

Ingrid T a y l o r, *Poles Apart: The Life and Works of the Artist Antoni Sulek*, London: Austin and Macauley Publishers 2010, pp. 114 + 264 mostly full-page color illustrations.

Hansen's Law contends that, among immigrants, it is the second generation—the sons of immigrants—who most want to identify with the new country in which they live, to the exclusion of their old identity. It is the third generation—the grandsons of immigrants—who seek to recover their roots. In the case of Antoni Sulek (1951-88), that certainly was not the case.

Sulek was a prolific Polish painter, born in a former English army camp in Northumberland to Polish *émigré* parents, and who died January 6, 1988, aged 36. Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, his works have attracted posthumous interest. Ingrid Taylor, a retired police investigator and aficionado of Sulek's paintings, contributes to that revival in this first full-length study of his life.

Separate paths brought Julia Raczyło and Piotr Sulek to England, where they married in 1949. His mother was deported from Puzieniewicze to Arkhangelsk, his father deported from Grajewo to Kurgan in central Asia. Both fled the Soviet Union for Iran during the Anders' „amnesty”. Julia found herself in a refugee camp in British Rhodesia, while Piotr fought at Monte Cassino. Piotr eventually settled in Northumberland because of the availability of work in a local mine. Both their children were born in a converted barracks used during World War II by a local British army garrison. The Suleks would remain in such provisional quarters until they settled in their first real house in 1958.

Antoni exhibited interest in and talent for painting from a young age, a passion (some might say obsession) that remained with him throughout his brief life. Educated in local schools, he took some post-secondary art classes but consciously chose not to follow the instructions, insisting he wanted to paint, not be told by others how to paint. Sulek's life always remained on the margins: financially precarious, socially somewhat isolated, artistically mostly unknown. In 1970s Britain, the „painters” qualifying for state support put paint to walls, not canvasses: the artist's efforts to obtain social welfare failed. Sulek was a complicated character, a loner without many close relationships, often appearing unkempt and haggard. Artistically, he benefited from a small group of gallery owners and others who recognized his talent and encouraged him to pursue his own path, even as Sulek resisted efforts to channel those talents into more lucrative but less artistically rewarding regional landscape painting, for which he might have had a local market.

Sulek's subjects run a wide gamut, from Polish history, landscapes, and heroes to portraits of composers and authors to sketches of Lublin churches to space exploration. His styles range from realist albeit adapted landscapes („Lublin Skyline”) to abstract („Sketch of Three Soldiers”). His impoverishment contributed to the sheer variety of his media: proof of the maxim *Polak potrafi*, Sulek painted on whatever he could lay hands on—paper, old posters, wallpaper, cereal boxes, discarded phonograph albums—and with whatever he had at hand, be it watercolor, oil, pen and paper house paint, or colored markers. Those limits notwithstanding, Sulek produced at least 2,000 paintings. One must add „at least,” because Sulek gave away paintings, either out of friendship or to get a few pounds to buy artistic supplies. His work may be hanging unrecognized in British homes.

According to Hansen's Law, this son of immigrants should have been 110% British, ignoring his Polish roots. But Poland's history and especially its 20th century struggle for freedom is a prominent theme in his works. Although the son of Polish immigrants, Sulek first visited Poland when he was 27. His travels largely coincided with the rise of *Solidarność* and the imposition of martial law. Indeed, Sulek's connection to his ancestral homeland was abruptly severed in 1983 when, during a visit to his uncle, Dr. Leon Antoni Sulek in Lublin, he was arrested for joining a *Solidarność* march. Released and given back his passport, he was ordered to leave the country the next day under a permanent visa ban.

Reflecting on the factors that could account for this patriotic *polskość*, Taylor points to Sulek's roots. Both of Sulek's parents belonged to that generation which paid dearly for its attachment to the reborn Polish state. As the son of a Polish soldier who fought for his country's freedom, only to find himself in permanent exile from a homeland under Communist subjugation, Polish patriotism was in the air Sulek's family breathed. Taylor also opines that, as a Pole who came into adulthood in a relatively sedate Britain of the 1970s and 1980s, Sulek also felt the desire to support the renewed struggle for freedom that his contemporaries were waging in Poland through Solidarity.

Themes Polish permeate Sulek's work. His portraits include Marshal Piłsudski, General Anders, Major Sucharski, and Father Popiełuszko. His sketches include Anders and Sikorski. He does a number of abstract paintings of Polish towns around 1977. His sketchbook from 1983 includes numerous Lublin scenes, including „Poczta”. „Arrest by ZOMO” is an oil painting of the event that shut Poland's door to him: Sulek would not live to see a free Third Republic. Other pen and ink sketches include „Brama Krakowska”, „Interior of Lublin Castle,” and „Warsaw Town Hall Ruins, 1944”. One particularly interesting 1980 painting is a blended skyline that includes Warsaw, Kraków, and Lublin. Paintings of Polish soldiers, of a Lancaster Bomber at an airfield, and one entitled „Stolen” (depicting a Soviet soldier stealing a chicken from a Grajewo farm) point to the influence his family's World War II history had on him.

Sulek died in 1988 amidst unclear circumstances, after having been brought to the hospital following his supposed collapse. He was diagnosed with liver failure; efforts to transplant an organ were futile. Taylor, whose own police career involved homicide investigations, opines that Sulek died from years of self-neglect, poor

nutrition, and possibly sucking on his paint brushes while working (paints in the 1960s and 1970s were still lead-based). Sulek does not appear to have been involved with alcohol.

Taylor began her research into Sulek's life after being exposed to some of his paintings, part of the renaissance of interest in his work that has emerged. In addition to this book, a website showcasing a fair selection of Sulek's works is now available: www.sulek-art.com.

Scholars of Polonia will find this book valuable in several ways. On a most basic level, it introduces readers to a fresh and hitherto unknown Polonian artist whose works include strong Polish motifs. But other issues raised in this book also call for further investigation.

American journalist Tom Brokaw once coined the term „the Greatest Generation” to apply to those Americans who grew up during the economic Depression of the 1930s and went on valiantly to fight and win the Second World War. This reviewer has long believed that the term „Greatest Generation” also applies to those Poles who grew up in the free Second Republic and became adults-in fact if not always according to the calendar-during World War II. Their sheer struggle for survival-be it in Nazi-occupied Poland or across the vast Gulag-coupled with their unrelenting fight for their country's freedom, earns them that title. But the fact is that so many of those Poles, unable to go home, became a transfusion of patriotic lifeblood revitalizing Polonia in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Britain. Having carried out what historian Anna Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann elsewhere called the „exile mission”, the struggle abroad for a free Poland, a most promising field for research would seem to be that generation's nationalist impact on its children. From the reviewer's own experience in the United States, many of the children of that *emigracja polityczna* followed Hansen's Law, wanting to be just plain old Americans, not necessarily Polish freedom fighters abroad. But, as this book shows, some did indeed imbue the ideals and carry on the struggle of their fathers. There may be many more tales in this area to tell.

At the same time, how did they carry on that struggle? In Antoni Sulek's case, it was through art. His weapon of choice, however, also made him misunderstood, in two ways. As Ingrid Taylor notes, on the one hand, the local British public that might have bought Sulek's paintings neither understood nor was particularly interested in his Polish themes: he might have been less of a starving artist if he sketched fewer „Lublin Castles” and more „Coldstream Castles”. On the other hand, Sulek's own family probably also hoped their son would get a „real job”, to support himself. The tensions in Polonian households between pursuing well-paying work (be it regularly paying blue collar work when it existed or even secure office work) versus employment whose compensation was more remote or elusive (be it professions lower paying professions like teaching, those requiring a bigger up-front investment like law, or riskier undertakings like art or music) is anecdotally known. That said, further study on job choice among Polonian immigrants in their new societies, its impact on cross-generational relations and upward social mobility deserves further study.

Lastly, while World War II ended for most Westerners in 1945, the lives of many Poles stranded in the West remained on hold throughout the 1950s. In her study, *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939-1956* [Ohio State UP, 2004], Anna Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann notes that many Poles remained in displaced persons camps in Germany into the mid-50s. The Suleks finally moved into a council home 12 years after Piotr arrived in Britain. There is a website dealing with the postwar Polish resettlement camps in the UK (<http://www.polishresettlementcampsintheuk.co.uk>) but clearly much more research can be done.

This book is also to be singled out for its generous selection of over 250 full page, mostly color reproductions of Sulek's works as well as photographs and excerpts from his letters.

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Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *Hollywood's War with Poland, 1939-1945*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky 2010, ss. 362.

The role of the visual media in relation to war is relatively new, and its effects still uncertain. Some claim that America lost the Vietnam War on the nightly news. Others maintain that democracies are uniquely handicapped when fighting a war, because the free flow of information and its impact on public morale is often not matched on the other side: the public quickly loses its fervor before pictures of coffins and body bags. Only a limited pool of reporters, for example, accompanied the British recapture of the Falklands in 1982 and the U.S. military intervention in Grenada in 1983.

Whatever the role and effects of visual media on contemporary warfare, its role during World War II was vastly different. The Second World War was fought before the age of television; visual images came via newsreels shown in theaters. In the pre-television era movie-going in America was a frequent, common, and popular pastime. In addition, Hollywood produced numerous films aimed at bolstering the Allied cause and rallying the American public. The Office of War Information (OWI) was Washington's liaison with Tinseltown.

How, then, did Hollywood portray Poland during World War II? Professor M.B.B. Biskupski, who holds the Blewas Endowed Chair in Polish History at Central Connecticut State University and author of this book answers: poorly, if at all. „A statistical survey of Hollywood films released between 1939 and 1945 provides some fascinating conclusions. Having analyzed the casts of approximately 400 movies [...] there are perhaps 20 portrayals intended to be Polish, 35 Italian, 40 Jewish, and 330