

The two key phrases of Demshuk's study are "*Heimat* of memory" and "*Heimat* transformed." The former refers to an idealized image created on the basis of selective memories that made the lost territories into a paradise lost. The latter refers to the shocking reality of the places that the Germans left behind. News about the devastation of war, depopulation, and Polish settlers taking over what was left had first reached the expellees by letters from the few who had not fled. Tourist travel became possible after 1956, to which the expellees engaged en masse. Hundreds of thousands of Germans could then compare with their own eyes their "*Heimat* of memory" with the "*Heimat* transformed." Demshuk argues convincingly that the extreme contrast between their dreamland built on selective memories and the postwar communist reality of Soviet-occupied Poland was the main factor that enabled the expellees to accept the fact that the "German East" had irrevocably become the "Polish West."

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This book focuses on the German point of view, as amply indicated by its lack of balance. We learn how and why this fairytale "*Heimat* of memory" arose, but we do not learn why the "transformed *Heimat*" was so degraded. The destruction of war? Communist administration? The fact that the Soviet military was stationed in Poland throughout the communist period (1945–1991)? Demshuk mentions (in one sentence!) the fact that the Soviet soldiers removed "machinery" from the region. He gets close to an important discovery, but never follows his trail. He is more interested in how Germans reacted to the reality they encountered than what made that reality arise. The Bismarckian myth of "*polnische Wirtschaft*" recurs over and over in the book, a German slur against Poles. Demshuk cites it with premonitory comments,

but he does cite it because it is found in the expellees' reports made when, in search of a dreamland, they discovered devastation.

It is therefore worth adding at least one fact. A Soviet "Trophy Army" followed on the heels of the Red Army when it entered the territory of Silesia in 1945. That plague erased everything from the earth that had made up the expellees' *Heimat*. On Stalin's order issued ten days after Yalta (Order No. 7558, paragraph 6b of February 20, 1945) all German lands that were to be transferred to Poland were subject to total pillage of their entire infrastructure. Over three years, the entire area was completely deindustrialized. When the Soviet Trophy Army was finished, all that was left for the Poles were bare walls and the ground.

Like the expellees, Demshuk apparently knows nothing about the organized looting by the Soviets of the lands granted to Poland. He shows unintentionally how that ignorance can be the source of anti-Polish prejudice among Germans even today. The irrepressibility of that prejudice surprises Demshuk, and while he ostensibly opposes it he remains unable to repudiate it on the basis of historical facts. Δ

## **The Forgotten Holocaust**

### **The Poles under German Occupation 1939-1944**

**By Richard C. Lukas. Foreword by Norman Davies.** New York: Hippocrene Books ([hippocrenebooks.com](http://hippocrenebooks.com)), 2012. xviii + 358 pages. ISBN 978-0-7818-1302-0. Paper. \$19.95.

### **Farrah Madanay**

Richard C. Lukas's third edition of his seminal *The Forgotten Holocaust* includes four new features: a preface by Lukas, a foreword by Norman Davies, a short history of Żegota [the Polish Catholic underground organization whose goal was to help Jews], and an annotated list of Poles executed by the Germans for attempting to save Jews. These additions reinforce one of Lukas's theses that Poles, from the officials of the government-in-exile to the families who hid Jews in their homes, tried to aid Poland's Jewish citizenry.

Davies' *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, is cited in several footnotes and Davies also adds his thoughts in the new foreword. Although he concedes the book's shortcomings, he applauds *The Forgotten Holocaust* for forging the path to a healthier discussion of World War II issues.

*The Forgotten Holocaust's* goal is to show the slaughter of Poles by German Nazis, which in turn is meant to invalidate Western stereotypes of Poles and Eastern Europeans as doing nothing while Jews were being murdered. Lukas tries to reconcile Jewish and non-Jewish narratives in one Polish history, a reasonable goal considering the fact that the ratio of Jewish to non-Jewish deaths in Poland during the war was nearly one to one (that is, the number of Polish Christians and Polish Jews that perished was roughly the same).

In the new preface Lukas lays out his two-pronged argument for the book: to point out that the German Nazi war against Poland concerned not only Jews but also Christian Poles, and to debunk the crude perception of all Gentiles as anti-Semites. The book archives the memory of trauma that Poles faced, particularly in the first half of the war when, Lukas asserts, Polish Christians rather than Polish Jews were Hitler's main targets of annihilation. Lukas further speculates that had the Final Solution succeeded and the war been prolonged, Polish Christians would have been exterminated next (5).

To vindicate Poles of their anti-Semitic caricature, *The Forgotten Holocaust* recontextualizes the German occupation in Poland. Lukas turns his attention particularly to the dual resistance of the Polish government exiled in London, and the underground Home Army and Żegota in Poland. Through anecdotal evidence and Polish records, Lukas convincingly demonstrates how Poles both passively and actively resisted the Nazis, as well as provided aid and shelter to Jews. Lukas coherently explains the broad scope of the Polish Underground, from the key pro-Semitic generals Rowecki and Sikorski to the role of the Polish press. However, Lukas' writing truly excels when he describes the spirit of the Poles through short anecdotes, such as the witty Polish rewritings of German propaganda posters and courier Jan Karski's clandestine trips between the Warsaw Ghetto and London.

Devoting two chapters to the Polish-Jewish relationship, Lukas qualifies that if Poles expressed any anti-Semitism at all, it was grounded in economic rather than racial prejudice. Despite this economic anti-Semitism, ethnic Poles united in defiance against the Nazis and in sympathy for the Jews. Lukas best demonstrates the erroneous negative image of Poles, instilled by Joseph Goebbels' propaganda and reinforced by American and British newspapers, in his two new appendices "Żegota: A Conspiracy of Good" and "They Were Killed for the Help They Gave." At the national level, Żegota represented Poland's philo-Semitism, since it was the only government-funded organization in occupied Europe specifically dedicated to saving Jews. At the individual level, the incomplete annotated list of 704 Poles killed for attempting to save Jews represents the zenith of courage and humanity. This list is particularly notable in light of the fact that Poland was the only country in which Nazis imposed the death penalty on anyone who was caught helping Jews. Lukas cites a common maxim among Polish activists during the war: "For one Jew, you lose your head; for several Jews, it's the same head" (295). The maxim reflects the humor, rationale, and indomitable spirit of the thousands of Poles who aided Jews during the war.

In the chapter "Poles and Jews," Richard Lukas quotes Polish-Jewish Żegota member Adolf Berman: "The flotsam and jetsam on the surface of a turbulent river is more visible than the pure stream running deep underneath, but that stream existed" (141). Within a chapter that directly confronts the Polish-Jewish relationship surrounding World War II, Berman's quote aptly sums up the premise of Lukas's *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation 1939–1944*. While the Polish collaborators, blackmailers and denouncers did exist, a sizable contingent of Polish resisters and rescuers more accurately characterized the German-occupied country.

In a field dominated by Jewish historians, Lukas differentiates himself as a scholar whose foremost interpretation of the Holocaust is through a Polish historical lens. While he seeks to restore balance to Holocaust history, his own bias is apparent throughout the book. Although

he professes contributing a broader and more objective view of the Holocaust, his title reveals a primary interest in Polish victimization, which indeed is reflected in his overly positive, philo-Semitic Polish history of World War II and Polish-Jewish relations. In addition to his criticism of Jewish historians for subsuming or trivializing the tragedies of non-Jewish Poles to the Jewish Holocaust, Lukas makes sweeping generalizations regarding Jews in twentieth-century Poland. These generalizations, which Lukas uses to explain Polish anti-Semitic sentiments, include deficient Jewish assimilation, Jewish Polonophobia, and Jewish collaboration with the Soviets. Lukas's work lacks references to Hebrew and Yiddish literature and testimonies, relying excessively and almost exclusively on Emanuel Ringelblum's diary testimonies for a Jewish foil.

Originally published in 1986, *The Forgotten Holocaust* compels a shift in World War II historiography to restore a balanced record of both Jewish and Christian Polish victimology. The extensively documented book offers a compelling study of the plight and bravery of Christian Poles in their military and social resistance efforts to save all Polish citizens from Nazi terror. From the aloof bystanders in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* to the pigs in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Poles are habitually portrayed as apathetic and anti-Semitic Holocaust witnesses. In *The Forgotten Holocaust*, Lukas challenges the stereotype of the anti-Semitic Pole who willingly sides with the Nazis, a stereotype that persists in both dominant historical discourse and popular media in the West.

Amongst the scores of Holocaust publications, *The Forgotten Holocaust* differentiates itself through Lukas's distinct insights into Poland's specific yet largely understudied Holocaust history. The third edition's added features bolster a deeper understanding of Polish Resistance history, securing the merit of Lukas's book not only for its interpretations but also for its applied pressure to broaden the field of Holocaust studies. Δ



## MORE BOOKS

*The Clash of Civilizations or Civil War*, by **Zbigniew Stawrowski**. Kraków: The Tischner Institute ([www.tischner.org.pl](http://www.tischner.org.pl)), 2013. 127 pages. Index, bibliography. ISBN 978-83-60911-14-3. Paper.

This is one of those essential books that everyone should have in his/her library. Professor Stawrowski takes on the fundamental concepts of our civilization: democracy, freedom, religious tolerance, community, ethics, and morality, and shows by means of a Socratic argument how many inconsistencies are built into the popular understanding of these terms. He intimates that these inconsistencies may eventually lead to the collapse of such ill-defined projects as the European Union or any other ostensibly democratic and tolerant society.

Among the inconsistencies present in contemporary democracies is ambivalence concerning human life, abortion and euthanasia among them. The implications of using in-vitro or rented-womb procedures are also startling. Stawrowski points out that we are the first civilization that actively engages in the destruction of human life in nonmilitary situations. For the first time in history, a civilization has given consent to procedures that have much to do with eugenics: we choose those lives that seem to have the best chance of developing well and actively engage in the destruction of those that we deem unwelcome, deformed, or defective.

Stawrowski further argues that what is sometimes touted as "religious freedom" is in fact a misnomer. There is no way to avoid being "religious"; the atheist's belief in the nonexistence of God is a form of religion, as is any person's belief in any principle whatsoever, be it the principle of satisfying one's physical desires and surrounding oneself with comforts, or the principle of charity toward others. The very fact of naming individuals implies commemoration of saints or heroes of one's religious tradition (Muhammad, John, David). Furthermore, the sense of community that every society must have (otherwise it is a group of creatures hostile to each other and unable to cooperate on any project) is also religious in