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*** THE FORGOTTEN HOLOCAUST ***

[The following was condensed from Ewa Majewska Thompson's paper, "Reflections on Richard Lukas's _The Forgotten Holocaust_" read at the Polish-Jewish dialogue, Houston Holocaust Museum, March 1, 1998. The original piece was published in the _Sarmatian Review_, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, April 1998, and is available online: <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia/498/thompson.html>. If this condensed version interests you, be sure to read the original.]

The Forgotten Holocaust tells the story of a nation that fought on the Allied side in World War II but emerged from the war a loser. It tells the story of a country that lost one-quarter of its population, it tells of millions of people murdered, sent to concentration camps, subjected to medical experiments and other barbaric acts. It tells of a people who lived through an era where terror was total, yet it had the most effective Resistance movement in Europe, and virtually no collaborators of any social stature. It tells of heroism, generosity and love of one's neighbor when assistance resulted in immediate death. It tells of a million people involved in sheltering Jews. It is the Polish story -- the story that had been silenced by fifty years of Soviet occupation.

To understand _The Forgotten Holocaust_, it is crucial to remember that in September 1939, both Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia attacked Poland. It is crucial to recall that in 1939, in 1940, and in 1941, the Soviets were the sworn friends of the Nazis. In 1939 Hitler said the annihilation of living forces was the primary task in Poland. And the Nazis immediately set out on their murderous ways. Before Jews became the primary target, hundreds of thousands of Poles were being rounded up and shipped to Auschwitz and other extermination camps. While this was going on, in the Soviet-occupied eastern Poland, Polish intelligentsia perished in Katyn and in the Gulag. A million and a half Polish Christians went to the Siberian Gulag.

Lukas readily admits that the Jewish tragedy in World War II had no parallels. But he helps us comprehend that the Polish tragedy had no parallels either. While the Jewish Holocaust ended in 1945, terror in Poland lasted for forty-five more years. The grief of the Holocaust has obscured the tragedy of the Poles whose land was polluted by the Holocaust executives and, in 1945, faced a new reign of terror when the Soviet-controlled secret police began murdering and terrorizing people by the tens of thousands. At the end of the war, the Jewish remnants were allowed to depart for Israel, America and Western Europe. The Poles had no such right to seek sanctuary abroad. They stayed in Poland and suffered for another 45 years of Soviet brutalization. Who will pay them for their looted lives? Surely Poles also deserve a measure of sympathy and understanding. Lukas book strives to generate that ounce of understanding.

There is one more aspect of Lukas's book which needs to be mentioned.

To Polish Christians it has become increasingly clear that events of World War II need to be viewed not only in moral terms but also in terms of interest. While the interests of Polish Jews and Catholics were the same concerning the Nazis, they did not coincide regarding the Soviets. For the Jews, the Soviet Union was a possible refuge from the horrors of Nazi occupation. For many Jews, the Soviet Union was a land of promise. Throughout the war, and subsequently, when many Jews saved by the Soviets came back to Poland, a significant percentage of them sided with the Soviet occupier and not with the Poles. For Polish Christians, this was an act of treason. For the Jews themselves, it was a means of survival and ideological choice. The interests of both groups were dramatically different. This fact has to be recognized and accepted. But it is also time to move on and beyond World War II as the base for Polish-Jewish relations.

*** PARISH MONOGRAPHS ***

[Editor: Ceil Jensen <cjensen@mipolonia.net> got back from a trip to Poland not long ago, and she posted this note on the Poland-Roots mailing list. I thought it was worth repeating, as some of the ideas and sources she mentions might prove helpful to researchers. Thanks, Ceil!]

I have learned of a Polish publisher who puts out monographs on parishes. Some are on sale in the churches, and some are kept by the priests at the rectory. I also bought some at a religious bookstore in Mlawa. The publisher, the Bernardinum Publishing Co. of the Diocese of Pelplin, has a Website here:

<http://www.bernardinum.com.pl/>

Krzysztof Kowalkowski has written many monographs on parishes in the Tczew area. See this page on my site:

<http://mipolonia.net/view/kowalkowski/index.htm>

The Bernardinum has published several of Kowalkowski's books. You can search for them here:

<http://www.bernardinum.com.pl/?a=3>

There is a little search box in the lower left corner to put in parish names ... but it is probably better to surf because of the way a name changes in the Polish language when it's used in varying contexts.

I have books for Milobadz, Lubiszewo, Pszczolki, Krag, Rytel, Lidzbark, Rogalinek ... maybe a few more. They are great because they usually have maps, old photos, new photos and lists of surnames.

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