

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

Irish" (p. 188). Biskupski says „perhaps” because at least six or seven involve ambiguous „Eastern Europeans” about whom certain hints suggest they might be Polish.

Biskupski adds that those 20 portrayals are all uniformly negative and minor. The Polish Americans are all cowards or fools, long on ambition but short on qualifications, muscle power but hardly brain power. Poles are petty and self-interested, thinking they could manage Hitler but discovering they are outmaneuvered by him.

Why such images, especially when Poland was the reason World War II began? Biskupski argues for three causes: the communist orientation of many Hollywood writers and movie professionals; the politics of the Roosevelt Administration; and the Polish Jewish roots of many Hollywood producers. Each factor deserves attention.

The most important factor underlying the negative images of Poland, claims the author, was the fact that many Hollywood writers were communists or fellow travelers, for whom the Soviet Union represented an ideal and whose accession to the Allied camp represented a unique opportunity. To present Poland fairly would have raised the embarrassing question of the Nazi-Soviet Alliance of 1939. Biskupski insists this is why even after the USSR changed sides in the war that it was necessary to cast Poland and especially the Polish Government-in-Exile in a negative light in American films. Thus „To Be or Not to Be” portrays the autonomous Polish Underground, the largest civilian resistance in Europe, as a British „organization” (p. 86). „In Our Time” features a London shop girl, now married to a Pole, lecturing the Polish about the evils of collaborating with a visiting Nazi delegation. As Biskupski bitingly observes, „[...] the American audience is given a surrealist lesson in the geopolitics of the 1930s: the resolutely anti-appeasement British try desperately to alert the pro-Nazi Poles to the errors of their ways” (p. 91).

Polish Americans are likewise cast negatively. „Action in the North Atlantic” depicts Johnnie Pulaski (who happens to bear the name of the only foreign commander to die for America during its Revolution) as a coward, stupid enough to light cigarettes aboard a petroleum-filled ship (pp. 176-79). Winock in „Air Force” is an enlisted man who never shows the judgment needed to be the officer he thinks he ought to be (p. 172). In short, Poles and Polonians are generally absent: if they do appear, they are negative and unlikeable.

Biskupski in fact comments clearly on just how maladroit doing an honest film about fighting Poland would have been. „[...] [A] series of films showing a heroic resistance effort in Poland would have raised a host of awkward issues. Half of Poland was, after all, under Russian occupation. Moreover, the Soviets clearly coveted Polish territory and regarded the country as within their sphere of influence. It would have been difficult to celebrate Polish valor while celebrating the Soviet Union as a champion of democracy” (p. 74).

The second factor driving the portrayal of Poland in wartime Hollywood films was Roosevelt administration foreign policy, as propagated by the OWI. One must remember that the United States did not enter World War II in 1939 in solidarity with invaded Poland. Washington declared war only in late 1941, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. By that time, Stalin had broken with Hitler after Germany invaded the Soviet Union. In FDR’s calculations, Poland might have been a symbol but the USSR was the essential ally, whose military might was deemed

essential to winning the war. In such a worldview, Moscow needed to be presented positively, criticism muted. Eric Knight, one of the principal writers of the „Why We Fight” series, summarized his reaction to „Battle for Russia” in words that can describe the whole vision behind film portrayals of Soviet behavior: „Watchers feel that Russia is a hell of a swell country to be allied to. That’s important” (p. 152).

Thus, films like „Mission to Moscow” engage in the „glorification of Russia and the whitewashing of communism” (p. 135) even as Poland gets a side slap through a fictional insertion of the Soviets arresting a German spy crossing the USSR border with the comment „such incidents are frequent occurrences” (p. 137). „The North Star,” about Hitler’s invasion of the USSR, even opens on „the Polish border” (p. 144), notwithstanding the fact that in 1941 there was no Polish border, only the demarcation line between the German and Soviet zones of occupation in Poland, with the latter invasion conveniently unmentioned. „Song of Russia” is described as „panegyric” (p. 73).

The third factor Biskupski considers responsible for Hollywood’s depiction of Poland was, paradoxically, the family roots of many Jewish-American producers in partitioned Poland. He uses the Warner Brothers, a family that hailed from north of Warsaw in Russian-partitioned Poland, as his main illustration. Many families brought with them experiences of pogroms and anti-Semitism which, even if they originated in the policies of the partitioning power (e.g., Russia), came inevitably to be associated with the place (e.g., Poland). One observes a similar phenomenon today, when writers use the term „Polish concentration camps” even though they were Nazi camps implementing Nazi policy in occupied Poland. These memories, however, were further reinforced by the low-grade anti-Semitism that infected the Second Republic, particularly the latter years of the Sanacja regime. Commenting on Polish Catholic and Jewish émigré communities in the United States, Biskupski observes: „For Poles, the reborn homeland was a source of pride; for many Jewish Americans, especially those of Polish origins, it was a place of unpleasant memories which, once restored, had proven unfriendly to its minorities, including over 3 million Jews” (p. 214).

If Polish Jews in America were disinclined to remember Poland fondly because of past history, a further factor complicated the picture. Raising the issue of European anti-Semitism would inevitably have demanded a discussion of the Nazi persecution of European Jewry, a subject glaringly absent from Hollywood’s wartime repertoire. That lacuna, however, was no accident: Biskupski attributes it to „enormous pressure from the Roosevelt Administration, particularly the OWI, which did not want the issue of anti-Semitism emphasized in any discussion of the war. [...] Joseph I. Brien of the Production Code office reminded studios that anti-Semitism was popular in the United States as a hint that Jewish themes in films not be emphasized” (p. 217).

In summarizing his whole study, Biskupski is at pains to avoid any suggestion of a conscious, organized, and consistent campaign. He insists that „[c]ertainly there was no conspiracy against Poland or the Poles. Rather, what we notice is the creation of a climate of opinion, created by several mutually reinforcing factors” (p. 216). What were those factors? „Ignoring or minimizing Poland was a shared

goal of a number of overlapping interest groups. The Roosevelt Administration's OWI did not want Poland mentioned because it raised the issue of Soviet behavior during the war and its expansionist foreign policy, which made Washington's support for the Soviets an awkward public issue. The political Left had regarded Poland as a topic best forgotten ever since the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact. For many in the Hollywood Jewish community a film about Poland inevitably implied some discussion of German anti-Semitism, which it was under considerable pressure to avoid. [...] [There were therefore] many mutually reinforcing motives that explain [...] reluctance to raise Polish issues. If Poland could absolutely not be avoided, it was to be presented in a manner calculated to garner the least public sympathy. Poland was a dangerous topic for many powerful interests in wartime Hollywood" (p. 218).

This book is bound to be provocative and controversial, although in some ways it discusses but the tip of anti-Polonism in some American media and cultural circles. Separate studies could obviously be made of anti-Polish images in literature (e.g., Tennessee Williams' Stanley Kowalski) or the „Polish joke” on American television. Biskupski himself does not plan to return to this topic, though the field seems ripe for other researchers. Biskupski also told this reviewer that during a 2010 visit to Poland, he received some interest about a Polish translation of this book. Given his ability to tell his story with scholarly detail and popular appeal, such a book would no doubt garner interest. Special recognition goes to the University Press of Kentucky, which has a track record for publishing controversial books on Polish/Polonian topics.

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Stefan N e s t e r o w i c z, *Travel Notes: Visiting Polish Settlements in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas* [original title: *Notatki z podróży*], Trans. Elzbieta Szczepaniak McNeilly, Houston: Polish Genealogical Society of Texas 2007, pp. 150.

People love travelogues. Historical travelogues are especially important because they supply a window into everyday life in times long past. Those observations are sometimes so valuable that they make the book a classical insight on to a given moment in history. Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, based on his 1831 trip to the United States, remains to this day a primary source into the mindset of a new people, the Americans. Astolphe de Custine's *Russie en 1839*, the work of another Frenchman who visited Czarist Russia, is a similar classical statement of what makes that country tick.