

ANNA D. JAROSZYŃSKA-KIRCHMANN, *The Polish Hearst: 'Ameryka-Echo' and the Public Role of the Immigrant Press*, Urbana Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2015, pp. 288. ISBN 978-0-252-03909-6. Also e-Book

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18290/sp.2019.23>

In the early twentieth century, the foreign language press in the United States flourished: “Between the 1880s and 1920, from 800 to over 1,000 titles of foreign language newspapers were published in the United States, and in 1930 alone, 142 foreign-language dailies and 511 weeklies came out” (p. 5). The Polish American press represented no small part of those numbers. Anna Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, professor of history at Eastern Connecticut State University, introduces us to Toledo’s *Ameryka-Echo* and its publisher, Antoni Paryski.

Ameryka-Echo emerged from a union of two newspapers. A. Paryski launched *Ameryka* in 1889, then bought Buffalo-based *Echo*, creating *Ameryka-Echo* in 1906, which continued in publication until 1971.

Antoni Paryski (1864-1935) was born in Poland and came to America in 1883. He eventually found his place in journalism, working in both Polonian newspapers as well as with purely American printers, albeit in cities that had large Polonian diasporas: Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Winona, before finally putting down roots until his death in Toledo.

The growth of the American Polonian press coincided, according to Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, with major changes in American journalism, two of which are particularly significant: technology and philosophy. New typesetting technologies were emerging, and Paryski’s exposure to American publishers familiarized him with them, so that *Ameryka-Echo* was a very modern newspaper for its day. Philosophically, journalism shifted from political party-associated newspapers focused on debate of public issues to sheets of sensationalist “yellow journalism” (of which William Randolph Hearst was the preeminent American example), marketed for the masses, claiming to be “objective” and “neutral,” in which traditional news was downplayed in favor of features (advice columns, recipes, simple stories) to sell copies.

Paryski in many ways adopted these shifts to his paper, which carried a strong anti-Church/anti-clerical tone. (Its readers were threatened with ecclesiastical sanctions by various bishops). He also painted himself as a tribune of the working class, even occasionally spouting socialist-like rhetoric alongside his anti-Church tirades, only to show his true colors when he prevented unionization of his own plant or sided with the owners against Polish American strikers in 1919 during Toledo’s Willys-Overland strike.

The book can be divided into two parts. Chapters 1-4 discuss the larger history of *Ameryka-Echo* and Paryski, from what is known of the publisher’s early life in Poland

through his years running *Ameryka-Echo*, the years after his death when the paper remained in the Paryski family and, finally, when it passed into other hands until it ceased publication. Chapters 5-8 focus on Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann's own research interest and scholarly contribution in this book: readers' contributions to the paper. *Ameryka-Echo* featured a column, "*Kącik dla wszystkich*" [A Corner for Everybody], in which readers could voice their opinions and debate issues. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann is especially interested in this participatory form of epistolary democracy.

Karen Majewski, in her *Traitors and True Poles* (Ohio University Press, 2003) has shown that, contrary to the stereotype of early 20th century immigrants, they were readers. Her book shows how Polonian book publishing and newspapers serialized all sorts of books – primarily fiction – for readers. Even Paryski threw in books along with his subscription deals. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann also argues that Paryski was very much influenced by Polish Positivism and its philosophy of restoring Poland through self-improvement and education: *Ameryka-Echo* constantly presented itself as a "platform of informal learning for Polish immigrants in the United States" (p. 107). Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann shows that, contrary to those who thought of Polonia's "huddled masses" as voiceless, they sought out and had some venues to express their views.

Paryski, the Worzalla Brothers in Wisconsin, *et al.* were key figures in the early Polonia press. Paryski was certainly a complex if not controversial figure, who led a paper often anti-Church in tone but whose influence in Polish-American journalism was significant. One simple example: *Ameryka-Echo* ran a series of articles by Stefan Nesterowicz ca 1908 about Polonia in Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana – four states which nobody typically identifies with Polonia. The lasting value of those reports, especially for genealogy purposes, is shown by the fact that they have been reprinted twice, most recently in 2007 as a book, *Travel Notes*, by the Polish Genealogical Society of Texas.

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