

of Silesia Press, 2010. 347 pages. Index of names. ISBN 978-83-60743-40-9. Paper. In Polish.

A collection of several dozen papers on Polish émigré writers who at some point in their career lived in Canada.

*Inne wyzwania. Poezja Bogdana Czaykowskiego i Andrzeja Buszy w perspektywie dwukulturowości*, by Janusz Pasterski. Rzeszów: University of Rzeszów Press, 2011. 360 pages. Bibliography, Index of names, English summary. ISBN 978-83-7338-611-2. Paper. In Polish.

A solid academic tome on two Polish poets born in eastern Poland, victims of Soviet deportations to the gulag. Both were saved by General Anders's evacuation of surviving Polish citizens, arrived in London and moved to Canada where one passed away in 2007 and the other presently lives. Truly an example of multiculturalism, though not in the commonly accepted sense of the term. A review to follow.

## The Polish Operation Stalin's First Genocide of Poles 1937–1938

**Tomasz Sommer**

Below I present an annotated translation of a recently declassified Soviet document written by head of the NKVD Nikolai Yezhov. It details the fate of families and individuals of Polish nationality and mostly Catholic background who were subject to the first wave of repressions in the “Polish Operation,” or the systematic killing of every third or fourth person in the USSR's Polish minority from 1937 to 1938. The vast majority of victims were not immigrants to the USSR (as were some enthusiastic Americans who tried to help the Soviets), but rather inhabitants of areas that became the USSR after the October Revolution. At first the Soviet government let them alone. Persecution began when the Soviet system solidified. In the English-speaking world there are no studies detailing the fate of this minority that numbered, by various counts, between 600,000 and one million persons.

The Poles were an uncertain and dangerous element for the Soviet government for three reasons. First, they were not scattered among Russians, Ukrainians, or Lithuanians, but usually lived in densely populated communities that viewed themselves as native to the

land. Second, owing to Poland's political rebirth in 1918, they were suspected of being the fifth column bent on regaining for Poland territories lost after the first partition of 1772. Third, Poles were Catholic, meaning that they were members of an institution considered by atheistic Soviets to be their greatest enemy. From the Soviet standpoint, there was only one truly satisfactory solution to eliminating the Polish danger: physical extermination of the Polish population.

The command to begin liquidating the Poles (Order # 00485) was issued on 9 August 1937.[1] Two days later it was disseminated to NKVD personnel in the entire USSR.[2] To be sure, the murders of Poles took place earlier as well. At the time that the above order was issued they were already in progress. It can be said that the decision of KC WKP(b)'s Political Bureau legitimized the already existing phenomenon and made it into a mass occurrence. The genocide of Poles sanctioned in 1937 was the crowning “achievement” of the depolonization tactic undertaken by Russians in the eighteenth century and carried out by the Soviets as well.

How many victims did this depolonization process claim? According to Nikita V. Petrov and Aleksandr B. Roginskii, the NKVD documents list 111,091 death sentences imposed during the “Polish operation.” These death sentences fell under the “state of exception” (not requiring court approval).[3] Rev. Roman Dzwonkowski SAC, a Roman Catholic priest who researched Catholic martyrology in the Soviet Union, writes that “thousands were shot outside of the official ‘Polish Operation’—according to some, close to 150,000.”[4] According to the Soviet census of January 1937, there were 636,200 Poles living in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.[5] This is almost certainly an undercount. Poles avoided listing their nationality in official documents for the same reason that Jews avoided registering as Jews in German-occupied countries during the Second World War: in both cases persecution was imminent. The actual number of Poles in the USSR in the 1930s was probably between 800,000 and one million persons. The number of Polish victims most likely adds up to a quarter million. The anti-Polish repressions before the Second World War (i.e., the war and postwar deportations of Poles to Soviet prisons and gulags are not included) thus has to be an extraordinarily high figure.[6]

The NKVD was a secretive and criminal organization, but it kept detailed accounts of its crimes. Access to some of these documents is still difficult.[7]

The missing names (i.e., those killed whose names were not on the death sentence lists) may become available in the future. The vast majority of those arrested were not intelligence agents but simply persons of Polish nationality who lived in various areas of the Russian empire, sometimes going back centuries. Their arrest and subsequent execution were due to the fact that they were of Polish and Catholic background. One can only imagine the amount of torture it took to extract fake confessions from those arrested. The Report translated below has to be viewed with an understanding that people under torture may admit to actions they never committed.

Order # 00485 contains an outline on how to report the killings of Poles. Field telegrams about mission advancement were to be sent “every five days,” that is on the first, fifth, tenth, fifteenth, twentieth, twenty-fifth, and thirtieth of each month to the NKVD Headquarters in Moscow, specifically to Yezhov’s desk.[8] In turn, Yezhov was to report to Stalin on the progress of the genocide. At first Yezhov’s office was very much involved and thorough in its reports, creating special *résumés* that were compilations of field reports. Later, however, Yezhov supplied only a short introductory paragraph followed by a full copy of the field reports. At the beginning of 1938 reports pertaining to the “Polish Operation” became less distinctive in character—they were added into the main body of reports relating to progress in the Great Terror operation, although there were exceptions to this rule.

I gained access to Yezhov’s Report during a query in Moscow in 2009. It is the first report about the “Polish Operation” written expressly for Stalin, detailing the first arrests and execution of Poles. Here is its first translation into English:

File number: CA FSB F. 3, Op. 4, D 104,  
L. 262-274  
Top Secret  
For Comrades Stalin, Molotov,  
Voroshilov, Kaganovich  
No. 59660  
5/9 37

In accordance with the order given by the NKVD of the USSR[9] pertaining to the operational liquidation of the Polish intelligence cadre, on August 20 we began to arrest Polish fugitives, political emigrants, POWs, consulate associates, and other individuals suspected of spying for Poland.[10]

Between August 20–30, 1937, 15,218 Poles were arrested: 5,410 in the Ukrainian SSR, 3697 in the Belarusian SSR, 775 in the Western region, 1,293 in Leningrad, 615 in Moscow, 820 in the Western Siberian Region, 450 in the Sverdlovsk Region, and 1311 on the train.

Preliminary results of the operation testify to its importance in obtaining material evidence and successfully preventing counterintelligence and sabotage activity. We confiscated weapons, ammunition, explosive and toxic materials, grenades, counter-revolutionary literature, fake passports, incomplete blank documents, and large sums of money in Soviet and foreign currency.[11]

In the course of the operation we discovered and liquidated a number of residencies of Polish intelligence connected to the Second Division of the Polish Staff Headquarters through special couriers and Polish consulate apparatuses composed of people operating in commercial companies, as well as certain highly qualified spies specifically inserted during different periods of time into the territory of the USSR.

As a result of the operation in the more remote regions of Sverdlovsk and Western Siberia, many peripheral branches of the Polish Military Organization were identified and extirpated.[12]

Below we present the most significant data concerning the Polish Operation in the republics and regions saturated with the cadres of Polish intelligence.

#### **USRS**

The arrests of individuals suspected of spying for Poland and subsequent interrogations gave us much information about Polish sabotage and intelligence activities. The largest operations were undertaken in the Kiev Oblast’ where 1,621 persons were arrested, and the Vinnytsa Oblast’ where 1,346 were arrested. The arrests eliminated 51 Polish intelligence residencies in the Kiev Oblast’. Polish agents collected intelligence in the border regions of Korosten, Nizhnii Novgorod, and Zhytomir, as well as in the city of Kiev. These residencies were oriented toward intelligence concerning the Kiev Military District and toward

infiltration of large economic enterprises.

Thus the deputy director of Gosgeos'emka named Gluchowski[13] was arrested in Kiev along with a group of engineers he had recruited who were passing on information of defensive importance to the Polish consulate. Also arrested in Kiev was a former member of the Communist Party of Poland, I. K. Skakovski, who testified that having lived in Poland in the 1930s he was recruited by the Polish Defense Ministry with the aim of infiltrating the Communist Party of Poland, and in 1931 was transferred to the USSR by the Second Division. He created a number of underground groups (POWs) in commercial organizations in the areas of Magnitogorsk, Ulan-Ude, and Zaporozh'e. About 20 intelligence gatherers have been found to be associated with Skakovski. A veteran agent of the Second Division named Lipinski was likewise arrested. Lipinski was a former lieutenant of the Polish Army, convicted in 1923 and sentenced [by the Soviet authorities] to ten years imprisonment.[14] After returning to Ukraine in 1933, Lipinski returned to underground activity. He made contact with the Polish consulate in Kharkov and recruited seven coal industry workers, five of whom were engineers. With the aim of maintaining contact with Lipinski, a Polish consulate courier visited him regularly in the Donbas region, supplying him with orders and money.

In Shepetovka a subterfugal organization of the POW type was found and eliminated. It was established in 1924 by an illegal immigrant from Poland named Skarniewski. He was an army officer who managed to install himself in the role of a schoolteacher. The organization prepared combat teams in which anti-Soviet Polish youths participated. Their armament and training were masquerading as "Osoaviakhim" activities.[15] Sixteen individuals were arrested, of whom eleven admitted to the crime. In the Radomysl region the NKVD located a Polish espionage group preparing to blow up the Eighth Artillery Regiment's ammunition supply. In 1936 members of this group attempted to blow up the ammunition depot, killing the security guard in the process. The detonation was foiled due to armed

resistance by the guards. According to witnesses, this diversionary band was created by the commissioner of the Mironov artillery regiment. Mironov was arrested as well.

Based on the confession of a Polish fugitive named I. M. Lach, captured in the city of Cherkasy, it was established that he was an agent of the Polish intelligence and established a residency in the city of Kansk, where he lived and worked as a teacher.

An agent of the Polish intelligence named I. I. Radkiewicz was also unmasked and arrested in Cherkasy while masquerading as a locksmith in a cigarette factory. In 1932 Radkiewicz crossed the border along with a group of eight Polish spies and established an espionage network in Pervouralsk and Zlotoujście.

K. A. Polech[16] was an agent of the Polish intelligence who illegally arrived in the USSR in July 1937. He was unmasked and arrested. During interrogation he admitted that he had been transferred to the USSR in order to undertake intelligence gathering missions in branches of the Korosten garrison or in the militarily sensitive region, and that for that reason he was given a special preparatory course for secret agents. The following items were confiscated from K. A. Polech: two revolvers, two bombs, a compass, various Soviet documents with the surname of Melbekka, and 1,200 rubles in Soviet banknotes. Analogous materials were obtained in the Nizhnii Novgorod Region where two agents of the Polish intelligence, Konopczuk and Chainski,[17] were unmasked and arrested after they crossed the border. They too had false documents and weapons. During the arrest Chainski resisted and attempted to escape; he was, however, wounded and arrested.

Numerous illegal border crossings were discovered, and the persons arrested belonged to Polish and Romanian intelligence. In the stretch of the Slavuta Border Region over the past five years, a Polish intelligence agent named A. I. Zastovski-Bublik clandestinely crossed the USSR border seven times and encountered no difficulty in returning to Poland. In the same Slavuta Border Region in the years 1936-1937 couriers

Lepinski, Jaworski, and Slucki crossed the border without difficulty and reported to one Kierekowski from the Second Division. Here also a certain Polish agent named Gomula made his border crossing.

In the section of the Iampolskii Border District, agents of the Polish intelligence L. Karpinski and one Witoslawski passed on packages with gathered intelligence to the head of the Polish watchtower team (headed by one Zdybanski) located directly across the border. They did so for four years. An agent of the Polish intelligence named P. Z. Domasiuk-Kuczewski-Orlov crossed the border without impediment in the Volhynian Border District, and he continued doing so over a long period of time that ended only in April 1937. In the Mohylev-Podolia Border District a Romanian secret agent named W. Emuliak made illegal border crossings between 1928-1937. He recruited 11 collaborators for the Romanian intelligence.

#### **BSSR**

As a result of initial interrogations of persons arrested in Orla, a Polish subterfuge group was exposed. It was headed by A. I. Kaminski, whose two brothers were officers in the Second Division of the Polish Staff HQ. Kaminski admitted that he recruited 13 diversionists, including those working at the Gorlov power plant that was to be blown up.

One hundred and fifty-three Poles were arrested in the area of Dzerzhinsk,[18] 19 of whom worked as directors, eight as NKVD workers, and 24 as employees of regional enterprises. During searches bundles of weapons were found, together with explosive and bacteriological materials, false documents, and large sums of money.

A subterfuge group composed of 18 members was discovered in the Smolevitse region. It was organized by the local veterinarian named Tura, who was also a Polish fugitive. Tura's testimony confirmed an association with the Polish intelligence. A member of the right-wing deviation group and a former director of the Narkozem Veterinary Administration of the BSSR[19] named Pasmaninka was also arrested. He organized a mass outbreak of infections in large

populations of cattle on the orders of Polish intelligence.

During the operation conducted against Poles in the town of Osveia, a group of spies led by one Czerwoniec was identified and arrested. It had six members and worked for the German intelligence. A person named Krasowski admitted to having spied for Poland and named 15 other spies, including one worker of the NKVD border control. Similarly, in the town of Gomel' an individual identified as Palev admitted to spying for Poland, and he named ten other collaborators. Among the arrested was an individual named Dausza, former employee of the Polish newspaper *Orka*. During interrogation he admitted to involvement in the POW since 1916, and testified to parallel spying operations in the Mohylev region. An individual named Beneka also was a member of POW; he had been arrested in 1918 and was the former People's Health Commissar of the Belorussian Republic. He said there were many cells of the POW in central regions of Belarus.

In Polotsk the arrested Pole named Wojciechowski admitted to membership in the anti-Soviet "White Russian" émigré organization bent on military resistance to the Soviet government.

#### **The Western Region**

Seventeen Polish espionage organizations and 19 Polish spies were discovered and eliminated. W. F. Wasilewski, a Red Army soldier from the Logistics Division of 166 Air Brigade, was arrested in Smolensk. Masquerading as a technician in the management of construction, he testified that he had been an agent of Polish intelligence since 1930. He was recruited by a courier named Szubyniewicz, who came from Poland and brought with him a letter of reference from Wasilewski's relatives in Poland.

A Polish spying group operating along the Moscow-Kiev and Belarusian railway was discovered and eliminated. It was created by a resident of the Polish intelligence named W. A. Uglich, who held the position of dispatcher at the Briansk-2 station. Uglich testified that Poles had recruited him already in 1919, and at the request of the intelligence bureau he organized spying cells along the

Belarusian and the Moscow-Kiev railway lines. During the course of the investigation it was established that in 1936 the aforementioned organization undertook an assassination attempt directed at a military train traveling on a branch of the Leshchyn Belarusian railway. The organization's mission also included assassinating Party and government leaders. During the inquiry, 39 members were identified.

An Austrian army officer and a former prisoner of war named Z. M. Goldberg was arrested in Viaz'ma and testified that he illegally crossed the border into Poland in 1928, where he was recruited by the Tarnopol branch of the Polish intelligence and was subsequently transferred back to the USSR with espionage and subterfuge missions in the area of health care. He recruited two doctors into espionage work.

An individual named M. W. Kukiewicz entered the USSR pretending to have deserted from the Polish Army. He became a hairdresser in Klintse, and during interrogation admitted that in 1929, while he was studying in the officer cadet school in Ostróg, Poland, he was recruited by a lieutenant of the Polish intelligence [name illegible] and was transferred to the USSR for a spying mission along with another spy named Zareczuk. Kukiewicz revealed the address of the conspirators that he had received in Kiev from the Polish intelligence.

### **The Leningrad Region**

Initial results in the Leningrad district indicate that the POW and the Second Division of the Polish Staff Headquarters organized wide-ranging and extremely harmful activities in the important defense enterprises in Leningrad and in the units of the Red Army. A significant number of spies were given the mission to destroy military factories at the moment of Polish incursion into the USSR. The military factories "Bolshevik" and "Red October," as well as factories nos. 4, 6, 52, 218 and others had Polish agents working within, preparing for destruction of the facilities. One of these agents named Andrzejewski, an engineer in factory no. 4, admitted that he was a member of POW since 1915, having

been recruited by a former colonel named Aranowski. He maintained contact with one Labinski, likewise an agent of the Second Division. Labinski worked as an engineer in the same factory and prepared diversionary tactics as directed by Andrzejewski. He recruited seven members of the spying ring among the factory workers.

A former corporal in the Polish army named Kukharev worked as an engineer in factory no. 208 at the time of his arrest. During interrogation he confessed that in 1923 he had been illegally transported to the USSR by the Polish intelligence and established at the military factory in Leningrad. In 1934 a courier from the Second Division of the Polish Staff HQ visited Kukharev and passed on directives for preparation of acts of sabotage in the factory.

An engineer of the electrotechnical institute named Daczkowski likewise confessed that in 1934 he was recruited by a resident of the Second Division and an employee of the Polish consulate in Leningrad named Karszo, to whom Daczkowski passed on information about topics studied in the institute, particularly the experiments with radiation that would have negative effects on airplane engines.

A worker from the Stalin Factory named Winicz confessed to having been recruited in 1936 by a Polish scout named Piotrowski, and having passed on information about the factory. Winicz was given an order to blow up the turbine department. For this reason Piotrowski gave him potent explosive materials.

Wowczak and Inzigirej, two workers at an artillery range, admitted belonging to a sabotage group created by a Polish scout named Dektiarev. They confessed that they were preparing a detonation of the gunpowder supply located on the range.

A former planner of the 201 Outpost of the Leningrad Military Region named Kabicki admitted that in 1920 he was recruited in Warsaw by a colonel of the Polish intelligence named Marski, and was subsequently transported to the USSR with intelligence gathering aims. In the USSR he organized many conspiratorial meetings that the high-placed workers of the LWO

attended. He tried to involve them in espionage activities.

The arrested helper of the manager of WWS LWO named Vesilev testified that in 1935 he was recruited by an agent of the Polish intelligence named Zielski, and was passing on information about WWS LWO for financial compensation.

A brigadier named Mironowicz was arrested in the Zdanov Factory where he worked. He admitted to complicity in organizing an illegal Polish Catholic organization and in preparing acts of sabotage.

An aide to the commandant of the 15 Special Infantry Battalion named Szpakowski admitted that in 1933 he was recruited by the Polish intelligence. His contact was one Kochanski (arrested), the former commander of the Third Air Brigade. On Kochanski's orders, Szpakowski organized in his battalion a branch of the POW composed of nine members.

A man by the name of Pancern who was a supervisor in the Bolshevik Military Factory was recruited to the POW in 1933. He devised a method for recruiting other workers into the POW under the guise of working for the NKVD. He was an active spy and prepared acts of sabotage to be implemented in the event of a war with Poland.

#### **The West Siberian and Sverdlovsk Districts**

In Sverdlovsk in the Urals and in the Western Siberian Oblast', the activities of Polish spies were vigorous. Owing to the confession of a Roman Catholic priest named Zukowski obtained during an interrogation<sup>[20]</sup> and information obtained from another individual named Piotrowski (both were arrested in Novosibirsk), it was established that the operation of the intelligence-gathering, espionage, and saboteur organization POW occurred in the Siberian territories. In command of the Siberian POW were Filipowicz and Sosenko, in addition to the aforementioned Zukowski. The organization possessed branches in many larger cities in Siberia. At the order of the POW Piotrowski infiltrated the UNKVD mess hall with the aim to poison UNKVD workers in the event of a war scenario. A similar situation was detected in Sverdlovsk where, as a result of the inquiry, a Ural branch of the POW was discovered. It had been

organized in 1933 by a certain Malinowski [illegible], an active Pilsudskiye transferred from Poland. The aforementioned POW HQ possessed intelligence-gathering agencies located in many important industrial enterprises in the Ural region. Both of the previously mentioned POW HQs were identified as a result of the present operation intended to eliminate the Polish intelligence cadre; before there had only been a general suspicion that they existed.

The above report summarizes only the beginning of the Polish Operation and therefore is far from complete. A significant portion of the arrested have not yet been fully interrogated and unmasked; nonetheless, there are numerous indications of mass assignments of Polish intelligence agents to our institutions and factories and of Polish penetration, not solely of the border regions but also of many industrial complexes and certain large enterprises deep inside the country. As a result of the investigation, numerous well-embedded and well-trained diversionary groups have been identified. As of 1 September 1937, 930 Polish agents have been tried and executed.

Signed: The People's Commissar of the USSR Internatal Affairs, General Commissar for State Security Nikolai Yezhov

September 1937

*Translated by Andrzej Skulski*

Insofar as possible the Polish spelling of Polish names has been preserved or reconstructed. The report was written in Russian and the translator has followed the Russian rather than the Ukrainian transliteration rules regarding names of places and regions in Ukraine.

The Polish version of this article will appear in vol. 23 of *Studia nad faszyzmem i zbrodniami hitlerowskimi* [Studies in Fascism and in Hitler's Crimes], edited by Marek Maciejewski (Wrocław: University of Wrocław Press, October 2011).

#### **NOTES**

1. Order #00485 was given by Nikolai Yezhov on August 11, 1937. It was an operational order, i.e., it had been approved by Stalin two days earlier, on August 9, and it follows the decision of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) to physically eliminate Poles. The text of the order

- was first published in Nikita Petrov's article "Polska operacja NKVD," *Karta* (1993), pp. 27–29. The order also appears in *Rozstrzelać Polaków. Ludobójstwo Polaków w Związku Sowieckim w latach 1937–1938. Dokumenty z centrali*, edited by Tomasz Sommer (Warsaw: 3S Media, 2010), p. 81. The text of the order as it appears in Petrov's article was obtained during the brief period of free archival access under Boris Yeltsin. A copy of the order also exists in Kyiv Archives (HDA SBU, f. 9, spr. 23, k. 20–24). The original remains in Russian archives to which access is presently prohibited.
3. Nikita V. Petrov, and Aleksandr B. Roginskii, "<<Pol'skaia Operatsiia>> NKVD 1937–1938. Repressii protiv poliakov i pol'skikh grazhdan," *Istoricheskie Sborniki Memoriala*," Vypusk 1. Moscow: Zven'ia, 1997, pp. 40–44.
  4. Roman Dzwonkowski SAC, *Religia i Kościół katolicki w ZSRS 1917–1991* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2010), p. 214.
  5. *Vsesoiuzhaia perepis' naseleniia 1937 goda. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), p. 87.
  6. The author of the present article is currently preparing a monograph on the "Polish Operation" where these issues will be discussed in detail.
  7. Nearly all documents concerning the genocide of Poles in Ukraine have been handed in by Ukrainians to Polish researchers and published in the collective work *Wielki terror: operacja Polska 1937–1938* [The Great Terror: the Polish Operation, 1937–1938], vol. 8 of the series *Polska i Ukraina w latach trzydziestych-czterdziestych XX wieku* [Poland and Ukraine in the 1930s and 1940s], Warsaw-Kyiv: Institute of National Memory, 2010. Courtesy of *Memorial's* Nikita Petrov, this author has edited and published additional documents in the collective volume *Ludobójstwo Polaków*. However, no documents from Belarus and very few from Russia have been released or accessed.
  8. *Ludobójstwo Polaków*, p. 85.
  9. The reference here is to order #00485.
  10. Order #00485 was formally directed against "counterrevolutionary Poles" that included the aforementioned categories. In practice, the determining feature was nationality, and the arrests were based on whoever caught the eye of the NKVD police. *Ludobójstwo Polaków*, pp. 1–22.
  11. The first published photocopy of Yezhov's report appeared in *Ludobójstwo Polaków*. The original is located in the Central FSB Archives where it is sewn together with other documents pertaining to September 1937. Its identifying number is CA FSB F. 3. Op. 4. D. 104. L. 262–274. Subsequent reports show an increase in the number of arrests. The increase amounted to 143,810 persons, of whom 111,091 were executed.
  12. The Polish name is *Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego Wojska Polskiego*, or *Komórka Organizacyjna Sztabu Generalnego WP*. Its task was intelligence including radio intelligence, counterintelligence, sabotage, cryptology, and the study of foreign armies and foreign affairs in the years 1918–1939. In Soviet documents persons associated with the Second Division were called "defensiva." The NKVD "invented" an organization called the Polish Military Organization [Polska Organizacja Wojskowa, or POW in Soviet documents] that allegedly was a continuation of Józef Piłsudski's POW founded in 1914. According to the NKVD this organization was on the verge of taking over the USSR in the 1930s. Every person of Polish background was potentially a member of this network, as implied in NKVD documents.
  13. Gosgeos'emka was a Soviet government company that made geological photographs. The name Głuchowski (Glukhovskii) also appears in the "Report of the People's Commissar for Internal Affairs of the USRS" written by Israil Leplevskii. *Ludobójstwo Polaków*, p. 569.
  14. Andrzej Lipiński, b. 1897, arrested June 28, 1937, executed September 23, 1937, posthumously rehabilitated in 1959. HDA SBU, Donetsk, issue 14196-PF.
  15. Obshchestvo Druzei Oborony i Aviatsionno-Khimicheskogo, an organization that explained to young people how to defend themselves in case of air and chemical attacks. It had over ten million members.
  16. Konstantin Andreevich Polech was sentenced to death on September 23, 1937, in Kyiv. HDA SBU, f. 5, spr. 465, k.11–18.
  17. Mikhail Anastas'evich Kononchuk [name misspelled in the report about the death sentence], sentenced to death August 31, 1937. HDA SBU, f. 5, delo, 465, k. 11–18. Karp Andreevich Chainski, sentenced to death August 31, 1937. HDA SBU, f. 5, delo, 465, k. 11–18.
  18. The former Koidanov Region in the Minsk Oblast'. Like the Marklev Region in Ukraine, it was declared by the Soviets to be an autonomous Polish region in 1932. It numbered 44,000 residents. In 1938 its autonomous status was withdrawn, apparently because so many Poles were arrested and executed.
  19. Part of *Narodnyj Kommissariat Zemlerobstva*, or Ministry of Agriculture.
  20. Fr. Antoni Żukowski, b. 1885 in Irkutsk, ordained in 1909, murdered during the "Polish Operation" on October 12, 1937, in Novosibirsk. He was active in parishes from the Ural Mountains all the way to

Lake Baikal. He was first arrested in 1920, but was released and continued to clandestinely serve Roman Catholics in Siberia until his final arrest and execution in 1937.

## Letters

### Personal remembrances of Czesław Miłosz

I read with interest the poetic recollection of Miłosz by Professor/Fr. Raymond Gawronski (*SR*, April 2011) and would like to contribute some personal memories in that connection. While my younger sister Anna was an undergraduate at the University of California-Berkeley as a Comparative Literature major in the late 1980s, she was considered as a possible candidate for an assistantship to Miłosz. The poet invited her to his place and basically had one question: “How did you acquire your last name?” (*Skąd Pani ma to nazwisko?*) My sister’s answer was, “I acquired it at birth” (*Od urodzenia*). Miłosz never got back to her, and she never became his assistant.

The future Nobel Prize winner knew our grandfather, Jan Chodakiewicz, a fellow student at the law faculty of the Stefan Batory University in Wilno. They met through my grandfather’s friend from high school, Lech Beynar (aka Paweł Jasienica). Miłosz was also a high school classmate of my grandmother’s oldest brother, Janusz Cieszewski, also a law student at USB. The late Jerzy Przyłuski recalled the cordiality between the two many years later. Janusz Cieszewski was a hardcore Endek. While in the United States Miłosz recoiled from anything that had to do with his personal past.

On the other hand, my personal dealings with Miłosz were invariably positive. While I did my volunteer work at Amnesty International at Berkeley and audited classes at UC Berkeley, I was interested in neither the poet nor in his poetry. Since I was barred from dealing with Poland and the USSR, I focused on Afghanistan, Cambodia, Vietnam, and North Korea. However, whenever we needed something done for Polish prisoners of conscience, my boss, Laola Hironaka, a Catholic nun, a JD and a PhD in Japanese literature, would turn to me and say, “Let’s hit Miłosz.” And he would invariably come through, including intervention on behalf of Fighting Solidarity (*Solidarność Walcząca*), a courageous group in Poland that did not eschew armed self-defense against communism.

Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Institute of World Politics*  
Washington, DC

## The Past

by

Cyprian Kamil Norwid  
Translated by Leo Yankevich

1.  
God does not make the p a s t, nor death, nor grief,  
But he who breaks the law,  
Whose depths are so raw,  
He, knowing evil, seeks a m n e s i a for relief.
2.  
However, he’s not like a child inside a stroller,  
Crying: “Look, there’s a tree,  
Only I see it flee. . .  
Into the woods!”; the tree remains; the child grows older.
3.  
The past exists today as well as beyond the green:  
A simple hamlet waits  
Not this or that odd place. . .  
Whose fields no living man has ever walked or seen.

## Przeszłość

1.  
Nie Bóg stworzył p r z e s z ł o ś ć i śmierć, i  
cierpienia,  
Lecz ów, co prawa rwie,  
Więc nieznośne mu —dnie;  
Więc, czując złe, chciał odepchnąć  
s p o m n i e n i a!
2.  
Acz nie byłże jak dziecko, co wozem leci,  
Powiadając: „O! dąb  
Ucieka! . . . w lasu głąb. . .”  
—Gdy dąb stoi, wóz z sobą unosi dzieci.
3.  
Przeszłość jest i dziś, i te dziś dalej:  
Za kołami to wieś  
Nie—jakiś tam. . . coś, gdzieś,  
Gdzie nigdy ludzie nie bywali! . . .