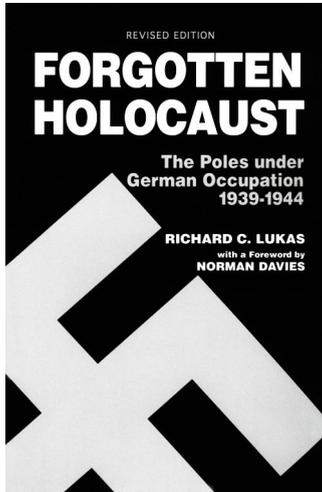

***The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation 1939 – 1944*, by Richard C. Lukas (revised edition 2001), 338 pages.**



This book was written several years ago but now appears in paperback and includes 60 pages of supplements, although the original text remains untouched. It is a popular history of those years, likely to satisfy most readers who are now interested in this subject. Its main focus is a comparison between the well-covered Jewish Holocaust of that period and the "forgotten" Polish Holocaust. To keep things in perspective, a few words should be added. Lukas does not engage in a partisan (and senseless) polemic as to which "disaster" was more important or greater. Such discussion would lead nowhere, opening wounds which have healed after 60 years, or reviving arguments discussed very many times with no conclusion. Incidentally, the word "holocaust" can hardly be found in pre-1940 dictionaries; its Greek origin has biblical connotations. On the other hand, the word "genocide," the systematic, planned annihilation of a group, has a universal meaning which can be applied to massacres of the ancient past or the current times.

Lucas reviews this period systematically and is quite aware that both the Polish or Jewish predicaments should be presented with objectivity; he succeeds here, and his book has a good reference value. When some valid corrections are warranted, he makes them. For example, he tells us that only a miniscule number of Poles who were hiding Jews was honored by Vad Yashem in Jerusalem or their names are found at the museum in Washington D.C. The current edition of his book lists 704 Poles who were shot or hanged for aiding Jews, with many details presented. He points out that thousands were murdered during the "pacification of villages" for helping Jews. Many records were lost forever. One can mention some of the rescue ideas explored or thought about during the War. For example, Jan Karski, after secretly visiting the Majdanek Camp, had a chance to tell the grim story directly to President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House; the latter considered Karski's presentation plain exaggeration. There were those who proposed that Auschwitz be bombed, but one look at the Europe's map clearly shows distances for Western planes as impossible to travel. And what of the precision? - True, there were some limited but practical ways, such as Gen. Anders bringing 3,000 Jews as his soldiers from Siberia to Palestine. And, of course, the Jewish Ghetto defenders in 1943 expected tons of weapons from the Poles who were lucky to find some guns for themselves. Such were often desperate plans when faced with harsh realities.

The book's seven chapters also deal with the German occupation system, the Polish underground movement, the military and civilian resistance, the relations between Poles and Jews and the two uprisings in Warsaw. The reader will greatly benefit from this information.

George Suboczewski