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Reflections on Jozef Obrebski's Work in Macedonia from the Perspective of American Anthropology

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REFLECTIONS ON JÓZEF OBRĘBSKI'S WORK IN MACEDONIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGY

by JOEL MARTIN HALPERN

This article deals with the difficulties encountered by Józef Obrębski when he immigrated from Poland after World War II. He went first to England where he gave a series of lectures at Oxford University. Then he went to Jamaica under a contract sponsored by the British Colonial Office. Subsequently he moved to New York City where he obtained a job working at the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations. He ended his career at C.W. Post College, a small undergraduate institution near New York City. This article documents how he failed to make a career in the United States. His lack of success is attributed primarily to his failure to publish any of his research findings. However, he did preserve all of his field notes, which provide a rich resource for contemporary researchers.

Artykuł ten omawia trudności, z jakimi spotykał się Józef Obrębski, kiedy wyemigrował z Polski po II wojnie światowej. Najpierw przebywał w Anglii, gdzie dał serię wykładów na Uniwersytecie Oksfordzkim. Następnie wyjechał na Jamajkę w ramach kontraktu finansowanego przez Brytyjski Urząd Do Spraw Kolonii. Później przeprowadził się do Nowego Jorku, gdzie pracował w Zarządzie Rady Narodów Zjednoczonych. Swoją karierę zakończył w C. W. Post College, małej szkole średniej niedaleko Nowego Jorku. Artykuł ten ukazuje, jak Józefowi Obrębskiemu nie udało się zrobić kariery w Stanach Zjednoczonych. Brak sukcesu wynikał przede wszystkim z nieumiejętności publikowania wyników własnych badań etnologicznych, prowadzonych w różnych rejonach świata. Ob-

rębski zachował jednak wszystkie swoje notatki terenowe, które stanowią bogate źródło dla współczesnych badaczy.

Józef Obrębski (1905-1967) had a moderately long, interesting, and, in some respects, tragic life. The consequences of the Second World War and the subsequent Communist domination of Eastern Europe altered his life profoundly. While he and his immediate family escaped relatively unscathed and even his voluminous scholarly documents were preserved he was never able to successfully readapt to the life he chose first in the lands of the then British Empire and finally in America. It would indeed be a limited approach to judge a person's life simply by their public record, in this case by a published output. Further it certainly is a tribute to the significance of Obrębski's scholarship that now, more than a third of a century after his death, researchers in Macedonia and Poland have chosen to explore in detail the documents he left behind.

Before undertaking this essay I used a quick computer search approach to get an idea of his published output. Harvard University, which has perhaps the best collection of Slavic publications in the U.S. list some 6 items for Obrębski. Of this number we can immediately deduct four since they are the result of this author's relatively brief work with Obrębski beginning more than a quarter of a century ago (*YESTERDAY'S* 1973¹, *OBREBSKI* 1977). The other two relate to his work in Poland and represent a research paper and a bibliographical presentation of the work of others (*OBREBSKI* 1931, 1936). Another approach is to use Web search engines, which, in a limited way does pick up all sorts of information about a person's life and activities. This approach is even more disappointing since of the 9 references all are either to my publications on Obrębski or to his archival collection, which I brought to the University of Massachusetts. By way of contrast with other members of Obrębski's generation of scholars of Polish origin, Harvard thus lists for Florian Znaniecki (1882-1958) some 21 books and monographs in Polish and

¹ The first publication issued while Tamara Obrębska was alive was *Yesterday's People, Peasants of Polesie, an Exhibition of Photographs of Rural Eastern Poland in the 1930s* by Joseph Obrębski, October 3 to October 14, 1973, University Art. Gallery, Herter Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst (edited by Joel M. Halpern). She attended this exhibit and was most pleased with the interested it elicited. The second one was "Ritual and Social Structure in a Macedonian Village" by Joseph Obrębski, edited by Barbara Kerewsky Halpern and Joel M. Halpern, Research Report No. 15, Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, May 1977 (this monograph was also issued by the International Area Studies Programs at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in 1977 as Program of Soviet and East European Studies Occasional Papers Series No. 1). It was also academically published in Polish in Warsaw but without attribution to the editors.

English and the Web has more than 600 references, while for Bronisław Malinowski, Obrębski's Professor at the London School of Economics, there are approximately 3,700 Web references. Admittedly both these men are a bit older but the comparison is still apt.

Since the focus of this essay is Obrębski's work in Macedonia another perspective is to examine Obrębski's work in Macedonia within the context of his overall career. Obrębski's life was spent within the contexts of six distinctive cultural environments three of them Anglophone and three Slavic. There were two South Slavic sites of his field research. First in Bulgaria and then, subsequently in Macedonia. With regard to Poland where he lived before World War II, while he never did work in Poland proper, outside of some work as a student in an area near Cracow. He did, however, upon his return from Macedonia conduct investigations in Polesie, then in eastern Poland among populations who spoke dialects of Ukrainian and Belarussian. We can then consider the variety of settings, in which he lived and worked. He, of course, had his mature roots in prewar Poland, within the context of the pre World War II boundaries. Then there was his work in Macedonia in the early 1930s. He was prepared for this research by his doctoral studies in London. After a stay in England after World War II there was his postwar fieldwork in Afro-Caribbean Jamaica when it was still a colony of England and, finally, his residence in the United States. Macedonia was an interlude, although an important one. His major fieldwork and intellectual engagement was, however, in Poland (Polesie), and, at the end, in Jamaica. In terms of job descriptions, intellectual environments and approximate chronology he was initially a student researcher, assistant in an ethnology department in Poland, graduate student in London, and up to World War II he was a researcher, applied sociologist-anthropologist in Poland attached to governmental and academic institutions in positions of increasing responsibility. I have avoided any detailed descriptions of these activities since they are most ably documented in Anna Engelking's paper in this volume.

Following the war he emigrated from Poland. In England he was invited by his old colleague from the Malinowski days at the University of London, Evans-Pritchard, who was then at Oxford, to deliver a series of lectures, which were later edited and published after his death by this author. They are very well done, clearly written and focus well on a series of then critical problems dealing with peasant society and its transformations. He was presenting materials of which British anthropologists were then unaware. But, unfortunately, he did not publish this material. However, through his anthropological contacts in London he was able to obtain a research grant to fund investigations on family life in Jamaica. Again he failed to manifest his findings by writing the expected research reports and there were no monographic publications. Essentially, the conclusion of his fieldwork in Jamaica marked the formal end of his anthropological career. He then obtained employment with the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations in New York City.

Finally at the end of his life he was a professor of sociology at C. W. Post College of Long Island University where his wife Tamara was also an adjunct professor of sociology. He encountered all the frustrations that one might expect of a well-trained, academic oriented researcher in a marginal university setting where one's intellectual perspective was irrelevant. His job was to teach beginning students in a sociology department.

During his years at Post College there is evidence in his archive that he presented a paper at an anthropology meeting and even submitted it for publication in a well-known journal, but it never appeared². Before arriving at Post College he had spent his career with premier institutions in Poland prior to the war. He received his education at the Universities of Cracow and London. After the war he lectured at Oxford University in 1946 (see the text of his lectures in the publication of Barbara and Joel Halpern: OBRĘBSKI 1976). The latter job was the initial step following his decision to emigrate from Poland for political reasons [Correspondence with Anna Engelking]. The immediate postwar period was a time of great expansion in the American university system and it was also one of great growth in the field of area studies of which the Slavic world was an important component. During the period of his employment at Post College there was a similar period of growth. But Obrębski lived on the margin of these developments for he had essentially no publication record in English although he certainly had admiring colleagues who valued his exceptional intelligence. There were large funds available for research not all of it directly linked to cold war policies. There were also numerous publishing outlets.

As professor Elizabeth NOTTINGHAM (1968) noted in her obituary published in *The American Sociologist*:

"Joseph Obrębski remained throughout his life a humanist in the deepest sense of the word. He was a man of exceptional modesty but great independence of spirit. He possessed a magnificent sense of humor and was a wonderful conversationalist. He represented some of the highest values of his Polish Cultural Heritage. The same spirit of open-handed hospitality and concern for the intellectual development of others was also evident in his contact with American undergraduates whom he encountered during his teaching activity not only at C. W. Post College, but also at Brooklyn College and Queens College of the City University of New York".

It is certainly important to know that those who knew him considered Józef Obrębski a fine human being and this sincerity and desire to help others may have also aided him in his fieldwork in Macedonia. Importantly, however, this account

² The text „Ritual and Social Structure in a Macedonian Village” (1961) which was to be published in the journal „Comparative Studies in Society and History”. It is not clear from the available documentation why this project was never completed.

mentions nothing about his professional work relationships with U.S. colleagues. There is good reason to assume that this aspect of his life did not exist very much while he was at Post College. There are, however, other references to his work with students and his role in promoting anthropology at Post College where it is noted that he was the first anthropologist on staff there. But the obituary also notes that he was an associate professor at the time of his death at age 62. This is a marked indication that at this small and relatively marginal American College his work was not sufficiently esteemed by his colleagues and employers to promote him to the rank of professor something that would normally be expected. He was also evidently in need of money since he felt the need to teach adjunct courses at Brooklyn College and Queens College. Such courses were most often taught by graduate students pursuing their PhD at the major graduate institutions in New York City such as Columbia University and New York University and, later, the City University of New York. There also seems little doubt that he had heavy teaching obligations at Post College. I had a job to directly observe these matters since Obrębski taught at C. W. Post shortly following the period when I was then a graduate student at Columbia.

Without doubt he probably had about double the workload of professors as at Columbia University who were engaged in research. Indeed considering his added courses at Queens and Brooklyn College a triple load would have been more accurate. It would indeed have been most unusual if in the midst of all this teaching of undergraduates he found any time to do scholarly writing.

After writing the above comment I searched my files and found an excellent paper prepared by an undergraduate student, Anthony J. Bellotti, and submitted to me for credit in May 1992, the year I retired. This is already a decade ago and I wish to quote from it here extensively because of its importance. It should be viewed as an historical fragment, which — under ideal circumstances — should require additional documentation. But I cite it here, because it is unlikely that we will have more to supplement the accounts of what happened some forty years ago during the final part of Obrębski's career at C.W. Post College, the only period remaining in his life, when he might have had an opportunity to work further on his Macedonia materials. Bellotti describes his visit to C.W. Post College and the interviews he conducted there. I have refrained from extensive editing the student's text. I have however shortened it when there is speculation that does not materially add to the documentation.

"I turned to Professor Joseph Kissinger of C.W. Post College who was a rather young colleague (lecturer) of Obrębski's as well as the secretary, Alice Gorby, of the Sociology-Anthropology Department. Much to my surprise they remembered him clearly and vividly more than a quarter century after his death. Obrębski had worked at the United Nations for ten years as Senior Social Affairs Officer in the Trusteeship department. He had arrived at C. W. Post from Hofstra University. Initially

I spoke with Alice Gorby on the phone. She immediately knew to whom I referred. She remembered Obrębski as a highly respectable man who was kind and gracious. She was delighted to hear that someone was researching his work and very helpful in referring me to Prof. Kissinger as well as Prof. Louis Weinstein (whom I have not reached yet for an interview)."

"I wanted to interview these former colleagues of Obrębski's to bridge the gap between his sudden departure from Jamaica for the UN and his arrival at C. W. Post. Although Obrębski had already been at the UN for 10 years before he arrived at Post, I thought that they might have spoken with him, perhaps at length, about his experience in Jamaica and with the Survey. Initially in my phone conversation with Kissinger I did not want to ask very personal questions regarding the development of Obrębski's career or anything suggesting an inquiry into the events leading to his death."

"I expressed to Prof. Kissinger that I was researching the Archives (on Obrębski at the University of Massachusetts) and that I was interested in what they might remember about him. He was rather open and frank about Obrębski's relationship with the American academic community and about C.W. Post College. Kissinger told me «we brought him here» from Hofstra University during the time when the College was just developing its Sociology-Anthropology Department. The College was founded in 1956 as a Junior College (first two years of University courses only — J. H.). Obrębski arrived in 1962. He said that he felt close to Obrębski, that he was very approachable and recognized by the students for his zeal and commitment to their development, and his unwavering scholarship. As a young graduate student/lecturer, Kissinger remembered the good conversation and rapport with both Tamara Obrębski, his wife, and Joseph. They spoke on a personal and professional level.

Yet the exuberance that Kissinger spoke to me about their time together was also followed by a reminder of how Joseph Obrębski suffered much in his relationships with the larger academic community. I asked, rather bluntly, why it might be that Obrębski never published anything about Jamaica or anything since returning to the academic environment. «Frankly,» he told me, «there was a lack of appreciation for the quality of his research here in the States.» At first this seemed a bit too simplistic. «In fact,» Kissinger continued, «Obrębski was very frustrated because nobody was interested in his work. He was not very happy. He received little administrative support even here at C. W. Post.» I got the distinct impression of a man still under the kind of censorship of his work as when he worked under the Survey and Edith Clarke (with whom he frequently quarreled about academic integrity in research — J. H.). Kissinger did not say why his work was not accepted. However, this «lack of support» was loudly enforced in Obrębski's relegation to Assistant Professor until 1966 when he was finally granted an Associateship. At the same time, Kissinger told me, Obrębski's son Stephen, who had lived with him in Jamaica at the age of [ten], was of the same rank as an assistant professor of Ocea-

nography at Stoneybrook College (it is actually the State University of New York at Stoneybrook and a graduate institution while C.W. Post was strictly an undergraduate institution — J.H.). Tamara, Obrębski's wife, was an adjunct professor at C.W. Post. Kissinger underscored just how this rendering to obscurity «rankled him,» indicating how Obrębski frequently uttered obscenities about his status. Kissinger was able to offer quite a valuable perspective as to why Obrębski did not publish anything after leaving Jamaica”.

Several years afterward, in her conversations with Prof. Louis Weinstein and Prof. Joseph Kissinger, Anna Engelking obtained a confirmation of this perspective on Obrębski later years. They remarked on the singular modesty of Józef Obrębski. In these conversations a hypothesis was suggested that his failure to publish derived from his lack of concern with respect to academic titles and the formalities of academic life in general. This was combined with a difficulty in adjusting to life in the US. These attitudes produced a situation in which Józef Obrębski kept to himself. He did not like to talk much about himself. When speaking of the past he mostly recalled his WW II experiences in occupied Poland. This experience understandably involved a major trauma for all of his family. In the 60s he already gave the impression of a tired and resigned man [1996 conversation of Anna Engelking with Prof. Louis Weinstein and Prof. Joseph Kissinger].

From this writer's point of view while these observations of his colleagues certainly had a validity within the C. W. Post College setting the sad and tragic fact was that Obrębski was totally cut off from the wider academic world. This was the world in which research on Eastern Europe was valued and well funded. Similarly there was a growing interest in the so-called developing world of which Jamaica was very much apart. In turn the developing world was linked to developments at the United Nations, to questions of colonialism which were very much a part of the work of the Trusteeship Council. In the right setting someone with Obrębski's background could have made an outstanding career as many intellectual immigrants from Eastern Europe did. His extensive archive on Jamaica and the Trusteeship Council awaits still exploration by future scholars. Many foreign born academics, specifically refugees from communism, began their careers at places like C. W. Post but through extensive networking, participation in professional meetings giving papers presenting their research and, most important, through publication they were able to move from jobs on the outer fringes of academia to positions closer to the center of activity. Obrębski totally failed in these endeavors. His archive evinces some attempts but they were never followed up with persistence.

But in a contrasting context he did retain his ties to Poland and at the time of his death, he had an invitation for the academic year 1968-1969 as a visiting professor to Warsaw University to expand the cultural anthropology department and its offerings [Correspondence with Anna Engelking]. Probably these contacts with Poland helped him to keep up his spirits at a very trying time in his life. Unfortunately he did not live to take advantage of this significant opportunity.

It is also germane to note that Obrębski's research in the Balkans was not unique for this period. During the time he spent in Macedonia there were other scholars at work in the area. They came from abroad (the U. S. and U. K. as well as within the area) and within what was then Yugoslavia. Perhaps most immediately pertinent was the work of Professor Milenko Filipovic who before the Second World War was based at the University of Skopje. Professor Filipovic was an ethnologist who had been trained by the well-known Serbian human geographer, Jovan Cvijic who in the interwar period taught at the University of Belgrade. Not only did Filipovic carry out numerous investigations in Macedonia but he also founded a journal of ethnology based at the University of Skopje, where he taught ethnology in the early 1930s³.

As far as I am aware they never met. Although Obrębski and Filipovic did share one point in common in that they both received Rockefeller fellowships. Although Filipovic received his on the eve of World War II but decided to remain in Skopje and not seek refuge in the U. S. In 1951-1952 he did, however, come to the U.S. and spent most of his time at Harvard University. At that time he was employed by the Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences in Belgrade. Filipovic was my mentor at that time of my first visit to the Balkans in 1953-1954. Obrębski would have been in the U.S. in that period but apparently their paths did not cross when Filipovic was in the U.S. from 1951-1952. I first met Filipovic at Columbia University in the fall of 1952. At that time Obrębski was presumably at the United Nations, a short subway ride away. Filipovic, who was so important in my initial researches in Yugoslavia, was introduced to me by one of my Columbia professors, Philip Mosely. One can imagine that if Obrębski and Filipovic had had the chance to meet in the latter parts of their lives they would have had much to discuss. Filipovic during his stay in the U. S. spent most of his time

³ A selection of Milenko Filipovic's work in translation was published as: *Among the People, Native Yugoslav Ethnography, Selected Writings of Milenko S. Filipovic*, edited by E. A. Hammel, Robert S. Ehrich, Radmila Fabijanic-Filipovic, Joel M. Halpern, Albert B. Lord, *Papers in Slavic Philology* 3, Michigan Slavic Publications, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, 1982. A bibliography of Filipovic's work is included in this publication. If we limit our look at Filipovic's publications to the period from 1930-1933, we find first of all that he published extensively in Macedonian publications such as *Glasnik Skopskog naucnog drustva (GSND)*, *Godisnjak skopskog filozofskog fakulteta*, *Juzni Pregled*, *Skoplje*. He also contributed to the publications of the Serbian Academy of Sciences in Belgrade, the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences in Zagreb, the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade. Filipovic also published in 1930 and 1931 in the proceedings of the III Congress of Slavic geographers and ethnographers which was held in 1930 in Belgrade. In 1931 he published a report on his work in Strumica of that year in the *GSND*. We can simply conclude that between 1930 and 1933 Filipovic had 35 publications including survey of the ethnographic literature of Macedonia. Some, if not all, of these publications were presumably available in Warsaw. Since Obrębski was a careful scholar it is reasonable to suppose that he might have consulted some of Filipovic's publications before going to Macedonia.

at Harvard but also traveled widely. He was at the center of East European research. Indeed it can probably be said with some justification that Filipovic during his year in the U. S. encountered more of the research life at American Universities than Obrębski did during his total residence in the U. S. sad as that may seem to be.

Then there was Philip Mosely. He was in the 1950s and 1960s Professor of Political Science and Director of the Russian Institute at Columbia University and one of the founders of Slavic and East European Studies in the U. S. He was a close colleague of Filipovic and was instrumental in aiding him in renewing his Rockefeller Foundation fellowship. I initially met Filipovic in Mosely's office and through him made my initial arrangements for my doctoral research in Serbia. It is more than likely that Mosely and Obrębski did not overlap in their times in Macedonia. At the time I met him Mosely was not only an expert on the Balkans, but he was a key member in the American delegation that negotiated the postwar treaty with Yugoslavia concerning the country's western boundary with Italy, especially the area of Trieste. He was also both during and after the war a key advisor to the State Department and his original expertise involved the Soviet Union. He was resident in Moscow during the 1930s purge trials.

But in the late 1930s the American Social Science Research Council, in response to Mosely's application for funding for a historical project, insisted that he spend time in the Balkans studying household and family structure. As a result he wrote a series of now classic articles on the *zadruga*, the South Slavic extended family as a result of his travels throughout the Balkans. When I knew him, beginning in the early 1950s, he was also a colleague of Margaret Mead and they had collaborated on a number of projects involving anthropology and Slavic Studies. After Mosely's death in the late 1960s Mead wrote a chapter for a book issued on the occasion of a conference concerning Mosely's work to which Yugoslav and Bulgarian ethnologists were invited (included was the daughter of Milenko Filipovic who was then deceased). This book also had a chapter dealing with extended family households in Macedonia (MOSLEY 1976).

It seems quite clear that Mosely and Obrębski never met. Yet contacts could have been made quite easily. Sula Benet who was from Poland and had initially studied there was then a professor of anthropology at Hunter College. She was also a friend of Margaret Mead. I knew Sula Benet quite casually and after Józef Obrębski's death his widow Tamara contacted me at the suggestion of Benet concerning the disposition of the Obrębski archives and photographs.

Since a channel existed for Obrębski through Sula Benet to both Mosely and Mead and, incidentally, to my professor at Columbia, Conrad Arensberg. Mosely, Mead and Arensberg and even Benet were either at the very center of East European research activities as they concerned anthropology or at least knew everyone else who was involved. This included contacts at all the major American Universities, all the funding agencies. For that time both Mosely and Mead exercised enor-

mous power to get grants, to recommend scholars for prime university appointments. They also had a plethora of contacts with publishers. Why then did Sula Benet wait until Obrebski's death to contact me about the disposal of his archives? Now, of course, there is no one to ask. Did Obrebski purposely avoid contacts that might have reduced his isolation and opened up numerous opportunities? One can only speculate. The only matter that stands out is his consistent failure to publish any of the results of his research in Macedonia in English, or in any other language for that matter.

It is also appropriate to mention two other scholars who were active in the Balkans in the 1930s. One was the American rural sociologist Irwin Sanders who arrived in Sofia to teach at the American College there, a missionary related institution, the year I was born, in 1929. As of this writing Professor Sanders is still alive. While teaching at the American College he became interested in Bulgarian village life and began a study of a village near Sofia. This research subsequently became his doctoral dissertation in sociology at Cornell University where he enrolled after his return to the U.S. It was published under the title *Balkan Village* (SANDERS 1949). In addition to his teaching career Sanders spent a period working for the Ford Foundation and was much involved with international education. He taught both at the University of Kentucky and at Boston University. The final scholar that I wish to mention is Rudolf Bicanic who began his career as an agricultural economist and became associated with the Croatian Peasant Party in the 1930s. In this capacity he prepared a number of detailed reports on the difficulties of peasant life in Croatia in the 1930s especially as a result of the Great Depression. He, like Obrebski, received an education in England and a number of his books and articles appeared in both English and Croatian⁴. Sanders was both in New York (at the Ford Foundation) and in Boston (at Boston University) during the entire period of Obrebski's residence in the U. S. In terms of Obrebski's interest in Macedonia and Sander's long-term interest in Bulgaria and the fact that they had both done studies of village communities – this alone would have been ample reason for them to meet. Like Mosely and Mead, Sanders was also at the heart of grant and research funding. He also was at that time employed by the Ford Foundation. But again they seem never to have met. Maybe Obrebski's prideful sense of himself was a part of the problem.

⁴ Most pertinent to our interests is his monograph: *How the People Live: Life in the Passive Regions (Peasant Life in Southwestern Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina; Yugoslavia in 1935)* (BICANIC 1981). It was edited by Joel M. Halpern and Elinor Murray Despalatovic, Stephen Clissold; translation (1941) completed and substantially revised by Mirjan Despalatovic, preface by Elinor Murray Despalatovic, afterword by Joel M. Halpern, Research Report No 21, Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, September 1981. It was first published in 1936 in Zagreb under the title: *Kako Zivi Narod, Zivot u pasivnim krajevima*.

I think it can conclusively be stated that, apart from his Polish contacts, after his work in Jamaica, Obrębski remained totally isolated from the English-speaking world as far as research and publication are concerned. Obviously this was a loss, especially to Obrębski, but also to the wider scholarly community that would have benefited from his potentially seminal contributions. Clearly his inability to publish had drastic consequences. It is not at all surprising that in the very marginal corner of academia in which he found himself there was no interest in or support for his work. He was involved in a downward spiral. His pay was almost certainly limited in consonance with the type of institution in which he was employed. This forced him to do extra teaching of elementary courses in the City University system and he clearly had no time to edit his massive accumulation of material for publication.

This was also the time in the early to mid sixties in which extensive support for research was available from institutions such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Sciences Foundation as well as private sources such as the Ford Foundation. Such support would have provided him with full salary maintenance for a year or several years. But to apply for such grants you needed an initial record of substantial publication in English. In his sixties tired and despondent he was, in effect, living the life of a graduate student and his son was already surpassing him. If he had had some contact with the world of scholarship in anthropology and or Slavic Studies I would certainly have encountered him. In the period 1963-1967 I was teaching at Brandeis University and then from 1965-1967 at the Russian Research Center at Harvard University. It was a period of excellent funding of even large and elaborate research projects in Eastern Europe, a time when there were many opportunities for appointments at major universities with Slavic Centers. His researches would have been of intense interest. It is indeed a sad story. There are no villains here, he lacked basic political survival skills and the resulting traumas associated with his downward mobility, without doubt, caused him untold misery and doubtless shortened his life.

There is a final part of these events and that has to do with the miraculous survival of the major part of his archives. As noted earlier I first met Józef Obrębski's widow Tamara through Professor Sula Benet who was then teaching at Hunter College (now part of the City University of New York). After initial phone conversations I invited her to Amherst and she was my houseguest and we then devised a plan for a photo exhibit involving Obrębski's dramatic photographs of Polesie. The exhibit opened in one of the University of Massachusetts's art galleries on October 3, 1973 and I obtained money for a modest catalog *Yesterday's People, Peasants of Polesie, An Exhibit of Rural Eastern Poland in the 1930's*. (YESTERDAY'S 1973). The exhibit was a success and there was significant publicity in the local papers, in part inspired by the fact that the area around the University was settled in the early 20th century by immigrant Polish farmers who replaced the original Yankees who had moved west.

From the beginning it seemed logical to bring the archives to the University where we then had a modest East European Studies program, a graduate department of anthropology with several professors interested in Europe and a number actively researching in Eastern Europe. We also had a Slavic Librarian of Polish origin who was keen to build our library resources. However, Tamara Obreński was very hesitant to part with her treasures, especially the many photographs. There was no comparable institution in the New York metropolitan area that was competing for the collection. After Tamara's death her son was eager to arrange matters and have the voluminous material removed from the house in Queens so he could proceed with the sale. As a result I traveled to New York with a graduate student Dennis Venencak, of Polish origin who later did his doctoral work in Poland. Unfortunately he died too early of a brain tumor at the beginning of his career. He was most helpful. We rented and loaded a large truck and carted the extensive collection to Amherst. Obreński's son generously provided an initial grant that was used to catalog the Jamaican material. A local Slavist, Galina Rothstein, cataloged the Polish material. The Macedonia material is relatively well indexed but has not been as well cataloged as the other collections.

One must, of necessity, be respectful of the complexities of his life experience. But the essential point remains that, for whatever reason, Józef Obreński did not pursue a normal academic career at a University or research institute just prior to World War II. Further, by implication, he was something of a perfectionist. Thus the author's publication of Obreński's Oxford lectures did not require a great deal of editing as a comparison between the archival copy and final book publication text will demonstrate. Further, as has been noted, he tragically lacked the necessary skills to survive in the politics of the academic world as witness his Jamaican research experience. Thus when he finally came to the U.S. he lacked the essential formal credentials for an academic important at a major research university. His failure to produce a timely research report on his Jamaican experience evidently alienated his prestigious academic supporters in England. Thus the path was apparently set for his marginalization from the then quite active world of anthropological research. Apparently this marginalization had a very destructive effect on his health and no doubt contributed to his relatively early death. Fortunately he has bequeathed to us his very rich archive which documents the full extent of his talent and accomplishments.

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