

known with more certainty, Snyder estimates that 3.3 million people died from starvation and hunger-related diseases in Soviet Ukraine in 1932–1933. He concludes this chapter by quoting Western intellectuals and leaders such as Arthur Koestler, *New York Times* reporter Walter Duranty, and former French prime minister Edouard Herriot, whom the Soviets fooled into believing that the starving Ukraine was one big happy Potemkin village.

“Class Terror” covers the parallel rise of Hitler’s SS (Schutzstaffel), and Stalin’s OGPU (*Ob’edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*) which delivered state terror in the Soviet Union, most famously in the show trials of the 1930s. Snyder describes Professor Paweł Wiczorkiewicz’s work on the military show trials as “a fundamental work on the military purges.” Here again, Snyder reminds us of the Western intellectuals and leftists who were drinking Stalin’s Kool-Aid about a vast global conspiracy threatening Soviet promise. In both of these chapters he singles out George Orwell for providing an alternate and more accurate version of history. An introduction to the betrayals in these military purges is presented in Nikita Mikhalkov’s film *Burnt by the Sun*.

Bloodlands then proceeds to more familiar ground as it lays out the rapid shifts by Hitler as he began persecuting and killing German Jews, and Stalin’s similar attacks on Ukrainian Poles and Soviet Jews. These genocidal similarities preceded the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the subsequent attacks that Poland fought alone. The progress of *Bloodlands* is clear from a number of its succeeding chapters: “Final Solution,” “Holocaust and Revenge,” and “Resistance and Incineration.”

Bloodlands does not contain stories of individuals of Polish, German, and Russian background who were faced with the impossible choice of possibly saving themselves by betraying Jews, Ukrainians, Russian kulaks, and Poles into the hands of murderers. It does, however, make perfectly clear how grave the result of each of these individual choices was. Some of these many stories have been told in diaries (Victor Klemperer, David Sierakowiak), memoirs (Primo Levi), and in Hans Fallada’s recently translated novel, *Every Man Dies Alone*. Snyder’s focus, however, is on the overview of how the machinery and bureaucracy of unimaginable suffering and death became the everyday experience of millions.

Bloodlands echoes the prescient warning in 1919 by John Maynard Keynes in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. There Keynes predicted that if the terms of the peace after World War One punished the nations

who lost, “nothing can then delay for very long that final civil war between the forces of Reaction and the despairing convulsions of Revolution, before which the horrors of the late German war will fade into nothing, and which will destroy, whoever is the victor, the civilization and the progress of our generation.”

In often similar magisterial language, Timothy Snyder has exhaustively chronicled the horrific systems of mass murder in Germany and the Soviet Union that preceded and coincided with the war that Keynes feared. Snyder’s book is a full and meticulous recovery of the history of how the entire peoples and their culture in the bloodlands were systematically obliterated. By his estimates, there were 14 million noncombatant deaths here. The Nazis killed 10 million prisoners of war and civilians, 6 million of whom were Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Those who cooperated with Stalin killed 4 million prisoners of war and civilians. Confronted by the appalling numbers of the dead, Snyder’s writing is committed to clarity and restraint, with both the right distance from and a clear focus on the horrors he presents. Without these qualities, the histories in *Bloodlands* might otherwise prove to be a challenging read. With them, *Bloodlands* is a necessary book. Absolutely necessary. He concludes with a chapter devoted to “Humanity,” and his hope, in the final lines of this book, “for us as humanists to turn the numbers back into people.” May his hope be fulfilled.▲

Personal Reflections on *Bloodlands*

Europe between Hitler and Stalin

Raymond Gawronski, SJ

“Spigau” she used to say in her Polish pronunciation of a German word, but I could never find it anywhere, and along with it, the number by which she was called at “Appell” in the camp. Two decades after the war, my mother destroyed the documents I remember seeing, the “Arbeitsbuch fuer Auslaender” with the eagle and swastika on it, the “P” for Pole: the memories of those days were too painful, the nightmares. Most of the tales of my childhood—her tales, the tales of other family and friends—were of such places, camps and invading armies, Stalin killing my godmother’s Latvian father, my grandfather being labeled a “kulak” and condemned (along with his “kulak” family) for deportation “east,” the horizon of the stories outlining the silhouette of the blonde Czech girl hung by the Germans for espionage. Dresden and

the Warsaw Rising, Auschwitz and Pawiak, people with numbers on their arms and people who trembled when the sirens were tested in Brooklyn. They are all dead now, and all I had left was the word “Spargau” which I could not locate.

And then it occurred to me (perhaps triggered by “Speer Boulevard” in Denver): in German, it would be something like “Speergau.” A word typed into the computer, and sure enough there it was: “Spargau Concentration Camp”—near Leipzig, just as she said. Somewhere on the border of labor and death.

All these stories had their origins in what Timothy Snyder calls “The Bloodlands”—those lands between Berlin and Moscow where the modern social experiments of Hitler and Stalin were enacted. Although I was raised with stories steeped in horror, *Bloodlands* was too much even for me: I simply had to stop reading it for weeks at a time, and the very thought of reviewing it is difficult. But it is a book that must be read and digested, a very significant book that knits together what otherwise are discordant chunks of history, many of which are totally unknown in our culture, and presents a circle—indeed, multiple circles—of hell right in the heart of the twentieth century.

The “Killing Fields” of East Central Europe simply boggle the mind, and behind them, the profound confusion that the tens of millions of poor souls who lived in those countries at that time experienced. We in the United States and Western Europe are especially ignorant of this world, where the bulk of the fighting of the Second World War took place.

Behind the horrors of the twentieth century lie the imperial ambitions of Germany and Russia, and, in both cases, their refusal to recognize the legitimate existence of other nations between these monoliths. It began with the collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union, where the hunger caused by the collectivization was turned into starvation by politics. Snyder counts five million people intentionally starved to death most in the Ukraine, where the Ukrainian peasants were singled out for genocidal punishment and then something approaching a million people were killed in “the Terror.” Among those killed in the Terror, the chief target were Poles living in the Soviet Union [see Tomasz Sommer, “The Polish Operation: Stalin’s First Genocide of Poles, 1937–1938,” *Sarmatian Review*, XXXI/3, September 2011, 1618–1625, *Ed.*]. So it began in the 1930s.

After the dual invasion of Poland, both invaders killed several hundred thousand Polish citizens, focusing on the intellectual and leadership classes. The Katyn massacre of over 20,000 Polish officers is now

increasingly well known; less well known is the deportation of about a million Polish citizens by both Germans and Soviets. In the case of the Germans this was done in order to begin clearing the ground of Slavic people for German settlement.

After the German invasion of Hitler’s former ally the Soviet Union, the pattern of horror in the occupied Eastern lands became an interweaving of what Snyder calls “belligerent complicity”: massive partisan activity, encouraged by the Soviets, countered by German reprisals. Here Snyder counts more than 300,000 people killed in such reprisals.

One of the most shocking revelations of Snyder’s book is Hitler’s originally planned “colonial demodernization” of the Soviet Union and Poland that would take tens of millions of lives, while the eastern plains of Europe would become an “agrarian domain of German masters.” The “Hunger Plan” was for thirty million people to be starved to death in the winter of 1941–42, diverting food to Germany. There was to have been a seven-week “lightning victory” over the Soviet Union, leading to the deportation of Jews from Europe, then the East was to be colonized by German colonists. “The Holocaust overshadows German plans that envisioned even more killing. Hitler wanted not only to eradicate the Jews; he wanted also to destroy Poland and the Soviet union as states, exterminate their ruling classes, and kill tens of millions of Slavs. . . . If the German war against the USSR had gone as planned, thirty million civilians would have been starved in the first winter, and tens of millions more expelled, killed, assimilated, or enslaved thereafter”(ix). Although never realized, these plans “supplied the moral premises of German occupation policy in the East”(ix-x).

There was no lightning victory, and the German leadership had to scale down their plans, killing about ten million people. A million people were “purposefully starved in besieged Leningrad and more than three million Soviet prisoners of war died of starvation and neglect” (416). As war went on and labor was needed, prisoners were used as forced laborers. Because of the turn of the war, the plan for mass killing had to be delayed, but the plan for colonization was never abandoned. It was, in fact, the “Final Solution” that the Nazis were able to implement.

Nazi Germany had far fewer Jews than its eastern neighbors—less than 1 percent of the German population when Hitler came to power in 1933—and many had left by the time of the war. About one-quarter of 1 percent of the German population was Jewish by the beginning of the Second World War. Snyder insists

that the bulk of the genocide of the Jews of Europe happened *in situ*, in the east, where the majority of Europe's Jews lived. The German forces moved in and simply slaughtered resident Jewish populations; those in ghettos were executed later, in the death factories that were created later in the war. In a bizarre twist, the Nazi leadership actually viewed the death factories as a "humane" way to exterminate the Jews, contrasted with the original plan of death by starvation (258).

Far from relativizing the horror of the Jewish Holocaust, placing the genocide of the Jews in the context of the "liquidation" of other groups actually heightens the pathos, the simple, devastating fact of the total programmatic attempt to exterminate entire communities. Words fail. "Of the fourteen million people deliberately murdered in the Bloodlands between 1933 and 1945, a third belong in the Soviet account" (x). These fourteen million people were "all victims of a Soviet or Nazi killing policy. . . but never casualties of the war between them" (x). In the midst of such mind-numbing horror, Snyder attempts to keep in mind that we are reading about human beings, individuals, with stories, lives, faces. This humanizes, but also serves to increase the horror of it all.

To do any justice to this very nuanced study and to the intricate webs of human death, one would have to simply read this book. It is a tale of relentless horror, from the beginning of the Soviet famine and terror, through the horror of the Nazi racial utopia and its perversion of Western civilization, through the Soviet "victory" that really meant that one of the monsters crushed the other, but the horror, and the monster, continued.

Snyder's sensitivity to the various peoples involved, their own motivations, situations, histories, relations, is remarkable and highly praiseworthy. His reflections on subsequent inflation of numbers by nationalist groups is sober and needed. His sympathy for the peoples of the Bloodlands inclines him to be justly critical of Great Russian chauvinism as regards the mosaic of peoples in the Soviet Union. This in itself makes for very interesting reading, the hijacking of statistics by Russians at the expense of Ukrainians and especially of Belarusians, since it is in Belarus that the highest percentage of deaths occurred. Snyder's criticism of Germany is relentless and unsoftened by many humane considerations. German racial policy toward easterners was clearly the frequent source of massive horrors, with a long history of racism behind them. Snyder walks a tightrope of deepening concern for the Jewish Holocaust and a most moving presentation while situating it within the suffering of

other surrounding communities: I believe he accomplishes this very difficult task well.

Curiously, in his final reflections he notes that "for Germans who accepted Hitler as their Leader, faith was very important. The object of their faith could hardly have been more poorly chosen, but their capacity for faith is undeniable. . . devotion and faith did not make the Germans good, but they did make them human" (400). G. K. Chesterton once wrote that someone who did not believe in God would believe anything: is this not what happened in the societies of modern Germany and Russia in which traditional Christianity was rejected, and the human capacity for faith found itself reaching for idols?

When he describes the assault on the Polish intelligentsia, Snyder, a bit surprisingly, characterizes it as an assault on "the Enlightenment." In his view, the attack on the intelligentsia "was an attack on the very concept of modernity, or indeed the social embodiment of Enlightenment in this part of the world" (153). In 1939 the Soviets and the Germans "invaded Poland together, and carried out a policy of de-Enlightenment" (415). Yet he notes that a German interrogator "had ordered an old man to be killed for exhibiting a 'Polish way of thinking'" (154). Surely there is an incompatibility between these two statements, as well as a lack of understanding of what makes Poland Poland.

It is true that the intelligentsia of Poland would have prided itself on strong Enlightenment roots and in that sense have been "modern." But it was not because Poland had an "enlightened" intellectual leadership that it did not become the monster state—nor did it ally itself with either of the monster states at its borders. In fact, the roots of the ideologies of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union very much emerged from that modernity that so hated this "reactionary"—and Catholic—state and mindset in their midst. The Bloodlands were the lands of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, what has emerged as the modern European homeland of Roman and Uniate Catholicism, as well as of religious Judaism. It is a strange irony that the author of this excellent book appears to seek to defend the values of an Enlightenment that, by striking at the roots of the intellectual faith of Catholic Europe, led to a totally unbalanced understanding of the human being and produced the monsters of the mass collective egos, incarnate in the idols that were Hitler and Stalin. The traditionally religious people who found themselves caught between these monsters of modernity and a traditional European leadership still

somewhat rooted in the sanity of ancient philosophy and theology saw them for what they were and remained sane. When the Soviet Union finally collapsed, it was around the figure of Pope John Paul II, representative of ancient Christianity in fruitful dialogue with modernity and gratefully mindful of its Biblical roots that the uncompromised intellectuals rallied. ▲

Ex fumo in lucem

Barokowe kaznodziejstwo Andrzeja Kochanowskiego

(*Ex fume in lucem*: Andrzej Kochanowski's Baroque Homiletics) **By Anna Nowicka-Struska.** Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press (www.wydawnictwo.umcs.eu), 2008. 247 pages. Index, bibliography. ISBN 978-83-227-2915-1. Paper. In Polish.

Joanna Kurowska

This is a study of a series of funeral sermons delivered by the seventeenth-century Carmelite preacher Andrzej Kochanowski. For purposes of comparison, the study also deals with homiletics of several other Carmelite preachers. Nowicka-Struska maintains that while displaying many characteristics typical of the genre, time, and culture in which they were created, in many ways Kochanowski's sermons are exceptional. Her approach is twofold. She discusses the sermons from the point of view of a literary scholar and while doing so, weaves in the cultural and historical background of the Polish Baroque. This discussion constitutes the book's main corpus (chapters 1–3). Since sermons represent a religious type of writing, the closing chapter of *Ex fumo in lucem* discusses the various aspects of Carmelite religiosity.

The theme of death looms large in Baroque artists' works, and thus the topic (funeral sermons) seems well chosen. Nowicka-Struska evokes not only the main tenets of seventeenth-century mentality and cultural topoi in their particular Polish setting, but also an entire gamut of historical, social, religious, and psychological details. The first chapter briefly discusses the history of funeral sermons, focusing particularly on those that appeared in print. We are reminded of the traditional structure and function of a funeral sermon (*docere, laudare, delectare*) and learn interesting details regarding their publication. While connecting funeral ceremonies with the Baroque's overall fascination with the theater, Nowicka-Struska argues that the seventeenth-century *pompa funebris* was in fact a performance that involved the deceased (typically someone from the social elite), the preacher, and his

audience. Such a performance reflected many aspects of seventeenth-century society including culture, religion, and history. In the context of the funeral as part of the *theatrum mundi*, Nowicka-Struska discusses a number of rhetorical and literary characteristics of the sermons themselves, such as the use of visual effects and the dialogue, formulaic expressions, voice, and gestures.

The second chapter focuses on correlations between history and Carmelite preaching, particularly the ways in which the latter employed historical sources. Nowicka-Struska first outlines the fundamental and fascinating problem of historical evaluation, then discusses the main influences that conditioned such evaluations in the seventeenth century. We are reminded of the epoch's turbulent history (the Swedish wars and Khmelnytsky's uprising), of the Polish *szlachta*'s conservative outlook regarding politics and culture; of Sarmatian myths about the origin of Poles and their historic role; and finally, in the context of the post-Trent developments and Counter-Reformation in Poland, of the Sarmates' beliefs regarding Poland's role as the *Antemurale Christianitatis* and "Gate to Europe." As Nowicka-Struska demonstrates, all these developments found their echoes in Carmelite funeral sermons, whether as a ground for social criticism or as an opportunity to reinforce and foster the Sarmates' view of history. This chapter also explores the presence in sermons of such *topoi* as the opposition between the "Golden Past" and depraved present; the notions of history being God's playground and of God toying with human fate; as well as the Baroque's favorite notion of the vanity of history and individual human life. Finally, in this chapter Nowicka-Struska discusses the parenetic aspects of the sermons, especially the role models for male and female members of the *szlachta* and aristocracy, both lay and consecrated.

In the third chapter Nowicka-Struska tackles various aspects of the Carmelite sermons' aesthetics and style. While discussing applications of the baroque conceit in religious writing, she shows the sources from which Andrzej Kochanowski derived his conceits including nature, astronomy, astrology, mythology, the Bible, fine arts, architecture, and literature. While the sermons are described as sources of information regarding social mores in seventeenth-century Poland, the only customs mentioned in this part of the book are culinary ones. A large part of the chapter discusses various rhetorical figures employed in the sermons. Chapter 3 seems less well organized and occasionally repeats material already discussed in earlier parts. For example, while discussing the employment of literary motifs by