

Dear Friends,

I had a plan in mind to fly to Helsinki, in Finland, and then slither down through the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), ending with a short visit to Warsaw. To be honest, one of the main attractions of this plan was that it would let me add five new countries to my life list in a relatively short and direct progress. So I did my research, and plotted it out, and as I was going to end in Warsaw e-mailed my friend Alfred Znamierowski (right), a noted scholar and a genius heraldic artist¹, saying Alfred, I'm going to be in



Warsaw and I'd like to see you. He wrote back that he no longer lived in Warsaw but in a small village near the Czech border, but that he was holding a heraldic conference in the nearby city of Cieszyn at the end of September, and would I like to come? So I changed my plans, and on September 25 flew from San Francisco to the evil gleaming horror of the Frankfurt Airport, and then on to Kraków in southern Poland (country #70!). Left: the famous White Eagle arms of Poland.

I was only in Kraków (the *w* is pronounced like an *f*) this time for an afternoon and a night, just long enough to catch my breath, get some sleep, put a local card into my European cell phone, and pick up my car. But even on this first brief visit Kraków was charming, with a lovely old European city center (*Stare Miasto*, meaning *Old Town*). I wandered into the Town Square (*Rynek* in Polish) and heard the *hejnał*, a bugle call that has been played from the tower of a church there since 1241.² I had a good dinner, and a sound sleep thanks to St. Ambien, patron of jetlag. In the morning I spent a quiet hour in the hotel courtyard reading William Shawcross' biography of the Queen Mother on my Kindle; her girlish letters about the tedious round of debutante parties in 1922 were just the restful distraction I needed. Then the lady came with my car, I hooked up my trusty GPS (loaded with maps of Eastern Europe), and set off for Cieszyn.

It was a dreary ride to Cieszyn (pronounced CHESH-in) on a boring Polish highway clogged with vans, lanes closed for road works; high sound-buffering panels on both sides made me feel like a rat in a maze. But I needed to get to Cieszyn in time to register for the conference, so I pressed on rather than explore more bucolic paths, for which (I thought) there would be time later. The conference was held at a local college and GPS brought me right to the door of the student hostel where we were billeted. I wheezed and

¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Znamierowski.

² The bugle call ends abruptly to recall the killing of the original trumpeter by a Tatar arrow. Now the call is played by a city fireman. For more on the *hejnał*, and a link to a recording, see <http://www.krakow-info.com/hejnal.htm>.

staggered up the stairs and checked into a student dormitory room – very spare, but adequate for the purpose.

Dinner was at a restaurant in the lovely town square – almost no one spoke English, but the duck in orange sauce was delicious. Breakfast (included with the room) was laid on in the student café – a good Polish spread including salads I had never seen before, and sweetened couscous (a relic of the little-known Polish North African colonial empire).³ Pots of hot tea, but no cold water (*zimna woda*).

The conference was interesting in a scholarly way. Another middle-aged gray-haired white male crowd like the county collectors – how do I get involved with such people? Most of those present did not speak English, or at any rate not well; Slavic languages were the default setting, followed by German. I was the only registrant from the United States – indeed I was the only one not from Europe, and one of only four (with one each from France, Spain and Germany) not from *Eastern* Europe. The meeting-hall was hung with flags from all the participants’ countries, and I was glad to see the Stars and Stripes right up front next to the yellow-and-blue bicolor of Ukraine. Someone came up to me and gave me a Slovakian armorial calendar, saying *America! Obama!* I agreed completely.

Alfred’s conference was thoughtfully planned, and simultaneous translation into English (through headphones) was a great help. As usual at these conferences, some of the lectures were interesting, and some were not all that interesting but had great pictures, and some could have been improved on both counts.⁴ But most of them provided useful information, although now a month later I don’t think I could recite exactly what it was. And there were lots of heraldic books and pamphlets for sale, including some in Macedonian (a new language for my collection), and I bought greedily. The star of the conference (other than Alfred himself), and the author of the best-delivered paper, was a young historian from Lithuania (right), delicate and graceful as a doe, who advises the president of her country on heraldic issues.



³ Just kidding about Polish North Africa. I don’t know why they gave us couscous.

⁴ Two of the best were “Thirty Years of Catalan Vexillology and Heraldry” and “The Reasons Behind the Russian Changes to the Polish Civic Arms in the 19th Century.” I know: not for everyone.



I skipped most of the field trip to the Museum of Polish Silesia, but spent a little time exploring Cieszyn, loitering appreciatively in the town square and ogling the fine old buildings and medieval streets.⁵ Its arms, at left, show a fanciful version of the ancient fortifications of the town, floating equally fancifully on open water.⁶ The Town Hall had an opulent



armorially decorated council chamber (shown at right, from the chamber, the antlered fish arms of the Radecki).

I skipped the final banquet, too, as I usually do at these gatherings. It was difficult and isolating being unable to speak or understand the Slavic languages everyone else was speaking – either I had to sit silent and just listen to what I could not understand, or people had to speak to me in English, which was awkward for them and shut out almost everyone else. I try hard not to be the Ugly American who doesn't do the parley-voo, but in Slavland I cannot help it. People talk Slavic around me and I don't even know what kind – is that Polish or Czech or just what? It wouldn't matter if I did know – I couldn't respond even if I understood. I couldn't even remember the Polish for *thank you*.⁷

After the conference I spent part of the next day with Alfred in his home in a lovely spot in the Silesian countryside. I expected to find a studio full of paintbrushes and art supplies, but none of that – for years now Alfred has made his images on the computer using a program called CorelDraw. This was a great discovery for me – I have long been frustrated that I could design coats of arms with great facility, but could not execute them because this facility stopped at my wrist, and my hand would not do what my brain had clearly in mind. If I could learn CorelDraw I could solve this problem and many projects would become possible. I resolved to look into this as soon as I got home.

After visiting Alfred I set off to my next destination, which was Auschwitz (Polish *Oświęcim*). Auschwitz is quite close to Kraków and to Cieszyn, and I had long intended to visit this place if it were ever within reach. I did not want to spend the night in Oświęcim, though – Yid, don't let the sun set on you here tonight – so I aimed for Pszczyna (pronounced pish-TCHI-na), the closest nearby town large enough to have a hotel that advertised on the Internet. Again I drove with grim determination along the

⁵ According to tradition Cieszyn was founded in 810 by three brothers, Bolko, Leszko and Cieszko, who named their settlement after the Polish phrase *cieszym się* [we're happy]. This story may be doubted.

⁶ This is curious because Cieszyn is not on the open water, but on the River Ozla, a not particularly mighty tributary of the Oder. The arms are derived from the medieval city seal.

⁷ It is *dziękuję*, pronounced dzhen-KOO-ye. The little hook below the *e* is called an *ogonek*, and indicates an *m* or *n* sound, except sometimes it doesn't.

crowded Polish highways GPS selected as the fastest route, and which might perhaps become fast some day when the road works are done and the trucks get where they're going. But I was not in it for the scenery, not yet – first the conference and then the death camp, and *then* I would seek out the quiet rural byways.



Auschwitz is now in two parts: Auschwitz I, a relatively small place originally intended not as an extermination camp but for Polish prisoners, and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, a mile or so away, which is enormous and *was* purpose-built for extermination.⁸ I went to Auschwitz I first, not only because it was the first camp but because they require you to engage a guide if you get there after ten. I certainly didn't want a guide, so I got there as the doors opened at eight. Auschwitz I is now a small neat collection of trim brick buildings, looking from the outside like a somewhat condensed old New England college (above left).

There is little atmosphere of menace now on the outsides of these buildings, although the insides are grim enough. But next to one of the brick buildings is a reproduction of a



painting showing prisoners digging its foundations by hand in icy water under the German lash (above right). The crowded wooden triple-deck cot structures remain in one of the buildings. The three-building “infirmary,” closed to visitors when I was there, was used for medical experiments on prisoners. And the detention and torture cells in Block 11, and the Gestapo courtroom with the execution wall conveniently next door, still retain their stench of cruelty. The ARBEIT MACHT



FREI sign⁹ is still there (or maybe it is the replacement for the sign stolen a while ago), and so is the little stand nearby where a prisoner band was forced to play for

⁸ The German word is *Vernichtungslager*, meaning *camp for reducing to nothing*. At its height there were 48 sites in the Auschwitz complex.

⁹ Meaning *work will make you free*, which of course it didn't.

the work gangs going out under the sign. I wandered around for several hours, imagining as hard as I could what it must have been like there in *just an ordinary* German concentration camp, even before the extermination policy took hold. I was very glad to take a break in the cafeteria and get back to the Queen Mother.



Auschwitz II-Birkenau is quite different from Auschwitz I. Most of the buildings are gone now; the SS started to destroy the camp so no one would know what they were doing there, but had to flee from the advancing Russians before the job was done. Still, you can see from the existing buildings and the surviving chimneys how vast Birkenau was. And the famous Gate of Death is still there (above left; you can see the whole camp from the upstairs chamber), as is the railroad track leading through it to the famous siding. The siding (above right) survives too, where hearts were broken deliberately, gleefully, routinely, sadistically, day after day after day. The crematoria were blown up by the retreating Germans, but the ruins are still there, and also for one of them the runway leading into the building. But it was the siding where families were separated, some to be murdered at once and others to be worked to death first, that was the most powerful sight for me. That, and one boxcar left as an example of the hundreds of others, with stones placed on it in the Jewish manner as there is no tomb to place them on. And the sight of groups of visitors from Israel (some old enough to have been here before), many carrying Israeli flags, some draped in the flag as in a *tallis*. Fuck you, Hitler, we're still here!¹⁰



¹⁰ I myself am just old enough to have been destroyed as a baby in Birkenau. It is only due to the courage and initiative of my ancestors who left Poland when the Tsars still ruled that I was not. Uncounted cousins, descendants of my relatives who did not leave, almost all certainly perished at Birkenau and other places in Poland and Lithuania. God bless America!

It was a considerable relief to leave Pszczyna the next morning and head out into the countryside. Finally on the loose in Poland! Forests very leafy and deciduous, showing a bit of yellow now. Picked cornstalks, yellow and brown, awaiting plowing under; stubble in fields already harvested. Fields in Poland are cultivated in narrow strips; from the air they look like the ribbons on a general's chest. Even on the ground it is striking how land is used for different purposes every few meters.

In my part of Polish Silesia the difference among suburb, farmland and forest is not sharp – everything seems mixed together in an intensely used combination. Faded stucco houses and small industrial works line the narrow roads in grim succession; the river of cars and trucks presses on relentlessly with no verges, nowhere to stop, no place even to take in where I am. I thought: all Poland cannot be like this (and I later learned it is not) – maybe I am just on the wrong road. As before, I could have set the GPS for an alternative route and wandered the Polish countryside, but coming from Auschwitz I needed to get to a border, and was eager to reach the one I had been skirting for so long and cross into the Czech Republic.



Finally I crossed (country #71!; arms at left), with barely a sign to mark the line in the new borderless Europe.¹¹ PL-CZ was one of those borders where everything changes, from the crowded motley of the wrong stretch of Poland to wide, spacious, neat, welcoming farmland, more like England. Coherent villages, broad orderly fields with steeples in the distance. Woods and fields in their places; serious forests; uncrowded roads. England on a *very* good day.

So I just coasted around for a while, using GPS and my Communist-era Czechoslovakian road atlas (I had one for Poland too). It was delightful, and I amused myself with the names of the places I was entering. *Mizerów* loves *Companów*! There's no I in *Dvorce*! But I had no Czech money – I had expected an exchange station at the border, but there was hardly any border. Also I had nowhere to stay that night, and no words in Czech, not even a phrasebook. So first I found an ATM in what appeared to be a sanitarium for incurables and got some Czech crowns. Then I headed for a mid-sized town (*Vitkov*) to look for a hotel, using what I hoped was the Czech word *hotel*, meaning *hotel*.

There were at least four phantom hotels in *Vitkov*. One had a hotel sign with a big black iron rose that looked like something from Miss Havisham's house, but it was not a closed

¹¹ Note in the arms the double tail on the white lion of Bohemia, the checky surface of the eagle of Moravia, the special figure (called a *Kleestängel*, or clover-stalk) on the breast of the eagle of Silesia. All three of them wear crowns. I was in Moravia and Silesia on this visit, and didn't get to Bohemia at all.

hotel, it was a closed Czech post office.¹² Another, in a 50s-style Communist-looking concrete structure clearly marked *Hotel*, was open, but it was not a hotel either but a hairdressing school. The other two were just roadside directional signs, and did not visibly lead even to closed hotels. But I knew there was a national park not far away, so I headed there, saying the Ganesh mantra¹³, figuring there would be inns or country guesthouses nearby. The mantra and park plan worked, and I found a place in the lovely countryside at Klokočůvek where I could sit outside on a shady terrace, drinking tea and watching the autumn hills, while sweet-faced serving girls in long gingham dresses brought me snacks with my wi-fi. Thank you, Lord Ganesha! Time for *shabat!*¹⁴

Czech was little different from Polish, and from Slovak over the next border. They are all West Slavic languages, and all equally incomprehensible to me. Here's what they look like.

English	Polish	Czech	Slovak
Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. ¹⁵	Posyłam was jak owce między wilki, bądźcie zatem przebiegli jak węże i niewinni jak gołębice.	Posílám vás jako ovce mezi vlky. Buďte tedy obezřetní jako hadi a bezelstní jako holubice.	Posielam vás ako ovce medzi vlky. Buďte teda obozretní ako hady a mierni ako holubice.

Usually in countries where I don't speak the language I offer people what I can do. I say **English Français Italiano Deutsch**, in descending order of my competence, and let people pick one. More people picked German than English, throwing me back on the very primitive German I failed three times in college.¹⁶ But a lot of people stuck with Polish or Czech or Slovak, leading me to draw helpful pictures in my notebook; this worked pretty well to get what I really needed.

¹² In Dickens' *Great Expectations* Miss Havisham, jilted on her wedding day, lived ever after in her big house, wearing her ragged old wedding dress, with the dead flowers and moldy remains of her wedding feast still on the table.

¹³ *Om gang Ganipatiye nemaha!*

¹⁴ I was in Europe for all the so-called Presidential Debates. I tried to watch the first one on wi-fi in Klokočůvek but had to turn it off – I could not bear more than five seconds of Mitt Romney. He is certainly the vilest, slimiest pile of ordure ever to run for President, and that includes George Wallace, who at least meant what he said. Even before the election Romney has fairly earned more contempt and disgust than George W. Bush did after working at it hard for eight years; he makes Richard Nixon look like Theodore Roosevelt. Let's hope after the election (still about a week away as I write this) we never have to hear another word about him or his five identical sons, or hear his lying con-man salesman's voice, ever again.

¹⁵ Matthew 10:16.

¹⁶ I might have done better if I'd failed it four or five times. In nearly a month of doing this, no one picked French or Italian.

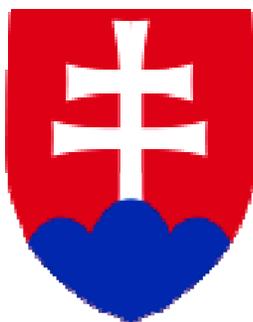
After *shabat* I tootled on in my car, way out in the sticks, in the *Mikroregion Odersko* [Micro-region of the Oder River]. Yellow and red leaves falling, hissing of wind in the trees. Immaculately mown and plowed fields, the ideal of a luscious fat countryside. Onion domes on the village churches, and chamfered roofs on the houses, reminding me always that I was in a foreign place. I drove whichever way the sun was not in my eyes, making no effort to know where I was, as distances were very small and GPS could easily put me back on the path to the next place (Čadca, Slovakia) when I needed to get there. Here are some pictures from Moravia.



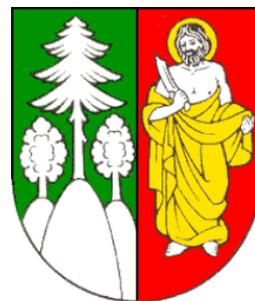
After Moravia I crossed into Slovakia in the Tatra Mountains.¹⁷ There was still no border station, but there was a much bigger sign and a patriotic statue. Slovakia looked down at the heels compared to Moravia, rougher and shabbier, more stucco peeled off, building lots much smaller. But it was still not as crowded as Polish Silesia, and had a back-country feeling like Missouri or western Virginia. I stayed on really minor roads. When I could see the Tatra Mountains it looked like Montana for while, and then New England;

¹⁷ Slovakia was not country #72 because it was #63 back in 2007.

scrub along the roadside and a few windblown trees with jagged peaks in the distance felt like Imperial County, California. But despite these associations the scene remained unmistakably foreign.



Arms of Slovakia, left; arms of Čadca, right.¹⁸ Čadca (pronounced CHAT-ka) was kind of creepy – there was a Third World feeling about it. The snazziest hotel in town, which came up first on the Internet, had an abandoned look and cost only 19 euros (less than \$25). The hotel restaurant was a pizza place I had to leave the hotel and go around the building in the dark to get to. I was pleasantly surprised to find my car unburgled the next morning. Things got pretty again after Čadca, though: sweet farm country and villy hillages.



I crossed back into Poland, aiming for Zakopane (a skiing center near the border) where I was to meet someone. As it turned out I didn't actually meet her, but it gave me a destination in the mountains. I kept my GPS on alternate routes; no more chamfered corners on the houses now, but great floppy eaves instead. I booked a hotel in nearby Ząb (pronounced ZAMP) near Zakopane, luxurious but modestly priced with a great view of the mountains (below left). Most houses looked new or rebuilt, but there were a few still around in the old style (below right), and even some log cabins.

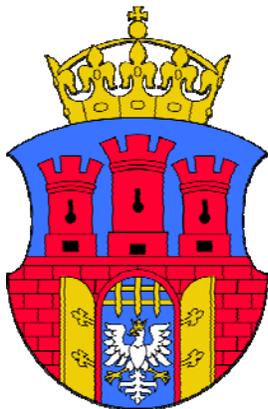


¹⁸ The three hills in the arms of Slovakia represent the Tatra, Fatra and Mátra Mountains. The figure in the arms of Čadca is St. Bartholomew the Apostle; tradition holds he was martyred by flaying, and so he holds a knife.

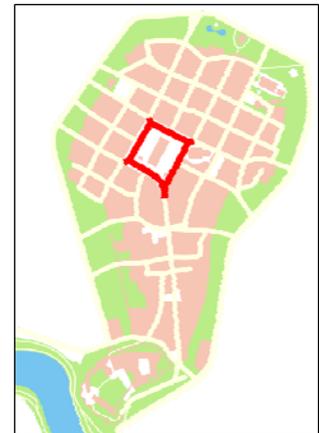
I took an excursion through the mountain country to Niedzica Castle (right), perched romantically over Czorsztyn Lake right near the Slovak border. I delayed my return to Ząb to listen to a group of far-from-home Bolivian Indians perform complex variations on *My Way* on the *siku*.¹⁹ On the way back I kept to country lanes and village streets and tiny alleys. All very pleasant and Heidi-like; Silesia might have been more fun if I had allowed GPS to divert me this way.



The next day I drove back to Kraków, still on bucolic back roads. I ignored the helpful road signs (left) and let GPS lead me to the tiny suburban office of the car company (really just the private house of the owner and her husband – their whole fleet was only eight cars). She drove me back to town in the pouring rain, and I settled into Kraków for a real visit.



The old center of Kraków, as mentioned, is a dream of a European city (arms at left). As shown in the map at right, it consists mostly of the medieval town, laid out in 1257 after the earlier town had been destroyed by the Tatars, surrounded by a park where the old fortifications and moat had been. The Main Square (*Rynek Główny*) – the largest medieval town square in Europe – is outlined in red; at the bottom of the map, by the River Vistula (*Wisła*), is the Wawel Castle and Cathedral



complex. My hotel was between the two centers. This self-contained and bite-sized arrangement makes Kraków especially pleasant to stroll around in (within the cocoon), as you never go very far without meeting a soft boundary. It was not destroyed by the Germans (as Warsaw was), or by the Russians, or even by the Americans with their chrome-and-glass vandalism that has so messed up New York. Most of the structures have a Baroque 18th-century feeling, although many are earlier or were reworked on Baroque lines when that was the fashion. As a result the *stare miasto* of Kraków has a restful, harmonious coherence – while there are pubs and souvenir shops

¹⁹ The Andean pan-pipe. This really was a choice of *My Way* or the highway.

and modern enterprises, they have been respectfully placed within the old structures.²⁰
Below: four pictures of Old Town Kraków.



There was time for tourism in Kraków – the medieval market hall in the Main Square (now given over inside almost entirely to souvenir stalls), and the Jagellonian University’s ancient paneled council and convocation rooms, and the depressingly ghost-infested former Jewish quarter of Kasimierz just outside the old town, and some tram rides to outlying neighborhoods. But the main sights were Wawel Castle (next page, top row) and Wawel Cathedral. Both these places are deep in the heart of Polish history – more so even than Warsaw. The Polish royal tombs (and the tombs of Polish presidents and patriots) are in the cathedral and its crypt, usually with magnificent heraldic adornment.²¹ Below bottom row: decorated vaulting from the cathedral, and an armorial panel from the sarcophagus of Queen Jadwiga (by Antoni Madeyski, 1902) – note how perfectly the eagle is made to fit its rectangular compartment.²²

²⁰ See, for example, the McDonald’s signs in the lower left photo on this page.

²¹ Wawel holds the tombs of many of the most important kings (beginning with Władysław I the Elbow-High), and also Marshal Piłsudski and General Sikorski and President Lech Kaszyński, who was killed in a plane crash two years ago.

²² In the cathedral, as in many (maybe most) other churches in Poland, there was a chapel to Bl. John Paul II (now beatified), complete with a photograph of him above the altar as a focus for prayer. It felt odd to see a church icon of someone I once shook hands with (in Rome in 1988).



As always in Europe, one of my main missions was to comb the cities for heraldry books. I am glad to get old books (although not older than 1850, when they start being expensive antiques and stop being useful for study), but usually what I find is no earlier than World War I. At least two thirds of what I find are quite new books, complete with ISBN numbers, but that's OK too because these books are unobtainable in the United States. As usual I had trawled the Internet for antiquarian bookstores, and a few new bookstores as well, and compiled their addresses and contact information in a table, and e-mailed as many of them as I could. When I got to Kraków I plotted them on a city map, with the aid of Google Earth, and began trudging systematically from one to the next.

I got to almost all 25 of them in two days; most had nothing for me, but a few had one or two things, and there was the occasional bonanza. What I bought at the conference, and what I bought in Kraków, filled my carry-on bag (now weighing about 50 pounds), so I knew I would need another suitcase for the haul in Warsaw. Unusually, most of the bookshop owners spoke no English, but Alfred had written out for me in Polish what I was looking for, and I managed in German if English didn't work. Even if we didn't have a word in common, my Polish script was enough to produce what the owner had,

and he would tap out my bill on a hand-held calculator. I never questioned a price, as heraldry books in Poland cost less than half what similar books cost in Paris or Vienna.

And then I went to the train station, carrying my suitcase *and* 50 pounds of heraldry books, and rode for about three hours over flat farmland to Warsaw. I checked into my hotel, a curious place where I was given a suite that went on and on like a Riverside Drive apartment, but which was completely unattended except during weekday business hours. But it was centrally located, and there was a terrific restaurant a few doors away where the staff spoke English. I ate there every night.



Warsaw (arms at left) is not at all like Kraków, but is an enormous metropolis, one of the largest cities in Europe by population.²³ It was almost completely destroyed by the Germans, who wrecked 85% of the buildings and murdered more than 60% of the civilian population.²⁴ As a result modern Warsaw is a *mélange*. The Old Town and much else has been meticulously reconstructed, but there is also a lot of post-war construction in the grim Communist manner, and a lot more in the sometimes more depressing modern style. Also Warsaw is very spread out, with enormous wide boulevards and arterial roads cutting right through the city. With some exceptions, it is not all that pleasant a place, and does not invite casual strolling.

The old town center, and especially the Town Square and Royal Castle, have been restored with immense care and skill, based on old photographs and paintings, and are now a World Heritage Site. I have compared the rebuilt Town Square with pre-war photographs and it is eerily exact. Standing on the spot, if I had not known it was a reconstruction I would not have guessed, perhaps because it does not look spanking new, but the stucco has been allowed to fade and chip as the original had. The same is true of the Royal Castle, inside and out, except a lot of the furniture and paintings are substitutes rather than reconstructions.

²³ The armed mermaid was originally (in the 14th century) a basilisk with a man's head, but transmuted in stages. The medal is the *Virtuti Militari*, Poland's highest decoration for valor, awarded for the Siege of Warsaw in 1939. The motto SEMPER INVICTA means *always unconquerable* (or *unconquered*), which is not even close to true.

²⁴ The score in buildings by January 1945 was 10% destroyed as a result of the 1939 invasion and siege, 15% during the 1943 Ghetto Uprising, 25% during the separate 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and 35% due to deliberate retaliation by the Germans after the Uprising. The Germans went from door to door burning and dynamiting, and took special care to burn libraries. For more on this see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planned_destruction_of_Warsaw. Although the Uprising was the immediate occasion of the final spasm of German vandalism, they had planned all along to destroy Warsaw and replace it with a model Nazi town, and drew up elaborate plans for exactly how to do it. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pabst_Plan.

Among the other sights of Warsaw I liked especially were the Army History Museum, full of great flags and uniforms, the dazzlingly modern interactive Chopin Museum in an old aristocratic palace, the Independence Museum (notable for a stunning bust of Piłsudski, right²⁵), Stalin's grotesquely overbearing Palace of Culture and Science, and especially the Palace on the Water (*Pałac na Wodzie*) in lovely autumnal Łazienki Park.²⁶ Images from Warsaw appear on the next page.



In Warsaw I did another bookshop tour, with the stores plotted on a map, but unlike Kraków, where almost all the shops were in the very small old city or right next to it, in Warsaw they were much more widely dispersed. And I was running out of energy, too, so remembering that the books themselves would be relatively cheap if I could find them, I splurged on a car and driver for the day. I told them at my hotel what I wanted, and that I didn't need a tour guide or a limousine, and they found me a young man who spoke English, had borrowed a car with a GPS, and was ready to ferry me around. He was 28 years old but had no memory of communism (he was five when the Russians gave up and went home). In six hours we got to (or phoned in Polish) about 30 stores, including a few that had vanished forever, and I bought another small suitcaseful of books (although not the suitcase itself, which we couldn't find). And in the process I got a cross-section tour of Warsaw better than any I could have got on a tour bus. On the last page are a few images from the books I got on this trip.²⁷

And then I went home, a few days early. I was very tired, and had seen all I could absorb, and could smell snow in the air.

David

October 2012



²⁵ Józef Piłsudski, Marshal of Poland (1867-1935) was a complicated man. He was a great war hero and architect of Polish independence, but a few years later overthrew the democratic government in a right-wing *coup d'état*. I visited his tomb in Wawel Cathedral, and brought home as a souvenir a plaster statue of him I bought in the Army Museum.

²⁶ The Polish letter Ł (or ł) is pronounced like the English *w*.

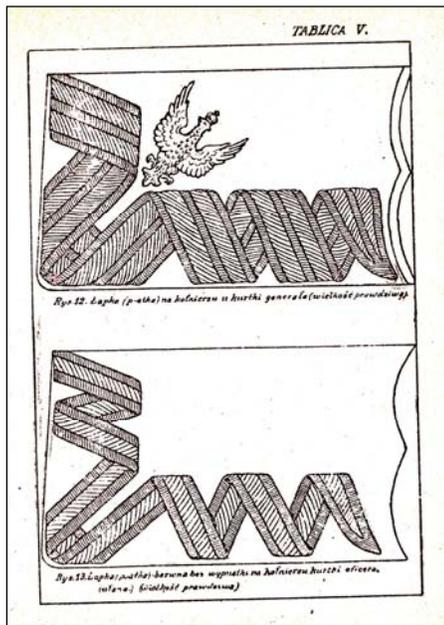
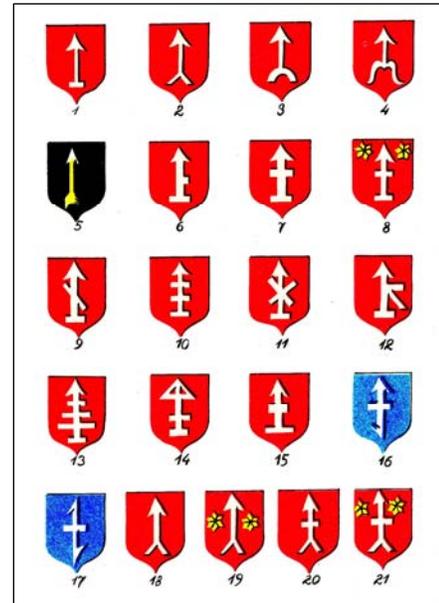
²⁷ The final haul was 46 books and 21 pamphlets: Polish 31, Czech 10, German and Ukrainian 6 each, Macedonian 5, English 3, Russian 2, and Belorussian, Italian, Slovakian and Spanish 1 each. Most of the works in languages other than Polish or German I bought at the conference rather than in the bookstores. As noted, Macedonian was a new language for my heraldic library, bringing the total there up to 45.

IMAGES OF WARSAW



TOP LEFT: the reconstructed Town Square. TOP RIGHT: the Marble Room in the Royal Palace. MIDDLE LEFT: a statue of me (as Cronos) by Jakub Monaldi, in the Royal Palace; the sculptor has flattened my waist but kept the rest of me fairly natural. CENTER: flags at the Army History Museum. MIDDLE RIGHT: Rotunda in the Palace on the Water. BOTTOM LEFT: view of the Palace on the Water. BOTTOM RIGHT: the Palace of Culture and Science, looking a lot gentler than it does in most views, but it is so enormous that closer-range photographs do not capture anything of its scale.

IMAGES FROM HERALDIC BOOKS BOUGHT IN POLAND



UPPER LEFT: Arms of a Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, by Pawel Dudziński (2007); UPPER RIGHT: Chart of Polish armorial glyphs, by Stanisław Hr. Mieroszowski (1887); LOWER LEFT: Page from official Polish uniform specifications (1919); LOWER RIGHT: Arms of Kruse, by Max Kalhke (1920).