

**WWII behind closed doors from 6**

Russian warlord himself filled the champagne glasses of German diplomats, and proposed a toast: "Because I know how much the German people love their Führer, I want to drink to his health!" Rees suggests that, if Hitler had sought active military assistance from Stalin, this might have been forthcoming. In June 1941, when the German ambassador called on Molotov to deliver a declaration of war, the shocked Soviet foreign minister said: "Surely we haven't deserved this."

The book discusses at length Britain's dealings with Russia over Poland, noting that the government was much less robust than is sometimes thought about Polish territorial integrity. Poland's borders, shrugged the Foreign Office as early as 1939, were "fluid". After initial hesitation, both Churchill and Roosevelt became astonishingly willing to redefine them in Russia's favour, to discourage Stalin from seeking a separate peace with Hitler.

Rees rehearses the shocking saga of Stalin's 1939-40 massacres of the Polish elite, now believed to total 21,857 victims, in addition to 300,000 deported to the Gulag. Later, when Poland's General Anders charged Stalin with the fate of several thousand Poles unaccounted for, and presumed to be held in captivity somewhere in the Soviet Union, Stalin replied blandly: "That is impossible. They have escaped." The incredulous Anders demanded, where to? "Well," shrugged Stalin, "to Manchuria."

Owen O'Malley, the British ambassador to Poland's exiled government in London, wrote a brilliant dispatch, discussing the government's brutal decision to suppress knowledge of the Polish massacres in the interests of the vital Soviet alliance: "In handling the publicity side of the affair... we have been obliged to appear to distort the normal and healthy operations of our intellectual and moral judgments; we have been obliged to give undue prominence to the tactlessness or impulsiveness of the Poles, to restrain the Poles from putting their case clearly before the public, to discourage an attempt by the public and the press to probe the ugly story to the bottom."

Roosevelt, whose relations with Churchill were much less cordial than popular myth suggested, was never much interested in eastern Europe, or Poland in particular. He was delighted by Stalin's willingness to support his cherished plan to create the United Nations, and went far beyond the demands of diplomacy in praising the Soviet leader. "I may say that I got along fine with Marshal Stalin," he told America in a 1943 Christmas Eve broadcast, following the "Big Three's" Tehran summit. "He is a man who combines a tremendous relentless determination with stalwart good humour. I believe he is truly representative of the heart and soul of Russia; and I believe that we are going to get along very well with him and the Russian people - very well indeed."

Rees argues that, given Russia's desperate need for American supplies and later desire for its cash, Roosevelt could have applied far more pressure to the Soviet Union about, for instance, Poland. And if Britain's prime minister was more alive to the perils of Soviet expansionism, he made the same mistake as the US president, in supposing that he might forge an emotional connection with Stalin.

Among the book's considerable anecdotal evidence from Russians and Poles about their war experiences are accounts of relatively unfamiliar horrors, such as the Red Army's February 1945 storming of Budapest. An orgy of rape took place, which anticipated later events in Berlin. In one incident, recounted by a Hungarian named Ivan Polez, Russian soldiers found a 17-year-old maid in a cellar crowded with terrified people. "Please help me! Help me," the girl cried,

as they dragged her forward. Polez said: "Everyone was frozen - stone. This was a terrible moment". And then the owner of the house, a retired military officer, started to talk to the maid. He said: "Please make this sacrifice for the sake of the country. And with this you will be able to save the other women here who will never forget this." The Russians dragged the girl upstairs. Later, she was thrown back into the cellar, sobbing and appallingly injured. The others in the cellar, in Polez's words, "didn't even dare to look at her". An estimated 50,000 Hungarian women were raped in Budapest.

The coherence of the narrative suffers a little from addressing so wide a subject in episodic fashion. But Rees is vastly well informed about the second world war. His judgments can seldom be faulted. It is foolish to expect revelations about this period from any of us who write about it today, because almost all sensational claims prove nonsense. But there are many surprises here, and much good detail.

Rees's principal message is that the allied cause was inescapably and deeply compromised by association with the bloodstained Soviets, morally indistinguishable from the Nazis. The West had no alternative save to make common cause with Stalin. The Soviets paid the blood price necessary to defeat Hitler's legions. Had they not done so, British and American soldiers might have filled cemeteries as large as those of the first world war. The relationship between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill makes an ugly story, and Rees tells it extraordinarily well. □

**President Kaczyński from 4**

then I walked over to President Saakashvili, we walked back slowly and changed cars. I don't think we were in any danger," Mr Kaczyński said.

The Russian foreign ministry has denied that the incident took place. "This is a real provocation. This is not for the first time when such things are happening: they stage everything themselves and then accuse the Russian or Ossetian sides," Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov told Interfax.

A South Ossetian security chief, Boris Attojev, told Russian newswire ITAR-TASS that his soldiers stopped the Polish-Georgian convoy and explained that the border was closed, after which the motorcade left peacefully.

The Polish press questioned Mr Kaczyński and Mr Saakashvili whether the incident had been staged, noting that a bus full of reporters was sent to the head of the convoy just before it arrived at the checkpoint.

"OSCE observers enter this district. And the Russians don't usually do this [open fire]," Mr Saakashvili explained.

President Kaczyński was in Georgia to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Rose Revolution, which brought down the pro-Russian government of Eduard Shevardnadze and installed Mr Saakashvili.

Mr Kaczyński opposes the EU's decision to resume partnership treaty talks with Russia despite the Russian occupation of Akhalkori, which was supposed to be back under Georgian control under an EU-brokered ceasefire.

The Polish government agreed to the EU-Russia talks however, and has in the past criticised President's Kaczyński's adventurism regarding the Georgia conflict.

The Rose Revolution celebrations were muted this year compared to previous festivals, with President Saakashvili's popularity having fallen since the war. □

**Warsaw Man from 8**

actually offered the post of prime minister. It is debatable whether that approximates Ms Palin's political career, but you can check whether the film is available with [www.polartcenter.com](http://www.polartcenter.com) or [www.polart.com](http://www.polart.com)

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Q: People around here think I'm crazy when I tell them about a Polish chocolate candy bar in the shape of a round maybe 9-inch cake. Someone once gave me one years ago, but I forgot what it was called. I think it said something like Wilkowski on the label. Do you know what I'm talking about?

DONNA WÓJCIK, Sterling Heights, MI

A: You probably mean Torcik Wedlowski, a chocolate-covered wafer torte that indeed might remind some Americans of a candy bar. They are available in your area at Polish Market on Maple Road at Dequindre.

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Q: I was born and raised in the UK (United Kingdom-RS) and my grandmother was Polish.

As I grew up my grandmother would make something I knew as Vishnufka and it has been a family recipe all of my life. However the juice we used to use was called Frubi.

Can you tell me if this brand still exists? If not, do you know or recommend a suitable substitute?

MARK GREEN, e-mail: [greenmj@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:greenmj@hotmail.co.uk)

A: I'm afraid I'm not familiar with Frubi. Perhaps it was only marketed in the UK. To make Wiśniówka (Polish cherry cordial) I suggest using Polish imported Morello cherry syrup. If not available, try Sauerkirch syrup from one of the German-speaking countries. Depending on the potency desired, use 50-50 with 100 proof vodka for a mild ladies' drink, to one part syrup to 3-4 parts vodka for a more potent tiple. The longer it stands in a dark cool place, the smoother it gets!

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Q: I think the oldest Polish Roman Catholic Church in the USA is located in Panna Maria, Texas, founded by 100 Polish families who came to Texas in 1854. The second oldest Polish St. Stanislaus Church which is located in Bandera, Texas. It was founded 6 weeks after the Panna Maria church in 1855. Where does St. Albertus Church, Detroit, MI fit in? As you know, St. Albertus Church was founded in 1872.

TOM SOSNOWSKI, 67 W. Columbia Ave, Pontiac, MI 48340; [tomsopa@yahoo.com](mailto:tomsopa@yahoo.com)

A: Some claim that Parisville, MI (in the Thumb) as the oldest Polish settlement in America, who church predated that of Panna Maria by several years. To check and compare visit:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~atpc/polonia/usa/plam-parisville.html>

St. Albertus is the oldest Polish parish in the Detroit area.

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Q: We are trying to reach an artist named Magdalena Hniedziewicz who does small paintings of Madonnas on glass. Google lists an art critic and writer by the same name who lives in Warsaw. Can you confirm if it is the same person?

RAYMOND BITTNER, Polish Art Center, 9539 Jos. Campau \* Hamtramck, Michigan 48212; phone: 1-888-619-9771 toll free; [www.polartcenter.com](http://www.polartcenter.com)

A: Yes, that is the party you're looking for. Magdalena Hniedziewicz may be e-mailed at: [hniedziewicz@gazeta.pl](mailto:hniedziewicz@gazeta.pl)

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Q: I have been researching my Polish family tree. I know my gramp left his mother and younger sister in Poland while he worked at a labour camp in Russia. Are there any death books for the victims of WW2? My grandfather belonged to Orthodox church in Bończa and I'm finding loads of victims names who were Jews but just want to know if there is any

record of my great grandmother, Zofia Pilipczuk. How can I find out if she was sent to a concentration camp?

TESSA PILIPCZUK, Gloucestershire, England

A: You might e-mail [indeks@karta.org.pl](mailto:indeks@karta.org.pl) to contact an organization that researches the fate of Poles victimized by the Soviets during the war. On the other hand, check out [www.fnp.pl](http://www.fnp.pl) for an organization that assists victims and Nazi atrocities and their families. Another option is the Polish Red Cross Tracing Service:

[www.wpck.org.pl/poszukiwania/tracing.service@pcl.org.pl](http://www.wpck.org.pl/poszukiwania/tracing.service@pcl.org.pl)

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Q: You once listed an outfit in Chicago that can deliver a hot Polish seven-course gourmet dinner to your doorstep. I would like to surprise my folks on their wedding anniversary with the kind of food they love but I am at a loss to prepare. Please do not use my name, otherwise it won't be a surprise.

J.S., Sarasota, FL (name and address withheld on request)

A: The name of the company is Polana. The food they deliver to Florida probably won't be hot and will have to be warmed up, but they do have a wide selection of items available. Contact them at: 1-888-765-2621 (toll-free) or visit [www.polana.com](http://www.polana.com)

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Q: Does Scieszka sound like a Polish surname? How do you say great-grandmother in Polish? What is the origin of city chicken?

DON SAMULL, Dearborn, MI, e-mail [dsamull@aol.com](mailto:dsamull@aol.com)

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A: The Polish word for great-grandmother is "prababka" or, endearingly, "prababcia". Scieszka is definitely a Polish surname whose original spelling is Ścieżka and means path or byway. It was probably misspelled by some semi-literate priest of village scribe centuries ago and that version stuck. Chicken was expensive and scarce during the Depression and World War II, so skewered cubed pork and veal, breaded, fried and baked was a cheaper, but very tasty substitute. Nobody knows why this dish is associated with Poles, especially in the Detroit area. Probably it was one of those freak occurrences - someone tasted them somewhere, liked them, prepared them at home for guests and it caught on. □

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**Wants to see Oprah from 10**

challenge," Mr. Dzienniak explained.

"I'm always trying. I'm always trying. If you don't try, you never know."

Mr. Dzienniak said people can help out without reaching deep into their pockets.

"If somebody doesn't have any money and want to support this project, there is another way to support it," Mr. Dzienniak said.

"A person may write to Oprah and said they heard about this man from Poland who is trying to get to her and ask her for help. It's not so hard to write a letter or e-mail. You have to act."

And if does get to see Oprah, not only will Mr. Dzienniak tell her of his mission but also ask her to bestow upon him another challenge, as well as invite her to his wedding in Poland next year. □