

The book is enlivened by a selection of cartoons by, amongst others, Gordon Minchinick, Sid Scales, Bob Brockie, Tom Scott and Garrick Tremain. They provide a convenient catalogue of public perceptions of the association over the years and of a succession of Ministers of Education. There are also numerous portraits of PPTA officers and employees, photographs of teachers deliberating and demonstrating and short biographies of selected presidents, general secretaries and notable members of the association. Secondary school teachers are, as this book makes clear, very busy people, and their workload has increased since the system was reshaped in the 1980s and 1990s to make it more efficient. Those who can find time to read their regimental history and its account of the association's tactical victories, stalemates and armistices, will find that time well spent.

COLIN McGEORGE

*University of Canterbury*

*A Strange Outcome: The Remarkable Survival Story of a Polish Child.* By John Roy-Wojciechowski and Allan Parker. Penguin, Auckland, 2004. 288 pp. NZ price: \$35.00. ISBN 0-143019-04-X.

*A STRANGE OUTCOME* narrates the journeys of John Roy-Wojciechowski (hereafter Jan), a survivor with members of his family of Soviet ethnic cleansing and the forced deportation of almost two million Poles during World War II to labour camps in Siberia. Co-authored with journalist and writer Allan Parker, the book provides generous historical narrative in which to place Jan's journeys in national and comparative context. These journeys cover his infant life in Poland, to becoming a victim of Stalin's campaign of terror against Poles, and subsequent internment with his mother and siblings in a Siberian labour camp. From there, Polish relief agencies secured the release of orphaned children and assisted in their transfer to camps in Central Asia and Persia, en route to Jan's final destination, the Pahiatua camp in New Zealand in November 1944. Jan's life is dramatically evocative of the terror and displacement in twentieth-century Eastern European history; his story provides a vivid entry into conflicted memories of forced displacement, migration and assimilation. The narrative of *A Strange Outcome*, like the memories on which it is based, moves the reader across borders, experiences and languages of forced travel, localizing the effects of trans-national and cross-cultural migration history.

*A Strange Outcome* follows a fairly standard chronological structure. Parker outlines the historical background of Poland's struggle for national autonomy, its interwar history and ethnic complexity. He sets up the context and chronologies of persecution and forced migration that underscore the setting of Jan's stories and memories. Born in 1933, Jan's memories only became truly vivid and impressionable when he was living in a children's orphanage in Isfahan, Persia. Before that time, the narrative reads as the biography of an ordinary Polish farming family in an experiment of the colonization of Poland's western borderlands with White Russians. The Soviet invasion of Poland on 17 September 1939, two weeks after the Nazis, put an end to the fragile farming scheme and brought millions of Poles and their territory into Soviet influence. From this point, the narrative reads as the despair of a fragmenting family: a father who was arrested by the Soviets and executed and the family who are forced at gunpoint and with typically minimal preparation for deportation to Siberia for work in Stalin's forced labour system called the *Gulag*. While some of the brutal history of forced migration of this period is known to historians, what resonates is the representation of the 'forgotten Holocaust', a view I would endorse particularly in the method of deportation of Poles to Siberia,

namely the six-week-long journey in the cattle cars, what Parker calls the ‘railways of horror for the unfortunate victims’ (p.53), and from which some historical parallels to the Nazi deportation of Jews to concentration and extermination camps in occupied Poland are evident.

Jan was only seven when he took this train journey and so the experience of it is not personally recounted. It is, rather, suggested through the experiences of other deportees. Parker is dependent on secondary accounts, for example of Jan’s sisters, to outline the conditions of the journey, and consequently there is little about how the journey may have affected the victims psychologically. Responses to transit are recalled in activities of sharing, singing and talks about the political situation and juxtaposed with the inhumane dumping of people on railway tracks or at stations. When primary sources are used, they are neither attributed nor referenced, and this limits the possibility for further interpretation.

The long cattle car journey delivered the Wojciechowski family to the Nuchw-Oziero camp sometime in early 1940. The narrative from this point moves the reader through the various activities of camp life. Jan’s mother, Helena, held a job in the camp bakery which afforded some possibilities to smuggle extra food to her children and the elder children performed some menial tasks. The charade of a work colony continued in the camp with wage compensation, while communication by mail with relatives was allowed but censored to a heavy degree. Life for the Wojciechowski family may have continued indefinitely were it not, strangely enough, for the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the impact of this on Soviet war preparations and their need for Polish men as extra troops. Thus, the release of many Poles in these camps extended to the Wojciechowski family who left in November 1941 and made the journey, along with other Polish refugees, to Bukhara, Uzbekistan, and then to Isfahan in Persia. The family was further fragmented when Jan’s 37-year-old mother died from typhus in Bukhara, leaving Jan and his sisters Amelia and Maria. Relief was to come from an unexpected source. Following discussions with the Polish government in exile in London, the New Zealand Prime Minister extended an invitation to the local Polish Consul General, Count Kasimierz Wodzicki, to initiate the relief effort of resettling the children, whose displacement was well publicized at the time. His wife, Countess Maria Widzicka, played a central role in petitioning for this outcome. Jan and his sisters arrived in Wellington in November 1944 feeling extremely weathered from the six-week journey. The event was covered in the media with a mixture of self-serving congratulation and genuine outrage at the forced displacement of innocent victims of political tyranny.

The balance of *A Strange Outcome*, approximately half of the book, is devoted to chronicling the life of young Jan, ‘reborn’ into the assimilated identity of John Roy. Displaced in the Pahiatua camp, the young boy became a determined immigrant, self-made businessman and family man. He continues to co-exist with his former self, a displaced soul from Poland, the land of his interrupted infancy and longing for re-connection with a missing sister and brother. Parker’s story-telling skills effectively combine the private anxieties of Jan as an immigrant in a foreign land.

*A Strange Outcome* contributes to local narratives of similar migration trauma and refuge found in Krystyna Skwarko’s *The Invited* (1974), and Maria van der Linden’s *An Unforgettable Journey* (1992). *A Strange Outcome* assists in bringing the other Holocaust of wartime Poland and New Zealand’s connection to it into intimate and compelling view.

SIMONE GIGLIOTTI

*Victoria University of Wellington*