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My life in fragments

by Zygmunt Bauman, edited by Izabela Wagner, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2023, 232 pp., $30.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-5095-5130-9

Alexei Kojevnikov

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censorship, a notion that might also help expand our understanding of the canonical Gulag texts as part of the transnational Cold War publishing scene. Ending on this note, Klots' book is an invitation to the reader to further theorize tamizdat as a historical phenomenon. Its thoroughly researched and documented multidimensional discussion of four major tamizdat authors will doubtlessly be an enrichment for scholars and a valuable resource for teaching Soviet literary history and the lives of forbidden texts in the twentieth century. And whereas Klots' monograph is more focused on a narrow set of texts, it should be mentioned that his remarkable digital index of tamizdat publishers and publications (https://tamizdatproject.org/) pays justice to the full breadth of the phenomenon and provides a valuable companion resource to the book.

Philip Tuxbury-Gleissner
Ohio State University
tuxbury-gleissner.1@osu.edu http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3730-4409

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My life in fragments, by Zygmunt Bauman, edited by Izabela Wagner, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2023, 232 pp., $30.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-5095-5130-9

Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017) never completed an autobiography. In this new book Izabela Wagner has brought together several of Bauman's partial recollections, including manuscripts written in Polish, and has added commentary to produce an eye-opening narrative that is essential for understanding one of the most important social thinkers of the last half century. The book covers, in Bauman's own authentic voice, the scholar's formative experiences up to circa 1960, when he matured politically and intellectually and started publishing major works.

While philosophically questioning autobiography as a genre, Bauman describes the entangled dynamics of his personal identities – ethnic and ideological – to explain some major historical contradictions of his lived epoch and his unrequited love for Poland, a country in which he was often viewed as "someone who is not entirely us." As a Jewish kid, Bauman was harassed in the 1930s. Socialist Poland first tolerated but eventually ejected him as an unreliable, subversive communist. He spent decades of his life in exile. In post-Cold War anti-communist Poland, Bauman faced suspicions as an unrepentant socialist. He learned to carry these signs of rejection as a badge of honour, understanding that a true intellectual effort necessitates contradicting society's received wisdom. Experiences of living on the margins imbued his scholarship with critical insights, original theoretical conceptions, and eventually international fame.

Growing up in interwar Poznań, Bauman strove for assimilation, in the face of open discrimination against Jews. Bullying by students inspired an even stronger motivation to identify with Polish culture and master its language better than his ethnically Polish classmates. Exclusion appeared inevitable, normal as life itself, until he started attending meetings of Jewish socialist youth. Dreaming of a desegregated world where everyone would be treated fairly, regardless of tribal labels, writes Bauman, "I found my Zion in Mołodeczno" (89) after the 1939 German attack on Poland and his family's dangerous, last-minute escape from Nazi-occupied to Soviet-occupied territory. Having tasted Nazi orders for Jews to wear yellow patches and not step on paved sidewalks, Bauman was accepted as equal on the other side of the new border in a school where teenagers spoke all kinds of regional and hybrid languages. He was the one to represent Polish

culture there, while being granted Soviet citizenship like all the others. Feeling "free and needed," he joined the Komsomol, the communist youth organization.

The 1941 German invasion of the USSR forced Bauman's family to flee further East, into the Soviet hinterland. Wartime existence was cruel and hungry, and politics dictatorial, but the people's solidarity and dedication in the face of equal suffering strengthened Bauman's romantic belief in communism: "Not all inhuman conditions dehumanize. Some disclose humanity in man" (97). Bauman started a local university and in due time entered military service, but conscientiously volunteered for the new Polish division to fight alongside the Red Army against the Nazis and liberate his native country. Hoping to help make the new Poland free and socialist, Bauman already knew – from early Soviet literature found in a village library – that Stalin's harsh version of communism was not the only one possible. The 20-year-old Bauman saw victory with his Polish artillery unit as a decorated veteran, wounded in the battles of liberation.

Bauman's service continued as a propaganda officer in the Internal Security Forces of the new People's Republic. The remnants of Polish Jews who survived the genocide, like Bauman's future wife Janina, still encountered grassroots antisemitism. Many, including his father, opted for emigration. Bauman disagreed; he strove instead to integrate into the new Polish society as an ethnic Jew, but by 1950 was told that his relatives' Zionist connections complicated his military service. He resumed academic studies, but Warsaw University refused to recognize his Soviet transcripts in physics. Political superiors gave Bauman recommendations for graduate studies in Marxist philosophy and work as a Party propagandist. His own intellectual interests had already evolved towards serving his country with scientifically Marxist sociological research.

Bauman characterizes the ensuing process as "maturation," citing an insider's joke from the period: "an apple falls when it matures, but a communist matures upon falling" (134). Bauman's fall was not sudden, but a prolonged slope: dissent grew gradually from within the movement itself as young idealists contemplated the gap between declared socialist ideals and frustrating social realities. A committed communist, Bauman hoped that observable contradictions were mistaken deviations from a fundamentally sound path and problems of growth caused by difficult initial conditions. But Khrushchev's anti-Stalin revelations in 1956 shocked him, and convinced him that the regime's problems were systemic.

The so-called "revisionist" trend in eastern European Marxism, with Bauman as its prominent representative, was tolerated grudgingly at first but grew increasingly vocal, demanding a free society true to socialist principles. Hopes for fundamental reforms from within ended in 1968: suppression of the Prague Spring meant that authorities in the Soviet camp opted for the "conservative" strategy of preserving the status quo. Earlier that year, a renewed bout of official antisemitism in Poland made Bauman annul his party membership and start packing.

Ethnic discrimination paradoxically made Bauman feel even more Polish. He identified with the tradition of "true Poles" from preceding centuries who suffered heroically to preserve their culture against imperial assimilation, in contrast to those who, having acquired a majority within their own nation state, started discriminating against the remaining minorities. For similar reasons, Bauman's Jewish identity estranged him from the state of Israel. His Jews were persecuted for centuries while trying to survive against improbable odds, rather than the privileged ethnic majority that betrayed traditional empathy with the oppressed. After a short sojourn in Israel, he settled as a refugee professor of sociology at the University of Leeds. Bauman's recollections do not cover this enormously productive part of his life, but readers can consult Wagner's excellent biography of Bauman, published in 2020, based on many archival discoveries.

Existing autobiographical fragments do include Bauman's last thoughts on contemporary society. Just as he could not march along with the suppression of dissent under communism, so he viewed the subsequent anti-communist lustrations and witch-hunts as betrayals of freedom. As with earlier utopian promises, the post-communist capitalist bonanza also failed to materialize for the majority; yet thirty years since "die Wende" and ever more dogmatically, the new elites continue the rhetoric of blaming the preceding regime and refusing to address the sources of mounting problems. For decades, Bauman wrote about the predicament of intellectuals; problems of the old and new left; contradictions of postmodernism and globalization; socialism as "the active utopia"; as well as liquid modernity and the incremental quest for emerging freedoms. Resurgent tribalism and hysterical warmongering increasingly worried him but he did not live to see them bounce back to such dangerous levels as were typical of the era in which he was born.

Alexei Kojevnikov
University of British Columbia
a.nikov@ubc.ca
http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1666-1669

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The Fourth of August regime and Greek Jewry 1936–1941, by Katerina Lagos, Oxford, Palgrave MacMillan, 2023, xi+273 pp., US$139.99 (hardcover), ISBN 978-3-031-20532-3

A plethora of authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships marked the Greek twentieth century, yet still limited literature exists on the subject. In this regard, Katerina Lagos's book on the Metaxas regime (1936 to 1941) is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of Greek authoritarianism.

The historiographical debate concerning the Fourth of August regime has revolved around identifying its ideological character. Some scholars have argued that the regime was essentially fascist, while others, more recently, have contested this approach as simplistic and have offered instead a more nuanced image of the dictatorship. There is no doubt that the Metaxas regime demonstrated similarities to European fascist regimes. As Lagos notes, however, it also presented important differences. A critical difference between the Metaxas dictatorship and European fascist regimes concerns its perception and treatment of Jews. Lagos stresses that "Metaxas differentiated himself from other dictators of the interwar period; Metaxas would not espouse antisemitic policies, nor would he comply with Nazi directives concerning German Jews. There was no Jewish question for Metaxas [. . .] In the face of persecution – both internally and externally – Metaxas sought to assist the Jews of Greece" (21–22). Lagos' book aims to clarify the relationship between the Fourth of August dictatorship and Greek Jews. Based on a broad range of written sources and oral testimonies organized chronologically and thematically, the book illustrates the complex character of the regime's stance towards Jews.

The book is divided into seven chapters and begins with a brief presentation of the history of the long presence of the Romaniotes and the Sephardim, the two dominant Jewish groups in Greece, and their relations with the Christian majority. Lagos shows that while religious