

structure of the book is chronological in a general way, but it is hard at times for the reader to link cause and effect as the text proceeds.

Most of the book focuses on the post-1989 Intermarium. The two contenders for power are what he calls the postcommunists and the patriots. The postcommunists are the Russians or the Russophiles, who are in cahoots with Western deconstructionists, feminists, environmentalists, gay rights advocates, nihilists, and postmodernists who are entrenched in American and Western European universities. These folks are all conspiring to do—something, although Chodakiewicz is not clear what that might be. In fact, there are conspiracies everywhere in this book, but the author offers no names, no institutions, no objectives, and no strategies. Whoever these apparent evildoers are, they are undermining the Intermarium's return (and he stresses a *return* following the example of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before 1772) to the ideals of parliamentary democracy, rule of law, respect for private property, widespread religious faith, freedom, and individualism. But who exactly is preventing this from happening is unclear; all Chodakiewicz is certain of is that the conspiracy runs deep.

Chodakiewicz's most important message comes in Chapter 19, titled "Lifting the Velvet Curtain." There he calls for an alliance between the United States and the old Eastern European countries—Poland, the Baltic States, the Balkans, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary—to contain Russia. Chodakiewicz declares the Western European countries and therefore NATO too anti-American and too infected with political correctness to be of much use. Proposing such an alliance in some ways reminds one of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's distinction between the New Europe and Old Europe following the 9/11 attacks, and in other ways the old French *cordon sanitaire* against Germany from the interwar years.

Chodakiewicz is at his least polemical in chapters 17 and 18 when he analyzes recent politics in the different Intermarium states. In these chapters he shies away from his postcommunist and patriot labels and discusses current politics in a rational and informative way—who is in, who is out, who is waiting in

the wings, and why. The one thing all of the Intermarium states have in common, no matter what side of the political fence they are sitting on, is corruption. Heritage, tradition, conspiracies, and religiosity all take back seats to corruption.

Chodakiewicz's call for more American attention focused on the Intermarium states and their neighbors will likely fall on deaf ears. It would seem that American foreign policy is now shifting from a focus on the Middle East to one on East Asia, which means that other parts of the world will be garnering little attention. The author complains that Russia uses its energy and economic policies to extend its influence, but for America those matter little compared to the oil-producing Middle East and the manufacturing power of China. Besides, the only foreign policy issue that generates passion among the current national politicians is the security of Israel, and that passion usually consists of accusing one another of being insufficiently supportive of it. Add to that the virulent divide between Republicans and Democrats on virtually any domestic initiative, and no one of consequence in the United States will be paying attention to the geopolitical fortunes of the countries Chodakiewicz cares about. That is just the way it is at this time in history.  $\Delta$

## Politics, History and Collective Memory in East Central Europe

Edited by **Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Stefan Garsztecki, and Rüdiger Ritter**. Hamburg: Reinhold Krämer Verlag (info@kraemer-verlag.de), 2012. ISBN 978-3-89622-110-0. 400 pages. EUR 39.80. Paper.

### Paweł Styrna

First, briefly: this book, a collection of papers by eminent scholars, is recommended reading not only for historians of the region, but also for policy analysts and journalists reporting on it. It deals with the territory of the Intermarium (Polish *Międzymorze*, Ukrainian *Mizhmorya*, and

Lithuanian *Tarpjūris*), or the lands between the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic Seas. This large swath of European heartland is all too often imagined in either postcolonial or narrowly ethno-nationalistic terms. What the late Pope John Paul II named as one of Europe's "two lungs" is generally not conceptualized as a historic-cultural entity of its own.

On the one hand, Central and Eastern Europe are frequently viewed as subordinate borderlands of the more important and influential neighboring powers, i.e., as an eastern march of Germany or a western "near abroad" of Russia, or perhaps a combination of both. On the other hand, the region is disassembled into its ethnostatist constituent elements: Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, Romanian, Slovak, Croat, Serb, and several others. True, the Intermarium has often been conquered by neighboring invaders, and ethnic particularisms have played a strong role in the region as well. Yet indigenous powers existed in the area for much of its history sometimes fighting among themselves, at other times forming alliances and unions or simply coexisting—and by no means as the "bastards of Versailles," to invoke the Soviet foreign minister Viacheslav Molotov's derogatory comment. During the span of four centuries the Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian state under the Jagiellons united quite a few of the lands between the Baltic and the Black Seas. Around the year 1500 the Jagiellonian dynasty also reigned over Bohemia and Hungary, thereby projecting its power all the way to the Adriatic Sea and the Danube River.

This book, coedited and coauthored by Professors Krasnodębski, Garsztecki, and Ritter is a collection of papers that provides diverse insights into the modern-day successor states of the Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian Commonwealth: Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland. Most authors are native to the region; some hail from universities in Germany and the United States. While this may lead to concerns about "insider bias," the "insider" authors are quite familiar and at ease with "outsider" sources and perspectives. Several contributors seem to be convinced that these outsider perspectives have often distorted the

history of the Intermarium, thus compelling the "natives" to offer a corrective.

The thread weaving its way through this collection is the deleterious impact of communism and postcommunism on the historical memory of the Intermarium peoples. In an ideological quest to mold a new man, the Bolsheviks proceeded to reinvent and Sovietize the cultures of the nations under their power. Their historical consciousness and collective memories were assaulted and partially altered. The so-called captive nations were decapitated through the extermination of their pre-Soviet elites who were the custodians of identity and memory. The common man was subjected to terror and indoctrination. Communist schools, media, and other propaganda outlets fed the captive nations a distorted version of their own history, refashioned to suit the needs of the Bolshevik captors. This picture emerges from several papers, most notably from Arvydas Anušauskas's contribution. The final incorporation into the Soviet empire (either as constituent republics or satellites) of the captive peoples was presented to them as a natural fulfillment of their historical destiny. The communist terror apparatus plus media and education monopoly made opposition difficult and dangerous, as Marek Jan Chodakiewicz's essay explains. Many feared even telling their own children that a family member had, for example, perished in the Ukrainian famine or fought in the anticommunist underground. While the communists ultimately failed at their goal of total Sovietization, they nevertheless managed to inflict serious damage on the communities they sought to destroy.

The situation following the implosion of the Soviet bloc brought mixed results as far as rebuilding fact-based historical memory was concerned. The postcommunists retained considerable influence and power in the former "people's democracies," and they have worked to salvage and reinforce as much of the Bolshevik institutions, procedures, and myths as possible. They sought legitimacy in a new political context by wrapping themselves in the mantle of patriotism and reinventing themselves as social democrats. In this they were assisted by former dissidents of leftist provenance who, as Zdzisław Krasnodębski points out in his essay

on Poland's Solidarity movement, sought to demobilize society after the Round Table agreements of 1989.

Concurrently, the anticommunist forces continued to try to de-Sovietize their nations' historical memory. This drive was often fueled by ethnonationalism that has caused much lamentation in the allegedly postnationalist West. The nationalist reaction has sometimes generated ugly results, such as the glorification of certain chauvinist traditions in Ukraine or the Baltics. However, some writers argue that nationalism may also be a necessary step in helping the atomized victims of totalitarianism rebuild their societies. While Germans or Frenchmen freely cultivated their nationalism for generations, the national aspirations of the Intermarium peoples were suppressed for decades. This led to the projection of the ethnonationalist perspective onto the past and attempts to "nationalize" even the history of such multiethnic states as the Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian Commonwealth. On the other hand, the Russophile forces in the postcommunist successor states are, as several authors point out, the purveyors of a Kremlin-oriented brand of "imperial" supranationalism (Mykola Riabchuk's and Genadz Saganovich's essays). Riabchuk in particular describes the struggle for the soul of the post-Soviet Ukrainian society and shows the mechanisms used by Ukraine's post-Soviet elites to manipulate historical memory. At the same time, he portrays the chauvinistic OUN-UPA in a sympathetic way, as many are prone to do particularly in western Ukraine, in large part because of Soviet and post-Soviet negative propaganda against this formation. Nothing is said about the mass murder of tens of thousands of ethnic Polish civilians by the OUN-UPA volunteers during the Second World War. However, for Riabchuk and indeed for many others in the region between the Black and Baltic Seas, the nationalist project, albeit in a democratic form, is the only feasible alternative to post-Sovietism. The latter means an acceptance of Russian hegemony—and Russia, as Andrzej Nowak's essay points out, continues to display imperial ambitions. Of course, an overly narrow ethnonationalism, by obstructing geopolitical unity in the Intermarium, can also facilitate the Kremlin's

agenda to reintegrate the post-Soviet zone. Marek Jan Chodakiewicz proposes a kind of pan-national conception that would seek inspiration in the "universalistic message of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth since it is the principal historical phenomenon binding the newly independent post-Soviet nations to the West." However, except for the Poles, the former participants in this Commonwealth show no interest in such a solution.

Ethnonationalism has an influential rival in academia and the media—postmodernism, whose influence is disruptive to the process of reconstruction of historical memory. The postmodernists negate the reality of nations, portraying them as "social constructs," a disturbing echo of Marxist allegations that national identity is nothing more than "false consciousness." The postmodernists tend to fish out ugly episodes in their national histories, especially the mistreatment of minorities by the majority ethnic group, to cast these histories in an unequivocally negative light. The purpose is, of course, to undermine nationalist "myths" and "hubris." However, it can also be posited that postmodernism encourages national self-hatred, and therefore it is inimical to the attempt by the former captive nations to dig themselves out from the rubble of communism and postcommunism by restoring their collective historical memory. *Politics, History and Collective Memory in East Central Europe* also contains essays written in the spirit of postmodernism. For instance, Egle Rindzevičiūtė, whose contribution focuses on Vilnius/Wilno, argues that "it was both an elitist ethnic Lithuanian concept of sovereignty and a rhetoric[al] heritage from the Cold War that were conveyed by the major current projects in narrating the past in Lithuania." This reflects the postmodernist view of nationalism as a tool for bolstering the power of the elites, and of anticommunism as a crude reflection of the right-wing's lack of sophistication. I would also describe Stefan Garsztecki's essay on memory as postmodernist. Altogether, the essays making up the book are enlightening and stimulating, in spite of the fact that some translations could have used more editing. Δ