possibly had power by joining together. This sense was made even more palpable by John Paul II, the first Polish Pope, who during his inaugural trip to Poland in 1979 told the millions of people who gathered to hear him "to live in truth" and "not to fear." The true impact was seen soon thereafter, in August 1980 when millions of workers joined together in the largest and most consequential national strike in the annals of international trade unionism. As the nationwide strikes grew in strength and gained international support, the Polish authorities were forced to sign the Gdańsk Accords, whose first provision recognized the right of workers to create and join independent trade unions of their own choosing—a fundamental admission that the communist government did not represent the working class.

Suddenly, all of Polish society had achieved a fundamental understanding of social solidarity and willingly took on the power of the communist state. Today we view everything as inevitable: Solidarity, 1989, the fall of the Soviet Union. In August 1980 nothing was inevitable. Each worker acted without knowing what the consequences would be. From previous

experience, they knew the possible risks: prison, dismissal from work, police harassment, retribution against family members, or, worse, targeted violence or "liquidation." Polish workers stood up to demand basic rights and freedoms knowing the real possibility of the ultimate retribution: a Soviet invasion. They did so because they had taken what Romaszewski called "that major first step towards freedom"—the belief that it "was one for all, and all for one."

In the end, Polish society used the 1989 elections to register an overwhelming referendum against communism, electing Solidarity candidates by 90 percent of votes in all but one of the contested elections and refusing to vote for most communist party candidates.

During the first period of Solidarity's legal or aboveground existence (August 1980 to December 1981), most of the intellectuals in KOR were key advisors helping to devise strategy. Zbigniew Romaszewski had earned enough of the workers' trust to be elected to the union's National Commission and its acting body, the presidium. The Romaszewskis also organized Solidarity's "Intervention and Lawfulness Commission," a way of institutionalizing their human rights protection mechanism within the trade union. The sixteen-month period of Solidarity's first legal existence was often called "the carnival." The term reflected the Poles' joyfulness about their newfound ability to express themselves and organize in a relatively free atmosphere. In fact, however, this period was fraught with constant tension. The communist hierarchy, still fully in control of the state, tried at all points to protect as much of its power as possible and constantly tested Solidarity's and Polish society's mettle through police attacks, harassment, dismissals, targeted enterprise closures, engineered food shortages, and military and police maneuvers.

The Romaszewskis documented everything and organized a defense system for all acts of repression—legal help, a public spotlight,

financial aid, material assistance—all while building a network that could survive a major crackdown. Behind all of the Romaszewskis' efforts was an understanding that opposing dictatorship was not an abstract idea: everything taking place in Poland involved real people, whose lives were often harmed by the risks they took to speak up and act on their beliefs. Every day they encountered the true impact that the communist system, in all of its repressive and bureaucratic apparatus, had on ordinary people. They made sure that Solidarity lived up to its name as a moral creed and never forgot those who took risks and suffered the consequences.

The transitions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have turned out to be much less than what human rights activists and leaders hoped for. The revolutionary chorus of “one for all, all for one” changed to a cackle of political ambitions and self-interest, not the least of which were the functionaries from the old regime protecting themselves and their associates.

Internally, within the leadership of the union, indeed within all of Polish society, there was a constant debate over how far to go and what would provoke the authorities beyond a breaking point that would result in a crackdown or Soviet invasion. The historical evidence shows that the regime began preparing a crackdown even as it signed the Gdańsk Accords in August 1980 and that General Jaruzelski carefully directed the plans as they evolved. The Soviet leadership was regularly informed of these plans, and Soviet threats to invade were meant to prod Jaruzelski to take action earlier. In the end, the crackdown engineered by Jaruzelski was thorough and complete, but ultimately, as Romaszewski predicted, it failed to break Solidarity and the Polish people's resistance. Most Poles had indeed taken “the first major step toward freedom.” As the Romaszewskis proved after martial law, with enough preparation to resist a crackdown, Polish society would not take a step back.

The authorities released Zofia and Zbigniew Romaszewski early, about a year apart in 1984 and 1985, as part of “amnesties”—an annual ritual in which the authorities would release some political prisoners in order to get relief from sanctions imposed by the United States and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe. The Romaszewskis were in no way broken; indeed, they remained resolute. But like other released political prisoners, they found themselves in an odd situation. They were no longer in prison, but they could not go back into hiding or reenter clandestine Solidarity structures—this would be too dangerous for their still-underground colleagues. They now had to figure out how to continue organizing resistance for Solidarity.

Upon their release, the Romaszewskis did what came naturally. They recreated the Intervention and Lawfulness Commission in 1985 so as to organize protection and material assistance for repressed Solidarity members and their families. The structure was neither legal nor underground, and its activities were both public and clandestine. Despite the informal nature of the structure, the Romaszewskis retained their initial authority to act from Solidarity's legal existence. This authority was reinforced by statements by Solidarity's underground structures and the union's chairman, Lech Wałęsa, who was also outside prison. Despite the formal lifting of martial law and the supposed general nature of the amnesties, the scale was now even greater, involving thousands of repressed workers who were still frequently detained, sentenced by administration to large fines, sentenced to imprisonment by penal courts, constantly under police surveillance, dismissed from work and unemployable, their children harassed and prevented from studying at university, and otherwise repressed by the regime.

Surprisingly, the Polish authorities allowed Zofia to travel to the United States as part of the effort to show “liberalization” in exchange for sanctions relief. It was then that the Committee in Support of Solidarity's president, Irena Lasota, herself a prison veteran from the 1968 student protests, met Zofia for the first time. The two women were of a similar age and had similar orientations: they were people of both action and compassion, with common strategies

for opposing communism through peaceful means and with similar understandings of the necessity for helping people who suffered the consequences of standing up for human rights. Lasota and the Committee had raised money for underground Solidarity and directed some of this money to support the Romaszewskis' network, first in the broadcasting of Radio Solidarność but also for human rights documentation and social assistance.

What was needed now, Zofia argued, was social protection on a vast scale. Tens of thousands of workers had been dismissed from their jobs for union activities. Hundreds were still in prison. They and their families needed assistance, which the underground Solidarity structures had difficulty organizing. Without such assistance there was a danger that the extended period of repression by the communist state would again break the social bonds of solidarity that had been so important to the union's existence. The Romaszewskis argued that the recreated Intervention Bureau could act more effectively while operating semiopenly since they and their network of human rights workers were now able to travel within Poland with relative ease, no longer fearing being caught and, given the delicate diplomatic dance of the Polish authorities with Western governments, unlikely to be arrested again. The Committee raised a substantial amount of money in the next several years for this purpose. Other organizations, like Joan Baez's Aurora Foundation, also provided grants totaling more than \$100,000 over three years. Irena Lasota organized channels for the delivery of this assistance and the Romaszewskis developed means for receiving and distributing the assistance with none of it being seized.

Rebuilding these networks of social solidarity helped bolster worker resistance. When workers in Nowa Huta, Silesia, and the Baltic Coast again organized well-targeted strikes in summer 1988, demanding the legal reinstatement of Solidarity, the Polish authorities, fearing that the strikes would again spread nationwide, agreed to new negotiations that resulted in the Roundtable Accords six months later. Not only did the government agree to Solidarity's legal reinstatement, it agreed to semifree elections in

June 1989. From the evidence, it appears that the Polish authorities believed they could neuter Solidarity by forcing the movement in a subordinate position in parliament. In the end, Polish society used the elections to register an overwhelming referendum against communism, electing Solidarity candidates by 90 percent votes in all but one of the contested elections and refusing to vote for most communist party candidates, denying many a quorum to be elected (required by the regime's own electoral law) and thereby denying the regime legitimacy to rule. Ultimately, as satellite parties defected, the communist government was too weakened to survive. The first noncommunist government was formed in September 1989. The "springtime of nations" revolt by Eastern European countries soon followed.

Before 1989, nearly everyone thought that getting rid of communism and bringing democracy to Eastern Europe was impossible. Afterwards, the same "experts" who had thought such a change impossible declared it "inevitable": communism fell because the system failed.

In the June elections Zbigniew Romaszewski ran as a candidate in a working-class district of Warsaw for a seat in the Senate, a newly created upper chamber of parliament that initially had limited powers with 100 contested seats. With his wife running the campaign, Romaszewski won one of the largest percentages of any Solidarity candidate. In the years that followed, he won re-election six times, serving a total of twenty-two years, the longest-serving member of parliament after June 1989.

During the spring of 1988 the Romaszewskis launched another, perhaps even more significant initiative. They had long built networks not just in Poland but throughout Eastern Europe, understanding the struggle in Poland to be part of a broader struggle against Soviet-imposed communist regimes throughout the region. Although there were still constant acts of harassment and arrests of activists in their network, by this time they had been acting for

several years without arrest or serious retribution. They believed it was now possible to be even more bold: to hold an international conference involving human rights activists from throughout the communist bloc countries as well as others, with the aim of fostering a regionwide human rights movement. They invited hundreds of people from throughout the Soviet bloc, Western Europe, and the United States to come to Nowa Huta, a communist-created city built around a steelworks outside Kraków, to discuss how to bring about fundamental change with respect to human rights in the region. While there had been cross-border meetings of KOR and Charter 77 of Czechoslovakia, among others, this was the first time that anyone had attempted to organize an open forum for human rights activists from communist countries.

The Romaszewskis got approval from local Catholic Church officials to hold the conference in a newly built church in Nowa Huta created at the behest of and dedicated to John Paul II, who had been bishop and cardinal of the Kraków diocese and had long sought to build a church in what the communists originally conceived as a centerpiece to the atheist regime. (The director Andrzej Wajda depicts the creation and socialist culture of Nowa Huta in the film “Man of Marble.”) The Romaszewskis believed that the Polish authorities would not directly intervene to prevent the conference from being held in this church building, called Mistrzejewice; despite the presence of battalions of black-coated secret policemen outside, they were correct. In the end, several hundred activists walked right past the battalions to attend the conference. They represented the by-now significant democratic opposition movements in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Baltic states; human rights activists from Russia, Romania, and Bulgaria; and an array of representatives from other repressed nations and ethnic groups within the Soviet Union. The general secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, John Vandervecken, and a representative of the AFL-CIO, teacher and union leader Albert Shanker, attended along with human rights activists from Western Europe and the United States. As the conference

got under way, the first strikes in Silesia began. Vandervecken left immediately after his speech to join the miners. It is hard to know the direct impact the first International Human Rights Conference in Nowa Huta had in spurring events in Eastern Europe, nor the direct impact of the second conference the Romaszewskis organized in Leningrad in 1990 in spurring the downfall of the Soviet Union. Certainly many of the participants went on to become parliamentarians, civil society leaders, and even prime ministers and presidents of newly free countries. What we do know, however, is that this may have been the first time that many human rights and democracy activists, all with a similar purpose, had had an opportunity to meet, talk, craft strategy, and declare for their countries a common future dedicated to the respect of human and worker rights.

The outmigration of more than 5 percent of the total population—nearly a quarter of Poles aged eighteen to forty—is a unique phenomenon in a developed democratic country and likely to create enormous burdens on future governments.

Before 1989 nearly everyone thought that getting rid of communism and bringing democracy to Eastern Europe was impossible. Afterward the same “experts” who had thought such a change impossible declared it “inevitable”: communism fell because the system failed. During the heady events of 1989 to 1991, however, what was clear was that the fall of communism was the result of millions of people rising up to determine their fates. They chose to bring about an end to communist dictatorship and to craft a democratic future, oriented to Europe and the West, for their countries. Those who organized internal opposition to communist regimes knew that any change, any transformation, depended on individuals standing up to and resisting the state’s power and challenging communist ideology. Without anyone to challenge the system, it could have continued much longer. There were many heroes who stood up and resisted. Some are well known internationally,

like Andrei Sakharov and Vaclav Havel; others, like Zbigniew and Zofia Romaszewski, are known in their own countries and even regionally, but not more widely. Then there are those who are wholly unknown but, as the Romaszewskis could attest, whose actions were the basis of the remarkable change and transformation that took place. These were the ordinary workers and members of society who finally decided to stand up and be counted, to create a new nation based on social solidarity, joining in the chorus “one for all and all for one.”

While many Eastern European countries are now in the EU and NATO, and tied to the West, nevertheless the transitions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have turned out to be much less than what human rights activists and leaders had hoped for. The revolutionary chorus of “one for all, all for one” changed to a cackle of political ambitions and self-interest, especially regarding the functionaries from the old regime protecting themselves and their associates. In the former Soviet Union, most countries simply switched from communist dictatorship to authoritarian rule by KGB veterans—Putinism and its variations, rule protected by a new oligarchic elite of former communists that controlled most of the economic assets. In Eastern European countries there was more development of basic democratic institutions, but in fact a great deal of political life has been stunted and warped by the continuing influence of former communist elites in public and economic life.

Twenty-five years after World War II most Western European countries were well developed democracies with stable politics and economies. Twenty-five years after 1989, Eastern European countries are facing different degrees of political turmoil and economic distress. No country, not even the most successful Baltic States, has stable political parties that reflect basic historical and social interests in the manner of the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, or even post-Nazi West Germany in 1970, twenty-five years after the cataclysmic World War II. Today, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania all face serious economic and

social crises, with political establishments unable to present satisfactory solutions to the electorate. In Poland, which supposedly has the strongest economy of all post-Soviet bloc countries, 2 million mostly young people have left their homeland in the last ten years, most never to return. The outmigration of more than 5 percent of the total population—nearly a quarter of Poles aged eighteen to forty—is a unique phenomenon in a developed democratic country and likely to create enormous burdens on future governments.

Many revolutionaries from 1989–91 were either incapable of confronting the new challenges of democratic politics or, worse, were seduced by power and money and simply forsook their principles and the people they once led. There were a few, however, who never stopped trying to fulfill the hopes of 1989. As a senator, Zbigniew Romaszewski was among those few. He set about trying to institutionalize human rights into legislation, called for accountability for the human rights violations of the communist regime, and challenged the new economic orthodoxy of free markets, which seemed to benefit mostly old communist officials. Many Solidarity leaders cashed in on the new free market in Poland and some became antiunion zealots, but Romaszewski stayed true to his roots, defending workers against forced closings, massive unemployment, and lack of social services. He sponsored legislation to support Solidarity activists who had permanently lost jobs and ended up in dire poverty as a result of their courage under communism.

Romaszewski also stayed true to his internationalism and his belief in the universal struggle for human rights and dignity. He remained a champion for freedom throughout the former Soviet bloc and worldwide. In 1998 he and Zofia organized a third International Human Rights Conference, this time hosted in the Polish Sejm, or parliament, building to highlight the unfinished business of human rights implementation in postcommunist and still-communist countries including the People’s Republics of China and Korea and the last unchanged Soviet satellite country, Cuba. Among many other actions, he led international efforts to defend helpless Chechens from

Russian invasion, including organizing a special Senate investigative commission on Chechnya that took him to the war-torn region; advocated for Crimean Tatars who were fighting Russian chauvinism in their homeland in Ukraine after returning from Soviet exile after forty-five years; carried out human rights investigations of crimes in former Yugoslavia; stood up to the new authoritarian regimes in the Caucasus and Central Asia; joined with his human rights brethren in Russia against the rise of Putinism and Putin's reassertion of Russian domination of the former Soviet empire; sponsored and supported the creation of Belsat to offer Belarusians independent news under the dictatorship of Aleksander Lukashenka; and traveled with Zofia to Cuba in 2006 to share with dissidents the experience of Solidarity. In retirement from the Senate, he and Zofia undertook new human rights campaigns, among them helping the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe, the successor organization to the Committee in Support of Solidarity, to monitor elections in Georgia in 2012 that led to the first peaceful and democratic transfer of power in that country. A month before his death, he traveled to Ukraine to register his personal support for the civic Euromaidan movement.

I first came to know the Romaszewskis by editing accounts of Radio Solidarność and informing the American public of their daring resistance to martial law. After their arrest, I reported on Zbigniew Romaszewski's calm and certain declaration of future victory in court—even as he, Zofia, and his colleagues faced several years' imprisonment. Despite not sharing a common language—I never learned Polish well enough to converse—I came to know both Zosia and Zbyszek closely after their release from prison. After Zofia's trip to the United States I raised funds from trade unions, human rights groups, individuals, and the NED to support their campaigns of social solidarity and lawfulness. I also assisted their organization of the Nowa Huta and Leningrad International Human Rights Conferences and several of their post-1989 efforts, including the third conference in Warsaw to keep the spirit of Solidarity and human and worker rights alive in the region. Throughout, I knew I was in the presence of true

makers of history. The Romaszewskis' contributions to the struggle for Poland's and Eastern Europe's freedom are immense, but what struck me most about both of them was how their sympathy for and commitment to others mirrored their personal devotion to and love for each other. It is rare to know individuals whose private and public actions are a consistent reflection of principled values and human morals. The Romaszewskis were such individuals.

In 2014 Zofia Romaszewska lost her partner of more than forty-five years; their daughter Agnieszka, who continued in her parents' footsteps and currently directs Belsat, has lost a devoted father and teacher. Poland has lost a great hero. I, along with many others in dozens of countries, have lost a true friend, someone whose values and commitment helped guide us for thirty years. Zbigniew Romaszewski never viewed any issue as complicated and was never tied up by any ideology. He always stood on the right side, the side of human rights and freedom, wherever and whenever it was needed. I hope his legacy continues to guide me and others as well.

Editor's Note: In 2014, Zofia Romaszewska was awarded the Lech Kaczyński Medal for her lifetime work on behalf of human rights.



Between clichés and erasure Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe as an “empty syntagm” in contemporary public discourse

Dariusz Skórczewski

ABSTRACT

Drawing on the ancient rhetoric tradition, this paper employs the notions of “figure of thought” and “figure of speech” to address the issue of the ambivalent “soft” status of Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe in various contemporary public discourses in the Western world, such as discourses

in the humanities, political discourse, journalism, media, and popular culture. While special attention is given to post-2004 discourses (after the acceptance of ten East Central and Southern European countries into the European Union), earlier discourses are not left out since it is in them that major patterns of articulations concerning East Central Europe have been established. While the figures of thought, among them “*figurae ad docendum*” (figures of instruction) and “*figurae ad delectandum*” (figures of delight) supplemented with “*figurae ad taedium*” (figures of contempt) can be deemed as general categories delineating the major attitudes of the “Western” public towards Eastern and Central European non-Germanic countries, societies, and cultures, the figures of speech (e.g. ellipsis, hyperbole, aprosdoketon, and others) play the role of rhetorical agents – amounting to ideological clichés – to fulfill the goals defined by the former. Drawing from the theoretical and conceptual framework of Saidean Orientalism, the analysis of submitted examples suggests that East Central Europe as a tangible and vulnerable geographical and sociohistorical reality has been erased from the discourse of the West. It has been effectively replaced, by means of rhetoric measures, with a large collection of its discursive substitutes, thus turning the toponym “Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe” and its synonyms into that which can be termed “empty syntagm,” a ready-made structure for achieving whatever goals are defined and pronounced outside East Central Europe.

Motto:

*Language is savage flesh, which grows in a wound,
in the open wound of the mouth,
nurtured on deceptive truth*

As is generally known at least since Hayden White, history is a narrative rather than a sequence of fixed, objective, and interrelated events. The way we speak about things affects them greatly. According to the constructivist view, things are produced by discourse. Although I do not fully subscribe to this view, believing in that things do exist independently from discourse, I do believe that our opinions about things are, to large extent, determined by rhetorical practices engaged in discourses that concern those things. The implications of rhetoric in historiography and in the humanities in general can be powerful in the shaping of the image(s) of whole populations and go far beyond mere academic

knowledge, extending into popular perceptions of whole nations and ethnicities, and thus contributing to the (re)production and dissemination of national and ethnic, usually negative, stereotypes. Once we enter the field of stereotypes, we realize how dreadful they can be vis-à-vis *real* lives of *real* peoples, who may have *real* psychological wounds inflicted simply through the circulation of scholarship-generated and/or scholarship-upheld stereotypes.

As a departure point, I take the following thought from Clifford Geertz: “Not only ideas, but emotions too, are cultural artifacts in man.”² Emotions spoken of in this paper are the emotions of Eastern and Central Europeans who continue to find themselves troubled and disappointed, or even exasperated, with the “dual framing of East-Central Europe as simultaneously in Europe and not yet European,”³ even now, ten years after the acceptance of their countries into the European Union. These emotions are products of culture and, more precisely, of various cultural discourses, the discourse of Western scholarship in general and Slavic studies in particular not excluded. The disappointment and exasperation of Eastern Europeans grows even larger when they encounter in Western (American and/or West European) writing the discourse of omission, silencing, and patronizing. Eastern Europeans, particularly those who take the West as the primary point of cultural orientation as is the case with Poles and other Central European non-Germanic countries, find the attitudes fueling such discourse difficult to come to terms with.⁴ In this paper I draw on examples of such discourses related primarily to Poland and the Poles; however, I do my best to render my formulations applicable to the majority of postcommunist societies of East Central and Eastern Europe. In the typology offered in the following parts of the article, I arrange these examples so as to demonstrate how, by means of some distinctive rhetorical figures, East European subjects are cogently rendered as not-yet-mature and converted into vulnerable objects of silencing (mis)representation, thus suffering from discursive appropriation and from being deprived of their own agency. In order to achieve my goal, I take as a departure point the traditional ancient distinction of rhetorical

figures into the “figures of thought” and the “figures of speech,” considering the former as the major patterns of reasoning to provide grounds for rhetorical operations performed by means of the latter. The survey that follows demonstrates that the more philologically alert era in which we now live offers productive insights into the complex author-text-context-readership relationship with regard to contemporary discourses on East and Central non-Germanic Europe. Drawing conclusions by all parties whom these discourses concern from the analysis of these discourses seems essential for the subjectivity, cultural visibility, and political agency of East and Central European societies. These conclusions are also fundamental for those engaged in studying such discourses, given the purpose of the humanities understood as a concern for the historically grounded and historically embraceable, or intelligible, “truth.”

“FIGURES OF THOUGHT” IN WESTERN CULTURAL DISCOURSES ON EASTERN AND CENTRAL NON-GERMANIC EUROPE

Ernest Gellner spoke of the “major bifurcation” of the European continent.⁵ Many repeat this concept and rehearse the notion of some alleged fundamental divide between the two halves of the continent. Such a position can be considered a post-cold-war residue, although its origin can be traced back to as early as the Enlightenment whose role in engineering Europe’s division was so convincingly demonstrated by Larry Wolff.⁶ Interestingly, even those among social and cultural critics who hold constructivist views stick to this essentializing concept, as if the “Otherness” of Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe was a given and unquestionable axiom. As a result, Edward Said’s comment on the logic of British epistemological domination over Egypt (“England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows”⁷) when applied to Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe under the epistemological domination of the West still obtains.

Despite the process of enlargement of European political structures, the framework in which Western Europe is being contrasted, or clashed, with Eastern Europe still pervades in public discourses both in the West, including

North America, and in Eastern Europe. This framework engages relevant rhetoric since it is, among other reasons, due to the power of rhetoric that the duality of the continent is maintained. This rhetoric employs three major types of figures of thought distinguished by the ancients: figures of instruction (*figurae ad docendum*), figures of contempt (*figurae ad taedium*), and figures of delight (*figurae ad delectandum*). Each of these types opens room for a pertinent rhetoric strategy and, by implication, points to a relevant attitude or approach of the “Western” subject to the “Eastern” object. I briefly discuss these types, supplying examples for each. I subsequently offer a concise presentation of the main figures of speech deployed in Western discourses on Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe, followed by a conclusion.

FIGURES OF INSTRUCTION (*FIGURAE AD DOCENDUM*)

Figures of instruction imply the notion of Eastern Europe as immature and not yet ready to be treated as a full-fledged political and cultural partner of the West. They translate into a number of rhetorical strategies used as a camouflage or alibi for the following notions:

1. “Keeping up” or “making up,” based on the philosophy of “admittance into the global capitalistic system of Western liberal democracy.”⁸

As cultural critic of Slovenian origin Boris Buden pointed out in his book *Zone of Transition: On the End of Post-Communism*, the “concept of transition has almost exclusively been applied to the so-called post-communist societies and refers to their transition to democracy.” Accordingly, Eastern Europe in itself is perceived as incomplete, living in a transient condition, and never fully mature, and Eastern European societies are all rendered in discourse as victimized, as if Eastern Europe exists only to highlight the West as the object of the East’s desire.

2. The need of advice from (Western) Europe or, in yet another version, the imperative of coming under Western tutelage.

Eastern Europe is portrayed as a pupil and the West as the educator. Western discourses abound in more-or-less overt accusations that

the unruly Eastern Europe does not comply with European standards and norms. Such indictments take for granted the assumption of a single-directional adjustment that should be carried out by East Europeans, and their alleged inferiority: "Diplomats do not hold back in harshly criticizing Eastern European states that, in their opinion, do not know how to adjust to the culture and norms that are commonly acknowledged as the right ones."⁹

3. The expectation in Western discourse(s) that Eastern Europe follow (or emulate) the West.

This expectation is usually accompanied by or juxtaposed with the threat that Eastern Europe will be judged for failing to comply with the imperative implied in this expectation. The patronizing and condescending tone of Jacques Chirac, who in 2003 with a burst of outrage criticized then-candidate countries of Eastern Europe for their independent stance concerning the war in Iraq, will forever remain in the annals of west European Orientalism:

Concerning, after all, the candidate countries. . . I honestly think that they have behaved with a certain lightness. Because entering the European Union still requires a minimum of consideration for others, a minimum of consultation. If, on the first difficult subject, you begin to express your point of view independently of any consultation with the body that you incidentally want to join, then it is not very responsible behavior. In any case, it is not well brought-up behavior. So I believe that they [Eastern European countries – D.S.] missed a good opportunity to keep quiet.¹⁰

4. Seeking the authority, looking up for approval. During her visit to Poland in January 2014, the American actress Meryl Streep thus contributed to the discussion on gender ideology as a threat to social relations in Poland, addressing Polish deputies via Poland's liberal daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*: "Gentlemen, you are about to lose power. . . . I thought you had already caught up with the West."¹¹ She continued her address, teaching her Polish audiences by pretending to speak to the deputies: "Gentlemen, you are fooling yourselves in the same way as talibs do. . . Look at the world and the direction it takes to evolve. Do you really think you can stop it? The past is dying in pains, but the old order will not give up without fight. I understand, but it is my

joy to announce to you: you represent the lost case."

Thus Streep placed herself in the discourse in the position of a "wise woman," a contemporary civilized sage endowed with the highest authority that allowed her to compare Polish parliament and Polish males to the Taliban.

Meryl Streep's comment laid bare some elements of Western discourse on Eastern Europe, but even more interesting is to see the interaction between a representative of Western opinionated cultural circles and East European receptive journalist circles, the latter assuming the position of the power-wielding delegate of the uninformed local indigenous people. The journalist Magdalena Żakowska of *Gazeta Wyborcza* informs the American actress in an ostensibly unbiased way: "Currently in Poland, a crusade is being waged by the Catholic church and the right-wing milieu against gender. Even a parliamentary group was created 'Stop gender ideology.'" Streep responds: "What? I thought that after communism you had already caught up with the West in the social and cultural sense." The last sentence explicitly demonstrates the patronizing attitude of a Western subject who points to yet another rhetorical approach to Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe in cultural discourses of the West, expressed through figures of contempt.

FIGURES OF CONTEMPT (*FIGURAE AD TAEDIUM*)

Various attitudes of Western subject toward East Central Europe are expressed through figures of contempt, from erasure and omission to overt disapproval, derision, or disdain. A classic example of such a mindset has been quoted by Hugh Seton Watson who years ago pointed to the popular image of East Europeans in Western discourse since Voltaire: "They have unpronounceable names, and live in plains and forests, on mountains and rivers which might be in another world."¹²

1. Homogenization, unification, and conflation.

Under a Western gaze all East and Central European non-Germanic countries and peoples are represented or discussed as a coherent unity falling under the same category, and are thus homogenized, unified, and conflated. Such homogenization, unification, and conflation in

Western discourses have taken place primarily due to the abused usage of the term “Soviet bloc” since the early 1950s to describe the diverse countries and nations that found themselves on the eastern side of the European divide. However, there are other reasons as well, among them the dominance of Russia/Soviet Union as the imperial center in public discourse, overshadowing all other non-Russian Slavic and/or post-Soviet states.

2. Blame for allegedly inferior quality.

A contemptuous attitude is not spared in scholarly discourse; rather, it subtly penetrates this discourse, demonstrating the troubling discrepancy between the work ethic of scholarship and the practice of some Western scholars in the humanities. For example, according to British anthropologist Chris Hann, the domination of Western scholarship results from its allegedly superior quality: “If . . . ‘local scholars’ wish to be as widely read as some of the outsiders who write about Central and Eastern Europe, then they need to put in the field time and write monographs of equivalent depth and sophistication.”¹³ Hann’s opinion clearly demonstrates a patronizing attitude toward East Central European scholars who are advised to “arrange for [English language] editing by a native speaker”¹⁴ or “take advantage of postsocialist freedoms to embark on anthropological projects outside their home countries.”¹⁵ The British anthropologist refuses to acknowledge that in the humanities Eastern European scholarship is in fact of equivalent depth and sophistication as its Western counterpart. Regrettably, and contrary to the facts, the fault of provincialism or even parochialism of Eastern European scholarship still holds in Western academia, as the above example demonstrates.

FIGURES OF DELIGHT (*FIGURAE AD DELECTANDUM*)

Figures of contempt applied as rhetorical strategies to discursively label East Central Europe neither preclude nor contradict figures of delight. The latter have been traditionally affiliated with Orientalizing discourses on Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe that have proliferated in philosophy, literature, political writings, and scholarship in Western

Europe since the Enlightenment. A domain of exciting exoticism—this is how Europe’s eastern lands have been perceived for two centuries by travelers, writers, and even crowned heads.

Figures of delight are also characteristic of a new overtone that can be heard in recent scholarship and public discourses, one that eschews the simplifications and overgeneralizations concerning Eastern Europe that were so commonplace in Western scholarship and culture even ten years ago. This new overtone reverberates in utterances that admit that “while Central and Eastern European countries tend to get lumped together, they vary considerably.”¹⁶ And indeed, they do vary, and noting differences is becoming common practice more often than not in the British, French, and German media. In this respect too a rhetoric is engaged that at times makes the apparent “delight” in East Central Europe equivocal and problematic. A recent example in the *New York Times* demonstrates how Poland is placed against the backdrop of other East Central European countries: “To the east, Russian aggression has paralyzed Ukraine’s hope for faster economic development. To the south, Hungary flirts with authoritarianism and still struggles to climb out of the last recession. To the north, Lithuania and the other Baltic States are being squeezed by the cycle of escalating trade sanctions between Moscow and the European Union.”¹⁷

Against such a dark background containing diverse images of the unpredictable and unstable Eastern Europe all of which restage the ancient topoi of *locus horridus*, Poland happens to be portrayed as its opposite, *locus amoenus*, the idyllic place of economic safety and political comfort. As the quoted example demonstrates, the figure of delight is selective, never allowing the whole of Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe to become a valuable object of delight, comparable with the values and attainments/achievements shared by the West. Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe thus remains dubious and problematic, a place where even if good things occur they are inevitably accompanied by things going bad.

A similar strategy laid the groundwork for Vice President Joseph Biden’s pushing forward Eastern European countries as examples to

follow: "In Eastern Europe, countries still struggle to fulfill the promise of a strong democracy, or a vibrant market economy. Who to look to better than you? Who to look to better than Central European countries that 20 years ago acted with such courage and resolve, and over the last 20 years, have made such sustainable progress? You can help guide Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine along the path of lasting stability and prosperity. It's your time to lead. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus can benefit from your personal experiences."¹⁸

The three types of figures of thought described above may or may not exist separately in single texts. Interestingly, they not infrequently coincide. For instance, figures of instruction may surface next to figures of contempt. It all depends on the complexity and the modality of discourses engaged in a given text. Second and more importantly, these figures of thought have the potential to employ various figures of speech. Thus the same figure of speech may be deployed to render different meanings that serve different purposes overtly expressed by or implicit in a given figure of thought. The next part of the paper covers ten of the figures of speech concerning Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe that are likely to be encountered most frequently across various discourses in the English-speaking world.

FIGURES OF SPEECH IN WESTERN CULTURAL DISCOURSES ON EASTERN AND CENTRAL NON-GERMANIC EUROPE

The figures of speech discussed below refer to formal patterns of word arrangement for the purpose of a transformation of meaning, as defined by Greek and Latin rhetoric. While originally denoting "local" transformative operations, usually within syntax, these patterns can also be attributed with a broader generic meaning: they can be understood as logical principles of organizing the discourse and whole bodies of texts belonging to that discourse. The following discussion briefly analyzes the way of advancing the argument in each figure in order to identify the semiotic strategy behind these figures. Particular attention is paid to conceivable ethical and epistemological implications of the use of these figures in

Western discourses on Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe. Since particular political goals can be accomplished by means of rhetoric, it is necessary to realize that when dealing with language we are dealing with sensitive realities of actual groups of peoples.

1. ANTITHESIS

Antithesis has traditionally been the elementary rhetorical operation at the very foundation of Western discourse on Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe. At least since the cold war it has become commonplace that "Western Europe and Eastern Europe are portrayed as opposing spaces, which together embody a series of dichotomous relationships."¹⁹ Consequently, knowledge production and other discourses on the East developed by the West have become dominated by the rather simplistic formula of "us" (signifying Western populations) versus "them" (standing for peoples inhabiting Europe's eastern part).

Among the spectacular examples are Hans Kohn's theory of Eastern versus Western nationalisms and its numerous applications and mutations, such as Peter F. Sugar's *Roots of Central European Nationalism* (1969) or, more recently, Brian Porter-Szücs' *When Nationalism Began to Hate* (2000). The rhetoric of antithesis in these and other books in the same or similar vein points to the major problem of the discursive location of East Central Europe. They take for granted and essentialize the difference between the West and East European paths for social and economical development, taking the Western way as a default or yardstick with which to measure any and all other populations and places. For example, when quoting from Kohn, Sugar speaks of him with much reverence, elevating him to the position of absolute authority while at the same time using a patronizing tone regarding the countries and nations of Eastern Europe:

Professor Hans Kohn recognized the basic problem of Eastern European nationalism when he stated: "So strong was the influence of ideas that, while the new nationalism in Western Europe corresponded to changing social, economic, and political realities, it spread to Central and Eastern Europe long before a corresponding social and

economic transformation.... Nationalism in the West arose in an effort to build a nation in the political reality and struggle of the present without too much sentimental regard for the past; nationalists in Central and Eastern Europe created, often out of myths of the past and the dreams of the future, an ideal fatherland, closely linked with the past, devoid of any immediate connection with the present, and expected to become sometime a political reality.²⁰

Here we can recognize other rhetorical devices as well: we find out that East Central European space is “devoid” (pointing to a lack, deficiency, *figura per detractio*) of reality, based on unreal myths, legends, and fables. With such assumptions, Sugar concludes—again quoting Kohn—that it is “no wonder that eastern European nationalism did not tend towards a ‘consummation in a democratic world society,’ but was ‘tending toward exclusiveness.’”²¹ According to Kohn’s and his adherents’ ideas the structure of antithesis is subservient to figures of contempt and instruction, while in other cases it is the dominant instrument of figures of delight. For instance, it is antithesis that has given rise to the title of the Penguin series “Writers of the Other Europe.”

2. ELLIPSIS

Among the most frequent rhetorical modes of the presence of East Central Europe in Western discourse(s) is that of East Central Europe’s absence, that is, omission, oversight, silencing, or erasure. The figure of ellipsis renders Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe discursively nonexistent, as if that part of the world were a void on the cultural or scholarly map(s) of the world.

This ellipsis takes on various forms depending on the context. In the discourse on modernization and nationalism, this ellipsis may be made manifest by the following:

a. The rhetoric of discursive erasure, consisting of neglecting Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe by passing it over in the texts where the mention of East Central European countries seems by all means justified. For example, in the twenty-three-minute documentary film on the December 7, 1941 attack of the Japanese army, screened in the Museum in Pearl Harbor Memorial Theater, the narrative leaves the

viewers unaware that World War II was started by Hitler’s attack on Poland. In a similar vein, it is a commonplace practice that popular audiovisual documentaries on World War II do not inform viewers of the number of Poles who perished between 1939 and 1945 while, for example, the film on German history screened in the Deutsche Historische Museum in Berlin does not spare the audiences details concerning the number of Sinti, Roma, and Jews murdered by some de-ethnicized “Nazis.” Countless examples of this practice can be easily furnished. To avoid a wrong impression, the erasure is not merely related to the problem of the legitimacy of claiming the status of a victim of the totalitarian regimes before, during, and after World War II. Rather, the existence of “white spots” in the discourse(s) on Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe makes it clear that the knowledge production concerning that part of the world has been effectively appropriated, arranged, and distributed according to a set of undeclared premises, most of which were set up without consulting with those whom these premises directly concern. This points to the long-lasting absence of East Europeans in the construction of Western discourses on Eastern Europe.

b. The rhetoric of lack, or deficiency, attributed to the region. This rhetoric is dominant in theorizing about Central and Eastern European nationalism. One hears that the Central European variant of nationhood bore the marks of the incomplete journey to modernity made by these nations.²² “Whereas many individual researchers do not view East-Central Europe as irrational or un-European, discussing political complexities in East-Central Europe in terms of Europeanness still fuels the othering of East-Central Europe. The more Europe is eulogized as a site of values, the more Eastern Europe is tacitly marked as lacking these values.”²³ Thus Jacques Rupnik maintains that “the populist backlash in Central and Eastern Europe reveals, first and foremost, the absence in the new democracies of *corps intermédiaires*, of checks and balances, of truly independent media to serve as a counterweight to creeping authoritarianism.”²⁴ The concept of East Central Europe’s deficiency is conducive to the feeling of East Central European resentment, so well

known to East Europeans and so well described by the Hungarian scholar and politician György Schöpfung. According to him, “the region is haunted by its own sense of indeterminacy and incompleteness, of not having a voice, of being disregarded and that completeness, and with completeness the good life, is elsewhere.”²⁵

c. The rhetoric of *désintéressement*, demonstrated, for example, by “the absence of any curiosity in Western states about the other half of Europe. Only a few scholars believe that the other part of Europe could be useful in the debate about the role of the state in the globalized world and about social redistribution in a new economic context.”²⁶

3. ANTONOMASIA

Substitution with a usually degrading epithet is yet another form of rhetorical existence of East Central Europe in Western discourses. Under this category falls the antonomasia-type of term “balkanization” whose critical discussion went into the agenda of Maria Todorova’s book *Imagining the Balkans*. Here also belong the infamous names used, auspiciously less and less frequently these days, by uninformed journalists in the Western press to describe German concentration camps on Polish lands, such as “Polish death camps” and other similar practices that no amount of individual corrections seems able to change.

4. AMPHIBOLIA

Ambiguity and the lack of clarity in using terms related to East Central Europe, particularly to East Central European history, may result from placing them in a wrong “syntagmatic” context. Such ambiguity, constitutive of amphibolia, is not merely a coincidence or a linguistic error; instead, it is the outcome of East Central Europe’s long absence as the speaking agent in the discourse of humanities. One of the most common rhetorical ambiguities related to Poland’s history is the confusing use of the term “Warsaw uprising.” While in the native Polish historical discourse this term has been reserved for the general uprising from August through October 1944 during the German occupation with over two hundred thousand Polish civilians and Home Army soldiers killed, in the English-language circulation of knowledge it has

traditionally been reserved for the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw ghetto from April through May 1943, leaving the general uprising out of historical discourse. This peculiar shift in terminology has created a great deal of misunderstanding among users of the term, who remain unaware of its ambiguity. Through the decades of Soviet rule and henceforth for other reasons, knowledge production in the countries of Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe, such as Poland, has not been powerful enough to persuade American and West European audiences about the need to revise some Western concepts and terms by means of which the experience of Eastern and Central Europeans has been described. This experience has been bent to fit the dominating grand narrative on Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe promoted in American history and political science textbooks.

5. HYPERBOLE

Hyperbole is frequently deployed as an instrument of rhetorical downgrading. The images of East Central Europe delivered through cultural discourses of the West appear to be intentional caricatures of East Central Europe, full of grotesque exaggerations and inaccuracies. Such images have proliferated since the Enlightenment both in literature (as demonstrated by Larry Wolff) and in other cultural practices, including jokes and motion pictures. Concerning the latter, it was a hyperbole that constituted the main creative device in Steven Spielberg’s acclaimed *The Terminal*, in which some features of an ordinary citizen of an Eastern European state have been grotesquely distorted.²⁷

6. GRADATION

Whenever judgments are formulated in Western discourses concerning the “Europeanness” of Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe versus the par excellence “European” West Europe, gradation is applied as the instrument of value attribution, according to “the representational pattern that privileges the fully European ‘Europe’ over the not-yet-fully European ‘Eastern Europe.’”²⁸ Consequently, the decolonized populations of the East European subcontinent are relegated to a secondary role,

and their claims to Europeanness are presented as naïve and ludicrous. Tony Judt, that great supplier of distorted perspectives on Eastern Europe, has opined that “whatever we would say concerning the former splendor of Prague or Vilnius, these cities were never capitals in European sense, such as Florence, Madrid, London, or Vienna.”²⁹ In a similar vein: “Warsaw is not, and for most of European history never was, the center of very much at all.”³⁰ Or: “The developments in Poland were a stirring prologue to the narrative of Communism’s collapse, but they remained a sideshow. The real story was elsewhere.”³¹ This is how, in the subtly distorting perspective of the late Tony Judt, a smoothened and coherent version of history written from the top down to the bottom emerges, privileging the narrative developed and authorized by the Western metropolis. The monophonic structure of that narrative would be easily disrupted by the uncontrolled polyphony of voices from the local populations of East Central Europe, were these populations allowed to speak for themselves. The true history of these populations – as can be inferred from Judt’s writings – lies in somebody else’s hands, outside the reach of East Europeans.

7. ENUMERATION

Innocent as it may seem, enumeration as deployed in Western cultural discourses on East Central Europe often discloses a powerful yet concealed premise. According to that premise, East Central European political entities are presented as deprived of agency and ontologically frail, whereby the position of the epistemologically as well as politically dominating Western subject is reinforced. Enumeration not only conflates and homogenizes the diverse East Central European peoples and cultures but at the same time denies their right to be rendered in their own terms, either as proposed by them or coined by paying close attention to their historical experience. Even in scholarly publications assertions such as the following can be encountered in which, by means of enumeration, “the cultural hegemony of [West] European knowledges”³² over the territories and peoples subject to scholarly descriptions is being maintained. Consider the

following: “The states of Eastern Europe either did not exist until recently, or else had to be reconstructed in the modern era following their obliteration by greater powers in earlier times. From a Western perspective (though not necessarily in the eyes of the locals), Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, and Bosnians — to cite only the best known — are all invented nations. Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, the Baltic states, even Greece, whatever the real or imagined glories of their distant past, have all been constituted and reconstituted out of lands and peoples whose history was once submerged in someone else’s story.”³³ The problem with such discourse is not merely the absence of reciprocity but the scantiness of spaces for the possibility of such reciprocity and for the reassertion by East Europeans themselves of “the epistemological value and agency of the non-[West-]European world.”³⁴ Thus the East European indigenous “subalterns” (locals) remain speechless, as if silenced by the rhetorically powerful and speaking Western center. The writing of the hegemonic West thus becomes the “textual standard that enforces the marginality and inferiority of colonised cultures and their books.”³⁵

8. SYNECDOCHE

In various fields of scholarship and public discourses on East Central Europe, a part of the region, e.g., a single country or people, is used to represent the whole of the post-Soviet sphere. This strategy of synecdoche functions in two ways, both of which are standard discursive practices in Western media and elsewhere. First, referring to geographical distinctions, a single entity is taken as illustrative of the whole region. Second, a single occurrence of social behavior or attitude is interpreted as commonplace and standard in postcommunist societies. “As is often true, Poland can be seen either as an exception to, or a magnifier of, trends present elsewhere in the region”³⁶ – such statements are representative of this strategy.

9. RHETORICAL QUESTION

Rhetorical questions serve the purpose of amplifying or even enforcing the anticipated response of the audience without their explicit answer. In the context of things East Central

European, rhetorical questions posed in Western cultural discourses usually undermine, subvert, or demean the significance of East Central Europe. For instance, referring to her said-to-be “peripheral status” as a writer, Dubravka Ugrešić mentions: “After my novel had been published in England in 1991, the critic finished his review with the question: ‘Anyway, is it this, what we need?’”³⁷ As with the other figures listed above, rhetorical questions like the one just quoted reinforce the perspective of the more powerful and authoritative Western epistemological center where the framework of discourse on East Central Europe is defined and where this discourse is originally pushed into motion.

10. APROSDOKETON

The nature of this figure consists of introducing a word or idea that has not been anticipated, given the syntax and the expected semantic effect. I consider this figure to be the most sophisticated strategy of dismissal and textual appropriation of Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe in Western cultural discourses.

In his review of Anne Applebaum’s *Iron Curtain*, Max Frankel states the following about Ms. Applebaum’s meticulous study of Stalin’s tyranny in East Central Europe: “Along the way, millions of Germans, Poles, Ukrainians and Hungarians were ruthlessly driven from their historic homes to satisfy Soviet territorial ambitions. Millions more were deemed opponents and beaten, imprisoned or hauled off to hard labor in Siberia. . . . It is good to be reminded of these sordid events, now that more archives are accessible and some witnesses remain alive to recall the horror. Still, why should we be consuming such a mass of detail more than half a century later?”³⁸

The question posed is a rhetorical one, and it can be counted as an example of the preceding figure. There is more to it, however. It appears unexpectedly, according to the logic of *aprosdoketon*. The way it is asked demonstrates the gap between the disengaged attitude of the Western author and the impossible-to-disengage attitude of the East Central European participant in the events. These two subjects meet across

space and time in the texture of Frankel’s review, in its very discursive tissue, the former being in power, while the latter is disempowered. In fact, Frankel’s question reverberates with the tone known to the readers of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* whose last chapter “Orientalism Now” concludes with this poignant remark: “I consider Orientalism’s failure to have been a human as much as an intellectual one; for in having to take up a position of irreducible opposition to a region of the world it considered alien to its own, Orientalism failed to identify with human experience, failed also to see it as a human experience.”³⁹

CONCLUSION

Conclusions can be drawn on three levels. First, as the cited examples clearly demonstrate, it is impossible to speak on any topic without engaging rhetorical devices. East Central Europe is one such topic. Second, the above analysis is part of the return to philology in literary studies. It posits that studies of the discourse on Eastern and Central Europe can easily be accommodated within the studies of contemporary rhetoric. Third, this analysis demonstrates that Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe continues to occupy an uncertain position in contemporary discourse, just as it has done over decades. It is extremely rare that politicians, scholars or other authors who speak or write about that part of Europe admit the need for a self-critical attitude in their approach, such as the one expressed in this passage: “The authors of this report, although coming from the Western periphery of these regions, nevertheless share in many ways the traditional hegemonic Western discourse on East Central and to a greater extent, Eastern Europe. The vision of a united Europe is also very often a di-Vision of Europe.”⁴⁰

Instead, Eastern and Central non-Germanic European societies continue to be patronizingly maneuvered into a position subordinate to the Western hegemon, looking up to the West for approval, and thus turning the West into their “surrogate hegemon,” as Ewa Thompson once proposed.⁴¹ While such historians as Timothy Garton Ash and György Schöpfung describe East Central Europe as the Sleeping Beauty, coming to life after decades of silence,⁴² based on the preceding analyses I believe that more often

Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe is viewed as an empty syntagm waiting to be filled with content provided by Western Europeans. This situates Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe in a position where it is tossed between discursive non-existence (being appropriated by others) and hardcore existence painfully perceived, experienced, and realized by East Europeans themselves, yet not shared—and frequently misunderstood—by others. As Gottfried Schramm notes, “East Central Europe is in no way just. . . a mere construct of historians and cultural morphologists but. . . a ‘reality.’”⁴³

Given the above analysis of rhetoric used in Western discourses on East Central Europe, Czesław Miłosz’s comment on the divided Europe remains valid: “Undoubtedly I could call Europe my home, but it was a home that refused to acknowledge itself as a whole. . . it classified its population into two categories: members of the family (quarrelsome but respectable) and poor relations.”⁴⁴ It remains valid in a way similar to that highlighted by Said’s notion of Orientalism expressed in his illustrious book from which, paradoxically, Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe is absent yet seems relevant in its conclusions to Eastern Europeans as well.

Why then do I consider *aprosdoketon* the most sophisticated figure on the list of rhetorical figures deployed to describe Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe? Not only so, but even the most perverse among all the figures employed in Western cultural discourse in order to depict that part of Europe? Because it implies disappointment on the part of the reader, as if yet again restaging East Central Europe’s uninvited and involuntary subservience. This disappointment is caused by the unfulfilled promise contained in the early part of the figure. In this sense, *aprosdoketon* can be deemed a metaphor of the majority, if not of totality, of Western discourse on Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe. Even if not disregarded or silenced, that part of Europe in the *aprosdoketon* discursive approach to it is eventually rendered as failed, disappointing, and troublesome to the Western subject, just as it has been to the reviewer of Applebaum’s most recent book. The reader of that review may be at

first flattered that his region has become a valuable object of study for Western writers and journalists, only to later become disillusioned as he discovers yet again that the Western subject appears to be organically incapable of expressing solidarity with his Eastern counterpart, thus reinforcing the ever-existing chasm between the Western world and Eastern and Central non-Germanic Europe, still perhaps the most Orientalized part of the world.

This paper was presented at the annual Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies, held in San Antonio, Texas Nov. 20–23, 2014.

NOTES

¹ *Język to dzikie mięso, które rośnie w ranie, / w otwartej ranie ust, żywiących się skłamaną prawdą.* From “Language,” a poem by Ryszard Krynicki translated from the Polish by Kevin Hannan. Dariusz Suska, “Bicie mojego serca,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 June, 2003:15.

² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 81.

³ Merje Kuus, “Europe’s Eastern Expansion and the Reinscription of Otherness in East-Central Europe,” *Progress in Human Geography* 28 (2004) 4:473.

⁴ Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

⁵ Ernest Gellner, “Introduction” in *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice*, edited by C. Hann (London: Routledge, 1993), x.

⁶ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 34.

⁸ Boris Buden, *Zone des Übergangs. Vom Ende des Postkommunismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2009); qtd. after Polish translation *Strefa przejścia. O końcu postkomunizmu*, trans. by M. Sutowski (Warszawa: Krytyka Polityczna, 2012), 35.

⁹ Grzegorz Lewicki, ‘The image of Poland abroad from the constructivist perspective of international relations’ in Dominik Skorupa et al. (eds.) *Solidarni wczoraj i dziś*, edited by Dominik Skorupa et al. (2007), 89. Cf.: Mark Mardell, “Polish Spirit”, Mark Mardell’s Euroblog, online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/markmardell/2007/07/p_olish_spirit_1.html>.

¹⁰ “Concernant en tous les cas les pays candidats. . . honnêtement, je trouve qu’ils se sont comportés avec une certaine légèreté. Car entrer dans l’Union

européenne, cela suppose tout de même un minimum de considération pour les autres, un minimum de concertation. Si, sur le premier sujet difficile, on se met à donner son point de vue indépendamment de toute concertation avec l'ensemble dans lequel, par ailleurs, on veut entrer, alors, ce n'est pas un comportement bien responsable. En tous les cas, ce n'est pas très bien élevé. Donc, je crois qu'ils ont manqué une bonne occasion de se taire" (Jacques Chirac at a press conference in Brussels on 17 February 2003, following a European Council emergency summit on Iraq).

¹¹ Magdalena Żakowska, "Ja sexy?! Nigdy!," interview with Meryl Streep, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22 January 2014 <http://wyborcza.pl/duzyformat/1,127823,15318901,Meryl_Streep_do_poslow_polskich_Panowie_traci_cie.html>

¹² Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between the Wars, 1918–1941* [1945] (Hamden: Archon Books, 1962, xv. Voltaire's mocking of Slavic names in his letter to Catherine II the Great dated 1772 established the pattern for subsequent prejudice (cf. Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

¹³ Chris Hann, "Correspondence: Reply to Michał Buchowski," *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 23.1 (2005):195. For more about the debate between Hann and Buchowski, see Hana Červinková, "Postcolonialism, postsocialism and the anthropology of east-central Europe," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 48(2):155–63.

¹⁴ Hann, "Correspondence: Reply to Michał Buchowski," 194.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁶ "Worry in the West as Eastern and Central European Economies Head South," <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/worry-in-the-west-as-eastern-and-central-european-economies-head-south/>

¹⁷ Rick Lyman, "With Robust Economy, Poland Navigates Around Eastern Europe's Strains," *The New York Times*, 4 October 2014.

¹⁸ Joseph Biden speaking on 22 October 2009 at the Central University Library in Bucharest, Romania.

¹⁹ Jason Dittmer, "Dracula and the Cultural Construction of Europe," *Connotations*, 12 (2002/2003), 2–3:241.

²⁰ Peter F. Sugar, "External and Domestic Roots of Eastern European Nationalism," *Roots of Central European Nationalism*, edited by Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer. Seattle and London: Univ. of Washington Press, 1969, 9–10.

²¹ Sugar, "External and Domestic Roots," 11.

²² George Schöpflin, "Central Europe: Defining A Thought-Style," *Acta Collegii Humaniorum Estoniensis* 4 (2004):26.

²³ Kuus, "Europe's Eastern Expansion," 484.

²⁴ Jacques Rupnik, "From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash," *Journal of Democracy*, 18 (2007) 4:24.

²⁵ Schöpflin, "Central Europe," 31.

²⁶ Nadège Ragaru, "Démocratisation et démocraties est-européennes: le miroir brisé," *Revue internationale et stratégique*, 41 (2001):146. Qtd after Karen Denni, "Central Europe As a Transition Zone," 67.

²⁷ In Spielberg's movie an alien arrives in the United States from the fictitious country named "Krakosia" (phonetically alluding to Poland's Kraków), a place bearing the clear traits of an Eastern European political entity and cinematically imagined as the contemporary "Orient." A collection of hardcore stereotypes of a citizen of an Eastern European state, he brings with him all the material and mental equipage of a typical Eastern European, becoming a figure partly pathetic, partly ridiculous, and although presented as charming and human (played by the always-excellent Tom Hanks), he is positioned in the film's narrative as essentially deplorable in the structure of modern American society.

²⁸ Kuus, "Europe's Eastern Expansion," 484.

²⁹ Tony Judt, *A Grand Illusion? An Essay on Europe* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1996); quoted from the Polish translation: *Wielkie złudzenie? Esej o Europie*, trans. R. Włodek (Warszawa: PWN, 1998), 40.

³⁰ Tony Judt, with Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Press, 2012), Kindle location 521.

³¹ Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 590.

³² Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 44.

³³ Tony Judt, 'The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History', *The New Republic*, 1998, 7 September 2000. *Emphasis mine. D.S.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 144.

³⁶ Rupnik, "From Democracy Fatigue," 18.

³⁷ Dubravka Ugrešić, 'Ich und mein Gepäck: die europäische Literatur als Wettbewerb um den Eurosong' [Me and my luggage: European literature as competition around the Eurosong], *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 12 April 2003. Quoted after Andrea Ellmeier and Béla Rásky, *Differing Diversities. Eastern European Perspective: Transversal Study on the Theme of Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity*, Council of Europe Publications, Phase 2, Part 569

(2006) [pdf], 13.

³⁸ Max Frankel, "Stalin's Shadow," *Sunday Book Review*, November 25, 2012:16. *Emphasis mine. D.S.*

³⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, 328.

⁴⁰ Ellmeier and Rásky, *Differing Diversities*, 13.

⁴¹ "Whose Discourse? Telling the Story in Post-Communist Poland," *The Other Shore: Slavic and East European Cultures Abroad, Past and Present*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2010), 1–15.

⁴² Attila Meleg, *On the East–West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Eastern Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006) 41. Accessed through "Transformation of Self-Identity in Central Europe Under State Socialism and After," <https://wiki.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/Transformation_of_Self-Identity_in_Central_Europe_Under_State_Socialism_and_After#cite_ref-52>.

⁴³ Gottfried Schramm, "Ein Rundgespräch über 'Ostmittleuropa': Vom sinnvollen Umgang mit einem Konzept für unsere Zunft," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 48 (2000):122.

⁴⁴ Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*, trans. Catherine Leach (London: Sidgwick, 1981), 2.

MORE BOOKS

Romaszewscy: Autobiografia. Ze Zbigniewem, Zofią i Agnieszką Romaszewskimi rozmawia **Piotr Skwieciński**. Warsaw: Trzecia Strona (trzeciastrona.pl), 2014. 512 pages. Numerous photographs. ISBN 978-83-64526-04-6. 49.90 zł from the publisher. Hardcover. In Polish.

One of Poland's top journalists talks to the Romaszewski family and constructs their autobiography thereby. Zbigniew and Zofia Romaszewski are model Polish citizens—active in the Solidarity and post-Solidarity movements, not as armchair theorists but as people who actively helped hundreds, perhaps thousands, of their fellow Poles who had neither the education nor the material resources to win in their self-sacrificial opposition to the communist state. The Romaszewskis were not part of the "licenced" opposition that often hailed from the homes of Party members whose connections provided shelter from police brutality and confiscation of livelihood. The Romaszewskis and those they helped gambled with their own survival and well being. The sacrifices they bore

for their fellow citizens are enormous, yet they have not sought recognition or remuneration. Unlike a large number of the present political class in Poland, the Romaszewskis did it because it was the right thing to do. In this book, they narrate their childhood and youth, and the growth of understanding that Soviet-occupied Poland was not Poland at all but rather a territory where brutality of the rulers was covered up by diplomatic and media deceit.

Just as Aleksander Kaminski's *Kamienie na szaniec* is a symbol of the generation preceding the Romaszewskis', so is this book iconic of the generation that sacrificed so much to make the social movement called Solidarity possible. Would that all Poles were like the Romaszewskis; barring that, this couple and their daughter remain models of behavior for today's Polish youth.

***Slicing the Bread: Children's Survival Manual in 25 Poems*, by Maja Trochimczyk.** Georgetown, KY: Finishing Line Press (www.finishinglinepress.com), 2014. 30 pages. ISBN 978-1-62229-687-3. \$14.00 from the publisher.

In a recent interview, historian Andrzej Nowak described the situation in East Central Europe as follows: its people live between two huge millstones, Germany and Russia, that constantly grind against each other and repeatedly threaten the existence of the people in between. Poles have to exert an extraordinary amount of energy in order to not be ground to dust by these neighbors. Maja Trochimczyk's twenty-five powerful poems describe the pain, hunger, and humiliation to which the surviving children and adults were subjected by these millstones—the German one in particular. The time of action is World War II and its aftermath. The first poem sets the tone: there was no bread to slice, just soup made of weeds and a tablespoon of flour, lunch for twenty people squeezed into a two-room house (this reminds me of Soweto in South Africa where huge families were housed in similarly small houses—but, unlike in East Central Europe, not as a result of the neighbor's aggression). Then come poems about hiding the

food from the Germans and from so-called partisans (yes, the Bielski partisans had their criminal side glossed over in the movie *Defiance*), and finally from Soviet soldiers. Then death, death, and more death—but not the anonymous death of millions, rather the loss of fathers, mothers, uncles, and aunts—sometimes in twenty-four hours, as when the incoming Soviets shot the narrator’s uncle in the street and shipped his wife and two sons to Siberia—all in twenty-four hours.

Poet John Guzlowski described similar things happening to Polish Christians under German occupation, but unlike Guzlowski, Trochimeczyk manages to insert a ray of hope. I cannot exactly describe how—I do not know how she does it. Perhaps the delicacy with which she approaches those who did not survive, whom the Holocaust commemorations discount because they were not Jewish—perhaps that delicacy and gentleness is the answer. In any case, these poems leave one reflecting on the beast that is hidden in some men and women. It is clear that the author does not believe, as some psychologists do, that anyone can become a beast under certain circumstances. I share her conviction in this regard.

This little book is quite different from many a volume of poetry that saw the printing press because the author wanted to see her work published. It has no authorial vanity. It is excellent and deserving republication by a major publishing house. The author is a poet who makes a living in a profession far removed from poetry, and who is also the author of scholarly works in literature and music. Order it from the publisher and you will not be disappointed. (SB)

War and Immigration

Becoming an American

Joseph A. Kotarba

The Long Way Home: An American Journey from Ellis Island to the Great War, by David Laskin. New York: Harper, 2010. xxiv + 386 pages. Sources, index. ISBN 978006123333-3.

Those of us who are second- and third-generation Americans of Polish ancestry can probably remember our grandparents’ stories about the great migration at the turn of the twentieth century. Key terms such as Ellis Island, Cossacks, Bolsheviks, Hamtramck, and turnips were the stuff of stories thick in old-country substance but never quite as important as the new lives forged in the United States. Less memorable were the very few stories about the Great War against Germany we entered in 1917. It seemed like starting a family, working a regular if difficult job, buying a bungalow on the south side, and nurturing a parish where only Polish and Latin were spoken marked the beginning of time. We heard heroic and sometimes gruesome stories of World War II from our uncles and fathers, but the Great War rarely came up.

In his intricately assembled history, David Laskin illuminates this period of American life by weaving two identities together into the portrait of an immigrant seeking a better life who becomes an American patriot fighting for his newly adopted country. As the author points out, when the United States entered the war in 1917 fully one-third of its people had either been born overseas or were the children of immigrants. In light of significant discrimination in America against immigrants from Eastern Europe, many turned to service in the armed forces during World War I in order to become full citizens. Other immigrants served simply because they were told to do so and they felt it was their duty. As Laskin notes, “some fought not for an idea, but because the sergeant told them to fight, because their buddy was fighting, because they were part of a platoon. But in the end, they also fought because they were Americans.” Army draftees and volunteers found themselves heading back to a Europe they thought they had left behind forever.

One really creative feature of this book is the sociological way Laskin traces and compares the biographies of twelve men—four Italians, three Jews, two Poles, an Irishman, a Norwegian, and a Slovak—from their homes in Europe, to the promised land of America, to their return to Europe as part of the American Expeditionary

Force. Nine of them survived the war. Laskin conducted dozens of interviews including with two surviving veterans, 106 and 110 years old, and collected family and regimental histories, military records, and historical archives. He has a taste for detail, both military and personal, and is particularly good at drawing parallels and contrasts between the polyglot AEF in which familiarity broke down barriers between people, and war-ravaged Europe where it seemed to have the opposite effect. Further, this group of twelve allows Laskin to explore different facets of the immigrant experience without relying on stereotypes: the Jewish junk dealer, the Norwegian bachelor farmer, and the Italian peasant boy had very different lives, both in their home countries and in this one.

Apart from all the death and destruction the war caused—described here in great detail—Laskin's main point is that the war very successfully helped the immigrants who served to integrate into American society. That was not an easy task. The men in one New York division spoke forty-three languages, and officers sometimes had to mime what they were trying to get the men to do. As one native-born soldier wrote in a letter home, "I think it is about the finest thing in the world for anyone, who like myself, has always suffered with race prejudice, to be mixed up in an outfit like this. The last six months of my life in the army, living and suffering with these fellows, has done more for me to get rid of race prejudice than anything else could have done."

The two Polish soldiers provide very interesting biographies. I briefly mention one. Joe Chmielewski's brother, Frank, migrated from the Russian Partition, otherwise known as Congress Poland, to South Fork, Pennsylvania in 1907. Frank worked at the Argyle Coal Company and quickly became a leader of the Polish community and the Catholic parish, St. Anthony's. His younger brother, Joe, arrived in 1912 and quickly found work in the mine, but unlike Frank, he did not find it very rewarding. Frank and Joe learned of the war in 1914 through their local Polish language newspaper, *Naród Polski*: "Battle on Polish Lands" read the headline of the September 2 issue. The complicated political situation in Poland left the

two brothers and other Poles living in America confused. Whose side should they take? What outcome is best for Poland? As Laskin put it, "Of all the newly arrived immigrants, the Poles were the first to grasp that the war in Europe was their war too." In 1917 Joe Chmielewski was young and restless, and his work in the mines and steel mills in Pennsylvania provided little satisfaction. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and was assigned to the 16th Machine Gun Battalion in Georgia. Joe saw no action with that battalion, but served two years in the army until his honorable discharge in 1919. Unlike his older brother, Frank, and other Polish immigrants who had deep roots in and commitment to their Polish and Catholic world and their families, Joe became a drifter. He worked at various jobs in Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois. The message seems to be that whether Polish, Jewish, Irish, or American, we get our meaning for life from the communities to which we belong.

The Long Way Home is a good read, especially since it instructs us about foreign-born soldiers whose service to America shines.

In Paradise

By Peter Matthiessen. New York: Riverhead Books (riverheadbooks.com), 2014. 256 pages. ISBN: 1594633177.

John Guzłowski

For a book that hopes to be a serious novel about the Holocaust by a very serious and much admired and awarded writer (three time National Book Award winner), this is a surprisingly silly book. The novel follows Clements Olin, a respected Polish-American scholar of Holocaust literature as he goes to Auschwitz to do research on Tadeusz Borowski, the author of one of the great memoirs about this German death camp, and to consider his own roots as a Pole and an American. Set in Kraków, Auschwitz, and Oświęcim and ranging in time between Poland's World War II history and its postcommunist years, this is the kind of novel that should be of interest to Central Europe specialists. *In*

Paradise, however, quickly loses direction as Clements Olin joins a retreat at Auschwitz with 140 other retreatants: Zen enthusiasts, rabbis, priests, nuns, writers, tourists, artists, and survivors.

What comes next reads like a Facebook discussion of the Holocaust and World War II Poland. The retreat participants throw around sound-bite statements about the Holocaust, about who was guilty and how they were guilty and what should have been done and who is still responsible and why we should care and why we shouldn't care, and on and on. And then these characters disappear and other characters come on to make and unmake their own sound-bite points. I kept feeling that I should be taking frequent and extensive notes, and then I realized that it would not do me much good because probably that is how Peter Matthiessen got into this mess of a novel, by taking too many notes during his own three Zen retreats at Auschwitz.

But that's not all that is going on in the novel. There is also an absurd love plot between Olin and a woman preparing to become a nun, and a mysterious birth plot regarding Olin's origins straight out of Dickens. What begins as a thoughtful discussion of what it means to be Polish and American quickly dissolves into melodrama. Threaded through all this are ridiculous statements about Poles—the women have hairy armpits, all Poles drink too much and are snooty and pretentious, they and other Christians are responsible for the Holocaust.

Nothing can save this novel, certainly not the main character. He is moody, cranky, sexist, shallow, and lost. As a scholar, he seems completely unfocused. As a Polish American, he lacks any cultural identity. What he does and where he goes matters not at all. A reader would be better off reading one of the Polish writers who the main character says he has read in order to understand Poland, Auschwitz, and the Holocaust: Czesław Miłosz, Wisława Szymborska, or Tadeusz Borowski. There one will learn a little bit about the Holocaust and so much more. Not in Peter Matthiessen's sketchy book.

While reading the book I kept thinking that this is a clumsy novel, all in all, written by someone who appears too tired to write a serious

novel about the issues he wants to take up. And then I read the *New York Times* review of the book, and it appears that Matthiessen was not only tired, he was also apparently dying as he worked on *In Paradise*. As a result, it belongs to that genre of final novels by great writers who should have buried their final pages before they were no longer capable of doing so, writers like Vladimir Nabokov, David Foster Wallace, Ralph Ellison, and of course Ernest Hemingway.

Letter to the Editor

The review of *Polish Hero Roman Rodziewicz: Fate of a Hubal Soldier in Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Postwar England* (SR, January 2015) mistakenly states that the books' Preface was written by the late Marcus Leuchter. Mr. Leuchter has only been quoted in a short statement, while the entire book including the Preface was written by myself.

Aleksandra Ziolkowska-Boehm, Wilmington, DE

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