

wickedness. While he lived, he paid a huge price for his intransigency. His legacy consists of providing us with unique information about communism and sketching out a particular ontology of the communist lie. As Jeremy Black notes in the foreword to *The Triumph of Provocation*, Mackiewicz's analyses can help us navigate and interpret other contemporary authoritarian systems and methods of governing, and they often shed light on contemporary international policies toward undemocratic countries. Δ

WEB SOURCES

Józef Mackiewicz, "Nierozwiązana zagadka Aleksandra Solżenicyna," *Wiadomości* no. 23 (1972), <http://tylkoprawda.akcja.pl/teksty20.html>, accessed 1 June 2013.

"Archipelag zbrodni i zagadek," *Wiadomości* nos. 13–15 (1974), <http://tylkoprawda.akcja.pl/teksty19.html>, accessed 1 June 2013.

I saw it with my own eyes [Widziałem na własne oczy] (interview), trans. Tatiana Fuller, <http://tylkoprawda.akcja.pl/teksty16a.htm>, accessed 1 June 2013.

History from the Ground up

Terrence O'Keefe

The Polish Experience through World War II. A Better Day Has Not Come, by Aleksandra Ziolkowska-Boehm. Foreword by Neal Pease. Lanham, MD and Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2013. viii + 175 pages. Index, footnotes. ISBN 978-0-7391-7819-5.

While it may seem offensive to quote Josef Stalin on any subject, there is one well-known remark of his that seems apt here: "A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths a statistic." This observation, turned on his own unrestrained power and cavalier attitude about the lives of others, signals him as the lead author of innumerable personal tragedies that generated the dire statistics that are the subject of conventional histories that deal with nations, states, and the relations among them, i.e., history "from the top down." Ziolkowska-Boehm's

collection of deeply affecting personal and family narratives returns us to the level where individuals are caught up in historical events that changed their lives forever, and tells us how they experienced them.

The intended spoils of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact were, for the Russians, the eastern half of Poland and the Baltic States. With their military occupation of eastern Poland during late September 1939, Soviet authorities, working through the NKVD, undertook vast "cleansing" operations, including targeted murders, mass killings, and large deportations of Poles whom they considered to be potential oppositionists (the grisly details are described in Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*). Though aimed at removing Poland's leadership class from the region, the criteria of "selection" for deportation were gross, doctrinaire, and often arbitrary. During the cattle-car transports and upon arrival at their destinations, death by malnutrition, illness, and exposure to extreme weather was considered "natural" by the authorities. Joanna Synowiec's journeys through this hellish passage are emblematic of thousands of Polish children who were orphaned and used as expendable labor by the Soviets during this terrible period. Her gloomy odyssey – Archangelsk, Uzbekistan, Iran, Mexico, the United States—killed her parents early on, leaving her as the family's responsible "mother" at the age of twelve, unable to prevent the death of one of her two brothers. Her imperative to rescue what could be rescued was so stark that she lost the ability to cry. While she managed to build a decent life in the United States, she never truly recovered from the succession of blows that hammered her during the war years. Her happy memories of a childhood on a prosperous farm near Szemiatówka (today in Belarus) have not vanished, but have been transformed by the nightmare that followed into a constant reminder that such everyday happiness could never be hers again. Hers is a story of irretrievable losses ("A better day has not come").

The longest chapter in this book, "Wartanowicz Family Vineyards in Podole," is an intergenerational saga of an extended family, one branch of which stems from the Armenian immigrations into Poland during the late middle ages. In the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries the parents of the family branch considered here (Eugeniusz and Teofila and their four sons and one daughter) established large and successful vineyards, orchards, and a manorial estate at Dźwiniacz in the vicinity of Zaleszczyki (now in Ukraine). The family's history and fortunes are told by several of the children and grandchildren of these five siblings, and gathered through family letters, diaries, and conversations with the author. The brief wartime story of Józef Wartanowicz's family records executions by the Gestapo and deaths and dispersals at the hands of the Russians.

The central story of Marian and Krystyna Wartanowicz's family, who owned another family property near Dobropole, comes from Krystyna's diaries and the reminiscences of their daughter nicknamed Anulke. She experienced her tenth through twelfth years as a deportee to Kazakhstan, followed by refugee status in Tehran, Pakistan, and South Africa, where the family chose to settle after reuniting with Marian and a brief English interlude at the end of the war. Fate was kinder to Anulke than to Joanna Synowiec. Anulke's father survived a German POW camp and her mother held the rest of the family together during their exile, demonstrating a fortitude that surprised those who knew her as a diminutive, stylish, and sheltered young woman before the catastrophe. Once again the strong contrast between the prosperous and pleasant conditions of the family before the war and the disruption, misery, and anxiety of the war years is central to personal memories of the era. But the most important thing—an intact family—survived and lived to build new lives in South Africa, England, Canada, and France.

What happened to those who remained behind in Poland, those who were not killed or swept up and deported by either Hitler's or Stalin's minions, is illustrated by the story of Anna and Ewa Bąkowski. Anna was the only daughter among the Wartanowicz siblings, marrying into the Bąkowski family and helping to manage the large agricultural estate Kraśnica near Opoczno in south-central Poland. Her husband, Jerzy Jaxa Bąkowski, was captured by the Russians and murdered as part of the Starobelsk-Kharkov "liquidation." Her daughter Ewa was a young teenager during the WWII years and, along with her mother, played a role in assisting local

underground units of the Home Army. This credential in itself was enough to create problems for mother and daughter in the communist state—you could only be anti-Nazi on Russian terms, i.e., with a strong communist Party orientation, a rarity in itself in Poland during the war years; any other form of democratic or political or civil activism made you automatically suspect. Finally resettling in Gdańsk, they had to conceal their "bourgeois origins" in order to avoid punitive actions that would have affected Ewa's educational and employment prospects. Other than vivid prewar memories of Dźwiniacz, Dobropole, and Kraśnica, all links to the family estates were severed for this generation of the Wartanowicz family and their children, never to be reconstituted.

Ewa Bąkowski's cousin, Janusz Krasicki, is at the center of the next family narrative in the book. As a boy of seven he saw his father, Captain Witold Krasicki, an air force pilot, leave for duty on September 3, 1939. His mother received several postcards from her husband while he was in Russian captivity. All communication ceased in spring 1940, when Captain Krasicki was among the 4,000 Polish POWs at the Starobelsk camp executed by the NKVD—one contingent of the many slaughtered by the operation now called the Katyń Forest massacre. The postwar years in Warsaw were as difficult as the war years for his family ("bourgeois origins" again), but Janusz, fascinated by aviation and inspired by his father's career, managed to become a civilian aviator in the face of obstacles created by the regime, becoming a lifelong official of the Aero Club. The story of his love of flying and pulling himself up by his bootstraps is actually a happy one.

"Wanda's life is a dramatic essence of the fates of the war generation. Fate led her through the underground flight in the Home Army, through the Gestapo headquarters in Szucha Street in Warsaw, the Pawiak prison, the camps of Majdanek and Auschwitz—to repressions in the postwar times of Stalin's rule." So begins the biographical sketch of Wanda Ossowska, the last in this collection, with its cautionary title "Let Our Fate Be a Warning to You." The bare facts of this opening sentence are filled in with the

details of her brutal treatment by the Germans who interrogated her fifty-seven times (leaving her with permanent physical damage) but were not able to break her. Before, during, and after the war her vocation as a surgical nurse brought help and encouragement to her countrymen for fifty years. The book ends with the moving story of Ossowska's determined and successful effort to save the life of Ida Grinspan, a fifteen-year-old French-Jewish orphan and only child in the Neustadt-Glewe concentration camp.

One final observation should be made here. With the exception of Janusz Krasicki's story, this book is one in which women's voices and actions predominate. During the war years Polish women undertook many difficult tasks to preserve both their families and their nation. Their efforts and perspective are given exposure here in a way that impresses the reader hitherto unfamiliar with their achievements. Ms. Ziolkowska-Boehm is to be congratulated for making their voices heard. Δ

New Perspectives on Polish Culture

Personal Encounters, Public Affairs

Edited by Tamara Trojanowska, Artur Płaczkiwicz, Agnieszka Polakowska, and Olga Ponichtera. New York: PIASA Books, 2011. x + 382 pages. Index, Notes on Contributors, Bibliography. ISBN 978-0-940962-73-6. Paperback.

Robin Davidson

From Professor Tamara Trojanowska's elucidating introduction to the closing essay on literary translation by poet and translator Mira Rosenthal, this collection of essays by eminent Slavic Studies scholars interrogates Poland's struggle with the public/private dynamic as it impacts the identity politics that have haunted the Polish literary imagination for more than two centuries. The collection includes twenty-one essays that bridge three centuries—nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first, address identity formation as it pertains to Polish culture's struggle with modernity, and seek to

revise the old dualism of public and private within the context of the shifting ground of postmodernity. The authors here employ Polish literature as the stage on which a passionate national discourse plays out, moving from the nineteenth-century Romanticism of Adam Mickiewicz and the Polish theater to the transnational imagination of the *O'Hariści*. In her introduction Trojanowska offers a compelling explanation of the rationale underpinning the order in which the essays appear. The book's arc involves two central concerns. The first deals with the increasing tensions among a communal, societal, and individualistic understanding of Polish cultural traditions and is evidenced in the essays appearing in parts 1–3: "Paradigmatic Shifts," "Experiences of the Self," and "New Dynamics." The book's subsequent focus refers specifically to Poland's experience of the extreme historical circumstances of European twentieth-century modernity: this concern is addressed in the remaining two parts—"Memory, Trauma, Mourning" and "Transnational Connections." The essays comprising this section use a range of philosophical and theoretical positions, including discourses in trauma and memory, postcolonial theory, and gender, to reimagine the public/private dynamic.

In the book's initial essay, "What's Love Got to Do with It?: Adam Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve, Part 4* and the Art of Transgressing the Private/Public Divide," Halina Filipowicz reexamines the gap between personal and collective life as it is manifest in the character Gustaw/Konrad. Her argument calls into question a traditional reading of the play and seeks to reinterpret Mickiewicz's intent. In her exploration of Part 4 of *Forefathers' Eve*, Filipowicz makes a particularly astute claim regarding the play's subtitle, *A Poema*, a word that for the nineteenth-century opera reviewer means *libretto*. She asserts that by using this subtitle Mickiewicz implies that *Forefather's Eve* moves fluidly between boundaries, shifting between drama and song, text and performance (what she calls "page and stage"), the private and the public man, in a coexistence where neither is entirely excluded—thus completely recontextualizing how Gustaw and Konrad have