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Is Lech Kaczyński Right for Poland?



Lech Kaczyński, President of Poland, 2006–. PiS Presidential Portrait Gallery, courtesy of the Polish Embassy in The Hague, the Netherlands.

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Our Take

Sweat equity

The April 2006 issue is a special issue of our journal. It features translated documents rather than scholarly articles, in line with our original mission of specializing in the translation of social, cultural, and political documents pertaining to non-Germanic countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The address to the Polish Sejm by the leader of the Law and Justice Party (PiS), which won the 2005 elections, outlines the political program of that party. The interpretation by Professor Jacek Koronacki offers reasons why Polish voters chose Lech Kaczyński for president and PiS (headed by President Kaczyński's twin brother, Jarosław) for Parliament (PiS has a plurality, not a majority, in the Sejm).

There are three problems to be considered. The first is expressed by the title of the April issue: Are Kaczyński and PiS right for Poland? Jarosław Kaczyński's speech indicates that after half a century of the culturally alien Soviet occupation, countries like Poland need time to break away from the naive belief that the world is a network of conspiracies, and that exposing them equals getting rid of them. Alas, the demasked (a favorite word in many postcommunist countries) conspiracies continue to function unless there is social consensus on how to get rid of them. The second issue is the corruption that, as Kaczyński states, is endemic to the Polish

economy and therefore politics. Here democracy comes to the rescue. The breaking up of corrupt networks is facilitated by periodical changes of government. The Kaczyński government has no ties to the old system, exceptions notwithstanding. But the job of getting rid of corruption is enormous. Scores of minor officials in the various ministries and institutes cannot easily be replaced. The change of staffing of the Polish diplomatic posts on the ambassadorial, consular, and lower levels is a gargantuan task. In various localities the staffers who were there under communism are still in place, or have been reshuffled from one post to another, or from a diplomatic post to a post in the offices of the government in Warsaw. Will this government be able to begin, let alone complete, the task of reviewing its representatives abroad? That too is part of the corruption ring.

Finally, there is the issue of sweat equity, or the value of trying. The concept has been used by Edward C. Prescott, 2004 Nobel Prize winner for economics. It does not appear in statistics and it cannot easily be measured. But in politics and social life, quantity does indeed become quality. Continuous efforts bring results, albeit delayed and indirect. In Polish, sweat equity translates into *praca organiczna*. While attempts of the Kaczyński government, and of other governments, to clean house may not be entirely successful, they will contribute to the cleansing of the public square. If the present government does not succeed in eliminating corruption entirely, the value of trying will remain. Except for the postcommunists, Polish public figures have had little practice in discharging public duties. Under communism, the principle of negative selection prevailed: the more pliable, obedient, and passive the official was, the more chances s/he had to advance in public service. People of integrity and initiative were eliminated early in the race. Now they try to rejoin the public debate. They carry the luggage of inexperience and wrong habits. Still, their efforts count, for out of imperfect debates there will eventually arise a public sphere in which the best will have a chance to compete. The texts in this issue contribute to this sweat equity. ▲

The Sarmatian Review Index

Corruption in postcommunist countries

Ranking of the Russian Federation in Transparency International, a corruption perception index run by a Berlin-based NGO: 126 (out of 159 countries), or the same as Albania, Niger, and Sierra Leone.

Ranking of other select countries in the same survey: Poland and Croatia, 70; Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, 107; Hungary and Italy, 40; Estonia, 27.

Source: Transparency International website <transparency.org>, as of 20 October 2005.

Press freedom in postcommunist countries

Ranking of the Russian Federation in Reporters Without Borders' ranking (a Paris-based NGO) in its fourth annual World Press Freedom index: 139 out of 167 countries, behind Kyrgyzstan (111th), Ukraine (112th), Tadjikistan (113th), and Kazakhstan (119th).

Source: Jonas Bernstein in *Russia Reform Monitor*, no. 1316 (21 October 2005).

Democracy in America

Reelection rate of U.S. Representatives in 2004 : 394 out of 398, or a 99 percent reelection rate.

Reelection rate of U.S. Senators in 2004: 25 out of 26 incumbents, or a 96 percent reelection rate.

Amount of money Daniel W. Lipinski, incumbent Democrat from Illinois, raised in 2004: \$212,619.

Percent of the vote he received: 73 percent.

Amount of money Rahm Emanuel, incumbent Democrat from Illinois (who in 2002 defeated Polish American candidate Nancy Kaszak in Democratic primaries, having then raised \$1.9 million) raised in 2004: \$1,597,260.

Percent of the vote he received: 76 percent.

Source: Andy Engel and Connie Schultz, "Prostituting the Political Process," *In Focus: A Special Research Study* (The Leuthold Group, 2005); Ross Stewart, attorney-at-law's blog at www.russstewart.com/10-2-02.htm.

Amount of money Senator (D.) William Proxmire (1915–2005, Senate years of service 1957–1989) spent on each of his election campaigns and the source of the funds: several hundred dollars on each consecutive campaign, paid out of pocket (Senator Proxmire did not accept campaign contributions).

Source: *Houston Chronicle*, 18 December 2005.

Perception of political corruption in the United States

Percentage of Americans who think that corruption is widespread in public service in America: 77 percent.

Amount of money federal lobbyists spent in 2004: 2.1 billion dollars.

Source: Donna Cassata, "Political corruption viewed by most as serious problem," *Houston Chronicle*, 9 December 2005.

International graduate students in the United States

Number of international graduate students in 2005: about 225,000, a rise of 1 percent over 2004.

Source: AP, as reported by *Houston Chronicle*, 7 November 2005.

Social perceptions in Poland concerning the importance of public figures

Rankings of the perception of importance of the Polish public figures deemed "the most important:" John Paul II, 66 percent; former President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, 9 percent; President Lech Kaczyński, 5 percent.

Source: Opinion poll conducted by Pentor, as reported by Michał Jankowski in *Donosy*, no. 4106 (20 December 2005).

Social perceptions of future economic security in Germany

Percentage of Germans who believe that in the future, the comprehensiveness of health insurance and security for the elderly will decrease: 71 percent.

Percentage of Germans who believe that [German] society will become more egoistic: 61 percent.

Percentage of Germans who believe in the Darwinian rule that only the strongest will survive: 53 percent.

Percentage of Germans who believe that in the future there will be more solidarity and unity among people: 14 percent.

Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Allensbach-Institut, as reported by *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 21 December 2005.

World trade and telephone capacity over the last half century

Increase in world trade between 1950–2004: between twelve and twenty fold, depending on methods of counting.

Increase in concurrent transatlantic telephone conversations between 1956–2004: from 89 to one million, plus faxes and emails.

Source: J. R. Saul, *The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World* (Overlook Press, 2005), 21.

Pope John Paul II's family home, the Holocaust, and the legacy of poverty in Poland

Name of owner of the boarding house in Wadowice from whom the impecunious Wojtyła family rented "rooms" in the 1930s: Yechiel Balamuth, a merchant later killed with his wife and daughters in the Bełżec concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Poland.

Owner of that house in December 2005: New York psychiatrist Ron Balamuth, said to be the grandson of Yechiel Balamuth.

Source: <usajewish.com/scripts/usaj/paper/Article.asp?ArticleID=761>, as of 9 December 2005;
<www.holocaustrestitution.net/hv-grand.htm>, as of 9 December 2005.

Amount of money for which the present owner has been willing to sell the house to the Kraków Catholic community: one million dollars.

Reason why the Kraków Curia has not so far purchased that house: they are too poor.

Source: Michał Jankowski in *Donosy*, 8 December 2005.

Catholic parishes in Poland

Number of Catholic parishes in Poland headed by a head pastor (who usually has at least one assistant pastor to help him in discharging parish duties and distributing the sacraments): 10,000.

Percentage of Catholics in Poland's population of 38.6 million: 90 percent.

Hence, the average size of parishes: 3,400 persons.

Source: *Rzeczpospolita*, 19 December 2005; CIA *World Factbook 2005* (cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook).

The follow-up to communism in Belarus

Population of Belarus in 1993: 10.24 million.

Population of Belarus in November 2005, according to the Ministry of Statistics: 9,762,200, a decline of 38,600 since the beginning of the year.

Number of people who continue to live in Chernobyl-contaminated zones: 1.8 million.

The percentage of dwellers in contaminated zones who have excess radioactivity in their body: 60–70 percent.

Number of childless families: 37 percent.

Number of families with one child only: 23.5 percent.

Percentage of Belarusians' income spent on food: 50 percent.

Source: David Marples, "Belarus facing several demographic problems," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (Jamestown Foundation), vol. 2, no. 231 (13 December 2005).

Russians under President Putin

Number of people killed in racist attacks in Russia in 2004–2005: 59.

Percentage of Russians seeing the fall of the USSR as "a tragic collapse of a great empire, rather than a liberation from communism" (a quote from pollster Yuri Levada): 66 percent.

Percentage of Russians opposed to immigration to their country: 60 percent.

Source: Jonas Bernstein in *Russia Reform Monitor*, nos. 1335 and 1338 (23 December 2005 and 11 January 2006).

Russia's pirating of intellectual property in 2005

Estimated amount of money American companies lost in 2005 because of Russian pirating of films, music, and software: 1.8 billion dollars.

Items pirated most often: business software, with losses of 748 million dollars.

Requirements for WTO membership to which Russia aspires: enforcement of intellectual property rights and curbing of software piracy.

Source: Alex Nicholson (AP), "Russia's pirating still dire," *Houston Chronicle*, 15 February 2006.

Polish dentists in the United Kingdom

Number of Polish dentists who took up job offers in the UK in 2005: 120.

Source: Catherine Simon, "L'élite polonaise fait du baby-sitting à Paris," *Le Monde*, 16 February 2006.

Perceptions of the Kaczyński—Marcinkiewicz government and party in January 2006 poll

Percentage of people who said that they would vote for the Law and Justice Party (which won a plurality in the 2005 elections) if the elections were held in January: 44 percent.

Percentage of people who thought that Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz has been doing a good job: 65 percent.

Percentage of people who supported the new government: over 50 percent.

Source: Opinion poll by Ipsos in January 2006, as reported by *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 January 2006.

Jarosław Kaczyński's address to the Polish Parliament (Sejm) delivered on the occasion of the first hundred days of the new presidency and government

Mr. Speaker, Distinguished Members of the Sejm:

One hundred days is a milestone. If memory serves, under President John Kennedy it became customary to refer to the "first one hundred days" of a presidency or government. We have done likewise. This is not a matter of surrendering to the magic of numbers, but rather an attempt to recognize something very serious: for the first time since we regained independence seventeen years ago, we are about to try to turn a corner, as far as fundamental renewal of our country is concerned. Seventeen years is a long time in the life of a man, but it is also a considerable period of time in the life of a nation. After the reconstitution of the Polish Republic in November 1918, the Second Republic had only twenty years to reinvent itself and Polish society. Seventeen years after its reconstitution, the man who was most responsible for its existence, Marshal Joseph Piłsudski, was already dead. Seventeen years after the end of the Second World War, the lucky Western Europe, having avoided a takeover by the communists, was already well advanced in rebuilding itself and its economy. The German economic miracle had already been accomplished: the year 1963 is usually regarded as the last year of that "miracle." Even though the early postwar years were difficult, the countries of Western Europe made an enormous leap forward during their first seventeen years after the war. It is therefore useful to pause and reflect upon what we Poles have achieved since 1989, when the "Polish People's Republic" ceased to be, bequeathing to us massive problems and a gigantic social and economic crisis, but, fortunately, no conflagration or destruction by firepower of our cities and villages, as had been the case after the Second World War.

It also is worthwhile to reflect on the last seventeen years because the problems we are facing now have partly been caused by the mistakes of that period. First, the economy. If all goes well, at the end of 2006 our GDP will have increased by 50 percent in comparison to 1989. This means that the Polish economy grew at a meager 3 percent per year or less. First there was

decline, then growth, and in 1996 we reached the 1989 level again. After that we had a few good years of growth and then, alas, five years of very slow growth.

We have also inherited a host of serious social problems. Almost 40 percent of our young people are unemployed. We do not have adequate housing: many families still live in communal apartments or rented rooms. Our families are in crisis. These are social pathologies that lead to depopulation. Our negative population growth is also caused by emigration: there is a real danger that emigration to other EU countries and elsewhere will drain our country of its educated classes.

Of course, there are successes as well. We are finally independent. We have democracy, however imperfect. The number of students at the institutions of higher learning has dramatically increased. In fact, progress in education is probably the greatest achievement of the Third Republic.

However, we have to ask: what can those newly educated young people do in Poland? Almost 40 percent of our youth cannot find adequate jobs. While we applaud successes of the educational system, we have to remember the next step. The 40 percent unemployment rate is more relevant to the future of our youth than the educational successes we can congratulate ourselves on. This being so, we urgently need to initiate processes that will improve the material situation of those most in need of assistance. In recent times, the two great social initiatives about which we spoke, construction of the highway system and affordable housing, have ended in failure. We have to reanimate these initiatives to assure rapid economic growth for the country.

What means do we have to accomplish this? I do not have in mind only financial means but also, and primarily, that sense of purpose that we seemingly regained in 1989 but that was thwarted by various realities. In Poland today the following questions have to be asked: What does it mean to live in a well-functioning state? What are the fundamental requirements for such a state? The following answer suggests itself. First and foremost, the leaders of such a state have to be democratically elected. A well-functioning state has to be governed by just laws to be effective. The bureaucracy essentially does what those in power tell it to do, according to the law. As to the economic decisions, in all well-functioning countries they too flow naturally from the general plan, which the elected government should have. In states that do not function well the lobbying powers weigh in disproportionately on economic decisions. The well-

functioning state does not rely on socialist planning but rather on a consensus, wisely researched and patiently built, about what is appropriate for the common good. This is the second aspect of a well-functioning state.

Third, a well-functioning state has to fulfill its obligation to assure security for its citizens and, to some extent, for the community of the states with which it associates itself. The aspect of security also includes the minimal standard of living that the state has to strive to assure for its citizens. Fourth, security also concerns the freedom of economic activity and, finally, the rights of citizens vis-a-vis the state, or rather, vis-a-vis the possible abuses of power by the state. Let us now ask whether the Polish state has fulfilled all these obligations during the last seventeen years.

We have had democratic elections and we do fulfill our international duties, but this does not cover all the aspects of the problem of security. The problem of energy security (the opportunity to buy oil and gas) has not been solved. Did the state assure the personal safety of citizens? Criminality in our society is so high that this question cannot be answered in the affirmative, both with regard to the megacriminals and the petty criminals. Unemployment, the sorry state of the apartment buildings in which so many of our citizens live, and the decline in health services make us lean toward a negative answer. What about economic freedom? It is enough to talk to small and medium business owners, and sometimes even to major businessmen, to hear that such freedom has often been thwarted.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, has our state protected its citizens from the abuses of state power? Alas, here too the answer has to be no. Much could be said about all kinds of excesses that have been happening with greater frequency than it might seem at first.

What about the ability to lead and initiate economic policies? It is clear to most people that the officials of our state have often had strong connections with the lobbying interests and even with criminal activities. In this situation, there can be no question about just and disinterested leadership in economic matters. I would say more: the last seventeen years did not see any economic policy clearly formulated and successfully implemented. There have been pressures, and under these pressures decisions were undertaken. Similar things can be said about all aspects of the process of governing (*applause*). I repeat, the state apparatus today is subject to pathologies that sometimes go very deep. This causes an inability to act on behalf

of citizenry; instead, the government often acts on behalf of the various privileged groups.

The results are far reaching, and they have a major impact on the economy. We all pay what may be called a corruption tax, or robbery tax. In the Third Republic, interest groups that use a certain *modus operandi* have taken over state and even private property without equivalent compensation.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is another aspect of this *modus operandi*. People who show honest economic initiative and who know how to produce wealth by honest methods are often pushed aside, if not destroyed, figuratively speaking. This amounts to destroying the most valuable part of our social and economic mechanism, the mechanism that advances the common good by means of effective economic activity (*applause*).

Ladies and gentlemen, let us look at the situation in the most profitable branches of our economy. Who are the winners there, and who are the losers? It is clear to many that the mechanisms that work there have little to do with free market principles. Those who have investigated the details of the situation—and these details can be dug up without much difficulty—see that these branches of the economy are intertwined with the former or current special services. This is a peculiarity of our state today (*applause*), the reality of Poland over the last seventeen years. A peculiar role of the special services, old and new, intertwined. A ruthless and, until recently, very effective defense mechanism employed in maintaining the status quo also with regard to those who had smoothly been transferred from the old regime to the new, without any “lustration” whatsoever.

This situation has to change. The Law and Justice Party considers this change to be a key part of its job (*applause*).

Ladies and gentlemen, let us give these seventeen years another look. During these seventeen years, we had only one government which was neither participating in nor condoning these mechanisms of corruption, in part or in full. I repeat, there was only one such government, that of Prime Minister Jan Olszewski. I am not counting the present government (*applause*). It is therefore appropriate to invoke the Olszewski cabinet and say a few words about what took place during its tenure. It is worthwhile to remember those anti-government campaigns that were launched then, because they may help understand the anti-government campaigns being launched today.

What did that government do? Alas, it did not have a comprehensive program of the kind Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz has today. We have to admit that it was our fault, for it was our party that was in power then. But despite a lack of a well-articulated program for the future, the Olszewski government tried to combat [foreign] agents, especially those embedded in the military special services. It also dared to question what some of our remarkable journalists have ironically called a “new and scientific” worldview. Members of that government did not comfort themselves with the naive belief that after 1989 a miracle occurred in Poland and the old state apparatus suddenly became the apparatus of a democratic state, while the network of special interests that consolidated in the 1980s was suddenly dissolved by a Parliament fiat, and that the existence of a well-functioning market economy could also be so declared. It is small wonder that members of the Olszewski government were brutally and often mendaciously attacked, both in Poland and abroad. A particularly insistent lie, perpetuated inside and outside Poland, was the idea that after Leszek Balcerowicz’s economic successes (they amounted largely to a decrease in the Polish GDP), the Polish economy was about to disappear into a black hole.

What was the real situation? During Prime Minister Olszewski’s tenure, the Polish economy began to grow again after two years of decline (*applause*). The widely distributed information that it was not so was mendacious. It was a lie, pure and simple. Yet Jan Olszewski’s famous question, to whom will Poland belong, was ridiculed and countered with an allegedly more relevant question: what kind of Poland will exist in the future—even though it was clear enough that the answer to the first question was tantamount to answering the second.

The Olszewski government collapsed. Today, we pledge to continue its unfulfilled promises and tasks. And just as the Olszewski government evoked fear and loathing among the defenders of special interests, so has the Marcinkiewicz government become the target of various hostile maneuvers.

But today the situation is different. In the last five years many things have happened in Poland. The years 2003–2004 have been particularly significant. During those years, the government of Prime Minister Leszek Miller inadvertently displayed the backstage of the economic deals which were being concluded during his tenure. Therefore, it is more difficult to lie today than ten years ago, although some people still try. Barring that, other methods are used to conceal the

truth. All these attempts have intensified because we in the PiS are trying to pull that backstage curtain wide open (*applause*). We do, in fact, want to pull it down. Such an operation, if successful, would launch us on the road to making our country truly a country of and for Polish citizens (*strong applause*).

This perspective of total demystification has caused much commotion among those who have profited from the system. To defend it, new ideas have been ushered in, ideas that could be described as “restoration,” to use the vocabulary of historical sciences: change a great deal around the edges, but leave the system essentially intact and fortify it in such a way that no one can rebel against it in the foreseeable future. To accomplish this by means of activities that, in theory, could be undertaken in a democratic way, but that in Polish conditions would make democracy impotent and dysfunctional. And to do so at the expense of those who are the poorest in our society. Such webs of influence need to be reconfigured from time to time, according to the economists. Thus such a reconfiguration had begun to be promoted on a large scale. To many it seemed that it had a great chance of success. Some of its adherents presented it in a way that made it almost indistinguishable from our program of real change. The society woke up to hope, and so have we in PiS.

Well, the promoters of the “restoration project” lost the elections. What won was the concept of radical change (*applause*). Consequently, members of the informal network of influences prepared new methods of combat. I would like to briefly mention two of them. The first brings in attacks on the PiS government from the outside as it were, by proffering interpretations of our government that are far from the truth. This is a tried and true method of imputing motives that the government does not in fact possess. An opinion is being perpetuated that no matter who wins the elections, the system will remain in place, because the stronger always win and grab the spoils for themselves.

The activities meant to promote honest competition in our economic market, the attempts to prevent members of the corrupt system from winning because they cannot deliver a cheaper or better product, are presented as attacks on democracy and the free market. An avalanche of insinuations and plain lies accompanies such statements. Indeed, in today’s Poland one observes a triumph of the insinuation principle.

Years ago, writer Józef Mackiewicz wrote about the “victory of the provocation.” This time it is not a victory but rather boastfulness, and not of provocation

but rather of insinuation. One should look at the details of this process. Who participates in it? The answer is simple: almost the entire elite of the Third Republic is involved in it. We remember very well the times when a counterreality, a reality articulated for public consumption, was a permanent aspect of the media and a formative element of the political system. Some of that fictional reality has disappeared, but much of this total lack of respect for the facts has been inherited by the Third Republic.

Yet, I repeat, something changed in the years 2003–2004. The gap between reality and what one reads about in the papers became smaller. But attempts are made to reanimate this old counterreality. Nikolai Berdiaev was probably the first to describe it in the Soviet Union; it would be good if it disappeared for good in Poland. This has not yet happened. But since PiS is accused of being hostile to democracy, let us ask when during these seventeen years was Polish democracy endangered, and who was in power then?

Let us recall that at one point [in 1993, *Ed.*], the UOP [Office for the Protection of the State, or part of the special services to which Mr. Kaczyński refers. *Ed.*] issued Instruction no. 0015, which in effect reintroduced the political police to Poland. These were the times when the Polish right was harassed: our special police services harassed the legally functioning political parties. The public square was being shaped by the power-wielding networks. Even elections were tampered with indirectly. And it was not PiS or its predecessor, PC (the mother party of PiS), that was in power then. No, PC was being brutally attacked at that time. Many of those who attack PiS now were in power when PC was attacked. They were the ones who made statements to the effect that one should first have free market and only later democracy. Thus, if there are forces in Poland that wish to curb democracy, they should not be sought on this side of the political fence.

Mr. Speaker! Ladies and gentlemen! Democracy in Poland is not in danger. The rule of law is not in danger. What is in danger is the unofficial web of connections that goes back to communist times. We shall fight against that network. We want to destroy it. We want to use legal methods, the methods appropriate for a country that believes in the rule of law. Our first goal is to discredit that network as immoral. We want to show who defends that network, and we have a right to do so. Polish citizens do have the right to know. We also want to do it because the network has intensified its activities lately.

Specifically, we face a front that defends the criminals of the past and attacks the Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro (*applause*). It would be instructive to know if those who now sign various declarations about democracy were equally brave during the time of trial, before 1989, and also after that date. I remember what was done about Instruction no. 0015 by a certain lawyer, who is still very active and who used to be the head of the Constitutional Tribunal. I remember that, and many of you do too. I remember cowardice and repulsive opportunism (*applause*). We shall not allow the criminal front to win. While dictatorship and authoritarianism in Poland are out of the question and only the naive believe that they are not, Poland does need order, and it shall achieve it (*prolonged applause*). Law and order are in the interest of ordinary people, and ordinary Poles are our first concern (*applause*). The Law and Order Party is a party of ordinary people, and we are proud of it (*applause*).

Mr. Speaker! Ladies and Gentlemen! I would also like to mention the second way of attacking and undermining Prime Minister Marcinkiewicz's government. This way can be called "internal criticism." It consists of highlighting the apparent contradictions in our program, unfriendly assessment of what the government is currently doing about the problems mentioned in our program. Such criticism is often laced with ill will and hostility, but it has to be taken seriously even if it is not motivated by concern for the common good. Let me attempt to answer such criticism in a general way, by reminding ourselves of certain obvious issues. The first concerns the most important and historically grounded function of a nation state: the defense of the interests of citizens vis-a-vis other nation states. Has the government done anything in that area? The government has been quite successful in the ongoing negotiations in Brussels, and I do not have in mind solely the financial issues. Those who know the details of these negotiations will surely admit that we can boast a measure of success in the great game that is now being played out in Europe. We are taking advantage of the possibilities of participating in that game in a certain way. We have been quite successful in our relations with the United States, the relations that open up various possibilities for us. We see light at the end of the tunnel even in those matters which seemed all but impossible to solve some time ago. We are making progress in the matter of national security. We are undertaking initiatives in the matter of energy supplies, of the supplies of gas in particular. And all this is moving ahead quickly, which could not

Seen from the political perspective, the picture is more complex. The obviously predominant one is that of a Poland of an assumed modernity, as envisioned by the “enlightened liberals”: open to the outside world or, to put it less diplomatically, favoring the supranational and the postnational over the national; and hostile to the other Poland, until very recently almost unheard from, one accused of provincialism and clericalism by the former, but in fact advocating adherence to the Polish cultural identity, with Catholicism not banned from the public domain. While the former preaches economic liberalism as a means to raise the destitute in due course, the latter emphasizes the state’s role in bringing welfare to the poor as soon as possible. The latter also claims that its adherents think in terms of social solidarity, which is a key part of the fabric of a healthy society. However, they are accused of populism and socialist sentiments by the former. The “liberals” prefer anything individual over (almost) anything communal. The first of these two Polands has its major political representation in the party called the Civic Platform (PO) with Donald Tusk at the helm. Its main adversary is the Law and Justice Party (PiS) led by Jarosław Kaczyński.

Broadly speaking, both these parties are center-right. In the Parliament (Sejm), PiS has 155 seats and PO has 133. Four more parties have their representations in the Parliament. These are: the Self-Defense Movement with 56 seats, the Left Democratic Alliance (SLD) with 55 seats, the League of Polish Families (LPR) with 34, and the Polish Peasants Party (PSL) with 25 seats. The Self-Defense Movement and LPR are populist parties, the latter with a strong pretense to a Catholic slant. Both claim to represent the lower social strata, with the Self-Defense Movement having a chance to become a voice of those aspiring to the middle class in small cities and rural areas. The Left Democratic Alliance is a party led mainly by the postcommunists, with strong appeal to the old and, partly, the new Left. Most importantly, it is connected to, if not a part of, an informal power structure that has developed in Poland since 1989. This system rests on participation in the governing institutions of which the post-communists had control in the years 1993–1997 and 2001–2005, and on the ensuing web of connections usually hidden from the public eye. In addition to running much of the country’s economy, this system—with considerable help from Adam Michnik’s newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*—has succeeded in making the society at large politically disoriented, and either alienated or deeply frustrated, or both. Those

disoriented and frustrated (but not alienated from politics) are now the major constituencies of the four political parties. From that group comes a part of the constituency of PiS as well.(1)

The power system in which the postcommunists hold the invisible levers is now in disarray. Founded in 1989, it first manifested itself as a dominant strand of the sociopolitical ideology, and only later in the economic arena. Let us not forget that in 1989, in what can be described as in the nick of time, Poland was declared a democratic regime of law and order, with its gaze focused on the bright future and with memory of the past erased. As alleged by some, the immediate memories were too painful, since “we all had been”—more or less, explicitly or implicitly—immersed in the service of the formerly totalitarian state. Lustration, let alone decommunization, was declared to be abominable: we have all been tainted, so how could we lustrate ourselves? Remembering the past was said to be counterproductive; it slowed the tide of near-affluence and (post)modernity, of tolerance, multiculturalism and other blessings of postnational Europe (never mind that this dream of postnationalism has never become reality). Remembering the past was therefore unwelcome, to say the least. Catholicism was equated with clericalism; holding to tradition and cultural identity was equated with ignorance; the word “patriotism” (read as “chauvinism”) was deleted from the vocabulary. Since the advocates of such views were numerous and vocal, and virtually monopolized the media, many people lost their sense of direction and an ability to distinguish between true and false, or even right and wrong.

As the twentieth century was coming to a close, however, it became clear to many that democracy and the (relatively) free market, while being real blessings, could also be exploited by ex-apparatchiks, by the former communist secret service agents, and by other functionaries of the now-defunct Soviet-occupied “People’s Poland.” Still later, some people realized why there was no reprivatization of individual property confiscated by the communist state, and why the privatization of large enterprises proceeded in strange twists. And only recently we learned that corruption has achieved unbelievably high levels. To the amazement of all, there happened the Rywingates, Orlen-gates, and PZU-gates.(2) The common people began to comprehend that there is a clandestine power system whose ambition is to dominate our country. This system functions in a mafia-style fashion, and it is partly controlled by the former communists and apparatchiks.

Professor Zdzisław Krasnodębski was right when he attributed the obvious crisis within this system to the following three factors: the parliamentary investigations of the Rywin case and other cases; establishing the Institute of National Memory; and—despite all their shortcomings—the media.⁽³⁾ All three have helped the Polish people to see the real state of Polish affairs. Jarosław Kaczyński is also right when he points out that the years of successes of the special interests made the postcommunists overconfident and convinced that they can go unpunished, whatever they do. They became less cautious and were caught in their dirty dealings. Such was the background of the offer Lew Rywin made to Adam Michnik. If accepted, the offer would have implicated Michnik in one of the major corruption scandals. Michnik declined and made the offer public, and so the corrupt system was shaken for the first time.

The system's erosion was what PiS leadership was waiting for. Jarosław Kaczyński, with his twin brother Lech's support (Lech is now President of Poland), desired the dismantling of the Round Table compromise forged under duress, to relieve Poland from postcommunist infiltration. Already in 1990 the Center Alliance (PC), the predecessor of PiS and also led by Jarosław Kaczyński, was declared a "threat to democracy" by the liberal-social-democratic ROAD movement, which was at that moment the dominant faction among the political circles that emerged out of Solidarity and the main architect of the Round Table compromise from Solidarity's side (ROAD later became the Democratic Union, or UD, and still later Freedom Union, or UW). Kaczyński himself, who along with his brother, was then the closest advisor to Lech Wałęsa, was dubbed by his leftist adversaries "Wałęsa's evil genius."

To make a long story short, after three years of feuding between the politicians who claimed Solidarity connection, SLD, in coalition with PSL, took over power in 1993. In the elections to the Parliament in 1997, SLD won 164 seats out of 460 seats, Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność (AWS) 202 seats, and UW 60 seats. The AWS-UW coalition was formed, but it fell apart even before the next elections in 2001. In mid-2000, UW left the coalition and AWS formed a minority government. Thus throughout the 1990s the post-Solidarity parties and factions were in disarray, regrouping as if in a haze, and leaving parts of their potential constituencies rudderless and helpless. SLD, this time in coalition with PSL and the strongly leftist Unia Pracy (UP), took power again and ruled until 2005.

The center-right forces learned their lesson, at least in part. In early 2001, PO and PiS were formed and since then rose to become the major contenders for power in 2005. Interestingly and rather unexpectedly, it was the conflict between AWS and UW that greatly facilitated the formation of PiS. When UW left the coalition with AWS, Lech Kaczyński, a retired politician, was offered the position of the Minister of Justice and also of Attorney General, made vacant after the UW Minister and Attorney had been dismissed. Not surprisingly and to the horror of the liberal legal academia, Minister Kaczyński proved determined to change the criminal code into a more severe one. He also tried to reform the everyday workings of the legal system. Kaczyński occupied the position for a very short time, but his short tenure sufficed to gain him much popularity within the society at large. He began forming PiS largely on the basis of this popularity. PiS was later taken over by his brother, a seasoned politician in his own right.

Prior to the parliamentary elections in September 2005, it was widely predicted that PO and PiS would gain the majority of votes. Virtually all polls said that PO would have a slight edge over PiS. The predictions were wrong only on which party would be the winner: it was PiS that got a slight majority, not PO. A clear majority of those who voted for either of the two parties wished that after the presidential elections in October a coalition would be formed between PiS and PO, regardless of whether Kaczyński or Donald Tusk won the presidency. That it did not happen was a shock to the public, in fact the first in a series.

Judging from what the public heard and saw after the elections ended, PO leaders did much to prevent the coalition. It was obvious from the outset that the PiS's main objective or, better to say, mission, was to bring back law and order, curtail corruption, and reorganize the intelligence and security services, all this through deep institutional changes. No wonder that PiS needed to gain control over the Ministries of Justice, Interior Affairs, and Administration, and Defense. It was equally obvious that PO was reaching for power as a guarantor of enhancing economic improvement, in particular via changes in the revenue tax code (PO refused to show more of its economic program, reportedly because it was too radical to be presented to a wide audience prior to the elections, the more so as the PiS's counterpart included much wishful thinking and all too obvious signs of a dangerous populist utopia). And yet PO decided to make the appointment of one of its leaders, Jan Maria Rokita, to the Minister

of Interior Affairs and Administration a necessary condition of joining the coalition. Because of a well-known rivalry between Rokita and Tusk, noted commentator Krzysztof Czabański called the PO condition, whose fulfilment would have strengthened Rokita's position within the party, the "joke of the year."⁽³⁾ Another leader of PO, Bronisław Komorowski, before he was made another of PO's "must-haves," in this case for Speaker of the Sejm, started a campaign of insults against PiS. The campaign swiftly achieved the level of complete absurdity. Simultaneously and from the beginning, contrary to evidence, PiS was consistently accused of only pretending to forge a coalition with PO, while in fact heading for such a coalition with the Self-Defense Movement and LPR. Such were the first several weeks after the elections, during which Jarosław Kaczyński and PiS under his guidance proved much abler players.

Apparently, for PO to form a coalition with PiS as a dominating partner was not an option (at one point, Rokita, otherwise a shrewd politician, complained that PiS did not agree to treat PO on a par, as if forgetting that PO lost the elections). It did not help PiS to send signals of restraint and rationality when it came to state welfare programs—evidently, the PiS pre-election program was not to be read literally in practice, and there could have been room for compromise on economic matters.

Attacks on PiS by PO and by the PO-inspired media have continued. In some media, PiS has been presented as a threat to democracy. Given the persistence of these attacks, one is tempted to wonder whether the web of informal connections, while originating with the postcommunists, had in fact spread to wider segments of the political and business circles and has reached the media. On the other hand, there have been some signals that the PO is interested in preserving the option of a possible coalition with PiS, whether out of self-interest or out of political realism that calls for moderation when striving for any betterment.

Whatever the reasons behind the conflict between PO and PiS, and however weak the Polish political system still is, it would be best for Poland if the two parties agreed to act together. If this were to happen, PiS would have to impose constraints on its plans for administrative change, and PO would have to stop indiscriminately opposing PiS's initiatives. Nothing in the programs of either party prevents them from sitting down together and working out a viable compromise on economic reform, first and foremost lowering the costs of labor and moving on with privatization based

on transparent rules. All this needs to be done for the common good, including the good of the now-destitute segments of society. Yet nothing like that is likely to happen soon.

In 1989, after fifty years of German and Soviet occupations, "the Third Republic" of Poland was established as a successor to the Second Republic of 1918–1939. With the Rywin-gate and other scandals revealed, many hoped that the year 2005 would mark the end of the Third Republic and the beginning of the fourth one. It now remains to be seen if the noncommunist political class is able to make this dream come true. ▲

NOTES

1. For a detailed account of the history of Poland between 1989–2001, see Antoni Dudek, *Pierwsze lata Rzeczypospolitej, 1989-2001*, 2nd edition (Kraków: Arcana, 2001).
2. Lew Rywin, a Polish financier now accused of major corruption; Orlen, a Polish energy company likewise accused of corruption; PZU, a major Polish insurance company.
3. Zdzisław Krasnodębski, "Pożegnanie z III Rzeczypospolitą," *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 September 2005.
4. Krzysztof Czabański, "Wzięte z sufitu," *Rzeczpospolita*, 3 November 2005.

BOOKS Books

The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999, by Timothy Snyder. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003. Maps, notes, index. xv + 367 pages. ISBN 0-300-09569-4. Paper. \$20.00 at Amazon.com.

This is one book that should be kept next to Norman Davies's works as a masterly tool in explicating non-Germanic Central and Eastern Europe. It details the postcommunist period as none of the currently-available histories of the region does. Very highly recommended.

Keeping Catholics in Their Place: The Boston Globe's Cultural Imperialism, by Robert P. Largess. Milwaukee, WI: The Catholic League for Religions and Civil Rights, 1983. 75 pages. Paper.

This little book alleges that the *Boston Globe*, one of this nation's most influential newspapers, has for years dismissed, belittled, passed over in silence, and ridiculed the achievements, beliefs, and lifestyle of persons of Catholic background in the Boston area. The

thesis is bolstered by case studies. The book is two decades old, and a follow-up to its investigations would certainly be welcome. A friend of *Sarmatian Review* mentioned this book to us because it seemed to express opinions similar to those expressed in “Our Take” (*SR*, XXV:3, September 2005).

***Urodzony z piołunów: o poezji Bogdana Czaykowskiego*, by Bożena Szałasta-Rogowska.** Katowice-Toronto: Polski Fundusz Wydawniczy w Kanadzie (PO Box 173, Postal Station B, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2T3, Canada), 2005. 172 pages. Index, bibliography. ISBN 0-921724-45-4. In Polish.

The Vancouver-based poet and university professor Bogdan Czaykowski (b. 1932) is not much given to self-promotion, and it is therefore particularly gratifying to see a book about him written by a Polish doctoral student. The book does follow the format that a graduate student in Polish has to adopt, but within that format much insight is given into this poet who deals with the horrors of life with gentility and gentleness. Czaykowski’s poetry frequently invokes nature, both the breathtaking beauty of British Columbia and the poet’s native Ukraine from which his Polish family was deported to the labor camps of Soviet Russia. Eventually, in much-diminished numbers, Czaykowski’s family managed to leave Russia for Persia, and then the United Kingdom. How to deal with such a blood-soaked past has been a dilemma for many survivors. As evidenced by his poetry, Czaykowski rejected the accusations, bitterness, and complaints that one so often hears from survivors. He concentrated on the here and now, both in his professional life and in his poetry. This enabled him to return to the past later in life, and to do so without the attitude of “the world owes me a living.” The world has never offered Poles a living, no matter how much they suffered and what they went through. Szałasta-Rogowska’s book is testimony to the poet’s triumphal survival, to the resilience and power of the Polish language that so many Polish-born poets have chosen in exile (even though, in many cases, they had English at their disposal), and to the power of the human spirit that endures and proclaims instead of complaining and demanding attention. (*sb*)

***(Mis)translation and (Mis)interpretation: Polish Literature in the Context of Cross-Cultural Communication*, by Piotr Wilczek.** Literary and Cultural Theory Series, vol. 22. Frankfurt-am-Main Peter Lang, 2005. ISSN 1434-0313, ISBN 3-631-54628-9. 164 pages. Bibliography. Paper.

We would have preferred no parentheses in the title.

Papers on sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and twentieth-century Polish literature, the Polish canon, and the obstacles to being assimilated abroad. Our favorite is “Jesuits in Poland according to A. F. Pollard”—not because its earlier version was previously published in *Sarmatian Review*, but because it illustrates a desperate ignorance about Polish culture that began to gather steam in the nineteenth century and came to full fruition in the twentieth. It still blossoms.

***Średniowiecze*, by Andrzej Dąbrówka.** Warsaw: PWN (www.pwn.pl), 2005. 435 pages. Bibliography, index. ISBN 83-01-14430-0. Paper. In Polish.

A magisterial textbook on the Polish Middle Ages. It covers history, religious texts, literature, oral literature, and various aspects of medieval culture in Poland. A treasure trove indeed. One wishes for an English translation.

***Literatura polskiego renesansu*, by Piotr Wilczek.** Katowice: University of Silesia Press (wydawus@us.edu.pl), 2005. Bibliography. 197 pages. ISBN 83-226-1492-6. Zł. 14.00. In Polish.

An accessible volume on the main aspects of the Polish Renaissance, its prevailing philosophy, education, art and architecture, and literary traditions. Includes chapters on the major writers: Andrzej Frycz-Modrzewski, Mikołaj Rej, Jan Kochanowski, Łukasz Górnicki, Piotr Skarga, and others.

***U stóp królewskiego Wawelu: Społeczność ukraińska w Krakowie w latach 1918–1939*, by Tadeusz Filar.** Kraków: Biblioteka Fundacji św. Włodzimierza, 2004. 262 pages. ISBN 8391575977. Paper. In Polish.

The front cover shows a Cossack street musician dressed in a traditional Cossack garb and playing a *bandura* in front of Saint Mary’s Church in Kraków. This picture corresponds to what is inside the book: the story of a vibrant and colorful minority in the land “close but foreign,” at a time when the Ukrainian people had no country of their own.

The twentieth-century Ukrainian diaspora in Kraków traced its history several centuries back to the times of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and its fate was tied to the fate of the Ukrainian minority in the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939). The author points out that before the Second World War Ukrainians formed almost a fifth of Poland’s population. He traces the history of Ukrainians in Poland from the rebirth of Poland following the end of the First World War through the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1918–1919, the Polish-Soviet War of 1918–1921, the Treaty of Riga (1921), the economic stabilization followed by the

Great Depression, the May 1926 *coup d'état* of Piłsudski and the rise of the Sanacja government, the Soviet communism "experiments" in the Ukrainian SSR, the tightening of the Polish government policies aiming at the integration of minorities into the mainstream Polish culture and the creation of a homogenous state, all the way to the rise of tensions, radicalization of Ukrainian political activists, Polish pacifications of Ukrainian villages and Ukrainian assassinations of Polish politicians. Kraków's Ukrainian community is described by the author as a reflection of all Ukrainians in the Second Polish Republic. Filar highlights the attempts of many Poles and Ukrainians to stop the escalation of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict. These attempts are almost forgotten today, and it is good that the author reminds us of them. Contributions of people like the Kraków mayor Mikołaj Zybkiewicz and Jagiellonian University professor Bohdan Łepkyj are examples.

Kraków is the former capital of the Polish Kingdom, and Ukrainians who lived there before the Second World War formed many civic institutions supporting their culture and providing sustenance for members of the Ukrainian community. Most of the Ukrainians came from the villages and small towns of Eastern Galicia, yet they actively participated in the life of the city, says the author.

The book ends with a brief note on the Polish September 1939 campaign in response to the German attack which started the Second World War. The author notes that the subsequent years are a difficult area of research, as they culminated in the mass deportations of Ukrainians from Poland in the Soviet-orchestrated "Wisła" Action. The "Wisła" Action, carried under NKVD directions and supervision, left little choice to either Poles or Ukrainians, and it put an end to the unique multicultural society that evolved during the centuries of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations (which ought to be renamed the Commonwealth of the Three Nations).

As the author admits, this first attempt to present a complete picture of the Ukrainian diaspora in Kraków at that time is not perfect, especially as the Polish sources seem to be more easily available than the Ukrainian ones. However, the bibliography contains a significant number of non-Polish publications which, taken together with the author's preface, are aimed at assuring the reader that all voices have been heard and given consideration. Filar's book is the most comprehensive one so far on the Polish-Ukrainian relations before the Second World War. It is a good

starting place for future studies of the subject. (*Piotr Konieczny*)

"The Polish American Family," in *Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations* edited by Charles H. Mindel et al. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988. 505 pages.

I found *Ethnic Families* in a Detroit-area used bookstore. The book provides an analysis of eighteen discrete ethnicities. As a third-generation scion of the American Polonia, I approached this chapter with keen interest and trepidation. My immigrant grandparents spoke only Polish, and I have witnessed our family's progressive adaptation to mainstream American society. Chapter Two, "The Polish American Family," was authored by Professor Helena Znaniecka Lopata of Chicago's Loyola University. Dr. Lopata's essay begins with a historical background and goes on to explore the common themes in Polish American families over several generations. She manages to present her themes in a succinct yet enlightening way as she deals with the national character, status competition, organized Polonia, family life, the respective roles of men and women, later stages in life, and change and adaptation. She elucidated a number of our family's idiosyncratic foibles; e.g., her discussion of the *okolica* concept placed in context many identity issues my family members have ruminated on throughout their lives. The insular qualities of living within Polonian communities are properly presented. The presentation of such subjects as gender roles and their evolution within Polonia is objective and non-sentimental. Finally, the potential weakening or demise of Polish identification due to intermarriage and American societal assimilation are introduced and discussed. Altogether, the chapter provides excellent reading for those who wish to understand their Polishness and deepen awareness of their roots. It has enlarged my understanding of where we have been, who we are, and who we are becoming. (*Cary M. Zdziebko Sheremet*)

***Gagarin Street: Poems*, by Piotr Gwiazda.** Washington, DC: Washington Writers' Publishing House (PO Box 15271, Washington, DC 2003), 2005. ISBN 0-931846-80-3. Paper.

The book opens with a postcommunist nostalgia song sung from the safe perch of a job in the United States of America. Mercifully, the remainder amounts to only sixty-one pages of bad poetry.



Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy 2004

Edited by Barbara Wizimirska. Warsaw: Polish Foreign Ministry (aleksandra.zieleniec@msz.gov.pl), 2005. 324 pages. ISSN 1233-9903. Paper. Contains a list of personnel in Polish foreign service.

Edward J. Rozek

Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy 2004 is well edited. The editor-in-chief of the series, Roman Kuzniar, and his editorial board are to be complimented for that.

The book is divided into six sections, each containing several articles. Section 1, "Vectors," consists of a speech by Minister of Foreign Affairs Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, an article on national security, and an article on the war in Iraq. Section 2 deals with the European Union and Poland's place in it. Section 3, "Problems," consists of four general articles on international relations. The articles in Section 4 discuss relations between Poland and the United States, Germany, France, Asia, and the Pacific countries, and, finally, the Visegrad group. Section 5 is a summary of Poland's foreign relations in 2003. Section 6, for the first time since the Polish Foreign Office began publishing the Yearbook, lists all ninety-nine embassies and a similar number of consulates that Poland maintains around the world. Overall, the articles are well written and informative.

The *Yearbook's* weaknesses lie in its serious omissions. There is no discussion of Russo-Polish relations, although Russia is Poland's neighbor and, even after the end of the Warsaw Pact, has continued to exert an enormous influence on Polish affairs. Although Poland's economic relations with foreign countries are under consideration in several articles, no mention is made of Poland's internal economy, which the successive postcommunist governments have startlingly dismantled. Today Poland is the poorest country in EU, with 18 percent unemployment and 17 percent of the population under the poverty level. Many of the unemployed are young people, who are becoming restless and are looking for opportunities to emigrate to western European countries or the United States.

Strictly speaking, the title, *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy*, is a misnomer. In the fifteen years since

the country achieved its independence from the Soviet Union, that policy has been shaped by a handful of Moscow-trained and Moscow-influenced postcommunists: President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, former prime minister and foreign minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, former prime minister and speaker of the Sejm Józef Oleksy, prime minister Leszek Miller, president of the Senate Longin Pastusiak, a number of top officials of the ministry of foreign affairs, and a number of ambassadors who are trusted by the postcommunists. With the exception of the short periods when Jan Olszewski and Jerzy Buzek were prime ministers, the foreign policy of the Third Republic has been hijacked by former communists. It was only at the end of 2005 that Polish patriots (elected to the Sejm and the Presidency in 2005) were in charge of the country's foreign policy. Not until 2006 will it be possible to consider the nation's foreign policy truly Polish.

In addition to being a member of the Visegrad group, which is briefly considered in one article, Poland is a member of NATO. Her representatives participate in various conferences and operations of that organization, yet Poland's role in NATO is not discussed in the book.

Poland is also a member of the United Nations. In 2004 it became a member of the European Union. I personally hope that the Polish voters will follow the example of the French and Dutch voters and decide to withdraw by not ratifying the EU's constitution, which was hastily prepared, mostly by French politicians like Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Jacques Chirac, in such a manner as to give France the preponderance of power. Various ancient European nations, whose history goes back more than a thousand years, cannot be unceremoniously uprooted and made part of an organization that does not, through its projected constitution, take their traditions into account.

The former communists, who began their lives under Soviet occupation, were easily persuaded to consider the European Union a substitute for the Soviet Union. By doing so, they sacrificed Poland's interests on many occasions. Among other problems, the European Union presupposes open borders, which means that terrorists from the Middle East or Asia can move across Europe without being obliged to identify themselves to any European authority. This is potentially an enormous security problem for Poland and for all members of the European Union.

Being a member of NATO is sufficient for Poland's security. Poland's greatest enemy is geography. Placed between Russia and Germany, Poland has had to devote

a greater percentage of her economic resources to provide for the nation's security than the countries on the western and northern rim of Europe.

Another of the book's weakness is the fact that there is only a cursory eleven-page discussion of Poland's relations with Asian nations such as China with a population of 1.3 billion, India with a population of over a billion, Indonesia, and the Philippines. There is a lack of vision in this book, as befits the communist-bred bureaucracy, used to do as little as possible and "not to rock the boat" so as to retain their armchair positions in the ministries, embassies, and consulates.

The recently elected leaders Lech Kaczyński and Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz face the formidable task of reshaping Poland's foreign relations with a view of providing security for the nation. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs Stefan Meller is better qualified than any of his predecessors to shape the foreign policy of Poland. ▲

The Grasinski Girls The Choices They Had and the Choices They Made

By **Mary Patrice Erdmans**. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press (Ohio University Press Polish and Polish-American Studies Series), 2004. 352 pages. ISBN 0-8214-1581-6. Hardcover. \$49.95.

Justyna Sempruch

Mary Patrice Erdmans takes us on a remarkable journey into the lives of women homemakers of Polish descent, their commitments to the American lifestyle, domestic routines, and motherhood. What is usually assumed to be a common and uneventful story of an average "nonworking" woman in the United States unfolds in Erdmans' account as a proposal to look at the more subtle ways that social structures constrain ordinary lives, and to search for resistance where assumptions, stereotyping, and prejudice practiced by a majority of traditional sociologists have prevented a deeper reach. While deciphering and tracing this resistance, Erdmans discovers numerous paradoxes, such as the fact that the ethnic minorities and women immigrants are too often grouped together with working-class women, whereas in fact they often represent different social cultures. She also notes that ethnicity, assisted by religion, sorts the various groups

into neighborhoods and occupations before any class structure actually does. Social class per se appears in Erdmans' analysis as a "muddy category," merging the "poor" and "financially stable" working-class families with the "lower-middle" and "middle-class" categories of status. However, her discussion of the Grasinski girls' assimilation to the American lifestyle clearly reminds us that class and status do matter, and that their integration is inevitably linked to social mobility.

Erdmans' research subjects have generally been classed together with working-class women, but they also emerge as her own relatives of Polish descent. On that basis it becomes apparent that moving up the social ladder for these women (including Erdmans herself) meant moving away from the ethnic community. Erdmans painstakingly analyzes this process of moving away, in which she also comes to understand her own connections to "Polishness." We assume, perhaps too quickly, that "Polishness" derives from Poland. The relation is not that simple. In defining its constructedness as "some sort of bastardisation," Erdmans rightfully argues that the traditional values originating from Poland are visibly based on the "blue blood" experience. In the process of cultural loss and successive assimilation to a foreign culture, it is predominantly upper-class home culture that constitutes itself as authentic and, subsequently, as "traditional value," while many other facets of culture, such as peasant culture, are discarded from collective memory.

One of such discarded traces, as Erdmans reminds us, is the centrality of motherhood in the Polish peasant tradition, and its continuous persistence in the lives of the Grasinski girls. Indeed, their life stories are deeply immersed in this culturally devalued maternal territory. The primacy of this identification seems to gesture toward a psychic paradigm of emotional attachment that, despite its own vagueness, constitutes itself as their dominant "status." When asked about the meaning of "being a mother," these women do not describe the various tasks of mothering but persistently point toward the privilege of motherhood, the emotion of maternal experience, and the spiritual depth of their attachments. Mothering in this sense becomes a "hidden status," embedded in the daily routines and often taken for granted or overlooked. Both her characters and Erdman herself articulate this difficult, indeed, seemingly impossible position of everydayness in domestic settings—"There are whole years I don't remember," "Life was a blur, if you ask me"—an exhaustive but also extremely fulfilling emotional work that taps into

the familiarity untranslatable into language: the experience of listening, consoling, touching, encouraging, soothing, laughing, supporting, and loving.

Thus the book is devoted to the lives of mothers who do not rebel against patriarchy, but whisper their own modifications of the very system that takes away their opportunity to develop their nonmaternal potential. In arguing that these women often use existing structures to “carve out spheres of influence” rather than directly challenging oppressive structures, Erdmans recalls specifically gendered ethnic routines as acts of resistance against culturally dominant taxonomies. Not only motherhood, but also the religious spaces of the convent are territories defining their “career,” involving continuous activity invested with “moral and meaningful” intent.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the book is the author’s approach to her subjects of research. For the sake of authenticity, Erdmans, a middle-class academic feminist, has invited them to join her in an attempt to recreate their lives, make them coauthors who equally construct their stories for the purpose of the manuscript. There are clear consequences to this empirical method. Their stories are partial, but not necessarily false. In allowing them to edit and comment on the manuscript, Erdmans corrects some of the biases that arise from her academic (and feminist) perspective: “I did not write this to expose them but to better understand the private worlds of white women in this generational cohort.” And although these women may be constructing a positive image of themselves for the sake of the sociologist niece and her public document, we nonetheless must ask, why the positive construction? How do they manage to have such strong feelings of self-worth in a society that renders them second-class citizens, treat them unequally, undervalue their work as mothers and housewives? As Erdmans is clearly aiming at voicing this question, she also needs to ensure that they develop an understanding of this empowering exercise. And, possibly, this is the weakest of the book’s achievements.

While it is clear that the Grasinski girls provisionally accept the idea of gender equality, they do not see themselves as feminists. Neither can we (readers) resolve the ambiguity as to the actual outcome of the underlying practice. Positing the family as a unit rather than themselves as individual subjects, these stay-at-home mothers do not subordinate their needs to those of their husbands, who are similarly caught up in the paradigmatic division of family labor. What

unmistakably remains to be addressed is that the very same division of labor perpetuates gender inequalities, privileging paid labor (and career as opposed to job) as an economically valuable and therefore recognizable form of activity. In this structure of labor, “nonworking” or part-time working mothers may be less willing to leave the safety of marriage, and will continue to build on the paradigm of the self-awarding economy of mothering. However, the family-focused economy argument inevitably crumbles when the marriage falls apart.

An in-depth feminist investigation of the complex set of reasons why the Grasinski girls refuse to challenge the conditions that create inequality would have certainly improved this book. Instead, we end up with a framework addressing choices that are both self-affirming and self-limiting, a framework attempting to challenge both the patriarchal and feminist narratives on who women are or what women should be. In this framework, motherhood and feminism as a particular blend of identity remains difficult to voice, underprivileged and, once again, unnecessarily paradoxical. ▲

Testaments

Two Novellas of Emigration and Exile

By Danuta Mostwin. Translated by Marta Erdman and Nina Dyke. Introduction by Joanna Rostropowicz Clark. Afterword by Thomas J. Napierkowski. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005. 120 pages. ISBN 0-8214-1607-3. Hardcover.

Jennifer J. Day

In Danuta Mostwin’s *Testaments* we are afforded a literary perspective on the lives of Polish émigrés in mid-twentieth-century America. As the commentators in the volume’s introduction and afterword point out, the voices of the Polish emigration have been underrepresented and slow to emerge in the context of American literature. Danuta Mostwin has been an acclaimed fiction writer since 1958, and this recent translation of two of her novellas has revealed a portrait of Polish American émigré life that will serve to solidify that experience in American literature, as much as it continues a two-hundred-year tradition of Poles thinking about themselves in exile.

The sociological elements noticeable in Mostwin's characterizations have an impressive basis: after immigrating to the United States in 1951, she earned her doctorate in sociology, going on to write scholarly works in her discipline while continuing to publish novels and stories in Polish. But it is Mostwin's light yet expert presence in the narrative that ultimately makes the strongest impression on the reader. In this volume she demonstrates a penetrating writerly gaze that benefits from her scholarly skills of analysis, but ultimately transcends social portraiture in its suggestion of psychological and philosophical questions relevant to every individual.

The novellas in this volume, "The Last Will of Blaise Twardowski" and "Jocasta," are presented as "testaments." Indeed, as they thematically treat episodes in the lives of Poles who struggle to understand and maintain their identity in emigration, they forcefully engage the notion of testament in various literal and metaphorical ways. Testaments have to do not only with what is left behind of the self upon death, but with conviction or evidence that that self exists. What is it that constitutes the self? Especially in light of the historical upheavals that have affected the families and fates of Mostwin's émigré protagonists, hard evidence of one's own identity can be difficult to come by, while convictions may turn out to be one thing in the "old country" but something completely different in new settings and social configurations. Mostwin builds this problem into the structure of her stories: each begins from a present tense narrative that introduces the main character as having already died. From this vantage point we join the narrator in a detective's search for the identity that leads up to that death, a search that is made difficult by the characters themselves. Like the characters who must "become acquainted with [their] own duality" ("Jocasta" 80), the reader is constantly aware of two different dimensions as s/he reads: the narrative present from which death and postdeath circumstances have been clear from the beginning, and the narrative past that forms the succeeding body of each story.

In "The Last Will of Blaise Twardowski," a third-person narrator relates the life and death of Błażej Twardowski, who had immigrated to America in the early twentieth century. A lifelong pennypincher who has denied himself any material comfort, at seventy-eight Twardowski seems content if lonely in his settled life as a denizen of the Polish community on Broad Street. After spending most of his life in America, he remembers the "old country" with little fondness, with

the notable exception of a childhood friend and mentor who taught him to read and write. But suddenly he receives a letter from his niece in Poland, who asks him for money to help settle a legal dispute involving a plot of land that Twardowski still nominally owns there. At this point "he felt as if someone were tearing out his vitals, slicing his belly open, and murdering him. He was fighting for his very life—for land" ("Twardowski" 21). Although he has become an irremovable part of the daily landscape of Broad Street, Twardowski still viscerally identifies himself with the Polish soil of his past. His decision to help his niece starts an onslaught of letters from poor relatives in Poland that Twardowski greatly enjoys receiving. Yet, as quickly becomes clear through the good offices of a Mr. Wieniawski, the travel/courier agent who reads Twardowski his letters and helps him to arrange money transfers, the letter writers are lying to him in order to get him to send money. The story gains depth through the developing relationship between Twardowski and his relatives, ingeniously and subtly sketched through the insertion of the actual letters. Yet it also grows through the simultaneous development of the relationship between Twardowski and Wieniawski, a later-generation émigré who himself has conflicting feelings about his own identity, caught between two realities, "straddl[ing] the line dividing two worlds" ("Twardowski" 13). In fact, through the backdrop of the Broad Street Polish community, Mostwin gives us numerous character sketches that illustrate various ways of being Polish in America. As Twardowski realizes his death is approaching, the vital question for him, the one that becomes the most bound up with his beliefs and with his own self-conception, becomes that of his last will. To whom should he leave his considerable fortune, amassed at a life's expense of self-denial? Twardowski's negotiation of what he calls the "third world, a world of the sick and the suffering" (56–57) becomes bearable only inasmuch as he can find an "outstretched, friendly hand" (46) that is proof of his own existence. Yet Mostwin's portrayal of this in-between space, resonant on so many levels in both stories in this volume, does not allow for easy assignments of blame or clear demonstrations of hero and villain. Mostwin is more concerned with exploring the implications of the "outstretched, friendly hand" in the character of Wieniawski, and the "testaments" of identity that such an act reveals as well as obscures.

In "Jocasta," the second novella in the volume, many of the same issues of identity are investigated in a somewhat darker key and with a different narrative

approach. The narrative alternates between a first-person acquaintance of Henryka Szatkowska, the main protagonist, and third-person “flashbacks” that are presumably retold by the first-person narrator. The novella starts with the narrator’s dream of Henryka who, we are told, has already died. This enigmatic and rather unsettling dream sets the tone for an ongoing inquiry into who exactly Henryka was through an account of her life since arriving in America at the age of sixty-nine in 1954. Here Mostwin highlights the troubled relationship between Henryka and her son Jan, who lives with his German wife and their son. Henryka is a strong, sometimes aggressive woman who consistently reminds the narrator of “a bird of prey”: “She was a big, powerfully built woman with somewhat heavy hips, tall, straight as a ramrod, meticulously and elegantly dressed” (71). The story unfolds as a drama of personal relationships: the decidedly antagonistic one between Henryka and her German daughter-in-law, the uneasy one between Henryka and her son, and even the developing bond between Henryka and the narrator, based on the fact that “we all lived simultaneously in two worlds, not one, and that this split us irrevocably in half” (80). In fact, this in-betweenness forms the crux of the psychological study in “Jocasta”; it manifests itself in Henryka’s initial devastating sense of “loss of her own self” (81) and in her dreams of an approaching chasm. The narrator skillfully contrasts this inner turmoil with Henryka’s impressive physical stature and her determination to survive by pure force of will: “I don’t believe in destiny, I don’t believe in premonitions. It’s all old wives’ tales and nothing else. Every problem can be turned around by the will. One has to will life” (82). Yet the efficacy of her staunch resolution to face up to life’s vicissitudes is called into question when her son winds up in the state mental hospital as the result of a car accident. As he sobs, “I want to go home!” she underscores her own lack of grounded identity by responding, “There is no home. Please, you must understand. There is no home left.” It is as if in this very instinct to fight by looking reality in the face, Henryka-Jocasta recedes further from winning the “battle of our lives” referred to in the fragment from *Oedipus Rex* that concludes the story. In her portrayal of Henryka, Mostwin employs a particularly successful structural device that relates her protagonist to the spaces she inhabits. Our narrator associates her successive encounters with Henryka with the four apartments she occupies in emigration. Each apartment is distinct in layout, furnishings, and general atmosphere, and in each space we are presented with a

study of how Henryka asserts herself in a new environment. Mostwin displays this thoughtful tendency to explore questions of identity through spatial placement in “Twardowski” as well, where she charts the relationship between her title character and Broad Street vis-a-vis a remembered or dreamed “old country” landscape.

In both novellas Mostwin develops an objective narrative voice that, while delving into personal memories and emotional reactions, holds itself at a remove from the protagonists. She provides no easy solutions for the reader, but instead invites us to participate in an understanding of Twardowski, Henryka, and their relationship with others, with no guarantee that an understanding is, in fact, available. One might wonder why, in a volume that gives so much attention to dual identities, Twardowski’s and Henryka’s premigration lives are painted in only the broadest of dream-strokes. Yet it is just this murkiness that illustrates best the strange middle ground they occupy, and makes their choices of personal testament in an unfamiliar place that much more important and vivid. While treating large psychological and philosophical questions of memory, identity, home, and self, Danuta Mostwin has also succeeded in capturing the individual and unique circumstances and details that turn potentially determinative forces into grounds for artistic speculation. ▲

Moving Parts

By Magdalena Tulli. Translated from the Polish by Bill Johnston. Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books, 2005. 133 pages. ISBN 0-9763950-0-2. Hardcover. \$22.00.

Janet Tucker

One of the most gifted of contemporary European writers, Magdalena Tulli creates an intricate and, ultimately, inhospitable fictional world in her unsettling and fine novel *Moving Parts*. Tulli has been hailed as the “new Bruno Schulz,” but her literary heritage extends back to Franz Kafka, and her prose evokes the illusive and deceptive “reality” encountered in Nikolai Gogol’s later prose. Her nearest “relatives” among current authors include Cuban-born Italian writer Italo Calvino and American novelist Don de Lillo, the latter sharing Tulli’s strong sense of unease and impending disaster. Readers of English are fortunate to read her work in the masterful translation of Bill Johnston, who

also rendered Tulli's *Dreams and Stones*, as well as Gustaw Herling's masterpiece *The Noontday Cemetery and Other Stories*, into English.

Tulli's most distinctive contribution to modern letters may well be her hapless narrator, who loses all control over "his" text in the course of *Moving Parts*. Gogol's narrator maintains ironic dominance over text and reader, while Schulz features a first-person narrator whose perceptions shape the readers' reactions. But Tulli's narrator can only observe helplessly as his world flies apart, a casualty of fictional centrifugal force with a "center that does not hold." That her narrator is male, not female like the author herself, injects yet another disquieting note. The uncertain fictional world she creates in *Moving Parts* brings to mind the world of Eastern and Central Europe, or societies undergoing far-reaching changes. Tulli leaves the reader in a void, completely unlike the solid ground we encounter in the realist novel of the nineteenth century. Characters appear fleetingly and uncertainly, their fates unclear. They float in a nebulous space beyond the narrator's control, perhaps even out of the reach of the author herself.

To underscore the insecurity of her fictional universe, Tulli typically depicts characters on the run. We encounter them in hotels—away from home—underscoring their vulnerability. When they are at home, their relationships unravel as the readers, uncomfortable witnesses to familial collapse, observe helplessly. Not even the narrator, the traditional locus of authority in fictional works, retains any sense of constancy or security.

Tulli combines homelessness with a universe gone awry in her images of displaced furniture that echo uprooted characters: "sofas, armchairs, and tables of that other world, deprived of solid ground, fall chaotically . . . into oblivion" (15). (Falling furniture foreshadows to a falling woman our "heroine", who plunges into the void and dies "instantly" [103].) "The tale," the narrator adds, "is like a hotel; characters appear and disappear" (15). A few pages later (23), furniture is piled up in a soggy heap out in the corner of the garden, where it will wait, forgotten, until clement weather. Tulli reminds us of the spatial and temporal fragility that lurks behind superficial solidity, and furniture, an everyday component of our lives vividly underscores this vulnerability. Our universe, she stresses, is built on sand, whirling through the blackness of the void.

How better to increase our sense of fear and helplessness than with a senseless crime? As in

Dostoevsky's later works, violence emphasizes the tenuousness of life. However, while in Dostoevsky murder is linked with larger religious issues, no such central theme emerges in Tulli. Thus we read that workmen are shot dead with an automatic pistol, a weapon divorced from a human perpetrator. The narrator—whose discomfort and powerlessness increase exponentially throughout—is "forced" to tell us about this pointless, bloody crime. He doesn't act of his own free will, but the reader never finds out who has compelled him to recount this exceptionally unpleasant episode. Nor do we know why he recounts any of the incidents that he attempts to describe. His efforts are made increasingly difficult by his unruly and independent characters. But the characters themselves do not gain in strength, and the centrifugal forces that the author set in motion from the beginning pull characters and events out into empty space. At the end, the story has "slipped out of [the narrator's] hands" (121).

By describing the narrator from the outside, Tulli effectively takes over his role and transforms him into yet another character. Midway through the novel, he has lost the privileged position we traditionally associate with a narrator. He is a most unwilling narrator, one who is "determined to do his job at the lowest possible cost" and who "sighs and sets to" (43). He gets his feet wet when attempting to keep pace with the novel (85). Unlike Herling's narrator, always in control, Tulli's is helpless and reluctant. We see him "calmly open[ing] and clos[ing] a double door and put[ting] a bunch of keys on a round side table" (41). As Chekhov's readers recall from his play *The Three Sisters*, possession of keys denotes control, but Tulli's narrator surrenders control when he deposits them on the furniture. Like peripatetic characters in the hotel and displaced furniture that hovers in space or gets shoved into a corner, forfeited keys underscore transience, loss of control.

Tulli elegantly distills the unease of a universe that has spun out of balance. She enlists details from everyday life, details that resonate with her readers' own unpleasant experiences. We see a married woman (encountered earlier, in a relationship with her lover) sitting uncomfortably in a dentist chair. Dental problems compound personal problems, and we never know whether anesthetic was administered. But we know "it's going to hurt" (49) if she wasn't medicated. Tulli forces us to imagine an unpleasant scenario, including the whirring drill. She expands fictional

anxiety to include her readers, in effect forcing us into this unsettling world.

Finally, the void prevails, and we are deposited in a silent world, the aural equivalent of visual emptiness. In her masterful novel, Tulli strikingly and subtly captures the essence of a world in transition between tradition and modernity. This elusiveness, an apt symbol of contemporary uncertainty, may also be an echo of Poland's complex history. Δ

Sowjetische Partisanen in Weißrußland Innenansichten aus dem Gebiet Baranovici 1941-1944. Eine Dokumentation

Edited with an introduction and annotations by Bogdan Musial. Russian documents translated into German by Tatjana Wanjat. *Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 88. Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag (<http://www.oldenbourg-verlag.de>), 2004. 271 pages. ISBN 3-486-64588-9. Paper. Euro 24.80 from the publisher. In German.

Marek Jan Chodakiewicz

Stalin's victory over Hitler in the Second World War saved the Soviet Union from destruction and ensured its perpetuation for the next half century. The military feat was reinforced by the Soviets' skillful exploitation of their triumph over the Nazis. Soviet propaganda used the victory to whitewash communism of its crimes and reinforce its fake moral dimension in the West. The legacy of the defeat of Nazi Germany was applied to legitimize the perpetuation of Soviet power at home and its imposition abroad, in particular in East Central Europe. All this was reflected in the creation of narratives for both domestic and foreign consumption.

The central narrative centered on the alleged Soviet fight against a worldwide "fascism." The narrative stated that "the Soviet people" under the leadership of the communist party resisted "fascism" until its defeat in 1945. The resistance culminated in "The Great Patriotic Fatherland War" (1941–1945). This narrative required the suppression of a number of historical events. Thus the Nazi-Soviet collaboration, on both official and unofficial levels, was vehemently denied. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 23 August 1939 was

reduced to a communist tactical retreat. The Soviet murder of the Polish officers in the Katyn Forest was denied and delinked from the Nazi mass murder of prominent Poles in the Palmiry Forest, even though both were synchronized crimes whose aim was to exterminate Poland's elite. The memories of the exuberant welcome of the Nazis by Soviet citizens in the summer of 1941 and the massive participation of "the Soviet people" in the Nazi war effort against "the Soviet Fatherland" were buried. The extermination of the Jews was depicted as "martyrdom of Soviet citizens" and stripped of its uniqueness. And, unlike the struggle of the Nazis and their collaborators against the Polish independent underground, the onslaught of the Soviets and their proxies on pro-Western Poles was depicted as "the struggle against fascism."

One of the most important elements in this narrative was the subnarrative of "the Soviet Partisan Movement." According to this narrative (26), the communists organized the masses that rose up to display "Soviet patriotism" in defending the "Soviet fatherland." The "Soviet people" in the occupied territory either flocked to the ranks of communist guerrillas or supported them wholeheartedly. Enjoying universal popular support and equipped with crucial war supplies by Moscow, Stalin's partisans were able to inflict enormous casualties on the German "fascists" and their collaborators. Thus, according to the communist narrative, they contributed mightily to the victory over Hitler and legitimized the Soviet power in eastern Europe.

By January 1944, out of 1,156 Soviet partisan units of 187,571 fighters, 723 units comprising 121,903 persons, or 65 percent of the total, operated in tiny Belarus.

This narrative is still present in Russian and Western history textbooks, but it began to unravel when independent scholars were granted access, however limited, to the Soviet archives. Polish scholars Zygmunt Boradyn and Kazimierz Krajewski were the first to expose the falsehoods of "the Soviet Partisan movement" in their case studies of present-day Lithuania and Belarus. However, their works have not yet been translated into English. The German historian of Polish background, Bogdan Musial, has a broader access to scholarly readers.

Musial has edited a selection of Soviet documents concerning communist guerrillas in Poland's prewar province of Nowogródek (now Belarus) that the Soviets

renamed “the region (*oblast*) of Baranovichi.” He divided his work into five parts: the origin and organization of the regional Soviet partisan structures; the partisan military operations and propaganda; their relations with the civilian population and internal affairs; their attitude toward the Jewish partisans; and their struggle against the Polish noncommunist underground.

According to the documents issuing from Minsk (the bulk of Musial’s archival selection was obtained in that city), the Soviet guerrilla operations were initiated by the NKVD/NKGB immediately after the Nazi invasion of the USSR and of its occupied Polish, Baltic, and Romanian territories. On 26 June 1941 the Soviet leadership in Belarus ordered fourteen guerrilla units into the field. They consisted of 1,162 fighters including 539 NKGB, 623 NKVD, and the remainder the Red Army (17–18). These detachments were quickly wiped out or dispersed. The forests and swamps of Belarus filled up with tens of thousands of Soviet troops, the stragglers whose regular units had been destroyed in the *Blitzkrieg*. For the most part, these stragglers remained militarily inactive and found some employment with the local rural population, both Polish and Belarusan. The Germans left them alone until Spring 1942, when they tried to apprehend them. The stragglers fled back into the forest, individually and in small groups, where they established encampments and bases. Soon these groups were joined by the fugitive Soviet POWs and some Jews. There were also camps established and run exclusively by Jewish inhabitants of the area. Meanwhile, the remnants of the original NKVD commandos who had survived the Nazi assault of summer and fall 1941, and new NKVD men sent as reinforcements by Moscow, located the forest hideaways and gradually subordinated to themselves many of their denizens. Simultaneously, the NKVD men reestablished the clandestine communist party structures. By January 1944, out of 1,156 Soviet partisan units of 187,571 fighters, 723 units comprising 121,903 persons, or 65 percent of the total, operated in tiny Belarus (21).

In July 1944, the Soviet irregular forces in the Baranovich region consisted of 11,193 fighters, 10 percent of them women. The majority of the partisans were Belarusan: 6,792, or 60.7 percent. The remainder consisted of gentile Russians (2,598, or 23.2 percent), Jews (973, or 8.7 percent), gentile Ukrainians (526, or 4.7 percent), gentile Poles (143, or 1.3 percent), and others (161, or 1.4 percent) (36). Many of them were

forcibly drafted (36, 42, 74). Some of them eventually deserted, the Poles in particular (134, 136, 253–54).

Jews were a special case among the Soviet partisans. The documents show that they were forced into the forest by the Nazi danger. The young and armed Jews were usually welcomed by the Soviets. Women, children, and the elderly were abandoned at best and victimized at worst. There were even instances when Jews were killed by the Soviet partisans (155, 158). Eventually, however, separate Jewish groups, both guerrilla units and mixed family groups of refugees, were subordinated to the communist partisan leadership and were considered as Soviet assets (124).

The Jewish partisans had a difficult time. Even within the Soviet partisan units they had to contend with “hatred of Jews” (91). The Soviet leadership vowed to curb anti-Semitic words and deeds, but at the same time it punished expressions of Jewish solidarity. In May 1943, “partisan Grigorii Rivin, Jewish by nationality, [was] shot because of his systematic spreading of Jewish chauvinism.” Rivin’s transgression was that he openly and frequently complained that “Jews were not accepted into the [partisan] unit . . . [and that] they were harassed” (190). In June 1943 in Mironka, after a Jewish sentry mistakenly killed a Soviet partisan, the latter’s comrades unleashed themselves upon the Jewish patrol, killing seven of its members (192). In the wake of such occurrences, the supreme command of the Soviet partisan Stalin Brigade announced that the “spreading of Jewish chauvinism and, equally, of anti-Semitism is a fascist method to destroy the partisan vigilance” (192). The former was punished seriously, while the latter appears chiefly to have been denounced verbally.

Perhaps for that reason only a few Jews considered themselves Soviet or communist. Most seem to have been conscious that theirs was a uniquely Jewish experience. Most focused on the survival of the remnants of their community at any price. This included accommodating to the Soviet ways. A few Jewish leaders took advantage of the situation to solidify their power over their Jewish underlings. Those who challenged them were punished, occasionally even killed. One story recorded here is that of Tuvia (Anatol) Bielski and his staff who sentenced Israel Kesler to death. According to his judges, Kesler was a prewar thief and arsonist. He ran a brothel in Naliboki and served as an informer for the Polish intelligence. Following the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland, Kesler fled to Lithuania and later hid in Naliboki. After June 1941, Kesler allegedly denounced communists, including Jewish party activists, to the Nazis.

Subsequently, he escaped from a Nazi-established ghetto and joined the Bielski partisans. He was caught plundering peasants and shot (203–205). These charges display the signs of a standard Stalinist character assassination. Why would Bielski have accepted a criminal, and a Polish or Nazi collaborator, into the unit in the first place? Was Kesler really unique in his plunderings when all other Soviet partisans gathered supplies in a similar way?

In the meantime, a Soviet informer accused Bielski himself of embezzling gold; no serious consequences followed, however (203). Charges of robbery were also levied at Jewish partisans by their Soviet comrades (193). According to the report of 28 May 1943, “some groups, among them the Jewish ones, preoccupy themselves not with struggle but with capturing supplies. Some persons in them, who had fled from a camp, carry out banditry (plundering, drunkenness, and rape)” (123).

The complaints about these alleged transgressions sound disingenuous, coming as they do from the Soviet sources. The Soviet-allied guerrillas routinely engaged in plundering peasants. Documents show that partisan activity often amounted to banditry, rape, pillage, and murder (52–53, 88, 111–112, 144, 158, 166). Occasionally individual transgressors were punished. On the whole, however, the leadership of the Soviet irregular forces considered robbery to be a legitimate *modus operandi*. Since they largely lacked popular support, the Soviet guerrillas raided villages and manors for supplies. As a top Soviet commander put it, “Most partisan units feed, clothe, and arm themselves at the expense of the local population and not by capturing booty in the struggle against fascism. That arouses in the people a feeling of hostility, and they say, ‘The Germans take everything away and one must also give something to the partisans’” (48). However, this aspect of the Soviet partisan movement has been eliminated from the standard Soviet narrative about them. According to that narrative, the Soviet partisans killed 1.5 million “Germans and their collaborators.” In reality, the casualties inflicted on the enemy did not exceed 45,000, half of them Germans. As Musial puts it, “The higher the position of the official submitting the report, the higher the enemy losses reported” (22).

In the meantime, the Soviet partisan commanders deluged Moscow with “euphoric reports about their military successes which did not reflect reality” (107). Regarding the German antipartisan pacification action “Hermann” in the Naliboki Forest undertaken between 13 July and 8 August 1943, the communist partisan leader reported the annihilation of the staff and the

commanding officer of the infamous SS-Dirlewanger Sonderbrigade, and boasted of “3,000 killed and wounded enemies, 29 POWs taken, 60 destroyed enemy vehicles, 3 tanks and 4 armored cars taken over.” The Soviet losses were put at “129 killed, 50 wounded, and 24 missing” (107). In reality, Dirlewanger died after the war and his staff escaped unscathed. The German casualty rolls show 52 killed, 155 wounded, and 4 missing. On the other hand, the Nazis reported 4,280 killed and 654 captured “bandits” (107–108). Among the combat casualties, in addition to Soviet guerrillas, there were also Polish independent Home Army partisans. However, most of the losses consisted of civilian Poles and Belarusians, including the denizens of Naliboki which was completely obliterated by the Nazis. Hundreds of inhabitants were shot, several hundred were deported to slave labor in the Reich, and only a few managed to flee.

The drama of Naliboki reflected not only the extreme character of Nazi policies toward the civilian gentile population, but also the brutality of the erstwhile Soviet occupiers-turned-partisans. It appears that for the majority of small farmers in Belarus, the situation resembled one in Darfur in 2005. On 8 May 1943, two months before the Nazis obliterated the town, the Soviet partisans massacred 128 gentile men of Naliboki in a surprise night attack. They were members of the local self-defense force. Many of them also participated in the Polish underground Home Army (116, 119, 152, 191). In another case in January 1944, the Soviet guerrillas torched the village of Koniuchy, killing at least thirty-four gentile civilians.

Although assaults on Polish gentiles had already become commonplace in 1942, they multiplied in number, scale, and fierceness when, in the wake of the Katyn affair, Stalin broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish government-in-exile in London in April 1943. Henceforth, Soviet Partisan propaganda dubbed the Polish prime minister General Władysław Sikorski’s policy “criminal and hostile to the people” (122), and *Pravda* published editorials alleging that the London government collaborated with Hitler. Communist propaganda routinely referred to the pro-Western Polish underground army as “bands of the White Poles” (84–86, 250). According to another propaganda directive, the Polish underground was to be referred to as “the protégés of the Gestapo” (134).

The narrative thus created was assisted by the Soviet commanders who wrote in their reports about “the archenemy of our Fatherland: the German occupiers and their Polish lackeys” (144). The men massacred in

Naliboki were referred to as “counterrevolutionary elements: policemen and spies” (119). The Polish guerrilla groups were described as “hostile toward the Soviet power” that included “notorious fascists” (227). “Poles fighting against the [Soviet] partisans are German agents and enemies of the Polish people,” said a top secret order of May 1943 (228). The Poles were routinely lumped together with the Nazis as in the report of 1 December 1943, where the Commander of the Lenin Brigade bragged that “thanks to the intelligence provided by our informers we cleansed the territory of the forest of German and Polish spies” (63). In other reports, one reads about “the Polish spy Maria Downar” who was shot, and nineteen Polish “anti-Soviet elements” who were captured (137–42). On 23 June 1943, the Soviet partisan leadership authorized denouncing the Polish underground to the Nazis. Later, orders went out to “shoot the [Polish] leaders” and “discredit, disarm, and dissolve” their units (223). It was alleged that the Home Army units were “not Polish partisan groups but groups formed by the Germans. . . . These German groups which consist of Poles are to be destroyed,” according to the top secret order of 29 June 1943 (237). On 5 December 1943, it was resolved that “the [NKVD] Chkalov Brigade should commence the cleansing of the area of the White Polish band. . . . The band, especially the policemen, landlords, and settlers, is to be shot. But no one must know about this” (250–51).

Such orders merely confirmed the existing situation. Since 1942, individual Polish gentile patriots were routinely assassinated and Polish guerrillas and underground groups were assaulted, sometimes by treachery. Feigning friendship, the Soviets lured at least two sizable Polish guerrilla detachments to their destruction. Musial’s study suggests that the Soviets seldom attacked German military and police targets. They preferred to assault the poorly armed and trained Belarusan and Polish self-defense forces. The guerrillas torched and leveled Polish landed estates much more frequently than they blew up military transports and assaulted other hard targets. “[B]y the end of 1943, most large landed estates had been destroyed” (106).

According to Musial, by fall 1943 a full-fledged local Polish-Soviet war raged in the territory of present-day Belarus and Lithuania. Between May 1943 and July 1944 at least 230 battles were fought between the adversaries (225). The Polish Home Army reeled under the Soviet assaults and felt abandoned by the Allies, as these territories were beyond the range of the Western supply planes. In that situation, says Musial, a few Home Army commanders accepted some weapons and

ammunition from the Germans, in order to counterattack the communists (224).

The Polish underground was established in the area in fall 1939. It was both anti-Nazi and anti-Soviet. The latter attitude stemmed from the memories of Soviet terror between 1939 and 1941, and was reinforced by the conduct of the Soviet partisans. Musial’s book shows that most members of the Polish underground were Catholic. Ethnic Poles probably constituted a plurality. But there were also Belarusans, some of them Eastern Orthodox, “locals,” individuals without any particular national consciousness, and a few Jews (58). Most underground members were part-time fighters. They were mobilized for a specific action and then released back to civilian life. A few full-time partisan units were organized in summer 1942. Most were self-defense squads hitting the Nazi terror apparatus or fending off criminals and Soviet partisans who robbed Polish villages. The latter case included the interception and execution of ten members of a Soviet Jewish group in Dubniki in November 1943 (194–95, 197). The accepted traditional narrative says that they died as victims of Polish anti-Semitism. Musial’s work was made possible by the partial opening of the Soviet archives; one can expect more information when the archives become fully accessible. Δ

The Polish Underground Army, the Western Allies, and the Failure of Strategic Unity in World War II

By Michael Alfred Peszke. Foreword by Piotr S. Wandycz. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, 2005. 244 pages. Appendices, bibliography, index. Hardcover.

Jolanta W. Best

Thanks to the efforts of its air crews, sailors, and the Carpathian Brigade in beleaguered Tobruk, the Poles had paid their dues to the British and Allied side (65).

Michael Alfred Peszke was born 1932 in Dęblin, Poland, and at present he lives in Wakefield, RI. He is a psychiatrist by profession and historian by avocation. After attending schools in Scotland and England, he studied at Trinity College, Dublin University, and at the Dublin University School of

Medicine where he received his medical degree. Until his retirement in 1999 he worked on the East Coast of the United States. This is his third book related to wartime Poland; his previous publications include *The Battle for Warsaw, 1939–1944* (1995) published in the East European Monographs Series, and *Poland's Navy, 1918–1945* (1999) published by Hippocrene. Peszke's interest in the Polish military was sparked by his father, who together with many other Poles served as an officer with Britain's RAF during the Second World War. His book is particularly good in describing the history of restructuring the Polish military in Britain, its contributions to the victory of the Allied Forces, and failed diplomatic efforts by the Polish government in exile to restore Poland's independence.

The book's cover features the Polish Parachute Brigade Flag and a painting by Piotr Górką presenting "Liberator Mk. VI of the Polish Air Force Special Duties Squadron 1568." Its eight chapters are characterized by symmetry and clarity. Peszke is a master of succinctness. The chapters are organized chronologically, but several appendices, notes, pictures, and a bibliography allow for further interpretation. The book can be interpreted as a depiction of events leading to a predictable conclusion, but it is also an arrangement of the "great themes" of war. It provides the details of the September 17, 1939 invasion when the Soviets broke the Non-Aggression Treaty (20); it delineates the Polish evacuees in Hungary and Romania (27–28), General Sikorski's war strategy (31), the Battle of Britain (48–50), the agony of the Warsaw Uprising (153–158, 159–169), and the Yalta outcome (180–184). *The Polish Underground Army* also deals with Polish participation in the Norwegian and French campaigns and with the Polish Parachute Brigade. It provides a narrative on the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa), and the Katyn graves.

Piotr S. Wandycz's foreword states that "Poland's contribution to the Allied war effort is often minimized or glossed over. . . . And yet, in proportion to the size and population of their state, the Poles rendered great services in the war against the axis powers" (2). They helped to reconstruct the German Enigma machine ciphers and handed it over to the French and the British. In the September 1939 campaign, Polish soldiers inflicted heavy casualties on the Germans, who lost about 300 planes and 1000 tanks in their *Blitzkrieg* in Poland (1). Wandycz says that Peszke's book can be viewed as the first attempt to evaluate the military and strategic thinking of the Polish government in exile in Paris and London.

Peszke meticulously reconstructs the Polish plan to fight the Germans. Other historians have described Poland's plans as "grandiose," but not "absurd" (2). Using the little-known historical documents from the British archives, Peszke pieces together the details of the relationship between the Western Allies, the Soviets, and Poland's postwar political fate. The appendices feature the "Revised Polish-British Air Force Agreement (1944)," the "Cost of the Polish Forces While Based in the United Kingdom" (202–203), the article on "Military Symbolism: Occupied Homeland Sends Two Flags to Its Warriors in Exile," and other documentation.

Additionally, Peszke reconstructs the "Balkan strategy" and its significance for Poland. From the beginning of the war the Poles tried to convert Romania and Hungary to the Allied side. Sikorski always viewed the Balkan and Danubian countries as an important factor that might lead to a possible victory over the Germans. He also felt that victory could have been achieved by strong Allied forces supported by a clandestine army in occupied Poland, the "soft underbelly of Europe." Peszke claims that Winston Churchill shared a similar belief. In August 1944, Churchill reluctantly agreed with the Americans to withdraw divisions from the Italian campaign to start the "Operation Dragoon" in southern France (10). According to Sikorski's war strategy based on the Balkan alliance, "Poland would be reinstated in its 1939 boundaries, but with the elimination of the East Russia" (45). The plan would have allowed for incorporation of the "Free City of Danzing" into Polish territory. This goal could have been accomplished only by the adoption of the Balkan Strategy by the Allied side. Sikorski considered an alliance based on the old and beneficial relationships between Poland and Romania, or between Poland and Hungary (10). However, Peszke admits that "there appear to be no archival documents to prove that this [Balkan strategy] was discussed by the two statesmen [Sikorski and Churchill]" (10).

The book supports the thesis that the Polish government in exile, and Generals Władysław Sikorski and Kazimierz Sosnkowski in particular, worked to integrate the Polish forces into the Allied armies. They were tying "the Polish underground army to the Western strategic and military goals" (45). The long-term goal was to liberate Poland from the Germans and the Soviets. The Home Army was established for that purpose.

Peszke's work gives excellent insight into the British policies of the Second World War era. It also demonstrates that the Polish Home Army "owed its

allegiance to the Polish government in the West and was completely loyal to the Polish commander in chief in exile . . . and was aided by supplies from the West” (29–30).

Peszke quotes Winston Churchill speaking in Italy, on August 23, 1944: “Is there any stop on the publicity for the facts about the agony of Warsaw, which seems from the papers to have been practically suppressed? It is not for us to cast reproaches on the Soviet Government, but surely facts should be allowed to speak for themselves. There is no need to mention the strange and sinister behavior of the Russians, but is there any reason why the consequences of such behavior should not be made public?” (163)

Peszke points out that the Battle of Britain played a special role in the history of the Polish Air Force (49). The 302nd Poznański and 303rd Kościuszko squadrons were fighting in the air battle over southern England and London. There were also many other Polish pilots fighting in RAF squadrons. Altogether, the Battle of Britain engaged 154 Polish pilots (48–50). On 20 September 1940, the BBC sent the following message to the world about the bravery of the Polish 303 Squadron (the British are always good about tea and sympathy): “The BBC sends warm greeting to the famous 303rd Polish Squadron with lively congratulations upon its magnificent record and all the best wishes for the future. You use the air for your gallant exploits and we for telling the world of them” (49). After the successful battle over the British skies, the Polish air strength grew further and included the bomber squadrons (300, 301, 304, and 305), as well as the new fighter squadrons (315, 316, 317, and 309). They were organized into the Polish wing under the command of Major Urbanowicz (50).

The final chapters of the book describe Polish determination and values. The failure of the Warsaw Uprising (Chapter 7) and the bitterness of Yalta (Chapter 8) give the author an opportunity to offer an interpretation of the war and of the moral stance of those states whose representatives signed the postwar treaty agreements. On March 3, 1945, Churchill wrote to President Roosevelt: “At Yalta we agreed to take the Russian view of the frontier line. Poland has lost her frontier. Is she now to lose her freedom? . . . That is the question which will undoubtedly have to be fought out in Parliament and in public here” (181). Churchill must have known that he lied through his teeth, for the matter had been already decided—but he maintained the “tea and sympathy” appearance.

Peszke’s book is ambitious, well written, and revealing. Sometimes the amount of information is

overwhelming and continuity breaks down. Yet Peszke helps to set up in his readers a “comparative imagination” built on a plenitude of historical data. The book challenges us to think critically about the interpretations of the Second World War proffered by a large segment of the American academia. ▲

Three poems by Steven Kaminski

Found Wanting

I protect my name for language is my measure.
Czesław Miłosz

Only then will you know the Day is at hand—
The horsemen will gasp under trees,
Bleeding sweating hides refuse the old spur’s prod,
And the people left to their own devices
Have every right to disbelieve they will ever arrive.
Once they kicked up clouds upon the scrub spines of hills,
And the valley gnawed its fist of fear,
Thinking an apparition fingered a father’s watch
And planned death by the all too familiar
Sweep of a hand, the inevitable made intelligible
Yet mocking,
For absolute power is more
Than undeniable conquest:
It is to make dumb triumph praised
In the language of the vanquished.

It wouldn’t do now:

Four riders conceived in man’s first foreign night
Who would fall among the complacent center
Would be curiosities in the modern world,
And no divinity worthy of the name
Would wreck vengeance with weaponry
The wonder of a bygone age that would bore
Sounding children led into a museum on a school holiday.

The signs in the heavens will swell again,
But men will explain very precisely
Why they cannot explain them.
Men will retell how the superstitious,
The fearful, and the stupid
Fell over themselves praising
God’s mysteries,
And what were once seen as heresies are now
Quaint mistakes, like a favorite aunt’s eccentricities,
Or Cardinals who worked the earth over
To fix men in the belief the sun moved as always.

The moderns think they have truths that surpass
 The worst imaginings of the ancients.
 Hellfire – should we dispatch a delegate to inform the
 Almighty of Nuclear War?
 Abyss – do we not fear how laughably alone our
 demise will be in the cosmos?

Pestilence – we have pinned down DNA molecules
 under microscopes while Life scuttles
 away in the
 cries of newfound discovery.

Today the born warrior perishes by a pulse in a
 distant microchip
 The writer, hero of his own life story, will be executed
 By his friends in a farrago of guilt memoirs,
 Indexed footnoted and forgotten
 The defence lawyer will meet the familiar jury
 Now grown unmovable in the face of eloquence
 tinned argot and props
 Everyone his own reasons, everyone justifies or
 laments
 No one believes the indictment
 The few root for the truth
 But the main will cheer the verdict.

Yet we have nothing to compare to
 God's spittle mixed with earth
 Along which a serpent had dragged itself.
 Those were the days when even a simple man
 Could see service in His Lord's command:
 And he gratefully weighed down the foreign horses
 with provisions
 As if he himself rode in their place.

After M. D.

Hiding in the reeds
 Our breath daring to mix with the mist,
 We hear a plaintive fiddle,
 A foreign folk song stirs itself to notes
 Only a viola knows.

Comfort never seems to last:
 A string breaks, then a curse,
 The village can burn, and the cattle slaughtered,
 And the tune broken off in mid-bar

But all will soon be put right.
 A little milk poured on the ground
 Brings a skittery hunger-tugged cat

Padding through trampled flowers in a kicked-up
 bed,
 And then the viola strung with her guts.

Frontier Land

You will always dwell on the borders,
 Though you emulate our customs,
 Pay obeisance to the same gods,
 Learn the tongue of the capital.
 Your garrisons will always think of home.

And the Emperor, when threatened with sack,
 Will blame your breached walls,
 Your gates pried open.
 Nor will he be grateful for the years
 You in fact turned the barbarians back.

There are cursed countries, their poets unknown,
 Their gifts dissipated like ashes in strange lands—
 But history will be written in the capital city,
 And all known honors discovered even in the least of
 its sons,
 For what Senate does not find Truth tied to a victor's
 company?
 The refugees from frontier land will learn
 About virtue from these books:
 They will mouth and nod as they're taught
 And earn condescending praise.
 Language, once overcome, will accompany
 And flood every raised spilling cup,
 Until one day they read about the front
 And what savages they are.

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Announcements and Notes

Wanda Urbanska's "Simple Living" tells the story of Poland

Urbanska is president of the Simple Living Institute located in Mount Airy, NC. She runs a TV series titled "Simple Living" (worth recommending to the Director of Programming of your local CBS channel), and she recently produced an hour-long segment on her family's Polish roots. Write to: info@simplelivingtv.net.

Summer Study Tour at the Catholic University of Lublin

Five weeks in historic Lublin (July 8—August 14, 2006), with a course on Polish language and trips to Warsaw, Kazimierz, and other places. \$2,207.00 includes health insurance and all costs except airfare to Warsaw. A two-week tour for \$1,358 is also available. Contact Professor Michael Mikoś at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, <mikos@uwm.edu>.

Madonna University, MI Polish trip—following in the footsteps of John Paul II

May 10–20, 2006. Visits to Kraków, Wadowice, and Zakopane, among others. \$2,200 per person includes double-room accommodations (private bath guaranteed), airfare, most meals. Write to: amerpol@usa.com.

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*The poet remembers.
Czeslaw Milosz, "You who harmed a simple man"*

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