



Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939-1944

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This book includes a short history of ZEGOTA, the underground government organisation working to save the Jews, and an annotated listing of many Poles executed by the Germans for trying to shelter and save Jews.

Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939-1944 Details

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Author : Richard C. Lukas

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Sarah says

I found it very informative. I had some difficulty with the details, but I've come away with a better understanding of the Polish situation during the German occupation of WWII.

Suzy says

A very compelling book. I am glad to be what really happened in Poland to the Polish people. Pretty shocking and surprising that a lot of this hasn't been known before. Something that the world should know about.

I have put it down for now but will continue to read a small amount at a time, it there is so much information, hard to take in one bite.

JShier JShier says

This is one of the better history books, presenting the situation much more honestly and openly. It is easier to read and is more objective than some.

I found this very informative and honest. It includes some photographs which give good insight into the plight of the population.

Still, though, there are important omissions and a student can't build a full picture without comprehensively reading around the subject. Like so many other books on this subject, it completely omits the key situations leading up to the war, leaving the reader to come to erroneous conclusions about who was ultimately responsible.

Ashley says

In some ways, I have mixed feelings about this book--but I feel like I should read the revised edition before making too firm a statement on it. It is certainly a valuable and interesting look at Polish responses to Nazi occupation--but I'll be curious to see what revisions have been made since this edition was published in 1986.

Czarny Pies says

This is an outstanding book about the six million Poles who died under the Nazi occupation. The six million break out as follows:

Jews (Yiddish and Polish Speaking) 3 million
Roman Catholics (Polish Speaking) 1.5 million
Greek Catholics (Ukrainian Speaking) 0.75 Million
Orthodox Catholics (Polish Speaking) 0.75 Million

Mr. Lukas does not address issue of the 0.5 million German speaking Lutheran civilians who also disappeared in 1944.

The reason for the Drang nach Osten was to eliminate Poles and thus free up land for German colonists. The concentration camps thus were first built and used to exterminate primarily Roman Catholics. The Greek Catholics and Orthodox Catholics were killed under other programs.

The Germans did not kill Jews in the camps until June 21, 1941 when they invaded Russia. After this point exterminating Jews became steadily a higher priority so that by 1944 only Jews were being exterminated.

The Nazis massacred the citizens of 170 towns for supporting the partisans over three years. Once the Russian army entered Polish territory, the Germans tried to round up and murder Young Polish males to prevent them from joining the Russian army.

Forgive me for participating in the rather distasteful statistical debate as to who suffered most from the endlosung. I encourage everyone to weep first for their own dead and then for dead of their companions in suffering.

All ethnic communities in Poland suffered during the Nazi Occupation. The Jews obviously lost the highest percentage of their population.

Since all the extermination (as opposed to work) camps were in Polish territory, Jews from all over Europe were sent to Poland to be liquidated. This considerably raises the Jewish percentage of death camp victims.

Jan Peczkis says

Though a Bit Dated, Still an Excellent Primer on the Forgotten Holocaust of Poles [Now Known as the Polokaust]

This work, written decades ago, still serves as an excellent, comprehensive introduction to this subject.

A more recent work on the Polokaust is Wojciech Materski POLSKA 1919-1945. The number of Poles who lost their lives at the hands of the Germans is not 1.5—2.0 million, but 4.4 million. Total Polish losses during WWII could be as high as 8 million.

AUTHOR LUKAS IS MORE OBJECTIVE THAN MANY OF HIS CRITICS

Historian Richard Lukas consistently presents both sides of the story. For this, he has been labeled a "Polish nationalist" or "apologist" of some sort. He clearly is not. For instance, he is critical of Polish disunity in the prewar government and in the Polish Government-in-Exile. He is candid about Polish-German collaboration, and the tactical errors of the Warsaw Uprising. He is unjustifiably harsh on the Polish-Underground NSZ.

AUTHOR LUKAS DOES NOT FIT THE STANDARD NARRATIVE ON THE HOLOCAUST, SO HE IS BESET WITH FALSE ACCUSATIONS

Most amazing of all is the assertion that Lukas equates the experiences of Jews and Poles. In actuality, Lukas recognizes the fact that the Nazis targeted the Jews for immediate and total annihilation. (e. g., p. 151). In contrast, the German genocide of Poles focused on the destruction of the intelligentsia, cultural genocide, etc. The total, or near-total, extermination of the Poles was to await the end of the war (pp. 4-5), with the "resettlement" provisions of GENERALPLAN OST possibly/probably being a euphemism for this extermination. [Recall that the extermination of Jews was also disguised as "resettlement".]

NO GERMAN FAVORS TO POLES OVER JEWS

Those much-mentioned "Poles who would be Germanized" represented only 3% of the Polish population of the Reich-annexed regions. (p. 24). Furthermore, in German eyes, they were not Poles. They were Germans who had become Polonized, and would now be re-Germanized.

GERMANS TRIED, BUT FAILED, TO SECURE A POLISH QUISLING

The no-Polish-Quisling-because-the-Germans-never-wanted-one argument (e. g., by Jan T. Gross) is fallacious. The Germans unsuccessfully approached Prince Janusz Radziwill, and others, as prospective Quislings. (pp. 111-112).

POLISH BETRAYERS OF JEWS WERE UNCOMMON

An Israeli study estimates that about 7,000 ordinary Poles collaborated with the Germans. (p. 117). [This comes out to a vanishing 1 in 4,000 ethnic Poles.]. As for the SZMALCOWNIKI, there were probably no more than about 1,000 in Warsaw. (pp. 250-251).

Contrary to oft-repeated accusations, the Polish Underground did systematically liquidate blackmailers of Jews, and, furthermore, was largely successful in ending their plague in some geographic areas of German-occupied Poland. (p. 119).

HOW MANY POLISH JEWS HAVE SURVIVED AS FUGITIVES?

The number of Jews who survived in German-occupied Poland is unknown. Figures of 40,000-50,000, and 100,000-120,000 (or more) have been quoted. (p. 149). Virtually all had depended on Polish help.

REBUTTING ATTEMPTS TO DISCOUNT POLISH OVERTURES TO JEWS

Lukas gingerly defends Bor Komorowski against the charge of his early Underground contacts with the Jews being postwar fabrications. (p. 173).

POLES CAN'T WIN. THEY ARE CONDEMNED WHEN THEY DO AND CONDEMNED WHEN THEY DON'T

Some (e. g. David Engel) have accused the Polish Government-in-Exile of playing down what it knew about Jewish deaths, possibly because of anti-Semitism. Ironical to this, an unnamed British official had asserted, in December 1942 [at which time most of Poland's Jews had already been murdered], that there was "no reliable evidence" that the Germans were exterminating the Jews, and that Poles were talking TOO MUCH

about Jewish deaths--in part to show that they were not anti-Semitic! (p. 160).

Go figure.

[HINT: Polonophobia is a prejudice. It is not rational.]

Meaghan says

Of course I was aware that the Poles suffered horribly during World War II and, as a nation, were the most victimized of all. I already knew that something like 20% of the population of Poland was killed during the war. But that doesn't mean I didn't learn a lot from Dr. Lukas's book. He covers World War II in Poland almost day by day -- though not in chronological order; each chapter focuses on a different aspect of the war (civilian attitudes towards the Germans, the Polish Underground, Poles and Jews, etc) instead. And he is able to enlighten the reader on Polish attitudes towards Jews without trying to either demonize or whitewash either side.

The Poles would best be described as feisty. Certainly they have a long history of resisting invasions from one direction or another (it's telling that the first line of their national anthem is "Poland is not yet lost"), and their defiant attitude can be seen throughout the book. The last chapter, describing the Warsaw Uprising, sounds like something out of a good novel -- one by Frederick Forsyth, say.

I will also note that this book is a work of superb scholarship with loads of notes and footnotes to back up Lukas's arguments.

Well done!

Ptj11 says

hgvgjfgj

Jacob says

This is a meticulously detailed history of the occupation of Poland by the Nazis during WWII. VERY detailed and informative while remaining highly readable. It is also highly objective, though it is not without appropriate subjective aspects. Saddening but necessary history. Highly recommended for all Poles as well as those who want a more complete picture of WWII, focusing on the plight of Poles. The plight of Jews in Poland is a prominent and detailed feature of this book as well, as discussion of the relations between Jews and Poles is discussed at length without neglecting the role of the Nazis to both of these groups. Overall, highly recommended.

Paul says

For me this was a trip into my family history and the little known story of how the Polish people were also systematically murdered by both the Nazis and Soviets during WW2.

It is an excellent record of what happened in Poland in addition to the murder of Jews that Poles were being killed at the same time.

I would recommend this for anyone with an interest in 20th Century European History.

FSU Alumni says

Richard C. Lukas (B.A. '57, M.A. '60, Ph.D. '63)

Simon says

It's good to see the hidden and forgotten genocides now coming to the fore in scholarship. The Holocaust was much bigger than most people believe, and the Nazis targeted many peoples for destruction. It is ironic that Poland is often seen as a tragic victim in WWII, but that the extermination policies are sometimes ignored in the process. This book is a great contribution to the growing scholarship on the question.

Wanda says

Poland lost 15-20% of her population during the war, the most of any country, and they came from all walks of life. These forgotten millions were murdered simply because they were born Polish. Very few people are aware of the fact that 3 million Polish gentiles were murdered by the Germans during World War II. Much of the 1939-1945 Polish history remains to be uncovered, such as the stories concerning resistance units, and the uprising of the Home Army and the suppression by the Soviets.

Lucas' historical volley "Forgotten Holocaust" is aimed at exposing a much overlooked part of WW II history, i.e. the suffering and wholesale slaughter of the Polish people. The tragedy of the Polish experience, is that it has been neglected and distorted by the West (which betrayed much of Eastern Europe at Yalta) and the suppression of this history by the Soviet puppet governments. The truth is beginning to trickle out, but archives are scant, some still being labeled as top secret (e.g. the SOE role in WW II resistance movements). In other cases only oral history survives, but those potential oral historians who are still alive are in their 80s and older. The search goes on in Poland with some alacrity to reconstruct many stories before they die. Lucas' main goal is to contrast the Polish gentile experience to the Polish Jewish one. The Polish experience was different than the Jewish one, in that Polish Jews were marked for immediate and total extermination while Poles were slaughtered a bit differently. Both were killed in large numbers.

What contrasted the Polish gentile experience was that the German genocide of Poles focused on the destruction of the intelligentsia and cultural genocide, while using the others as slaves to wait on those Germans who were resettled into what Hitler viewed as rightfully belonging to Germany (east of the Molotov Ribbentrop line). The total, or near-total, extermination of the Poles was to await the end of the war. An interesting part of the book deals with a different kind of Holocaust, the destruction of families. Polish

children who would be Germanized, because of their blond hair and blue eyes, represented about 3% of the Polish population of the Reich-annexed regions and were ripped from their families to be placed in German foster homes and orphanages. According to German crazy ideology, these were not Poles; they were Germans who had become Polonized, and would now be re-Germanized.

The book pays scant attention to the Warsaw Uprising, although to be fair, the intent is not to provide a blow-by-blow account of those tragic 63 days. I did find some interesting material herein about weapons stockpiles held by the Home Army.

What was fascinating to me was Luccas' description of the underground state. Absolutely extraordinary. All of those thousands and thousands of patriotic Poles running schools, universities, a justice system, cultural and journalism activities under the very noses of the Gestapo in an attempt to keep their country, history and culture alive. Recall that the Germans were trying to do away completely with Polish culture during their occupation; Poles were not considered worthy of education past elementary school and they could not speak their own language (under penalty of prison or death). I came away with an intense appreciation for the tenacity and courage of a peoples who said "Hell no." It is no accident that the Polish national anthem begins with "Jeszcze Polska nie zgin??a" (Poland is not yet lost). This is a country that takes its spirit to heart. Moreover, to think of the unity in preserving this vast underground state when at any minute there could have been a wholesale slaughter of its thousands of citizens is an extraordinary feat and one that has not been seen in any country. Much is made of the French underground and resistance, but it must be remembered that the French were divided. Their Vichy government were Nazi collaborators. Whereas the Poles refused to engage in any Quisling activity, although as Lucas points out Germans unsuccessfully approached Prince Janusz Radziwill, and others, as prospective Quislings. BTW, I did not know the meaning of the word quisling before reading this book. So I improved my vocabulary!

If I have one criticism of the book, which is very well written and footnoted, it is that Lucas drops words that he assumes we should know – e.g. numerus clausus, philo-Semite. I confess that I think that I have a very good grasp of words, but I found myself consulting google frequently. It would have been nice to put in parentheses what these words mean – at least the first time that they are used.

Finally, as one brick in the building of my understanding of all things Polish, this book gave me a great deal of food for thought. What is it about the Poles that in WW II TWO powers tried to destroy the Polish culture and peoples? There was a double tragedy in this time of their history when one realizes that in addition to wholesale slaughter by Nazis, hundreds of thousands of Poles were deported by the Communist Soviets between 1939 and 1941. Most (including most of my father's family) died. The Katyn massacres represented Stalin's effort to exterminate Polish intelligentsia. Perhaps the answer lies in the Poles' extraordinary tenacity that is anathema to totalitarianism that always seeks to destroy democracy and independent thought.
