

(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.

The birds sought out refuge wherever they could find it: in the forest, under the eaves, in the tall grass. Only the crows strutted solemnly in flocks around the pools. Sweeping the black clouds with their swart eyes, tongues thrust from dry gaping throats, they hung out their wings and waited for the coming bath; then sensing a storm of unwonted violence, they too rose up in a cloud and made for the forest. Of all the birds, only the fleet-winged swallow braved the skies: like an arrow he clove the thunderhead then dropped like a spent bullet.

It was just then that the nobility concluded their terrible battle with the Muscovites. Seeking the shelter of house and stable, they trooped off, abandoning the field to the elements massing now for their own battle. In the west, still bathed in sunlight, the earth glowed a sullen reddish-yellow. Like a dragnet the shadow-casting cloud caught up the remnants of light and went after the sun as if to enmesh it before it sank below the horizon. Whistling squalls sprang up, each scattering bright raindrops, large, and round, and grainy like hailstones.

Suddenly two dust devils met. Seizing each other by the waist, they grappled, spun round, and whistling and twisting over the pools stirred the waters to their very depths. Swooping down over the meadows, they shrilled through the grass and osier beds. Willow branches snapped; swathes of mown grass flew up like fistfuls of torn-out hair interwoven with curly locks of grain. The whirlwinds fell howling to the ground, rolled in the dust, plowed up and tore at the clod, creating an opening for still another twister that rose up in a column of black earth. Up it rose—a whirling, moving pyramid, its head boring into the ground, heels kicking up sand into the eyes of the stars. With every stride forward, it thickened, funneling out at the top, until, like a giant trumpet, it blazoned the storm with a triumphant blast; and with all this chaos of water, dust, straw, leaves, branches, and torn-up turf, the tempest smote the forest, roaring like a bear in the heart of the wilderness.

The rain came splashing down thick and fast like earth shaken through a sieve. A thunderclap rent the air. The drops coalesced into solid streams. Now like taut cords binding earth and sky they fell in long tresses to the ground, now in sheets they poured as if cast from a pail. Earth and sky vanished under a mantle of darkness; the

blackness of the night and the still blacker storm blotted them out. Now and again the horizon split open from one end to the other. Like a colossal sun, the storm-angel flashed his face then, shrouded in darkness again, drew back into the heavens and, with a thunderous peal, slammed shut the clouds behind him. Once more the tempest picked up strength. Another thunderous downpour! The gloom deepened, thickened; one could almost touch it. Again the deluge slackened. For a moment, the storm seemed to nod off; then again it awoke and rumbled. Once more the flood came down. At last, but for the steady pattern of the rain and the sighing of the trees around the house, all grew still.

Nothing could have been welcomer this day than such a torrential downpour. After shrouding the battlefield in darkness, the rainstorm flooded the roads, swept away the bridges, and turned Soplica Manor into an unapproachable fortress. Thus news of the events at the Manor could not get out, and it was precisely upon the circumstance of secrecy that the fate of the nobility hung.

Weighty deliberations took place inside the Judge's room. The Bernardine lay on the bed, exhausted, pale, and bloody, though in full possession of his senses. He issued orders while the Judge diligently carried them out. He called in the Chamberlain, summoned the Warden, then calling in Rykov as well, closed the door. The secret deliberations went on for an hour. At last, Captain Rykov threw down a hefty purse of ducats on the table and brought the negotiations to a stand.

"My Polish friends!" said he. "There is a common saying among you that every Muscovite's a scoundrel. Now you can tell anyone who cares to ask that you have met a Muscovite captain, Nikita Nikitich Rykov by name. He holds eight medals and three crosses; I beg you remember that. See? This one for Ochakov, this for Izmailov; these two for Novi and Preussisch-Eylau; and this one here for Korsakov's glorious retreat from Zurich! And be sure to add that Rykov received a sword for gallantry, three commendations from the Field Marshal, and four citations along with two honorable mentions from the Tsar himself. And I have papers to prove—"

"Aye, Captain," broke in Robak, "but tell us what will happen to us if you do not accept our

terms. Did you not give us your word you would hush up the matter?"

"So I did; and I pledge it again," said Rykov. "My hand and seal upon it! Why should I wish your ruin? I am an honest man, and I like you Poles. I find you a jovial lot, always ready for a tipples. Stout of heart, always ready for a tussle. In Russia we say, 'Who rides a cart often finds himself beneath it.' 'Today you ride in front, tomorrow you're in the rear.' 'Today you best 'em, tomorrow you're worsted.' So what's there to be mad about? That's the soldier's life! Why fret and sulk over a lost battle! Ochakov was a bloody affair. At Zurich our infantry got soundly thrashed. And on the fields of Austerlitz I lost an entire company. Before that (I was a sergeant then), it was your Kościuszko at Raclawice. His scythemen cut my platoon to ribbons. But what of it, I say. My turn came up at Maciejowice. There, with my bayonet, I slew two of your brave noblemen. Mokronowski was one: there he was, swinging his scythe at the head of the line. He had sliced off the cannoneer's hand, lighted linstock and all. Oh, you Poles! Your country! Rykov knows the meaning of the word. The Tsar gives the orders, and yet I feel for you. What business have we with you, anyhow? Moscow for Muscovites and Poland for Poles, that's what I say; but, alas, the Tsar will not hear of it!"

"Captain!" said the Judge. "Those who have provided your billets these many years know you for the honest man you are. Do not take this gift amiss, my friend. We meant no offense and made bold to collect these ducats only because we know you to be a poor man."

"Oh, my yagers!" cried out Rykov. "The whole lot of them skewered! My company! And all the fault of that scoundrel Plut! He's the commanding officer, so he will answer to the Tsar. Keep those pennies of yours, gentlemen. I have my captain's pay, such as it is. It does me for a bowl of punch and a twist of shag. I am fond of you Poles. With you I can eat, drink, whoop it up, and enjoy a good yarn; and so my life passes. Aye, I shall do my best to protect you. If there is an inquiry, I promise to put in a word for you. We'll say we dropped by for a visit and a snort of vodka, kicked it up a bit, and downed a few too many. Then, by accident, Plut gave the order to open fire, a skirmish broke out, and somehow his battalion got the worst of it. Meanwhile, gentlemen, be sure to grease the commission's hand with gold, and all

will be well. But I must tell you what I told this fellow with the long rapier here. Plut is in charge. I am only second in command. Plut is alive. He may play you false and sink you yet, for he is a sly customer. You will have to stop up his mouth with banknotes. What say you, sir? You with the long rapier! Have you talked to Plut? Come to terms?"

Gerwazy looked about him, stroking his hairless skull. He made a careless motion of his hand as much as to say that he had already taken care of the matter. But Rykov persisted:

"So? Will Plut keep mum? Did he pledge his word?"

Vexed that Rykov should be pestering him with questions, the Warden turned his thumb solemnly downward then waved his hand as if to end all further discussion.

"I swear by my Pocketknife that Plut will not give us away," said he. "His lips are sealed!" And lowering his hands, he snapped his fingers as if to dispel the mystery.

Gerwazy's dark gesture was understood. His listeners stared at one another in surprise; for several moments they studied each other's faces in gloomy silence.

"So the fox pays his skin to the furrier!" muttered Rykov at last.

"*Requiescat in pace!*" said the Chamberlain. "Clearly the hand of God!" said the Judge. "But I am innocent of this bloodshed. I knew nothing of it."

The priest rose from the pillows and sat gloomily silent. "It is a great sin to kill an unarmed captive!" he said at last, eyeing the Warden sharply. "Christ forbids revenge, even on one's enemy. Oh, Warden! For this you shall answer heavily to God. There is but one ground for pardon: if the deed be done not out of mindless vengeance but *pro publico bono*."

The Warden nodded, waved his outstretched hand and, blinking his eyes, repeated the phrase, "*pro publico bono*."

There was no more talk of Major Plut. In vain they scoured the yard for him the next morning. They posted a reward for his body. All to no purpose; the Major had vanished without a trace as though he had fallen into a well. Several conjectures as to his fate made the rounds, but no one knew for certain, either then or later. In vain they pestered Gerwazy with questions. No utterance would pass his lips except "*pro publico bono*." The Chief Steward was privy to the secret,

but he had pledged his word of honor, and so the old man's lips remained sealed as by a spell.

Having agreed to the terms, Rykov left the room; meanwhile, Robak had the fighting nobility called in.

"My brothers!" said the Chamberlain, addressing them gravely. "This day God has smiled on our arms, but I must be frank with you, gentlemen. Dire consequences will follow from this untimely battle of ours. We have committed a blunder and none of us is free from blame: Father Robak for being overzealous in spreading the news, the Warden and the nobility for mistaking his purpose. The war with Russia will not be waged any day soon. In the meantime, those of you who took a leading part in the battle are no longer safe in Lithuania. So, gentlemen, you must flee to the Duchy of Warsaw. I have in mind Matthias, styled Baptist, Tadeusz, Watering Can, and Razor. These named must fly across the Niemen where our nation's host awaits them. We shall lay the blame squarely on you fugitives and on Major Plut and thereby save the rest of our kin. I give you farewell, but not for long, since there is every reason to hope that our liberty will break forth this coming spring. Lithuania, which now bids you farewell as exiles, will see you shortly as her conquering saviors. The Judge shall attend to your journey; and I, insofar as I am able, will help with the funds."

The nobility saw the wisdom of the Chamberlain's words. Well they knew that whoever ran afoul of the Tsar could never find true peace with him in this world. A man must either fight or rot away in Siberia. And so, exchanging sorrowful glances in silence, they sighed and nodded assent. Although known the world over for their love of their land, which they hold dearer than life, yet Poles have always been ready to go abroad, traveling to the ends of the earth, suffering years of privation and want, battling men and fate—enduring all this turmoil, so long as there shines through it all the hope of serving their country.

They agreed to depart without delay. Only Buchman took issue with this course of action. Being a prudent man, he had refused to take part in the battle; but on hearing of the counsel he had hurried over to cast his vote. Although favorable to the plan, he sought to elaborate on it. He pushed for certain amendments and clarifications. A formal committee had to be struck, the aims,

ways, and means of emigration duly weighed, and many other things besides. But, alas, time was of the essence, and Buchman's advice was promptly shelved. The nobility bid a hasty farewell and set out on their journey.

Then the Judge, bidding Tadeusz stay behind, addressed the priest:

"Now I must tell you what I learned with certainty only yesterday: namely, that our Tadeusz is truly in love with Sophy. Let him ask for her hand before he departs. I have spoken with Telimena, and she no longer opposes the match. Sophy also agrees to the will of her guardians. If we cannot wed the young couple today, then let us, dear brother, at least betroth them before the lad's departure. You know well the various temptations to which a young heart is subject abroad. But with a ring on his finger, a youth has merely to glance at it, recall his betrothal, and the fever of foreign seductions cools at once. Believe me, a wedding ring has great power. Thirty years ago I entertained a strong affection of my own for Mistress Martha. I had won her heart, and we were engaged to be married. But God chose not to bless our union and left me orphaned after taking into his glory the comely daughter of my friend the Chief Steward. All I have left is the memory of her qualities and charms, and this gold ring. The poor lass appears before my eyes each time I glance at it. Thus, by the grace of God, I have kept my plighted faith till now. I never married and remain an old widower, even though the Steward has another daughter who is very pretty and very like my beloved Martha!" And gazing tenderly at his ring, he wiped his tears with the back of his hand.

"Well, my brother," he concluded, "shall we have them betrothed? He loves her dearly, and I have the aunt's and the girl's consent."

At this Tadeusz stepped forward and spoke with great animation. "My dear uncle, how can I thank you enough for the constant care you take for my happiness! Dear uncle, if Sophy were betrothed to me today and I knew she was to be my wife, I should be the happiest man in the world. But I must tell you frankly that for various reasons the betrothal cannot take place. Question me no further! Perhaps if Sophy agreed to wait, she would soon find in me a better, worthier man. Perhaps when I have proven my constancy, she will requite my love. Perhaps I shall garnish my name with a sprig of glory. Perhaps soon I shall

return to my ancestral home. Then, dear uncle, I shall recall your promise. Then, on bended knee, I shall greet my dear Sophy and, if she should still be free for the asking, beg for her hand. But now I must take leave of Lithuania. Who knows for how long? Meanwhile, someone else may win Sophy's favor. I refuse to bind her will. To expect a return of affection, an affection I have not yet earned, would be beneath contempt." And as the lad uttered these earnest words, two glistening teardrops, large as pearly berries, started from his big blue eyes and rolled swiftly down his ruddy cheeks.

All this time, Sophy had been in the alcove listening intently to their private conversation through a crack in the wall. She heard Tadeusz declare his love for her so boldly and forthrightly. Her heart trembled. She saw the two big teardrops in his eyes. And yet she was unable to grasp the thread of his mysterious words. Why had he fallen in love with her? Why was he leaving her now? Where was he going? The thought of his leaving saddened her. Never before had she heard so strange and novel a thing from the lips of a youth: that she was loved! She ran to the little family altar and took from it a holy picture and small relic box. The image was of Saint Genevieve; the box contained a shred of garment belonging to Saint Joseph the Bridegroom, patron of betrothed couples. Armed with these devotional articles, she entered the room.

"Are you leaving so soon?" said she to Tadeusz. "I have a little gift for your journey, and a word of caution too. Carry this relic and image with you always and remember your Sophy. May God keep you well and happy! May he bring you home to us soon, safe and sound." She fell silent and lowered her head; and as she closed her dark-blue eyes, the tears ran out from under her lashes. So Sophy stood silent, with closed eyelids, spilling tears like diamonds.

Tadeusz took the gifts and kissed her hand. "My lady," said he, "now I must give you farewell. Remember me! Say an occasional prayer for me. Sophia—" But he could say no more.

Meanwhile the Count, who had entered unbidden into the room with Telimena, found himself moved by the young couple's exchange of tender adieus. Casting a glance at Telimena, he remarked:

"How much beauty there is even in a simple scene like this when a soldier and a shepherdess

must part like a ship and the ship's boat in stormy waters! Indeed, nothing so stirs up the sentiments of the heart as the separation of two loving hearts. Time is a blast of wind: a small candle it will snuff out, but a great fire it only fans into a greater conflagration. My heart too is capable of burning more ardently from afar. Mr. Soplica, I took you for a rival. This error was the cause of our unhappy quarrel, which obliged me to take up the sword against you. Now I see my mistake: you sighed for this shepherdess, while I had given my heart to this fair Nymph here. Let our differences be drowned in the blood of our enemies. We shall not contend with murderous steel. Let us settle our romantic quarrel by other means. Let us see who outmatches the other in intensity of affection! Let us leave behind these dear objects of our devotion and hasten to face the sword and the lance. We shall strive with each other on the battlefields of constancy, compassion, and suffering; pursue our foe with a manly arm!" And saying this, he looked at Telimena; but she only stared back at him, aghast at his words.

"My dear Count!" broke in the Judge. "Why do you insist on leaving? Take my advice and remain on your estate where you are safe. The authorities may skin the minor nobility alive. But you, dear Count, are sure to come out all right. You know the regime we live under. You are rich. You will buy yourself out of prison with half a year's income."

"Not in my character!" said the Count. "If I cannot be a lover, then I will be a hero. Made anxious in love, I shall call on glory as my comfortress. If I must be a beggar of the heart, then let me be rich in feats of arms."

"But who prevents you from enjoying love and happiness?" said Telimena.

"The power of my destiny!" said the Count. "A dark prescience impels me in mysterious fashion toward foreign lands and great feats of arms. It is true that today in your honor I stood ready to light the flame on Hymen's altar. But this youth has set me a shining example in his willingness to tear the nuptial crown from his temples and ride off to prove his heart against Fortune's hurdles and the hazards of bloody war. This day marks a new Epoch for me as well! Birbante-Rocca once echoed with my arms. May these arms now echo throughout the length and breadth of Poland!" And finishing his piece, he proudly smote the sword-hilt at his side.

"Indeed, it would be hard to rebuke such zeal," replied Robak. "Go then, and take your money with you. Perhaps you will see fit to equip a company as did Włodzimierz Potocki, who astounded the French by raising a million francs for the war treasury; or like Prince Dominic Radziwiłł, who pledged his lands and chattels to field two new horse regiments. Go, I say; but take your money. We have no shortage of fighting brawn in the Duchy, but we do lack funds. Go then, and God speed!"

"Alas, my knight!" said Telimena, looking sorrowfully at the Count. "Nothing, I see, shall deflect you from your purpose. Therefore, I beg you, when you enter the martial lists, cast a tender glance at this lover's knot. (And tearing a ribbon from her frock, she tied a love knot and fastened it in the Count's buttonhole.) May this badge guide you into the cannon's flaming jaws, into the shining lances and raining brimstone. And when your valorous deeds spread your fame abroad, when the imperishable bay garnishes your bloody casque and victory crowns your lofty helm, then cast your eye once more upon this favor and recall the hand that pinned it at your breast!" She tendered him her hand; the Count knelt down and kissed it. And so, raising her handkerchief to one eye while squinting down with the other, Telimena watched the Count bid her his soulful adieus. She heaved a sigh—then shrugged her shoulder.

"My dear Count!" said the Judge. "Make haste! It is growing late."

"Enough of this!" growled Father Robak. "Be off with you!"

The Judge and the priest quickly parted the tender couple and drove them out of the room. Meanwhile, after embracing his uncle tearfully, Tadeusz kissed Robak's hand. The monk pressed the lad's brow to his bosom and, placing his hands crosswise over his head, looked up to heaven, saying, "God go with you, my son!" And he wept.

"What!" exclaimed the Judge, as soon as Tadeusz had quitted the room. "Will you tell him nothing? Not even now? Is the poor lad to know nothing? Even at his departure?"

"Aye, nothing," replied the priest; and for a while he wept with both hands over his face.

"Why should the poor boy know he has a father who hides from the world like a scoundrel, a common murderer! God knows how much I should like to tell him, but I forego this comfort in atonement for the sins of my past."

"Then it is time to think of yourself," said the Judge. "Considering your age and state of health, there is no question of your going abroad with the others. You say you know of a house where you can weather the storm. Tell me where it is. Hurry! A caleche stands waiting outside. But would the ranger's cottage not serve you better?"

Robak shook his head. "I have until morning," said he. "Now, my brother, send for the parish priest. Bid him come quickly with the *viaticum*. Dismiss everyone but yourself and the Warden, and close the door."

The Judge did his behest and sat down on the bed beside him. Meanwhile Gerwazy remained standing, one elbow anchored on the pommel of his sword, his bent brow resting on his hands.

Before beginning to speak again, Robak fixed his stare on the Warden's face and remained mysteriously silent. But even as the surgeon lays his soft hand on the patient's body before making an incision with his knife, so Robak softened the expression of his keen eyes. For a good while he trained his gaze on Gerwazy's face; then, as if hazarding a blind thrust, he covered his eyes with his hand and uttered forcefully:

"I am Jacek Soplica."

The Warden paled and lurched forward. Like a rock arrested in mid-fall he stood, bent at the waist, one foot raised off the floor. Wide-eyed he stared, whiskers bristling, mouth agape, white teeth bared. The rapier slipped from out under him, but he caught it up with his knees. Seizing it by the pommel with his right hand, then grasping firm hold of the hilt, he drew it back; the long dark blade swayed fitfully behind him. He brought to mind a wounded lynx ready to spring from a tree at the hunter's face. Puffing itself into a ball, the beast stands snarling, flashing its bloodshot eyes, twitching its whiskers and vibrating its tail.

"Gerwazy!" said the priest. "Man's wrath no longer holds me in terror. The hand of God is upon me. I adjure you in the name of Him who saved the world, who blessed His slayers from the cross and heard the robber's plea. Relent and hear me out. I have told you who I am. To ease my conscience I must obtain, or at least beg, your forgiveness. Hear my confession. Then do with me as you please." And he joined his hands as if in prayer.

The Warden drew back in great astonishment, smote his brow with his hand, then shrugged his shoulders.

The priest began to relate the story of his past friendship with Horeszko, of his love for the Pantler's daughter and the resulting enmity between the Pantler and himself. He spoke at random, often interspersing his confession with complaints and accusations. Often he would break off, as if he had finished, only to resume again. The Warden, who was privy to all the particulars, was able to make sense of the desultory tale and supply the missing parts; but the Judge was often left quite in the dark. With lowered heads both men listened intently to Jacek's tale. Meanwhile, Jacek's speech grew increasingly slow; often it broke off altogether.

"You remember, Gerwazy, how the Pantler would invite me to his banquets and drink my health. Often he would raise his cup and declare aloud that he had no better friend than Jacek Soplica. How he would clasp me to his bosom! Those who saw him would have sworn he was ready to share his very soul with me. He my friend! He knew perfectly well what was raging in my heart.

"Meanwhile, the neighbors' tongues already wagged. 'Hey, Soplica!' they called. 'You woo in vain. A magnate's doorbell exceeds the reach of a Cupbearer's son!' I laughed, pretending to scoff at dignitaries and their daughters. What were aristocrats to me! If I paid them visits, it was out of mere friendship. Never would I marry outside of my station, I assured them. Even so, those jests cut me to the quick. I was young, fearless, and enjoyed full access to society in a land where, as you know, minor nobility and magnates could aspire to the crown on an equal footing. Why, Tęczyński once asked for the hand of a daughter of a royal house, and the King agreed without any sense of shame! Are not the Soplicas every bit as worthy as the Tęczyńskis—their blood, their coat of arms, and their loyal service to the Commonwealth?

"How easy, in a single instant, to blight another's bliss so that an entire lifetime will not undo it! One word from the Pantler and how happy we should have been! Who knows? We might all be living still. Perhaps he would have lived out his declining years in peace and quiet, close to his beloved daughter, his lovely Eva, and his grateful son-in-law. He might have rocked his grandsons' cradles! But, in the event, he ruined us both. He—and that slaying—and all the consequences of that crime—all my sorrows and

transgressions!—but I have no right to lay blame. I am his slayer. I have no right to accuse him at all. I forgive him with all my heart; and yet he—

"Had he but once refused me openly (for he was well aware of our feelings), had he forbidden me to visit, who knows, I might have taken my leave, vented my anger, and eventually left him in peace. But that proud fox devised another stratagem: to behave as if it never occurred to him that I might be seeking such a union. And yet he had need of me. The nobility held me in esteem. I was well liked by the manor smallholders. And so, pretending not to notice my feelings, he went on receiving me as before. He even insisted I visit more often. But every time we were alone and he saw my eyes tear up and my bosom heave, ready to burst, the old fox would promptly turn to idle talk on the subject of lawsuits, the regional diets, the hunt—"Oh, the times we sat together, in our cups, and he, moved to tears, took me into his embrace assuring me of his friendship (for he was always in need of my sword or my vote in Parliament)—and I politely returned the gesture! Each time fury so seized me that the spittle rushed to my lips and my hand tightened around my sword-hilt. So much did I want to spit on his friendship and draw my sword! But Eva, seeing my face and demeanor, would guess what was passing inside me—how? I have no idea. She would look at me imploringly and turn pale. Ah, what a lovely gentle darling she was! That look of hers, so accommodating, so serene and angelic! I could not bring myself to frighten or stir her to anger. I held my peace. And so Lithuania's notorious roisterer, before whom the mightiest lords often quailed; for whom scarcely a day passed without a brawl; who would not suffer a king much less a pantler to offend him; whom the slightest disagreement sent into transports of rage—I, incensed and drunk as I was, remained meek as a lamb, as though I were gazing on the Sacred Host! "How many times I wished to bare my soul and even beg on my knees before him. But then on looking into his eyes and meeting that icy gaze I was moved to shame on account of my strong feelings. So I would strike up again in the coolest manner on our court cases and regional diets. I even cracked jokes—all this out of pride, mind, so as not to offend the dignity of the Soplica name or lower myself in the Pantler's eyes by asking in vain and incurring a refusal. Imagine the hay the nobility would make of it if word got

out that I, Jacek—"The Horeszkos refusing Soplica the hand of their wench!" That I, Jacek, had been served up a bowl of black soup!

"At last, at my wits' end, I decided to raise a small regiment of the nobility and leave our district and homeland forever; to head for some place in Muscovy or Tartary and wage war there. I went to bid the Pantler good-bye in the hope that, on seeing me, his loyal supporter and old friend (indeed, I was practically a member of his household, having campaigned with him and been his drinking mate all those years)—that, on seeing me about to depart for a distant land, the old man would be moved to show me at least a sliver of human intimacy; even as a snail reveals its horns! Ah! Who harbors in the bottom of his heart but the faintest flicker of affection for a friend will feel, upon bidding him farewell, that spark rise up within him like life's dying ember. Even the coldest eye alighting for the last time on a dear friend's brow will shed a tear!

"My poor love! On hearing of my departure, she turned pale and slipped to the floor in a dead faint. She could not speak; then a stream of tears started from her eyes, and I knew how dearly she loved me!

"For the first time in my life, I recall, I burst into tears. Tears of joy and despair! I forgot myself, went raving mad. Once again I was on the point of falling at her father's feet, ready to coil myself like a snake around his knees, and beg, 'Dear father! Take me for your son, or slay me on the spot!' But then the Pantler, sullen and cold as a pillar of salt, in that polite and distant manner of his, broaches the subject of— what, you ask? Why, his daughter's wedding! At such a moment! Gerwazy! Friend! Judge for yourself! You have a heart of flesh.

"Mr. Soplica! the Pantler says to me. 'A marriage broker has just paid me a visit on behalf of the Castellan's son. Now you are my friend. What say you to this? You know of course that I have a rich and beautiful daughter, and that he is but a Castellan from Vitebsk and thus carries little weight in the Senate. How would you advise me, dear fellow?' I have no recollection of what I said to him. More than likely I said nothing, mounted my horse, and fled."

"Jacek!" exclaimed the Warden. "Full marks for all this special pleading; but what of it? Your fault stands undiminished! Why, you are not the first in the world to fall in love with the daughter of a rich

lord or royal personage; not the first to conspire to snatch her away by force and so avenge yourself openly. But to devise such a cunning plot! To slay a Polish lord! In Poland! And in league with Muscovy!"

"There was no plot," Jacek replied with sadness in his voice. "Snatch her away, you say? Of course I might have done it. No bars or locks would have stood in my way. Why, I should have smashed that castle of his into fine dust! Did I not have Dobrzyn on my side? And four other gentry settlements besides! Oh, if she had only been like the women there, strong and sturdy, fearless of flight, pursuit, and the clash of arms. But the poor child! How her parents coddled her! A frail, timorous thing she was. A butterfly grub! A spring caterpillar! To snatch her away thus, to touch her with a bloodied hand would have killed her. No! I simply couldn't!

"To avenge myself openly and storm the castle would have been contemptible, for people would have said I was avenging my rejection. Warden! Your upright heart is a stranger to the inferno of slighted pride. 'The demon of pride began whispering better counsels in my ear. 'Take your revenge in blood and conceal the cause,' he said. 'Stop visiting the castle, root out your love, put Eva out of mind, marry another, and then—only then—dream up some pretext and take your revenge.'

"At first I thought my heart had found peace. That fiction pleased me and—and I married the first poor lass I laid eyes on. I did wrong, I know, and how severely I have been punished since! I had no love for her—Tadeusz's poor mother. She was a most upright soul and utterly devoted to me! But in my heart I was choking back my earlier love and rage. I raved like a maniac. I tried to bury my grief in farm labor and other business, but all to no purpose; the demon of vengeance held me in thrall. Ill-humored and sullen, I found solace nowhere. And so, sinking from sin to sin, I turned to drink. "And so it was that in a short space of time my wife died of grief, leaving me with this child; and all the while despair devoured me—

"How I must have loved my poor Eva! All these years! Where have I not traveled! Even now I cannot forget her. Her dear image always stands before me as if daubed by a brush! No amount of drinking would dull the edge of my memory even for an instant. All those lands I saw, and still I could not wipe her from my mind. And here I lie

in this bed—God’s servant in a monk’s habit, drenched in blood—still talking about her. To speak of such things at such a time! But God will forgive me. I want you to know the depth of my grief and despair when I committed that—

“The deed occurred a short while after she was betrothed. The whole district buzzed with news of her betrothal. People told me that on receiving the ring from the hand of the Governor Eva fainted away and grew feverish. She was already showing signs of consumption, and sobbed constantly. She loved another in secret, they surmised. But the Pantler, ever serene and jovial, continued to hold balls at the castle and invite his friends. Me, he no longer invited. Of what use was I to him now? The disorder of my household, my wretched state and vile addiction had made me an object of scorn and the laughingstock of the world. I, who once had the entire district wrapped about my finger; whom Radziwiłł used to call ‘dear fellow’; I, who would ride out of my settlement with a troop more numerous than a princely retinue—I had only to unsheathe my sword and several thousand blades flashed out around me, striking terror into the castles of great lords. And here was I now, the butt of village urchins. So suddenly had I fallen from grace in peoples’ eyes! Jacek Soplica! Let him who knows what it is to feel pride—” Here, growing increasingly weaker, the Bernardine slumped back into the pillows.

“Great are God’s judgments!” exclaimed Gerwazy, deeply stirred. “It is the truth! The truth! So is it you? You, Jacek Soplica? Hiding under a monkish hood? Living a beggar’s life! I remember you when you were hale and hearty, the handsome gentleman whom lords flattered and women went crazy about! The whiskered champion! It was not so long ago after all. How grief has aged you! How could I fail to recognize you by that shot of yours, when you felled the bear so expertly? Our Lithuania had no finer marksman, and, next to Matthias, no abler swordsman either. Why, our gentlewomen sang ditties about you:

*When Jacek curls his mustaches, the squirearchy wince;
The man he knots his whisker on has cause to dread the day,
For none escapes his wrath, not even Radziwiłł the Prince.*

“Oh, you tied a knot on my lord, you did! Wretched man! Can it really be you? Reduced to such a state? Jacek Whisker an almsman? Great

are God’s judgments! And now, sir! Hah! You shall not escape your deserts. I swore whoever spilt a drop of Horeszko blood—” But here the monk, raising himself to a sitting position in his bed, resumed his tale.

“I was out riding near the castle. Who could name the legion of devils residing in my mind and heart! And the Pantler! Why, he was killing his own child! Me, he had already slain—destroyed! Lured by Satan, I rode up to the gate. Oh, the revels he held in his castle! A revel every night! Windows ablaze with candlelight. Music echoing in the halls. It was a wonder the castle did not come crashing down on that naked pate of his. Anyhow, give vengeance a thought and Satan slips you the weapon. The thought no sooner crossed my mind than Satan sent along the Muscovites. I stood there and saw it all. You know how they stormed the castle—Because it is a lie that I was in league with Muscovy!

“Many thoughts passed through my mind as I stood there. At first, I broke out into a silly grin like a child watching a fire. Then, expecting to see the castle burn to the ground, I felt a sort of brigandish joy. At times I was prompted to run in and rescue her; the Pantler too—

“As you know, you fought them off bravely and with great skill. I could not believe my eyes. Muscovites were dropping like flies all around me. The cattle could not shoot straight if they tried! Seeing them routed, I was seized again by a mighty rage. Was this Pantler to taste victory? Was fortune to smile on all he did? Was he to emerge triumphant from this terrible assault? I was riding away in disgust. The day was just dawning. Suddenly I saw and recognized him. He had stepped out on the gallery. His diamond brooch flashed in the sunlight. There he stood, curling his whiskers, proudly surveying the field. It seemed to me he was singling me out for special abuse. He had recognized me, I thought, and was giving me the finger. He was mocking and threatening me! I seized a soldier’s musket, put it to my shoulder, barely aimed, and fired. You know the rest.

“A curse on firearms! Who kills with a blade must first strike his pose, lunge, parry, break; he may disarm his foe or choose to check his mortal thrust. With a firearm it is enough to grab a gun, cock it—a split second, a single spark—But did I run, Gerwazy, when you took aim at me from the gallery? Nay, I just stared into both barrels of your gun. What despair I felt! A strange sorrow rooted

me to the ground. Oh, Gerwazy, why did you miss your mark that day? You would have done me a favor; but clearly it had to be—to atone for my sin—” Here again he ran out of breath.

“God knows,” replied the Warden, “I did my best to gun you down. How much blood you have shed on account of that one shot! How many disasters have befallen your family and us! And all through your fault, Jacek! And yet today, when the yagers had their sights trained on the Count, the last male representative of the Horeszko family (albeit on the distaff side) you shielded him with your own body; and when the Muscovites fired on me, you knocked me to the ground. So you saved us both. If it is true that you are a consecrated monk, then your habit is proof against Pocketknife. Keep well! No longer will I seek to darken your doorway. We are quits! The rest we shall leave to God.”

Jacek offered him his hand, but Gerwazy drew back. “I cannot,” said he, “without slight to my honor touch a hand stained by such a murder, committed for private vengeance, and not *pro publico bono*.” But Jacek, slipping from the pillow, turned to the Judge. Growing paler by the minute, he asked anxiously for the priest, then called out to the Warden:

“I beg you, sir, stay a while longer. I have barely strength to finish. Warden! I shall die this very night!”

“What is that, my brother?” cried the Judge. “But I had a look at it. It is but a trifling wound. What do you mean send for the priest? Perhaps it is badly dressed. I shall send for the doctor. He is at the druggist’s—” But the priest cut him off.

“No need now, my brother. I took an earlier bullet in the same place—at Jena—wound never healed properly, and now it is infected—gangrene set in—I know something of wounds. See? Blood black as soot—what good is a doctor—a trifling matter!—We die but once; today, tomorrow, we must all yield up our souls. Warden! Forgive me, but I must finish my story! When the whole nation brands you a traitor, there is special merit in refusing to commit treason. Especially for a man who suffered from pride as great as mine!”

“The label of traitor stuck to me like the plague. My fellow citizens turned their faces from me. Old friends shunned me. The timid greeted me at a distance and steered clear. Even the merest yokel or Jew, after bobbing his head, would give me a sidelong derisive sneer. The word ‘traitor’ rang in

my ears, echoed throughout my house and over my fields. From dawn to dusk that word danced before me like a spot on a diseased eye. But I was never a traitor to my country.

“Muscovy took me, perforce, as one of her own. The bulk of the Pantler’s estate passed to the Soplicas. Later, the Targowica confederates wished to honor me with an office. Had I then consented to turn Muscovite (Satan counseled it; I was already rich and powerful then)—had I then thrown in with Moscow, the wealthiest magnates would have sought out my favor. Even my brother noblemen, even the rabble, so quick to discredit their own, will forgive those happier men who serve the Muscovites! All this I knew; and yet I could not—

“I fled the country! Where did I not travel! What did I not suffer! And then at last God deigned to show me the only remedy. I had to reform myself and, so far as it was possible, right the wrongs that—

“The Pantler’s daughter and her husband, the Governor, they transported to Siberia. There she died young, leaving here behind her a daughter, little Sophy. I saw to it that she was properly looked after—

“Perhaps I slew him more out of foolish pride than thwarted love; so I needed humbling. I entered a monastic order. I, once so proud of my birth, I, the former swaggerer, bowed my head and became an almsman, with Robak, the Worm, for a name; since like a worm in the dust— A bad example to my country, an inducement to treason: these had to be redeemed by good example, blood, and self-sacrifice—

“I fought for my country. Where? How? No one need know. Not for earthly glory did I so often expose myself to steel and bullets. I would sooner recall not my loud, valorous deeds but the quiet, useful ones, and the sufferings that no one—

“Many times I crossed the frontier bearing orders from our leaders, gathering intelligence, and plotting conspiracies. Who in Galicia and Great Poland does not know this quester’s cowl of mine! For a year I was chained to a wheelbarrow in a Prussian fortress. Three times Muscovy flayed my back with the knout. Once they had me on the road to Siberia. Then the Austrians buried me deep inside Spielberg’s vaults as a slave-laborer *in carcere duro*. Yet by a miracle the Lord delivered me and now He allows me to die among my people,

with the sacraments— But now—who knows?—perhaps I have sinned again! Perhaps I exceeded orders in fomenting the uprising so soon? Yet the thought that the house of the Soplicas should be the first to take up arms, that my kinsmen should be the first to plant our heraldic Charger on Lithuanian soil—that thought—surely—was pure enough—

“You wanted revenge, Gerwazy? Well, you have it! For you have been the tool of God’s punishment. With your sword God cut my scheme to ribbons. You snarled the thread I had spun for so many years! My great goal of a lifetime, my last worldly passion, which I nursed and fondled as though it were my dearest child—this you have slain before its father’s eyes; and yet I forgive you! You—!”

“Even so may God forgive you too,” broke in Gerwazy. “Father Jacek, if you must take the house, then I am no Lutheran or schismatic. He sins who grieves a dying man; this I know. Now I shall tell you something; no doubt you will find it a consolation. When my late lord fell mortally wounded to the ground and I knelt over his breast, smearing my blade with his blood and vowing vengeance, he shook his head at me and, stretching his hand toward the gate where you stood, traced a cross in the air. He could not speak, but it was a clear sign he had forgiven his slayer. I understood what he meant, but so great was my rage that I never breathed a word of that sign of the cross to anyone.”

The dying man’s agonies broke off all further talk. There followed a long hour of silence. They waited for the village priest. At last they heard the clatter of hooves. There was a rap on the door. It was the tavern-keeper, breathless after his hard ride. He carried an important letter addressed to Jacek. Jacek passed it to his brother and had him read it aloud. The letter was from Fiszer, then Chief-of-Staff of the Polish Army under Prince Joseph. It brought news that a state of war had been declared in the Emperor’s Privy Council; that the Emperor was even now proclaiming it to the world; that a General Assembly had been summoned in Warsaw; and that the federated Mazovian States were about to make a solemn declaration of union with Lithuania.

Hearing this news, Jacek muttered a silent prayer; then holding the blessed candle to his bosom, he raised his eyes, now ablaze with hope, and lavishly spent his remaining reserve of tears,

“Now, O Lord,” he prayed, “let thy servant depart in peace.” They knelt down. A bell rang at the door, a sign that the parish priest had arrived with the Body of Our Lord. Night was just departing. The first roseate sunbeams traversed the milky sky. Like diamond darts, they pierced the lattice panes and, glancing off the dying man’s head on the pillow, wreathed his face and temples in gold, so that he shone like a saint crowned with a fiery glory. Δ

LETTERS

In the September 2013 issue of *Sarmatian Review*, the reviewer of Richard Lukas’s book states on p. 1789 that the book under review is the only English-language work detailing the situation of Poles under German occupation. This is not true. In 1979 Jan T. Gross published *Polish Society Under German Occupation, 1939-1944* (Princeton University Press). On the same page, in the short review of Adam Zamoyski’s *Poland*, the reviewer mentioning Norman Davies’s *The Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland’s Present* fails to note that a second and updated edition of this book came out in 2001 from Oxford University Press.

Anna M. Cienciala, University of Kansas

Announcements and Notes

UWM ANNOUNCES SUMMER STUDY IN POLAND

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee announces its 2014 annual Summer Study program in Poland at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. The five-week Polish language course (July 7–August 9) includes 100 hours of instruction at beginning, intermediate or advanced levels, plus lectures on Polish culture and sightseeing. Cost estimate: \$3,425 including tuition, room, and board, and five UWM credits, plus round-air trip transportation Chicago-Warsaw-Chicago. The program is open to students and the general public.

Also offered are intensive and highly intensive courses on Polish language in July and August, ranging from two to eight weeks.

For information and application materials contact Professor Michael J. Mikoś, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures,