



Eugene J. Kisluk. *Brothers from the North: The Polish Democratic Society and the European Revolutions of 1848-1849.* Boulder: East European Monographs, 2005. vi + 272 pp. \$40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-88033-563-8.

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The Impact of ?migrés

The history of nineteenth-century Poland abounds in events that happened outside the country's historical or ethnic boundaries. This is nothing unusual, especially in Europe. However, unlike nations that engaged in colonial undertaking, Poland was deprived of its sovereign state, and thousands of Poles who did not accept this left the territories controlled by the eastern powers. More than seven thousand people took part in the best-known episode of the so-called great emigration after the anti-Russian uprising of 1830-31. They settled mostly in France, England, Belgium, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States. Because important Polish romantic poets, artists, scientists, and intellectuals were among these "migrés", it is only a slight exaggeration to say that they were an elite of the nation in exile.

The cultural output and political achievements of the great emigration belong to the mainstream of partitioned Polish history in which emigrants played a disproportionately large role. Eugene J. Kisluk's book, *Brothers from the North*, deals with this very phenomenon, and it is dedicated to one of the most important Polish organizations of the nineteenth century, *Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie* (the Polish Democratic Society, or PDS). Established in Paris in 1832, the PDS differed from other Polish "migré" parties, not only in its ideology but also in its unique formal features. The PDS persisted longer than other parties, lasting until 1862. The society was also popular among emigrants, and it is estimated that almost forty-five hundred persons passed through its ranks. It had a vivid internal life, set at first on care-

ful preparing and then on implementing a democratic-republican political program in Poland. These elements incline many historians, including Kisluk, to consider the PDS to be the first modern Polish political party.

PDS members left an amazing amount of documents and writings, and their history has become a subject of many studies during the last decades. Kisluk knows them perfectly. Relying on this knowledge, he has focused on the PDS during the European revolutions of 1848-49. This choice is interesting and well-founded, because, although various aspects of the Polish democrats' activities during the Springtime of Nations have been already discussed, no one has presented a comprehensive analysis of these issues to date. No scholar has inquired about the connections between the PDS and different national movements in 1848-49, and Kisluk makes this question the spine of his narration. His work is not only a case study of Polish emigration, but also an important voice in the discussion about the genesis and nature of events in Europe of the late 1840s.

Opinions that the Polish storm-birds were among the main catalysts of turmoil in Europe were expressed even before all barricades of those days had fallen. Since the PDS was a leading force of the Polish political diaspora, these judgments referred especially to this party. Kisluk carefully verified this image. He starts with the reconstruction of PDS activities in the years 1832-48, and then successively presents the participation of the society's members in the revolutions in France, Poland, Austria,

Hungary, and Germanic countries. The results of his research cannot be easily reduced to simple statements about “professional trouble-makers” or “hooligans” of the international revolution, on the one hand, and patriot emigrants concentrated exclusively on national aims, on the other hand. Exiled Polish democrats—however active and visible in many places of European revolt—did not exert a significant influence everywhere. As Kisluk establishes, Poles only symbolically participated in the February revolution in Paris, and their further presence in French politics was restricted to timid endeavors focused on gaining support of the Second Republic for the rebuilding of independent Poland. These efforts were indifferently treated by the new authorities, and, if the Polish cause became temporarily significant in France, it was the result of an internal game between French political forces rather than real Polish influence. Even the famous incident in the French National Assembly on May 15, 1848, was caused by pro-Polish demonstrations, not provoked by emigrants themselves.

The PDS role in the Poznań province (under Berlin’s jurisdiction) and in Austrian Galicia was more significant. *Amigras*, with Ludwik Mierosławski at the head, formed a prominent body among officers of the Polish military units fighting with Prussians in 1848. However, Kisluk indicates that leaders of the national movement in Wielkopolska mistrusted emigrant democrats, and they effectively cut them off from political power. The PDS managed to dominate the Cracow National Committee, but this institution was short-lived and was disbanded at the beginning of April 1848, after the intervention of Austrian troops. The society also had some influence in the National Council in Lwow. Quieter than Cracow, eastern Galicia became an asylum for democratic exiles for several months. There, they started two periodicals and engaged in training of the national guard. Nevertheless, the conservative opposition to the PDS was strong, and the society had limited possibilities and options even in eastern Galicia.

Kisluk discusses the participation of Polish democrats in events in Hungary, Saxony, and Baden. General Józef Wysocki, the military expert of the PDS, was given command of the twelve hundred-strong Polish legion in Hungary. Two political emissaries of the party—Wiktor Heltman and Aleksander Krzyżanowski—advised leaders of revolution in Dresden in the spring of 1849. There were no other important Poles active in Saxony yet, and Wysocki had influential Polish rivals in Hungary—generals Henryk Dembiński and Józef Bem, who represented more conservative circles of the great emigration.

So, the PDS can be seen only as one of many actors on the scene there. Kisluk is right when he writes that the most “Polish” revolution was the outbreak in Baden and Palatinate in May and June 1849. Mierosławski became the leader of its military forces, which had several hundred Poles (including many democrats) in its ranks, and Polish and French were the official languages in the headquarters. Contemporary opinion about the significance of the “Polish factor” in European revolutions of 1848-49 most likely derived its strength from the events in Baden. As a result, many countries sharpened their attitude toward Polish refugees and forced many of them to leave for Great Britain and the United States.

Kisluk’s book has some weak points, but they do not diminish its high value overall. The book includes a few errors in transcription of Polish names (“Smoła” instead of “Smolka”; “Gado?” instead of “Gadon”). Unnecessary repetition of full bibliographic information in the footnotes could have been easily eliminated. Petty correction is needed on one detail. On May 16, 1848, well-known British polonophile Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart delivered his pro-Polish speech in the House of Commons, not in the House of Lords. Stuart was a member of parliament from the London borough of Marylebone at that time, and he never sat in the House of Lords. Some doubts are also raised by the first part of the title chosen by the author. It appears from the text that only a small part of the French public was using the phrase “Brothers from the North.” Furthermore, the phrase denoted the whole Polish nation, not only democrats, in the view of the French. Describing the activities of the PDS in Europe in the years 1848-49 by this phrase can be accepted only as a kind of literary convention.

Far more important and numerous are the strengths of Kisluk’s book. The analysis of PDS actions in France and the detailed presentation of the changing French attitudes toward Polish democrats is one of its most valuable parts. This analysis is based on interesting and almost unknown archival sources brought to light for the first time by the author. Kisluk’s opinion on the PDS role in the European upheavals of 1848-49 is also balanced and convincing. He estimates that from 550 to 1,000 PDS members took part in these upheavals, and (at least) 24 were killed in action. Although these numbers allow the author to recognize Polish democrats’ contribution as significant, he writes correctly that the Poles could not have had a decisive influence on the course of events during the Springtime of Nations. The Polish role was more symbolic than political or military, and so was the outcome for democratic exiles. In some western cir-

cles, they still enjoyed a reputation of noble and unselfish freedom fighters. For other Europeans, they became the embodiment of subverters and promoters of anarchy in the world.

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