

Sarmatian Review Data

Sobering data on fake Internet and journal book reviews

Number of self-published books in the United States in 2006 and 2011, respectively: 51,237 and over 300,000.

Price of a glowing Web review (as ordered from a review-producing company): from \$5 to \$15.

Price of a negative book review: unmentioned.

Number of reviews one paid reviewer writes per week: 70.

Price charged to author/publisher by a journal specializing in reviews to publish a review: \$425.

Estimated number of fake Internet reviews (i.e., reviews commissioned for money or in order to promote or demote a product): one-third of all reviews (estimate given by Bing Liu, a data-mining expert at the University of Illinois-Chicago).

Source: David Streitfeld, "The Best Book Reviews Money Can Buy," *New York Times* (Business), 25 August 2012.

Traveling by plane in Russia

Ranking of Russia among the most dangerous countries for traveling by plane: 1 (second place is occupied by the Democratic Republic of Congo).

Number of people that died in plane crashes in Russia in 2011: 140.

Source: Denis Petrov, "Twenty Years After the Fall," *Chronicles: Magazine of American Culture*, October 2012, 41.

Military draftee problems in Russia

Shortfall in last year's (October 1, 2011-December 31, 2011) fall military draft: 30 percent.

The official target for the 2012 fall draft: 140,140 or around 15,000 lower than the spring draft (155,570).

Official Russian estimate of the number of persons serving in the Russian military: one million.

The real number: around 700,000.

Percentage of young Russians medically unfit for military service, according to Olga Kovtun, member of the Union of Pediatricians: 60 percent.

Percentage of teenage boys and girls that have reproductive illnesses: 46 percent and 65 percent, respectively.

Source: Russian Defense Minister Anatolii Serdyukov, in an interview with *Itogi* on 15 October 2012, as reported by Roger McDermott, "Serdyukov Confirms Long-Term Dependence on Dwindling Military Conscription," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 9, no.193 (23 October 2012).

Left-leaning media troubles in Poland

Left-leaning periodicals that have recently been declared in danger of closing or have already closed: *Przekrój* (a general entertainment social weekly founded in 1945); *Filmowy Magazyn do czytania*; and *Happy* (two offsprings of Agora, the parent company of *Gazeta Wyborcza*). Additionally, regional supplements to *Gazeta Wyborcza* have been cut.

Reasons for shrinkage: in the current year Agora's income fell by 11 percent in comparison to the previous year, while *Przekrój* readership fell to about 20,000, a figure that does not cover publishing expenses.

Source: <wpolityce>, 7–9 October 2012 (accessed 9 October 2012).

Postcommunism in Belarus

Population of Belarus in 1999 and 2009 (according to two censuses): 10,045 million and 9,489 million (a drop of 5.5 percent).

Source: Henryk Borko, "Czy Białorusi grozi kryzys demograficzny?" <Diarium.pl>, 12 September 2011 (accessed 29 October 2012).

Marriages and divorces in the second half of 2012 in Belarus: 835 divorces for every 1,000 marriages.

Number of abortions between 1990–2010: 2.7 million.

Source: Catholic Press Service in Belarus, as reported by <kresy24.pl> and <http://rebelya.pl/post/2792>, accessed 30 October 2012.

Current estimated rate of population decline in Belarus: -0.362 percent per year.

Source: *CIA 2012 World Factbook* (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bo.html>), accessed 30 October 2012.

Profession in which there are job openings worldwide

Estimated number of commercial aircraft pilots needed in the forthcoming 20 years worldwide: 450,000.

Source: Boeing Company estimate, as reported in NBC Morning News, 14 July 2012.

New allegations about Smolensk funerals

Contents of a written offer made by the Polish Association of Funeral Directors to the Office of Prime Minister of Poland Donald Tusk after the Smolensk plane crash on 10 April 2012, when all 96 persons on board (including President Lech Kaczyński and his wife Maria Kaczyńska) perished: the Association offered their services free of charge (coffins and funeral arrangements), in view of so great a tragedy befalling Poland.

Follow-up to that offer: no answer was received from the Donald Tusk Office.

What the Tusk government did instead: through its organ, Inspektorat Wsparcia Sił Zbrojnych (Inspectorate for Support of the Military Forces), it ordered coffins from a small and unaffiliated funeral home owned by one Piotr Godlewski. Godlewski's activities in Soviet-occupied Poland (i.e., before 1989) allegedly included being an informer for the secret police. His firm did not have 100 coffins in stock, so they had to be ordered from a manufacturer in Italy.

Further disposition of coffins and funeral expenses: Italians sold the coffins without making a profit, and they delivered them gratis. The low price offer included the arrangement of bodies in coffins and sealing the coffins. What happened next: the Polish state treasury paid nearly 300,000 zloties for the coffins to little-known subjects; separate bills by undisclosed firms requesting payment for transportation of bodies from the airport and for placing the bodies in coffins were also issued and paid. Yet it was Polish soldiers and not Italians that placed the bodies (or rather, the metal containers sent from Russia, allegedly containing the bodies) in coffins—thus fees were charged for work that was never performed.

How this scheme was discovered and when: on 10 October 2010, by an investigative reporter from TVN24.

Answer of government spokesperson Paweł Graś when confronted with questions from journalists: “One had to decide quickly.”

Journalist Stanisław Janecki's comment on Twitter: “The funerals arranged by a funeral home owned by a former spy for the secret police—[this] is an act of vengeance of the civil secret services on the military secret services. Now the latter will try to repay the former.”

Source: Antoni Trzmiel, “Kto zarabiał na pogrzebach smoleńskich?” *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 October 2012; and <<http://www.tvn24.pl/kto-zarobil-na-pogrzebach-smolenskich,281654.s.html>>.

Research projects in humanities that recently won financial support from the Ministry of Higher Education

The biggest and smallest grants the Polish Ministry of Higher Education disbursed in support of Polish humanities as part of the National Program for Humanities Development in 2012: *Studia Semiotyczne* (Semiotic Studies) in English translation, 350,000 zloties; Web publication of the *Polish Ethnography* in English, 166,667 zloties; Web edition of the serial *Zapiski Historyczne. Poświęcone historii Pomorza i Krajów Bałtyckich* (*Historical notes on the history of Pomerania and the Baltic countries*), vol. 75 (2010) and vol. 76 (2011), 154,660 zloties.

The three smallest grants went to the Jerzy Grotowski Institute for publication of “selected articles” from a theatrical magazine *Didaskalia* (8,400 zloties); to provide an English translation of the issue of *Pamiętnik Literacki* (a literary journal) dedicated to Czesław Miłosz (20,240 zloties); and for the English translation of one issue of *Kwartalnik Filmowy* (Film Review), to be placed on <ceeol.com> (26,860 zloties).

Total number of grants: 17, totaling one million zloties.

Source: Polish government portal <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/.../20111027_MPRH_modul_3>, accessed 14 October 2012.

Editor's comment: In Soviet-occupied Poland topics such as semiotics and ethnography were strongly supported by the authorities—folk art and formalistic studies diverted attention from Polish history and Polish historical culture. In 2012, the Polish Ministry of Higher Education seems to be continuing this policy.

Protests against alleged discrimination of Catholic television in Poland

Number of people who signed their names on a petition (dispatched to the agency of the Polish government that distributes permits to broadcast within a certain width) protesting discrimination of Catholic TV channel “Trwam”: 2,382,204 as of 14 October 2012.

The protesters' allegation: “Trwam” was unjustly refused a place on the multiplex that is allowed to broadcast throughout Poland; without public debate the authorities passed a bill through the lower house of the Sejm (controlled by the government party) that increases many times the fee for the new stations that want to broadcast. Those stations that have already received a place on the multiplex are exempted from the new fees, which are sometimes 40 times higher than the old fees.

Source: Portal <wpolityce.pl>, 14 October 2012; Portal of Polish Catholic Information Agency (ekai.pl), 1 August 2012.