

(2006) [pdf], 13.

<sup>38</sup> Max Frankel, "Stalin's Shadow," *Sunday Book Review*, November 25, 2012:16. *Emphasis mine. D.S.*

<sup>39</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 328.

<sup>40</sup> Ellmeier and Rásky, *Differing Diversities*, 13.

<sup>41</sup> "Whose Discourse? Telling the Story in Post-Communist Poland," *The Other Shore: Slavic and East European Cultures Abroad, Past and Present*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2010), 1–15.

<sup>42</sup> Attila Meleg, *On the East–West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Eastern Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006) 41. Accessed through "Transformation of Self-Identity in Central Europe Under State Socialism and After," <[https://wiki.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/Transformation\\_of\\_Self-Identity\\_in\\_Central\\_Europe\\_Under\\_State\\_Socialism\\_and\\_After#cite\\_ref-52](https://wiki.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/Transformation_of_Self-Identity_in_Central_Europe_Under_State_Socialism_and_After#cite_ref-52)>.

<sup>43</sup> Gottfried Schramm, "Ein Rundgespräch über 'Ostmittleuropa': Vom sinnvollen Umgang mit einem Konzept für unsere Zukunft," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 48 (2000):122.

<sup>44</sup> Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*, trans. Catherine Leach (London: Sidgwick, 1981), 2.

## MORE BOOKS

**Romaszewscy: Autobiografia.** Ze Zbigniewem, Zofią i Agnieszką Romaszewskimi rozmawia **Piotr Skwieciński**. Warsaw: Trzecia Strona ([trzeciastrona.pl](http://trzeciastrona.pl)), 2014. 512 pages. Numerous photographs. ISBN 978-83-64526-04-6. 49.90 zł from the publisher. Hardcover. In Polish.

One of Poland's top journalists talks to the Romaszewski family and constructs their autobiography thereby. Zbigniew and Zofia Romaszewski are model Polish citizens—active in the Solidarity and post-Solidarity movements, not as armchair theorists but as people who actively helped hundreds, perhaps thousands, of their fellow Poles who had neither the education nor the material resources to win in their self-sacrificial opposition to the communist state. The Romaszewskis were not part of the "licensed" opposition that often hailed from the homes of Party members whose connections provided shelter from police brutality and confiscation of livelihood. The Romaszewskis and those they helped gambled with their own survival and well being. The sacrifices they bore

for their fellow citizens are enormous, yet they have not sought recognition or remuneration. Unlike a large number of the present political class in Poland, the Romaszewskis did it because it was the right thing to do. In this book, they narrate their childhood and youth, and the growth of understanding that Soviet-occupied Poland was not Poland at all but rather a territory where brutality of the rulers was covered up by diplomatic and media deceit.

Just as Aleksander Kaminski's *Kamienie na szaniec* is a symbol of the generation preceding the Romaszewskis', so is this book iconic of the generation that sacrificed so much to make the social movement called Solidarity possible. Would that all Poles were like the Romaszewskis; barring that, this couple and their daughter remain models of behavior for today's Polish youth.

***Slicing the Bread: Children's Survival Manual in 25 Poems*, by Maja Trochimczyk.** Georgetown, KY: Finishing Line Press ([www.finishinglinepress.com](http://www.finishinglinepress.com)), 2014. 30 pages. ISBN 978-1-62229-687-3. \$14.00 from the publisher.

In a recent interview, historian Andrzej Nowak described the situation in East Central Europe as follows: its people live between two huge millstones, Germany and Russia, that constantly grind against each other and repeatedly threaten the existence of the people in between. Poles have to exert an extraordinary amount of energy in order to not be ground to dust by these neighbors. Maja Trochimczyk's twenty-five powerful poems describe the pain, hunger, and humiliation to which the surviving children and adults were subjected by these millstones—the German one in particular. The time of action is World War II and its aftermath. The first poem sets the tone: there was no bread to slice, just soup made of weeds and a tablespoon of flour, lunch for twenty people squeezed into a two-room house (this reminds me of Soweto in South Africa where huge families were housed in similarly small houses—but, unlike in East Central Europe, not as a result of the neighbor's aggression). Then come poems about hiding the

food from the Germans and from so-called partisans (yes, the Bielski partisans had their criminal side glossed over in the movie *Defiance*), and finally from Soviet soldiers. Then death, death, and more death—but not the anonymous death of millions, rather the loss of fathers, mothers, uncles, and aunts—sometimes in twenty-four hours, as when the incoming Soviets shot the narrator’s uncle in the street and shipped his wife and two sons to Siberia—all in twenty-four hours.

Poet John Guzlowski described similar things happening to Polish Christians under German occupation, but unlike Guzlowski, Trochimeczyk manages to insert a ray of hope. I cannot exactly describe how—I do not know how she does it. Perhaps the delicacy with which she approaches those who did not survive, whom the Holocaust commemorations discount because they were not Jewish—perhaps that delicacy and gentleness is the answer. In any case, these poems leave one reflecting on the beast that is hidden in some men and women. It is clear that the author does not believe, as some psychologists do, that anyone can become a beast under certain circumstances. I share her conviction in this regard.

This little book is quite different from many a volume of poetry that saw the printing press because the author wanted to see her work published. It has no authorial vanity. It is excellent and deserving republication by a major publishing house. The author is a poet who makes a living in a profession far removed from poetry, and who is also the author of scholarly works in literature and music. Order it from the publisher and you will not be disappointed. (SB)

## War and Immigration

### Becoming an American

Joseph A. Kotarba

*The Long Way Home: An American Journey from Ellis Island to the Great War*, by David Laskin. New York: Harper, 2010. xxiv + 386 pages. Sources, index. ISBN 978006123333-3.

Those of us who are second- and third-generation Americans of Polish ancestry can probably remember our grandparents’ stories about the great migration at the turn of the twentieth century. Key terms such as Ellis Island, Cossacks, Bolsheviks, Hamtramck, and turnips were the stuff of stories thick in old-country substance but never quite as important as the new lives forged in the United States. Less memorable were the very few stories about the Great War against Germany we entered in 1917. It seemed like starting a family, working a regular if difficult job, buying a bungalow on the south side, and nurturing a parish where only Polish and Latin were spoken marked the beginning of time. We heard heroic and sometimes gruesome stories of World War II from our uncles and fathers, but the Great War rarely came up.

In his intricately assembled history, David Laskin illuminates this period of American life by weaving two identities together into the portrait of an immigrant seeking a better life who becomes an American patriot fighting for his newly adopted country. As the author points out, when the United States entered the war in 1917 fully one-third of its people had either been born overseas or were the children of immigrants. In light of significant discrimination in America against immigrants from Eastern Europe, many turned to service in the armed forces during World War I in order to become full citizens. Other immigrants served simply because they were told to do so and they felt it was their duty. As Laskin notes, “some fought not for an idea, but because the sergeant told them to fight, because their buddy was fighting, because they were part of a platoon. But in the end, they also fought because they were Americans.” Army draftees and volunteers found themselves heading back to a Europe they thought they had left behind forever.

One really creative feature of this book is the sociological way Laskin traces and compares the biographies of twelve men—four Italians, three Jews, two Poles, an Irishman, a Norwegian, and a Slovak—from their homes in Europe, to the promised land of America, to their return to Europe as part of the American Expeditionary