

# POLAND

A Novel by

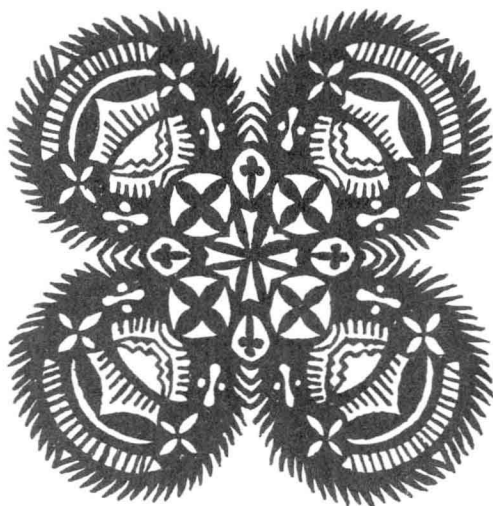
James A.  
Michener



---

# POLAND

---



---

James A.  
Michener

---



---

RANDOM HOUSE • NEW YORK

Copyright © 1983 by James A. Michener  
Cartography © 1983 by Jean Paul Tremblay

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American  
Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States by  
Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada  
by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Michener, James A. (James Albert), 1907–  
Poland.

1. Poland—History—Fiction. I. Title.

PS3525.M19P6 1983 813'.54 83-4477

ISBN 0-394-53189-2

ISBN 0-394-53388-7 (lim. ed.)

*Manufactured in the United States of America*

24689753

FIRST EDITION

*Book design by Carole Lowenstein*

BOOKS BY  
JAMES A. MICHENER

*Tales of the South Pacific*  
*The Fires of Spring*  
*Return to Paradise*  
*The Voice of Asia*  
*The Bridges at Toko-Ri*  
*Sayonara*  
*The Floating World*  
*The Bridge at Andau*  
*Hawaii*  
*Report of the County Chairman*  
*Caravans*  
*The Source*  
*Iberia*  
*Presidential Lottery*  
*The Quality of Life*  
*Kent State: What Happened and Why*  
*The Drifters*  
*A Michener Miscellany: 1950-1970*  
*Centennial*  
*Sports in America*  
*Chesapeake*  
*The Covenant*  
*Space*  
*Poland*  
  
*with A. Grove Day*  
*Rascals in Paradise*

# POLAND

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 1977 a television company invited me to go to any exotic place in the world to shoot a documentary, and I astonished them by choosing without hesitation: 'Poland.' When they asked why, I replied: 'If you look at its geographical and ideological position, you'll see that it must become a focal point within the next decade.'

In succeeding years I visited Poland some eight times, traveling to almost every part of the nation. Private sources provided me with a helicopter for the better part of a week. I used it to fly at a very low altitude over all of Poland. I was encouraged to visit schools, universities, laboratories, art centers, historical sites, and at one point I said that what I needed most was to spend some time with a devout Roman Catholic clergyman who spoke English. By good luck I was taken to see the Bishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla, with whom I had a series of productive conversations. Later I spent time with Cardinal Wyszynski and Primate Glemp, and through them was allowed to see the workings of a church within a Communist country.

By accident I spent a beautiful vacation at Lancut Palace and by design an extended tour to some dozen of Poland's magical castles. I also spent an equal amount of time in the heavy industries of Katowice and in the Lenin shipyards at Gdansk. By car I traveled many hundreds of miles to all parts of Poland.

In such work I had the guidance of Edward J. Piszek, an American Pole who, because of his humanitarian interest, had strong ties to Polish affairs, with an entree to almost any facet of Polish life. The car in which I traveled was often driven by his assistant, Stanley Moszuk,

a gifted citizen of Poland with a strong knowledge of its art and history.

When the time came in 1979 that I thought of writing a novel about the critical developments in Poland, it was obvious to me that since I did not speak Polish or read it, I would need some kind of bibliographical assistance, and Piszek and Moszuk came up with the idea of asking some dozen top intellects in Poland to draft summaries of recent scholarship in fifteen vital fields. They chose the scholars; I set the topics; and a happy relationship ensued. The scholars received payment for summarizing material they already knew well and I received an unmatched overview of Polish history as local authorities view it today.

They wrote in Polish, which was translated by experts who sometimes knew the field under discussion as well as the writer. From such sources and many others I compiled an impressive body of research data, including some excellent books written in Polish but now available in English.

After I had digested an enormous body of material and felt myself prepared to write the novel which I had had in mind for some years, I returned to Poland in the summer of 1981 and revisited every spot I proposed to write about: Tannenberg, where the great battle took place; Malbork, of the Teutonic Knights; Zamosc, which must be one of the most evocative small cities in Europe; Krzyztopor, a castle of unbelievable dimension; Dukla, of the captivating Mniszechs; Krakow, with its trumpeter; and of course, that section of the Vistula shoreline which would house my story. I mention no Polish place in this novel which I have not visited, and that includes Kiev, which was once Polish.

I followed each mile of Jan Sobieski's military expedition to Vienna, and there traced out his brilliant defense of that city. I went to all borders, followed all the military trails my characters would follow, and lived once more in Lancut Palace, imagining myself a guest of the great Princess Lubomirska, friend of Goethe, Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, all of whom considered her one of the most brilliant women in Europe.

One of my best excursions was with a pair of notable Polish scholars, who spent two weeks with me finding specific and out-of-the-way sites I wished to write about, including remote and towering Niedzica, which used to guard the far Hungarian border.

I had the remarkable experience of being arrested twice within ninety minutes for speeding in Czechoslovakia, once at forty miles an hour, once at forty-five. 'Polish license plates will trap you every time,' my companion explained. One had to pay the fine in Czechoslovakian currency, of course. But it could be purchased only miles distant from the point of arrest. I left Czechoslovakia just ahead of the police, who wanted to make a third arrest. I left Poland one week before martial law was declared.

The point of these comments is that I was constantly befriended and advised by a sterling group of Polish men and women who discussed

with me hour after hour every aspect of Polish history that I proposed touching. Normally, as I have done in my other novels, I would list their names, their impressive occupations, their achievements in research and scholarship, but I cannot ascertain whether in the present climate this would hurt or help them.

I know this: they were loyal Poles; they loved their land; they spoke of it with unbounded affection and never a hint of disaffection. They were patriots of a high order; two of them who had spent time in Auschwitz and Majdanek brought tears to my eyes as we retraced in brutal, infinite detail the day-by-day existence in the latter camp.

This book is dedicated to them, and I hope it conveys some of the passion they expressed in telling me of their Poland.

The completed manuscript was read by Professor Marian Turski in Rome and by Klara Glowczewska in New York, both of whom are entitled to my warmest thanks.



# EXPLANATION

This book is a novel. The three main families—the Counts Lubonski, the petty nobles Bukowski, the peasants Buk—are fictional, as is the village of Bukowo, its two castles, the manor house and its peasants' cottages. Most of the characters on whom the action of the novel depends are also fictional.

Because of the importance of the subject matter and the strangeness of Polish history to the average reader, the identification of certain historical characters, settings and incidents may prove helpful.

*Chapter I:* Characters, settings and incidents are fictional.

*Chapter II:* The Tatars Genghis Khan, Batu Khan and Ogoidei are historic, as are Henry the Pious, his mother, Queen Hedwig, and his reluctant general Mieszko the Obese. The siege of Krakow and the Battle of Legnica are historic.

*Chapter III:* The Teutonic Knights Hermann von Salza, Ulrich von Jungingen and Kuno von Lichtenstein are historic, as are Queen Jadwiga from Hungary and King Jagiello and Grand Duke Witold of Lithuania. The Battle of Grunwald is faithfully presented.

*Chapter IV:* The Swedish king and his ravaging are historic, as are the Polish king Jan Kazimir and his aide Jerzy Lubomirski, and the Transylvanian invader Gyorgy Rakoczy. The sieges of Czeszochowa and Zamosc are historic. The Krzyztopor castle existed and was destroyed as depicted and its Ossolinski owners are real, except that the particular members shown here are fictional.

*Chapter V:* All the principal military leaders on all sides are historic: King Jan Sobieski of Poland, Duke Charles of Lorraine, Prince Waldeck of the Germans, Kara Mustafa of the Turks. Inside Vienna, Rüdiger von Starhemberg and Hieronim Lubomirski are historic. Sultan Muhammad IV is depicted accurately, as is the great battle for Vienna.

*Chapter VI:* Princess Lubomirska and her palace at Lancut are historic, as are the Czartoryskis at Pulawy, the Zamoyskis at Zamosc and the Mniszechs at Dukla. The Granickis and their castle at Radzyn are fictional, as are the particular Mniszechs at the Niedzica castle, which is very real. The Palais Princesse in Warsaw is fictional.

*Chapter VII:* Emperor Franz Josef and his mistress Katharina Schratt, who appear briefly, are historic; all else is fictional.

*Chapter VIII:* The Polish prime minister Ignacy Paderewski and the Russian general Semyon Budenny are historic, as is the crucial Battle of Zamosc, which is not much stressed in most current histories because it involved a Polish-Russian battle in which the Poles won.

*Chapter IX:* The three centers of Nazi terror in Lublin—Under the Clock, Zamek Lublin and Majdanek—are historic and are depicted as accurately as data permit, except that the specializations of the various fields at Majdanek varied from time to time. Governor General Hans Frank in Krakow and Oven-Commander Eric Muhsfeldt at Majdanek are historic, but all other characters, Polish or German, are fictional. When I was far into the writing of this chapter, I learned that the rocket experiments at Peenemünde—which I had dealt with in an earlier novel—had been transferred right next door to the imaginary village I had invented for this book. Polygon was very real, as were the expulsions from Zamosc and the Polish retaliation.

*Chapter X:* Except for the brief appearances of President Reagan and Pope John Paul II, all characters are fictional, as are the settings and incidents.

# THE PEOPLE OF POLAND

During the major part of this narrative the people of Poland were organized in these clearly defined categories.

## NOBILITY

*Magnates:* Owners of vast lands and with many prerogatives, they controlled Poland, with no superior power to discipline them. Ostensibly similar to the great barons of England, they were in fact much more powerful, since they refused to grant consistent allegiance to their king. Because of Poland's geographical position, they often allied themselves, individually, to foreign powers. Thus the powerful Radziwills often represented Russian interests; the Leszczyńskis, French. They could be either extremely conservative (Lubomirskis, Mnischevs) or surprisingly liberal (Czartoryskis, Zamoyskis). But they were invariably pig-headed and in the end destroyed their fatherland. The various Counts Lubonski are fictional.

*King:* Originally an inherited title, it became an elected one, the magnates and gentry doing the voting and preferring to grant the crown to someone outside Poland rather than to one of their own, lest he become too strong. The title was not hereditary, and at the death of any king a riotous election ensued, with foreign powers usually participating with nominees favorable to their interests. This curious system provided one superb king (Stefan Batory of Hungary); one pitiful failure (a weak-willed French prince who resigned after three months); two imbecilic nonentities (from Saxony); three reasonably good kings who

brought disaster in their wake (the Vasa rulers from Sweden); and occasionally some authentic Polish nobleman who ruled at least as well as the outsiders (Leszczyński, Poniatowski). They also elected one Pole of dynamic power who proved to be a most memorable ruler (Jan Sobieski, hero of Vienna).

*Princes, counts:* Poland conferred no titles, but the papacy, the Holy Roman Empire and surrounding countries did, often at a stiff price, so there were princes, dukes and counts, but such titles conferred no power or standing superior to what the magnate enjoyed. Prince Lubomirski and Count Lubonski had no greater standing than tough old Mniszech of Dukla and were sometimes much poorer in worldly goods.

*Minor nobility:* Verbally, this category causes trouble. Polish writers use the word *gentry*, which doesn't sound quite right in English. European writers use *petty nobility*, but the adjective has unfortunate connotations. The minor nobility were divided into two groups: those owning land controlling the peasants thereon; and the landless factotums who affiliated themselves with one or another of the magnates. These latter resembled the lesser samurai of Japan, men of good lineage without castles or great estates who survived as hangers-on or as mercenaries. Another useful analogy is with the caballero of Spain, the man with only a horse, a lance and a proud name. The minor nobility provided five functionaries popular in Polish fiction: voivode (powerful governor of a territory); hetman (field marshal of the armies); castellan (governor of a palace and the territory subordinated to it); palatine (palace functionary); starosta (warden or constable). The category includes men almost rich and powerful enough to be magnates, and all intervening levels down to the roving rascal with no castle, no money, no village, no peasants, one horse and pride unbounded. The Bukowski family represents the middle levels and is fictional.

#### CLERGY

*Cardinal, bishop, abbot, monk, friar:* Directly linked to Rome, members of this group owned vast estates and whole villages and towns, with all the peasants included. Militantly defensive, they opposed the Orthodox Catholics of Russia, the Protestants of Sweden and Germany, the Jews of their own country and the pagans of the Baltic lands. Toward the famous Uniates of Poland, created by Rome to suborn the Orthodox, they were ambivalent; just as the good Catholics of Spain found it difficult to accept wholeheartedly Jews who converted, Polish Catholics always suspected the turncoat Uniates. In the earliest years of Polish nationalism, the clergy were often the only people in an area who could read and write, and thus they exerted great political pressure, but quickly the magnates and the better nobility educated themselves, often with great sophistication, and then a balance of power developed.

## TOWNSMEN

*Merchants:* Polish writers use the noun *burgher* to designate this category. A growing power throughout this entire narrative, owning their own stores and small factories, they resembled the middle class of all Europe.

*Craftsmen:* Of considerable skill in Poland, they inhabited the towns, were often owners of their shops, and were governed by their guilds.

## JEWS

*Moneylenders:* Because the Catholic religion commanded its believers not to charge interest, and because Polish knightly tradition forbade its members to engage in business of any kind (an injunction ignored in the case of wheat and lumber), the handling of money became the accepted responsibility of the Jew. Poland was far more liberal in its acceptance of Jews than most of its neighboring countries, so many found refuge there and prospered, but animosities did sometimes flare.

## COUNTRYMEN

*Small landholder:* Although Polish lands were usually held by either the magnates or the crown, clever farmers managed through adroit behavior, or courage in warfare, or service to magnate or king, to sequester small pieces of land on which they made enough profit to acquire other pieces until they became self-sufficient with their own farms, their own horses, their own rude machinery, and in time, hoards of zlotys which they used for the betterment of their families. Often the money was used as a dowry when an especially attractive daughter was married to a penniless member of the minor nobility.

*Peasant:* The vast majority of Poles were peasants, like the vast majority of all people in medieval Europe—and down to modern times in eastern European countries like Russia, Poland, Ukraine, Rumania and Hungary. In other countries they were called *serfs*, *esne*, *villeins*, *thralls*, *vassals*, *muzhiks*. They were not exactly slaves, but they belonged to the land, rarely owned their own homes, had to work stated days for their master, could not remove to another village without permission, had no education and not even a remote hope of bettering themselves. However, as in western Europe although at a much later time, Polish peasants did gain certain freedoms, release from ancient impositions and a measure of land ownership.

Despite this harsh system in which the magnate owned and controlled everything, a kind of rude democracy thrived in Poland, which was always much more liberal than its neighbors. In England only three percent of the population could be classified as nobility; in France, only two percent; but in Poland a full twelve percent were so qualified, which is justification for the Polish use of the designation *gentry*. And

in the towns another ten or twelve percent associated themselves with the nobility, which meant that many citizens had an interest in the government.

The incredible *liberum veto*, by which one man in a Sejm (parliament) of hundreds could negate and prorogue the entire work of the Sejm by merely crying 'I oppose!' was a major cause of Poland's disappearance from the map of Europe, but it was defended as the last refuge upon which a free man (in this case the magnate or his henchman) could rely to defend his freedom. That Poland survived so many fatal reverses was a testimony to its volatile spirit of freedom.

# CONTENTS

Explanation	xiii
The People of Poland	xv
<b>I. Buk versus Bukowski</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. From the East</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>III. From the West</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>IV. From the North</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>V. From the South</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>VI. The Golden Freedom</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>VII. Mazurka</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>VIII. Shattered Dreams</b>	<b>353</b>
<b>IX. The Terror</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>X. Bukowski versus Buk</b>	<b>508</b>

---

---

**POLAND**

---

---



