

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.

Poles also wrote travelogues. Almost a generation before de Tocqueville, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz penned his *Podróże po Ameryce, 1797-1807*. But if Tocqueville and Niemcewicz give us perspectives on what life was like for American society in general, Stefan Nesterowicz gives us a view of what life was like for Polish immigrants in a corner of America with which they were seldom associated: the „Old Southwest.”

Americans today think of the „Southwest” as Arizona and New Mexico but, prior to the Civil War, the „Old Southwest” was Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi (just as the „Old Northwest” was Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois). Nesterowicz visited his countrymen in those three states and in Texas in 1909, as a reporter for the Toledo-based Polonian newspaper, *Echa z Ameryki*. The „Travel Notes” were originally translated into English by Marion Coleman and published by a small press in Connecticut in 1970. They are out-of-print. The Polish Genealogical Society of Texas commissioned a fresh translation.

The South Central states are hardly where one expects to find Poles. In none of those states except Texas do Poles even reach one percent of the population (in Texas it is 1.23%). That said, Poles have some historical associations with the region: the oldest mass immigration of Poles to America settled in Panna Maria, Texas, in 1854, and-believe it or not-there were schemes to create Polish colonies in Arkansas in the 19th century. These Polonian settlements might have been small, but they were historic.

In seven chapters, Nesterowicz recounts his long train rides throughout the region. Chapter one covers the trip from St. Louis through Arkansas to New Orleans. Chapter two focuses on New Orleans, with sidebars on Polish enclaves along the Gulf Coast (Dunbar, Louisiana and Biloxi, Mississippi). Chapters three through six deal in-depth with specific regions of Texas: Galveston-Houston, Central Texas, Fort Worth and the West, and San Antonio. (Nesterowicz describes thirty individual towns in Texas, including Panna Maria, „Kosciusko,” and „Cestohowa”). In chapter seven, Nesterowicz summarizes his travels and makes general observations.

Nesterowicz’s observations are particularly valuable because he was writing in a segregated South. Edward Kantowicz commented that Polish immigrants during the *emigracja za chlebem* generally avoided Southern cities because they would have to compete for the handful of industrial jobs with local blacks, who knew the lay of the land much better. Nesterowicz’s observations confirm that position, all the while exhibiting great sympathy for the South’s exploited blacks. („I replied: ‘Why did you bring them here against their will and then abuse them? Furthermore, thanks to the work of these disdained blacks, you grow rich’. ‘For a long time man tamed different animals for different purposes’, one answered, ‘without asking whether they liked it or not. He did the same with the black race, whenever he needed it for a purpose’” – p. 29). Anybody who wants to accuse the Polish of anti-Semitism should read this book, where Nesterowicz frequently praises Polish Jews he meets along the way, at times suggesting how Polish Christians might learn from them. Writing at a time when Poland was divided among three empires, Nesterowicz opined that „Bringing Poles and Jews closer would be beneficial for us. Accepting many of their virtues would correct our imperfections” (p. 105).

The author is also sensitive to the exploitation suffered by Poles, and reserves particular spleen for when Poles used their countrymen for their own ends. His description of the wretched conditions Poles endured in the Gulf Coast oyster industry is appalling. (Many Poles from Baltimore, he says, were lured South by promises of easy money). His comments on how Poles sometimes defrauded their fellow Poles by selling them poor land or housing them in stables (see his description of Marche, Arkansas, p. 10) only confirmed the old Latin adage, *homo homini lupus*.

Nesterowicz is far more impressed by self-sufficient Polish farmers. His reports always include comments of the quality of the land in particular places, the prices of local commodities, and how a farmer could build a more prosperous future for himself. Denying that he's „trying to convince people to settle in this state”, (p. 137) Nesterowicz adds that „[f]rom what one sees in Texas, one must state that the future of our immigration does not belong in cities or factory sites” (p.134). (He also suggested that the children of these first Texas settlers consider Mexico as a place where, „with time they may blaze new trails for our emigration” – p. 137). In almost every town he visited, Nesterowicz always commented on the local Polish parish and the self-sacrificing priests who served Polonia in these out-of-the-way places.

A delightful, easy-to-read travel narrative, this book is both a trip back in time as well as one across a region too often neglected when studying Polish-American history. Reviewing the book for *Polish American Studies*, John Radzilowski points out that old Polonian newspapers need to be tapped for such primary source material. Recommended.

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