

Review: Ted Kazmierski, *Then Nothing Will Fail: An Autobiographical Account of Survival in Poland Under the Nazi and Soviet Occupation*, Verand Press, Sydney, NSW, 1998

Pages: 202

Important WWII Testimony of Nazism and Communism

Obviously, there is special insight into the Polish theatre of war and occupation, with a damning account of cruel Nazis and SS brutalising the Poles. This important eyewitness testimony mitigates against historical revisionism of the Nazis as a benevolent, liberating force as it shows they were brutal to *anyone* outside their race; all were *untermenschen* and worthy of beatings or death for minor infringements.

The Nazi zeitgeist is quite confronting; the author recounts how an old family friend who had become an SS officer suddenly behaved with extreme cruelty towards them, bereft of humanity.

The post-war section on the Soviet occupation is brief, most likely since the author managed to escape to West Germany. Nevertheless, the Soviets murdered thousands of Poles and sought to destroy the country just as the Nazis making it a comparison between two evils.

Prologue: The End Was Coming (pp. 9-15)

“If you believe in God – no harm will come to you ... I tried, but I could no longer believe ... my father ... He believed in God and God had not protected him. How could I expect God to protect Hilary and me from these two devils in their black uniforms?” [p13]

“How different Preus was now ... in his black SS uniform.” [p14]

I) Our Last Happy Winter (pp. 16-24)

Prussia annexed Poland in 1898 and Polish was banned. It was liberated in 1918 but had to fight the Red Army in the east.

“Sylwester” was New Year’s Eve.

II) A Taboo Subject (pp. 25-32)

Post-WWI inflation caused many to keep their assets in cash [?] at home.

III) Praying for His Intentions (pp. 33-42)

Hitler had annexed Austria, Sudetenland, and Czechoslovakia.

“At evening prayers ... he [our father] would ask Our Blessed Lady to save Poland from destruction.”

“My father ... impressed upon me ... never leave the house without making the Sign of the Cross.”

All men up to 45 were called up immediately for war.

Five German armies had attacked Poland; warnings were given Germans were strafing refugees on the road.

England and France declared war on Germany on the third day.

IV) The Saddest News (pp. 43-51)

All Poles had to hand in their wirelesses within 24 hours; if not they could be executed.

V) The Threat of Death – Our Last Prayers (pp. 52-69)

The Russians attacked from the east on September 17 while the Polish army was fighting the Germans in the West.

SS Officer: “I’ll give your boy one week to learn and speak German ... if he cannot ... he will be removed ... On German property and ... territory only German will be spoken. Also, as from now, the picture of the Fuhrer shall be displayed in a prominent place in your home.” [p66]

VI) Forced Evacuation (pp. 70-77)

Curfew was 22:00.

Preus had taken part in many SS atrocities before he was killed on the eastern front.

A year after Polish occupation oppression under the Nazi occupation got steadily worse.

Balkandeutsche were new settlers; Germans who had lived in the Balkans since the 19thC. The Germans would turn over Polish property to them.

VII) Clandestine Activities (pp. 78-83)

VIII) 'Fixing' a Pole (pp. 84-90)

Poles had to wear a white stripe on their bicycles.

The *Ostdeutscher Beobachter* (East German Observer) extolled the Germans to destroy the Polish spirit, particularly the Catholic faith.

IX) 'What Is it About You That Makes All This Possible?' (pp. 91-107)

The Soviets deported east Polish to the Urals and beyond Siberia.

Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa on 22/6/1941.

The Hitler Jugend were not required to answer for anything they did to Poles.

“My father could see ... Germans could not continue to allow a Pole ... in charge of a production facility on his own property.”

X) My First Assignment (pp. 108-114)

XI) Ugly Twist – A True Aryan (pp. 115-122)

Poles had the rights of stray dogs, and had to wait to enter buses for all Germans to be seated first.

Every Pole is named after a saint and so has a feast day.

Gramophones were made illegal due to their ability to be used as propaganda.

XII) The Power Above Us (pp. 123-136)

Since Ted's mother was born near Berlin, they gave her 80%. His father got 85% for being born on German soil and serving in WWI in the Prussian army. Ted was therefore offered a Volkdeutscher Category 3 citizenship document.

“If you don't sign here now that will mean the death sentence.”

XIII) My Mother at the Gestapo Headquarters (pp. 137-152)

XIV) No Pride – The Hallmark of Vermin (pp. 153-158)

The SS had made gloves from the skin of Polish women!

XV) The Plant Is on Fire “We Cannot Stop Doing What We Are Doing” (pp. 159-169)

In 1944, Germany adopted a scorched earth policy.

XVI) Despair Growing – The Decline of the Reich (pp. 170-182)

In late 1943, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin met at Tehran.

“Hitler's National Socialism and Stalin's Communism have a lot in common. They both want to destroy Christianity ... both have a social system ... conducted by the state dominated by a self-perpetuating totalitarian party.” [p171]

XVII) The Russians Waste no Time (pp. 183-191)

“Russia till has the same system you left behind in 1920 ... the Stalinist system has destroyed their humanity.” [p184]

XVIII) The reign of the Devil (pp. 192-198)

Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin signed the Yalta agreement on 12 February giving Poland to the Soviets.

“The Soviets will try to introduce ... social organisation in which all economic activity is conducted by a totalitarian state ... They will ... take our possessions and property, to destroy all private industry ... to put an end to our ... Christian faith.”

XIX) The Light at the End of the Tunnel (pp. 199-202)

Stalin died 5/3/1953, before which thousands of Poles had been killed or disappeared.