

(Read now) I saw the new Poland

## I saw the new Poland

*Anna Louise Strong*

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**Anna Louise Strong : I saw the new Poland** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised I saw the new Poland:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Post-WWII Poland Retains Nazi Trauma; Why Poles Exploited Jews. Rest is Communist PropagandaBy Jan PeczkisThe only redeeming value of this post-WWII book [Review based on original 1946 edition] is its description of the aftereffects of the genocidal Nazi German terror against the Ukraine and Poland. She comments: "We went a long way around, by Kiev. A thousand miles of devastated fields, charred villages, gaunt skeleton towns, wrecked bridges, burned railway stations. There is nothing resembling this in Western Europe, where the Germans to some extent observed the so-called laws of war. In all Slav lands they pursued a policy of national extermination, driving off cattle, deporting inhabitants, and burning what was left behind." (pp. 14-15).The author drove near Praga, Warsaw's eastern part. She observed that: "The Germans had also blown up most of Wedel, the world-known candy concern which formerly sold confections in Paris and exhibited at the World's Fair in New York." (p. 130).Many children were illiterate because of the Nazis having closed the schools. (e. g., p. 70, 115). The Germans had murdered the Polish priests, except for those few who taught according to Nazi precepts, or who hid in time. (p. 115).The Nazis had confiscated all but six known microscopes in all of Lublin. (pp. 73). Requests, from the American Red Cross for university equipment, took precedence over that for much-needed food, clothing, etc. for this reason: "'Can't they realize'--it was the only time Dr. Rabe spoke with passion--'that the mental and spiritual life of Poland is at stake? The Nazis have murdered our physicians and scientists. Unless we can at once make use of those we have left and multiply their brains in the next generation, the Nazi aim of destroying Polish culture will succeed.'" (p. 73).There were countless challenges. Lacking books and other essentials, "'Our professors must teach many things

from memory...Especially when your memory is broken by five years during which Polish intellectuals lived the lives of hunted beasts." (p. 74). On another subject, the author describes the Mazurs (Masurian people). They are depicted as a Slavic people who had colonized East Prussia centuries before the Teutonic Knights, and now comprised one-third of the population of East Prussia. According to Strong, the Mazurs claimed to have been original Polish-speakers who had been forcibly Germanized in recent generations, and, despite this, were not treated as genuine Germans by the Nazis. Now did not want to be Germans any more. (p. 43). [How much of this was opportunistic--to avoid expulsion?] Strong serves the reader a much sanitized version of Communism in Poland. She is deafeningly silent about the Communist terror going on at the time. While she does not extol Communism per se, she performs the role of the Communist propagandist by demonizing everything and everyone who is anti-Communist. There is the usual rhetoric about wealthy Polish feudal landowners, even accusing them of "instigating aggression" against the USSR in 1920. She trashes the pre-WWII Polish government, and falsely labels General Beck a fascist. (p. 258). Predictably, she repeats the same smear against the anti-Communist NSZ, also parroting the accusation that they killed Jews. (p. 77, 125). She whitewashes the Red betrayal of the Warsaw Uprising by invoking the laughable charge that Bor Komorowski was at fault for not attempting to communicate with the Soviet armed forces. The author unwittingly corrected some of the distortions of in-war and postwar events by the likes of Jan T. Gross in his *FEAR and GOLDEN HARVESTS*, as shown in the remaining paragraphs of my review: To begin with, Strong undermines the contention of the NSZ [also the AK] being the ones responsible for killing fugitive Jews. She quotes Colonel Victor Grosz, who says: "There is no unified Home Army. Widespread, disciplined unity is hard to maintain in underground groups. There were all kinds of underground groups in occupied Poland. Some were just men who took to the woods for safety and lived by loot; other groups had political convictions." (p. 124). The author quotes a "political officer" who elaborates on the brutalizing effects of the German occupation and inadvertently explains why there were Polish SZMALCOWNIKI (blackmailers of fugitive Jews): "Drunkenness, cheating, graft, thieving, speculation grew rife under the occupation. Suppressed people try to forget or to beat the game illegally. Besides, when rulers insist for five years that you are 'inferior,' it breaks normal self-respect." (p. 115). She quotes Marian Potopczyk, the new president of the Rada, who also focuses on the German occupation, and inadvertently accounts for Polish "greed" relative to Jewish property. He comments: "But the breaking of the buildings is nothing to the breaking they [Germans] did to the people... We were people who hid in cellars. We are people who were slaves for five years. How do slaves live? Some by bribing or cheating their masters, some by selling the loot from murdered Jews, by selling their neighbors..." (p. 225). Finally, ironic to Jan T. Gross' selective preoccupation about Poles acquiring post-Jewish properties, this was an all-around occurrence. For instance, the Red Army requisitioned a large set of post-Jewish shops in Lublin for itself. (p. 216).

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