

by the war. For the more than 1,500 Polish Air Force personnel who found themselves in Britain, this was complicated even further by the uncomfortable reality that they owed their flight to the dual occupation of their country by the Germans and the Soviets, dictatorships then linked in a bond of suspicion-laden convenience and later becoming enemies.

One of the Poles in Britain during that extraordinary summer was the noted travel writer Arkady Fiedler. Working with the government-in-exile Fiedler spent time with a remarkable squadron of primarily Polish fliers then engaged in regular and fierce combat against the *Luftwaffe*. The result was *Dywizjon 303*, published in English in 1943 as *Squadron 303*. The book was airdropped into Poland late in the war to be read by partisan detachments, has had a long and successful history in Poland and is still widely read there.

Now a new edition and translation of *303 Squadron* has been released by Aquila Polonica. This new press is committed to publishing fiction and nonfiction related to Poland's experience in the Second World War. The volume they produced along with the translator Jarek Garlinski does a terrific job bringing to life an extraordinary moment in the history of the war and of Europe's complex and violent twentieth century.

The subject of this book is air combat. Fiedler was clearly an avid listener and keen interrogator, speaking to pilots who were themselves running on little sleep and in constant danger of death from enemy fire, accidents, and strikes against their bases. At the heart of the book lies the crucial two-week period in early September 1940 when heavy losses among German bombers finally convinced the *Luftwaffe* to switch to less effective nighttime bombing and Hitler to indefinitely postpone the anticipated invasion of Britain.

The book's greatest strength is its account of the war in air. The twenty short chapters are mostly self-contained vignettes about incidents during those difficult weeks. These stories brim with keen insight into the psychology and bravery of inveterate risk takers. "The Cloud," a story of a young pilot trying to conceal himself from a German patrol, is a vivid portrait of the chaos, confusion, terror, and pain of dogfights in the air above England.

The political context of the book is never far from the surface. In English translation Fiedler clearly intended his work to convince Britons that Poles were a worthy ally against Germany, "that [Poles], just as they, believe in the existence of great human moral values—and that [they] will neither break [their] word, nor give birth to Quislings" (199). This can become a bit overwrought, as when he describes a pilot as "that unbowed lad from the Vistula. . . . He is a symbol of something indestructible. His pain and scars, and his sunlit eyes and smile, are indeed symbols of his victorious, if wounded, nation" (83).

The portraits of the pilots are fascinating by themselves. In the 1943 edition pilots' names remained concealed for fear of reprisals against families in Poland. This edition includes extensive biographical information about a number

of these fliers. Their birthplaces and early careers tell a fascinating story about the changing borders of Poland in the early twentieth century and interwar creation of a Polish military establishment. The capsule biographies at the end of this edition also provide a sobering reminder of the terrible toll of air combat and training accidents. Those who survived scattered after the war, some returning to Poland while others sought new lives in emigration. The highest scoring ace of the unit, Witold Urbanowicz, lived long enough to return to postcommunist Poland from the United States to take an honorary rank in the Polish Air Force.

This new edition is slightly revised from the 1943 translation and is based on later Polish language editions. Garlinski deserves great credit for rendering the text into the kind of spare and muscular English that the military prose demands. I also commend Aquila Polonica for the exceptionally high quality of the book's production. They have included a number of maps and photos that nicely complement the text and have done so while still making the book available at a very reasonable price. Anyone interested in Poland's journey through the Second World War or in the Battle of Britain would do well to add this to their bookshelf. I hope that it receives a warm welcome from the broader reading public who are interested in the history of airpower and air combat.

That said, I wish I could recommend this book for classroom use. It would seem to be an appropriate supplementary text for undergraduate courses on the Second World War or Modern Eastern Europe. However, the volume badly needs a thorough introductory essay that situates the story of 303 Squadron in the broader narrative of the Battle of Britain, introduces technical issues about aircraft to a nonspecialist reader, and provides more than a cursory introduction to the complexities of Polish history during the interwar period. Instead, appendices deal with topics like the "Song of the 303 Squadron" and the history of the Polish Air Force Colors that are likely of marginal interest to anyone but enthusiasts. ♦

More BOOKS

Reflections on the Polish notion of liberty in the works of Krzysztof Warszawicki and Anonymous (Krzysztofa Warszawickiego i Anonima uwagi o wolności szlacheckiej) [1587–1598], edited by Krzysztof Koehler. Latin texts translated by Krzysztof Nowak, Anonymous text edited by Łukasz Cybulski. Kraków: Ignatianum-Wydawnictwo WAM (www.wydawnictwowam.pl), 2010. Humanitas Studia Kulturoznawcze Series, 7. 448 pages. Index of names. ISBN 978-83-7614-073-5 (Ignatianum), 978-83-7505-675-4 (WAM). Paper. In Polish.

This book is one of the key political texts of the sixteenth century. What is the Polish understanding

of liberty? From today's perspective, one can say that it is related to Athenian republicanism and the notion of a free republic envisaged in *The Federalist Papers*. The anonymous author points out that while France, Italy, or England are richer in material goods than Poland, they are poorer as regards individual liberty: what in those countries passes for free living would be considered slavery in Poland. Indeed, while in England the monarch decided what religion should prevail in his country, in Poland such a royal decision would be impossible to implement owing to the fact that the noble class (numbering one million people, i.e., not a small group of privileged aristocrats) had rights and privileges written into the law. Famously, King Sigismund Augustus said in his speech to the Sejm in the sixteenth century: "I am not the king of your consciences." A Polish noble could not be arrested at the royal whim, he could not be persecuted for his religion (Catholic or Protestant), and he could not be taxed without the consent of the Sejm or the legislative body. His property could not be taken away without legal warrants.

The much-longer treatise by Warszewicki shows the Polish writer's familiarity with the writings of Machiavelli and his ultimate rejection of the Italian's vision of the state. The Thomistic vision of liberty prevailed in Poland during the Renaissance, and it remains one of the elements of Polish history that Poles can proudly remember. Nor does this vision belong entirely to the past: its core has survived centuries of political turmoil and is now being returned to—as this volume amply demonstrates.

***The Muscovite Carol (Kolęda Moskiewska)* by Paweł Palczowski. Edited by Grzegorz Franczak.** Warsaw: Neriton (www.neriton.apnet.edu), 2010. 146 pages. Index. ISBN 978-83-7543-142-1. Paper. In Polish.

This book is volume 6 of a series of reprints of Old Polish popular literature edited by Drs. Roman Krzywy and Radosław Grześkowiak. The series is meant to acquaint the contemporary reader with the "second tier" of literary activity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—works written for entertainment or those composed for some political occasion. This "Muscovite Carol" was a lobbying device: it was written to persuade delegates to the Polish Sejm (Parliament) that gathered in January 1609 to support King Sigismund III's expedition to Moscow. As the editor of the series states in the preface, the text promotes colonialism—Polish rather than Russian. The author tries to convince the MPs that Muscovy is a

great place for Polish colonization and that the time is right. While the mission did take place and Poles occupied Moscow for a while, they clearly did not anticipate long-term consequences. Eventually they lost, and the Muscovites took their revenge by a thousandfold.

Paweł Palczowski (1570–1609) perished during King Sigismund's Muscovy expedition. He was a courtier and a traveler, and his treatise on the Republic of Venice testifies to the interest and sympathy the Polish educated classes felt toward the republican system of government.

***The Diary of Maryna Mniszek's Guardian as He Escorted Her to Prince Dmitrii in 1606 (Diariusz drogi spisanej i różnych przypadków pociesznych i żalonych prowadząc córkę Jerzego Mniszka, Marynę, Dymitrowi Iwanowiczowi w roku 1606)*, by Stanisław Niemojewski. Edited by Roman Krzywy.** Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Losgraf, 2006. 394 pages. In Polish.

The Polish-Muscovite confrontation in the early sixteenth century seen by a simple man who escorted Dmitrii's fiancée Maryna Mniszek to Moscow.

***Opowieści "skolonizowanego/kolonizatora". W kręgu studiów postzależnościowych nad literaturą polską XX i XXI wieku* (The stories of the colonized/the colonizer: postcolonial studies in Polish literature of the twentieth and twenty-first century), by Hanna Gosk.** Kraków: Universitas (www.universitas.com.pl), 2010. 266 pages. Bibliography, index of names, index of topics. Summary in English. ISBN 97883-242-0911-8. Softcover.

An eminent specialist in contemporary Polish literature takes on the question that fascinates a number of scholars in postcommunist Poland: what methodology should one adopt while speaking of recent Polish cultural history? This complex book draws on postmodern works while analyzing the novels of Tadeusz Konwicki and other texts written under communism.

***Unpredictable past: selected passages from correspondence with friends (Nepredskazujemoe proshloe. Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druz'iami)*, by Semyon Reznik.** Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteia, 2010. 399 pages. Index of names. ISBN 978-5-91419-299-7. Hardcover. In Russian.

The intrepid Russian dissident Semyon Reznik offers his interpretation of Russian literary life in the Soviet period and afterward. He demonstrates the hypocrisy of many Soviet writers starting with Kataev

and ending with Solzhenitsyn. He takes on left-wing journalists and periodicals in the United States, starting with *The Nation* and Christopher Hitchens, and ending with another Russian expatriate (and American intellectual) Yuri Slezkine. The book incorporates letters written by the author in response to other intellectuals' books and articles. Altogether, Reznik provides a fascinating and very personal view of select twentieth-century cultural happenings in the USSR and the United States.

Raj doczesny komunistów. Dzieje Rosji w XX wieku (The communist paradise in this world: A history of Russia in the twentieth century), by **Adam Krzyżanowski**. Introduction by **Stanisław Górka**, edited by **Stanisław Górka and Mateusz Matyszkowicz**. Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2006. xxviii + 441 pages. Index. ISBN 978-83-7188-592-1. In Polish.

Secretly written in the 1950s, this insightful tome shows that it was possible to correctly assess Soviet Russia even when all the archives were closed and critical writing was strictly forbidden. Adam Krzyżanowski, one of the few survivors of prewar Polish intelligentsia and a former Sachsenhausen prisoner, died in 1963. This is the first edition of his unorthodox work that, we predict, will soon become a bibliographical rarity.



Adam Mickiewicz's birthplace in Zaosie (presently Belarus), as presented in a drawing by Napoleon Orda (1807–1883). This modest house was owned by Mickiewicz's uncle, then bought by the Stypułkowski family who were expropriated from it by the Russian government for the family's participation in the November 1831 rising.

Pan Tadeusz

by

Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855)

Book Six

The Genry Village

Argument:

First intimations of the armed foray.

Protazy's errand.

Robak and the Judge hold counsel on the commonweal.

Protazy's vain errand continued.

A digression on hemp.

The gentry village of Dobrzyn.

A portrait of Matthias Dobrzynski and his household.

Translated by Christopher A. Zakrzewski

Forlorn of her rosy hue, Dawn crept imperceptibly out of the raw murk; on her skirts hung the morning—dim of eye. Day had long since broken, yet the light was ever so feeble. Fog overhung the earth like the straw roof of a humble Lithuanian cottage. From the whiter glow on the eastern horizon, you could tell where the risen sun was beginning his journey across the earth; but his march was joyless, and he slumbered on his way.

Following the sky's example, life on earth was slow in stirring. Driven tardily to pasture, the herd caught the wild hare at their belated breakfast. At the peep of day the hare usually make for the trees. Today, in the gloom of the mist, they still nibbled at the chickweed or scraped holes in the sand in pairs, intent on enjoying the open air. But with the arrival of the cattle, they scampered back to the woods.

Silence reigned in the forest. A bird stirred; yet it piped no song. Shaking the dew from its plumage, it huddled closer to the tree, then, tucking its head into its shoulders, shut its eyes again and waited for the sun. Somewhere by the edge of a pool there clacked a stork. Crows, drenched in mist, roosted on the hayricks. Throats agape, they plied their raucous chatter—a sound as irksome to the farmer as the prospect of wet weather.