

# The Intelligentsia, Empire, and Civilization in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

**(Inteligencja, imperium i cywilizacja w XIX i XX wieku), edited by Jan Kieniewicz.** Warsaw: Institute of Interdisciplinary Research "Artes Liberales," University of Warsaw, 2008. 309 pages. ISBN 978-83-923482-9-0. In Polish, Russian, and English.

**Agnieszka Gutthy**

**T**he articles in this book focus on a plethora of experiences that the intelligentsia (a distinctly Eastern European invention) underwent from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the second half of the twentieth century. Organized into three thematic groups, the articles discuss the intelligentsia's activities as well as its silence in the context of imperial expansion. The examined countries range from the small nations subjected to the imperial domination of first Russia and then the Soviet Union, to those under colonial domination in Africa or Asia.

The first group of papers, "Talking and Keeping Silent," concentrates on Polish and Czech experiences. It opens with a theoretical article by Joanna Kurczewska, who outlines three sociological approaches to the problem. Daniel Beauvois then describes the position of the Polish intelligentsia, which was all but silent until the liquidation of the Vilnius educational district in 1831, then regained its voice between the November and January uprisings and continued to speak up after the January 1863 uprising and during the First World War. Beauvois argues that the "colonial" perspective is not appropriate for defining the condition of Polish society in the nineteenth century. Maria Krisań traces the development of the peasant intelligentsia in the Kingdom of Poland between the 1880s and the beginning of the First World War. Margarita Boronova examines the development of the Buryat intelligentsia before the 1917 Revolution. This intelligentsia created the sense of ethnic and cultural Buryat identity and took active part in the fight for national self-determination, for which it paid dearly while the communist regime was in power. Andrzej Tymowski examines the cases of the Polish and Czechoslovak experience. He argues that it is a mistake

to assume a simple duality of verbal activity versus silence of the intelligentsia, meaning verbally active intelligentsia who fulfill its mission versus silent intelligentsia who betray it.

The second group of articles examines the experiences of the intelligentsia on the empire's periphery. The first three papers in this section trace the formation and development of the local intelligentsia on the periphery of Russia and later the Soviet Union. Anton Ivanescu presents the isolation of the intelligentsia in northern Caucasus, Zoja Morochojeva discusses the silent intelligentsia and Russification of ethnic cultures in Central Asia, and Igor Antonov describes the discrimination of Yakut intelligentsia circles. Education obtained in schools where Russian is the language of instruction brought emancipation and modernization to these groups, but also dependence and subordination. Similar things can be said about the Buryat intelligentsia discussed in Boronova's essay. As a rule, the Soviet authorities tried to eliminate or prevent the appearance of ethnically-conscious local intelligentsia. Barbara Stępniewska-Holzer traces the formation and the processes of acculturation and assimilation of nineteenth-century Jewish intelligentsia in the territories that belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before the partitions. Jan Kieniewicz considers the situation of the Polish intelligentsia in the Russian Empire.

The third part of the book looks at how empires influence the formation and profile of the intelligentsia. Julia Sineokaya examines the intellectual elite's search for Russian identity, its situation at the turn of the century, its role in history, and its relationship to power. Andrzej Nowak looks at the post-Soviet Russian intelligentsia and attempts to interpret it from the perspective of Messianism as an intellectual stance. The three articles that follow deal with the problem of colonial domination in other parts of the world. Ewa Łukaszyk examines the evolution of discourses about Africa produced by the Portuguese and describes the rise of native African intelligentsia. This essay points to the importance of the new African intelligentsia and its function as a creator of a new African culture. Krzysztof Iwanek examines the formation of India's national consciousness and the role that students educated at British universities played in this process. Duc Ha Nguyen describes the condition of the Vietnamese educated elite. In the final essay Jan Kieniewicz presents his interpretation of colonialism.

The book poses interesting questions about the role and responsibility of the intelligentsia in the face of colonial or totalitarian domination. The authors of the essays are historians, philosophers, sociologists, or philologists. Seven of the articles are written in Polish, four in Russian, and five in English. The only blemish I can point to is that only seven out of sixteen essays are accompanied by summaries in English. This thought-provoking book invites further discussion. ♦

## The Ice Road: An Epic Journey from the Stalinist Labor Camps to Freedom

**By Stefan Waydenfeld.** Los Angeles, CA and Uckfield, UK: Aquila Polonica Publishing, 2010. x + 406 pages. Photographs. ISBN 978-1-60772-002-7. Cloth. \$28.95.

### Katherine Jolluck

**I**n his memoir *The Ice Road: An Epic Journey from the Stalinist Labor Camps to Freedom*, Stefan Waydenfeld details his experiences from the eve of the Nazi and Soviet invasions of Poland in September 1939 to his arrival in Iran in August 1942. During these three years Waydenfeld, age fourteen when the Second World War began, experienced traumas and trials shared by hundreds of thousands of Poles who lived in or fled to the eastern part of their newly divided country: incorporation into the USSR, the struggle to reunite family members, the loss of a relative in the Katyń massacre, deportation to the Soviet Far North, forced labor in the forests, hunger, disease, vermin, and a tortuous odyssey to freedom. These ordeals remain practically unknown to Americans, for whom this edition of Waydenfeld's original 1999 publication was prepared. The volume includes useful and enlightening supplementary materials: family and historical photographs, an epilogue by his wife that discusses their postwar lives, a report providing the historical context to Waydenfeld's experiences (not using, however, the most up-to-date sources), and a brief interview of the author by his daughter.

Before the war Waydenfeld lived with his family in Otwock, a health resort located near Warsaw. The child of a physician-father and a pathologist-mother, he enjoyed the fortunate life of the middle class. Although

their world was destroyed in autumn 1939, their status, skills, and possessions served them well in the ordeals to come, ultimately enabling them to survive Soviet exile and ensure their evacuation to Iran with the Anders Army (Polish Army in the East).

Soon after the Nazis reached Warsaw, the young Waydenfeld fled eastward, planning to join his father, a doctor in the Polish army. Several months later father, son, and mother were reunited in the city of Pińsk, now under Soviet occupation. Hoping to wait the war out back in Otwock, they applied for repatriation to German-occupied Poland. In June 1940 Soviet agents came in the middle of the night, ostensibly to transport them to Warsaw; instead, they were deported to the northern reaches of the USSR. Deposited in the settlement of Kvasha, near the town of Kotlas, Waydenfeld and the other deportees were forced to perform hard labor in the forest, otherwise they would not eat. It is from this part of his odyssey that Waydenfeld takes the title of his memoirs. For more than six months of the brutal winter of 1940–41, he worked to maintain a road on the compacted snow over which horses could draw a sledge loaded with trees felled by the deportees. In the dark of night, in temperatures lower than minus 40 degrees (Celsius and Fahrenheit), he walked over thirteen miles, pouring water fetched from holes he bored in the frozen river over parallel icy grooves, making sure that they were smooth. Waydenfeld writes that this ice road “has remained forever my idea of purgatory” (131).

The calamity of the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941 led the Soviets to seek temporary amends with the Polish government-in-exile, located in London. The resulting Sikorski-Maiskii Pact of July 1941 granted—“amnesty” to all the deported and arrested Poles, and allowed them to form an army to help fight the Germans. This treaty allowed Waydenfeld and the other deportees to leave Kvasha. Over the next year he journeyed thousands of miles to a series of destinations in southern Russia and Soviet Central Asia, using every available means of transportation: homemade rafts, trains, lorries, ships, donkeys, and on foot. At times the Waydenfelds' fortunes improved, such as when his father obtained work as a doctor in a new hospital near Samarkand. Often they endured horrendous conditions: confined to a meadow for weeks without shelter; days of transport with no food; infestations of lice and bedbugs; battles with typhus and pneumonia. The damaging effects that life in the USSR had on them can best be seen in the startling