

modern sense of nationhood. Bismarckian Prussia did its best to uproot Catholicism and denationalize Polish peasantry; it partially succeeded. Had the partitions of Poland not taken place, Poland might have remained the largest European country and its republican tradition might have accommodated the Ukrainian and Belarusian nations. Healy does not make note of these aspects of the Polish struggle for independence. (SB)

Józef Maria Ruszar, *Czerwone pająki [Red Spiders]*. Edited by Kamil Dworaczek and Jacek Jędrysiak. Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (www.ksiegarnia.ipn.gov.pl), 2017. 275 pages. Bibliography, footnotes, index, photographs. ISBN 978-83-8098-126-3. Zł. 20 plus postage.

Every book is *sui generis*, or should be—otherwise it is not worth reading. Ruszar’s book fulfills this condition splendidly. On the surface it is a diary/memoir of the author’s service in the army in Soviet-occupied Poland in the 1970s, but in fact it is an analysis of the Soviet ways of destroying human persons by making them go through a physical and psychological “meat grinder” from which they emerge dripping with vulgarity, bad health, hatred of their superiors, and a destroyed religious identity. The diary is replete with the none-too-elegant vocabulary used in the army, and with inserts of poetry and reflective passages that signal to the reader the civilized author’s presence. The title refers to the omnipresent *politruks*, or political indoctrinators assigned to each military unit. They see to it that soldiers do not veer too far from Soviet Marxist principles. An interesting episode of placing a Christmas tree in the common room is described: of course no mention of the tree, let alone of Christmas, was allowed, and it was only after the last *politruk* left for the day that the tree was set up. Yet in spite of savage attempts to stop it, the Christmas spirit makes its appearance, if only for one day, among the brutalized and hungry soldiers. In the 1970s in Soviet-occupied Poland the Church was the only institution that allowed one to escape communist slavery, if only for a short while. The fanatical hatred of Christianity among the Soviet-

educated Marxist teachers was on display day and night. One might add it has survived in those *politruks* who, unpunished, are now enjoying their retirement pensions in inconspicuous Polish towns and villages.

Daily life in the communist army is described in heartbreaking detail. The army, the author says, is chaos. It is also torture and an excellent way to shorten the lives of the recruits by exposing them to the elements without proper clothing; feeding them nutrition-free food; and allowing, indeed encouraging, drunkenness. The narrator rightly remarks that there is a shortage of books containing firsthand experience of soldiers under Soviet communism. He is perhaps one of the few who have the verbal skills and experience to tell the world about this little known aspect of the Soviet system.

Parallel to the horrific story of army recruits in Soviet-occupied Poland is the story of the spiritual development that occurs in spite of, or perhaps because of, these circumstances. The author realizes that the main goal of totalitarian systems is to deprive one of trust in other human beings—not human beings as a group, but individual persons, those whom we meet in daily life. He concludes that we have to trust others or else we shall not find God. However, these reflections come later. While he is in the army, Ruszar feels hatred and depression—hatred of those who dehumanize the teenagers who come to the army as recruits, and depression because, in addition to the horrible physical conditions in which the recruits live, there seems to be no way out of the ugliness, greyness, and vulgarity of the barracks. To a reader it soon becomes clear that a major reason for these destructive feelings is the absurdity and brutality of social engineering underway. Here the government has men at their most vulnerable: uneducated, young, ready to absorb whatever comes their way. The soldiers know that the totalitarian indoctrination, to which they are subjected even more than to military training rings false and frequently exposes itself as duplicitous. Yet they absorb it because there is nothing else to absorb—no counterinfluence, no good books, no Bible, no decent people who could serve as role models. So the intended goal may be achieved—

the army strives to produce vulgar and brutal atheists who act as beasts twenty-four hours a day. In Poland, with its background of Catholic religiosity, echoes of another world penetrate the walls of the barracks and save a good percentage of soldiers, but in countries like China and, until recently, Russia beasts were consciously produced by leaders of the system who considered their social engineering to be an achievement rather than a crime.

The book concludes with a lengthy afterword detailing the story of struggle against the totalitarian regime in Soviet-occupied Poland. Here the narrative centers on student activities, because the author played an active role in student protests. As one peruses the lists of names of students who signed various protests, one can easily find the reasons for the failure of these initiatives to bring desired changes. The lists are replete with names of people who later turned out to be on the payroll of the secret police, such as Lesław Maleszka. Secret police agents penetrated the entire protest movement in communist countries from the very beginning. Today the debate in Poland concerns not the agents like Maleszka who betrayed their colleagues in a horrible way and whose activities have been well documented, but personalities such as Lech Walesa who, according to recent discoveries of documents, was also steered by communist social engineers. In Walesa's case the stake was the system itself rather than the murders of one's colleagues.

One may ask why a university graduate like Ruszar was forced to join the army and spend a year with recruits ten years younger than he. It turns out that in the 1970s a law was passed regarding an obligatory 180-hour military training for students in all institutions of higher education. Ruszar was directed to a particular unit that had the reputation of being a punitive unit. Apparently the communist authorities hoped that isolating him in this way would wipe out his influence on others. (SB)

The Demon in Democracy Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies

By Ryszard Legutko. Translated by Teresa Adelson. Foreword by John O'Sullivan. New York-London: Encounter Books (www.encounterbooks.com), 2016. viii + 182 pages. ISBN 978-1-59403-863-1. Hardcover. \$23.99.

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Does liberal democracy share common features with Marxist communism? Of course not, its adherents and propounders would say. Those who look with increasing skepticism at the turn Western liberalism has taken over the last several generations are not so sure. Professor Legutko is in that number. He dares to go against general expectations in postulating that the two political and social systems share the same roots. Both are built on the assumption that human beings either lack a metaphysical dimension (metaphysics being a product of their overactive minds), or that their spirituality can be fully ignored in planning and executing their social and political trajectories. Both systems proclaim that human development can be fully explained by science; those aspects of it that have not yet been explained will be clarified in the future. Finally, both make a claim, overtly or covertly, that full implementation of their postulates will bring universal harmony, or the happy sojourn of humanity on this earth for the rest of imaginable time. Communism claimed this overtly, while the proponents of liberal democracy merely imply that after all improper behavior and thoughts have been weeded out humanity will live in reasonable contentment forever after.

This kind of criticism of liberal democracy may seem startlingly absurd to those who are used to the facile formulae of "separation of church and state" or "freedom of religion," or "religion is a private matter of citizens." Implied in these assumptions is the thesis that there are no religions incompatible with liberal democracy—