



# Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968

By Professor Marci Shore

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"In the elegant capital city of Warsaw, the editor Mieczyslaw Grydzewski would come with his two dachshunds to a café called Ziemianska." Thus begins the history of a generation of Polish literati born at the *fin de siècle*. They sat in Café Ziemianska and believed that the world moved on what they said there. *Caviar and Ashes* tells the story of the young avant-gardists of the early 1920s who became the radical Marxists of the late 1920s. They made the choice for Marxism before Stalinism, before socialist realism, before Marxism meant the imposition of Soviet communism in Poland. It ended tragically.

Marci Shore begins with this generation's coming of age after the First World War and narrates a half-century-long journey through futurist manifestos and proletarian poetry, Stalinist terror and Nazi genocide, a journey from the literary cafés to the cells of prisons and the corridors of power. Using newly available archival materials from Poland and Russia, as well as from Ukraine and Israel, Shore explores what it meant to live Marxism as a European, an East European, and a Jewish intellectual in the twentieth century.

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- Rank: #1376486 in eBooks
- Published on: 2006-04-10
- Released on: 2006-04-10
- Format: Kindle eBook

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### Review

“This book is utterly original, and its scholarship—and I don’t use this word lightly—is breathtaking. Shore has produced a penetrating study of a host of the twentieth century’s most perplexing issues.”—Jan T. Gross, Princeton University

(Jan T. Gross 1)

“Shore chronicles the collective journey of a group of brilliant and endlessly dedicated intellectuals through one of the worst hells, both physical and spiritual, of the century just ended. There is scarcely any study I can think of in any language to compare to this one.”—Michael Steinlauf, Gratz College

(Michael Steinlauf 2)

“A marvelous example of intellectual history at its best, this book captures the moral and political dilemmas of a generation of brilliant writers who experienced communism first as a dream, then as a nightmare. A superb addition to the ever disturbing literature on the ‘God that failed.’”—Vladimir Tismaneanu, author of *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*

(Vladimir Tismaneanu 3)

"Marci Shore's account of the founding generation of Polish intellectual Communists reaches far beyond its subject. In its deeply engaged narrative of the lives and illusions of the twentieth-century Polish avant-garde, *Caviar and Ashes* recovers a fascinating, talented community of men, women and ideas now rapidly receding beyond memory. Professor Shore's history of Polish Marxists is not just an impressive work of historical scholarship; it is a moving elegy to a turbulent century and a forgotten world."—Tony Judt, author of *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*

(Tony Judt)

### About the Author

**Marci Shore** is assistant professor of history at Yale University.

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