

wounded, and carried supplies through the streets of hell on earth?

Even more dangerously at that time, she wrote for underground publications affiliated with the Polish Resistance. In 1944 different areas of Poland were under the control of Nazi and Soviet forces, neither of which observed any standards for the treatment of civilians and prisoners of war. Writing for the Resistance was an act of great courage. If either enemy had taken her, she would have been tortured at the very least. Thankfully, she overcame hardship to bring us her memories of that time and how she survived.

*I slept with corpses under one blanket.
I apologized to these corpses
For being alive. ("Talking With Corpses")*

To bear witness through the witness of poetry is both vital and necessary. Polish writers who lived under Nazi or Soviet rule know this all too well. Even if it takes time—Swir waited for thirty years after the Warsaw Rising to publish these poems in 1974, according to Jericho Brown in his foreword to the Florczyk translation. However, according to Milosz, the first publication in Polish was in 1972, and the first bilingual edition, with translations by Magnus Kryniski and Robert A. Maguire, was published in Kraków in 1979 (*Postwar Polish Poetry*, p. 57). One of Swir's poems is titled "Waiting Thirty Years" (*Czekam trzydzieści lat*). It describes Swir's contact with an injured partisan. While she is "re-bandaging / his torn-up leg" he makes a promise to her:

*"When the war ends
we'll go dancing, little miss.
I'm buying."*

*I've been waiting for him
for thirty years.*

In *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010) and referring to Norman Davies and Włodzimierz Borodziej, Timothy Snyder writes that early in the morning when the uprising began, "the mood among the fighters and in the city itself was euphoric" (301). We know now that this young partisan did not survive. Then the great and terrible realization

surfaced of how many partisans, men, women, and children were killed during and immediately after the Rising. Estimates are upwards of 200,000. After the failed rising, the Germans expelled all living inhabitants from the city. How many women had Swir's courage and the need to write about what they had lived through? In "The Last Polish Uprising" she tries to imagine the unimaginable:

*When the place where a million people had lived
Became the emptiness of a million people.*

Swir's poetry is wide-ranging and significant, and I have quoted sparingly from *Building The Barricade*. There are just over thirteen poems devoted to the uprising here, and it seemed unwise to quote extensively from them. When they are read together in sequence their effects are both intimate and particularly powerful, a power and intimacy that recalls Nabokov's observation about Tolstoy: "Readers call Tolstoy a giant not because other writers are dwarfs but because he remains always of exactly our own nature, exactly keeping pace with us instead of passing by in the distance, as other authors do" (*The New Yorker*, vol. 57, November 2, 1981, 183). The experience of reading Anna Swir's poems from *Building The Barricade* is like walking beside her as she shares her utterly necessary remembrances of the past.

Milosz had the generosity to be the first to bring her poems in English to the West, as it was then known. Perhaps we should leave it to him to summarize her accomplishments: "William Blake was inclined to see human sins as phases through which humans pass and not as something substantial. In . . . Anna Swir there is a similar empathy and forgiveness." Δ

MORE BOOKS

Polska Wschodnia i orientalizm [Eastern Poland and Orientalism], edited by **Tomasz Zarycki**. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar (www.scholar.com.pl), 2013. 214 pages. Index. ISBN 978-83-7383-670-9. Paper. In Polish.

A collection of fourteen papers by Polish, Ukrainian, and Belarusian scholars on the

understanding and practice of Orientalism in Eastern Europe. While being itself a frequent object of Orientalist reification, Eastern Europe has produced its own Orientalist views on territories situated to the east of the Eastern European countries. Russia has thus been subjected to Orientalist interpretations by those who themselves were subjected to it by Western European scholars.

Wołyń we krwi 1943 [The Bloodlands of Volhynia: 1943], by **Joanna Wieliczko-Szarkowa**. Kraków: Wydawnictwo AA s.c., 2013. 399 pages. Photographs. ISBN 978-83-7864-260-2. Hardbound. In Polish.

The year 2013 marked the seventieth anniversary of the beginning of the genocide perpetrated by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists/Ukrainian Insurgent Army (OUN-UPA) against Poles in Volhynia and East Małopolska. Wieliczko-Szarkowa's book documents that history, with special attention to the apogee of the murders of approximately 100,000 people that started in summer 1943.

The history of Poles in the *Kresy* region challenges the dominant binary American paradigm of World War II: "good guy" Allies versus "bad guy" Axis. In the period 1939–45, Poles in Volhynia were essentially plunged into three simultaneous wars: first and last with Soviet aggressors (the "Allied" Red Army regularly killed the Allied *Armia Krajowa* after "liberating" a region); then (after 1941) with Nazi invaders; and finally, a campaign of mass murder organized by Ukrainian nationalist followers of Stepan Bandera who, with their hopes for an independent Ukraine through collaboration with the Germans dashed, embarked on their own campaign of ethnic cleansing in case, by some miracle, they wrested an independent country.

Wieliczko-Szarkowa's work is divided into three parts. The first two describe Volhynia in Polish history through 1920, then as part of the Second Republic. The vast majority of the book, however, focuses on Volhynia during World War II. A few pages at the end of the book take the history from the end of the war through the spring of 2013, with the failure of a project for a joint pastoral letter commemorating

the events between the Roman Catholic and Uniate bishops of now western Ukraine.

The primary focus of the book is also the most valuable: a detailed account—virtually village by village—of the systematic destruction of the Polish population of Volhynia (and, to a lesser extent, East Małopolska) in 1943. OUN-UPA forces would typically surround a village, preventing inhabitants from escaping, then begin the murder (by gun, pitchfork, knife, or sickle) of men, women, and children, either in their houses or by collective burning alive in a church or other building. After pillaging livestock and other goods, the place was completely razed to intentionally obliterate any trace of Polish settlement there. Numerous photographs bear witness to lone crosses and neglected markers in empty fields that today mark what were once places where people lived. The book also contains many photographs of victims of the killings, including infants.

There are voices—especially descendants of Volhynian families—who criticize how memory of the Volhynia massacres seems downplayed, even in Poland. Various factors, including bilateral Polish-Ukrainian relations, may account for this. In the West the Volhynia massacres and the larger OUN-UPA conflicts are even more unknown. Tadeusz Piotrowski has published four works (*Vengeance of the Swallows; Poland's Holocaust; Ukrainian Integral Nationalism; Genocide and Rescue in Wołyń*) but, generally speaking, there is virtually nothing in English (though one suspects Ukrainian diaspora circles, often sympathetic to Bandera, may have their own literature). In addition to Wieliczko-Szarkowa's work, 2013 has seen new works appear in Poland (e.g., Grzegorz Motyka, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej do akcji „Wisła”*). It would be valuable to make them accessible to English readers. (John M. Grondelski)

Stanisława Orzechowskiego i Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego spór o wiarę ("Frycz" St. Orzechowskiego oraz "Prosta opowieść" i "Orzechowski" A.F. Modrzewskiego, **edited by Krzysztof Koehler. Translation from Latin by Kaja Stompór-Lesicka**. Humanitas-Studia Kulturoznawcze Series. Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum and WAM

(www.wydawnictwowam.pl), 2013. 372 pages. Index. ISBN 978-83-7614-155-8 (Ignatianum), ISBN 978-83-277-0033-9 (WAM). Paper. In Polish and Latin.

The fourth volume in a series that presents Polish political writers of the sixteenth century. This volume presents the polemics between an author enjoying a good reputation among Enlightenment advocates in Poland, and one who has been criticized by adherents of Enlightenment ideology. The first is characterized by clarity of expression and an ability to build an argument, whereas the second, it is said, is intemperate and chaotic. The first is a Protestant, the second a Catholic. What are the merits of their arguments from the perspective of the twenty-first century? As one reads on, one realizes that Frycz-Modrzewski is a clever but not always honest polemicist, whereas Orzechowski is emotional in his arguments and displays a total lack of perfidy. This classical dialogue of Sarmatian Poland is very much worth reading. It shows the formation of Polish shortcomings and virtues, and explains the roots of Polish identity.

(Continued on Page 1850)



Report of the coronation
of King Ladislas Vasa (Władysław Waza),
1633 (title page). Polish
National Library collection.

Pan Tadeusz

by

Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855)

Book Ten Emigration • Jacek

Argument: The storm. Deliberations aimed at securing the fortunes of the victors. Talking terms with Rykov. The farewell. An important revelation. Hope.

Translated by Christopher A. Zakrzewski

The racks, which since morning had been scudding along like a scattered flock of black birds, kept massing together, rising ever higher in the sky; scarcely had the sun dipped from its zenith when they swathed half the heavens in a vast band of cloud. The wind drove it onward, ever more swiftly. The cloud grew denser, sank lower, until half torn from the sky on one side, it swung earthward, spread out along the horizon and like a great sail gathering all the winds into itself swept over the sky from south to west.

There came a moment of calm. The air fell still as if struck dumb with terror. The grainfields stood motionless. Until a moment ago they had been surging like seas, bending to the ground then recovering themselves with a toss of their golden spikes. Now, stalks bristling, they stared at the sky. So too the green willows and poplars by the wayside ceased bowing profoundly like women plainers over an open grave. No longer did they thrash their long limbs and spread their silver tresses on the wind. Now, as if benumbed with grief, they stood lifeless like the rock of Niobe of Sipylos. Only the quaking aspen stirred her hoary leaves.

Normally loath to leave the fields, the cattle huddled together in a tight knot and, forsaking their forage, trotted briskly homeward without waiting for the drovers. The bull pawed the ground, plowed it with his horn, bellowing balefully at the frightened herd. The large-eyed cow, her mouth open wide in wonder, kept gazing skyward, sighing deeply, while the laggard hog fretted, gnashing his teeth, and, stealing into the grain, made off with his plundered store of sheaves.

SR recommends these websites

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31xojg_tEds

A reading of “Ordon’s Redoubt” (*Reduta Ordona*) from Stefan Żeromski’s *Sisyphean Labors*. Quintessentially Polish.

www.DobraPolskaSzkola.com

An amazing portal. Not only materials and suggestions for Polish Saturday schools in the United States, but also cultural events and travel.

<http://www.pbgot.pl/pl/Wsparcie>

Polska Baza Genetyczna Ofiar Totalitaryzmów: Money is needed to continue archeological investigations of areas in the Powązki Cemetery where the communist police buried in unmarked graves the tortured victims of their interrogations (the heroes of Polish resistance). The Polish state under Prime Minister Tusk has declined to contribute, partly because of its chronically unbalanced budgets. The work is conducted owing largely to private donations. This research has already identified many individuals including Witold Pilecki, murdered by the Soviet-controlled secret police in 1947, the man who volunteered for Auschwitz and later reported on what he saw there.

<http://homes.yahoo.com/news/basics-windowsill-gardener-poland-edition-130000877.html>

A lovely site titled “Basics for the Windowsill Gardener, Poland Edition.” An entrepreneur in Poland started a site featuring basic garden tools and plants for sale. The site targets the mini-gardeners: those who have only windowsills or little porches at their disposal. The remarkable feature of this site is the stunning beauty of its photographs—take a look and experience the feeling of peace and serenity the site generates.

<http://www.warsawuprising.com>

A professionally executed site about Rising ’44 by Witold O. Kieżun. Text and original photos.

<http://pulchra.pl/>

Very fine jewelry made of tree resin through a patented process. Look at the Gallery—these are works of beauty.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnGEDGJeuOI>

Włodek Pawlik won the Best Large Jazz Ensemble Grammy at the ceremony in Los Angeles for the album “Night in Calisia (*Kalisz* in Polish) by his trio, trumpeter Randy Brecker and Kalisz Philharmonic. The award is the first ever for a Polish jazz musician at the United States’ top music ceremony, now in its 56th year. You can listen to it free of charge on YouTube.

<http://www.meblik.eu/shipping-to-usa-pl/>

A graceful and elegant display of children’s furniture caught our eye as we cruised the Web. They promise to deliver to the United States as well. High class and excellent design.

No, *Sarmatian Review* does not receive any remuneration from the sites mentioned above. Nor do we assume any responsibility for the current content of these sites. We simply liked the content of the sites when we checked them.

BOOKS (continued from Page 1838)

Gulag w oczach Zachodu (The Gulag under Western Eyes), by **Dariusz Tolczyk**. Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka (www.proszynski.pl), 2009. 344 pages. Index of persons. ISBN 978-83-7648-1081. Paper. In Polish.

An innovative study of the Soviet Gulag that combines narrative skill with factual accuracy. In many ways, the best book on the Gulag to date. After a philosophical introduction and a brief history of modern Russian public relations activities (starting with Peter the Great and reaching a high peak under Catherine the Great), the author details the development of the labor camp system and its double goal: to eliminate the recalcitrant and to get out of them as much labor as they could deliver before dying from malnutrition and maltreatment. Particularly chilling are the accounts of those American, British, French, and German politicians and journalists who wrote their mendacious reports from the USSR in the 1930s thus promoting the sympathy and admiration toward the “great light from the East.” We are waiting for the English edition of this book.