

## The Sheriff's Dream: Jacob's Redemption

**Arthur Kasper**

iUniverse (Sep 7, 2018)

Softcover \$13.99 (208pp)

978-1-5320-4256-0

*The Sheriff's Dream is a fascinating and dense story about Cold War-era Poland and the fight for democracy.*

Arthur Kasper's political thriller *The Sheriff's Dream* is more cerebral than action-packed, filled with Catholic theology and a strong sense of history.

Jacob Gorska, who was born in Poland in the 1930s, relocated to the US as a young man. Now, at the height of the Cold War, he works as a scholar and serves God as a Jesuit priest. He comes to the attention of Pope John Paul II and President Ronald Reagan because of the dual nature of his employment.

Gorska is given a top secret mission to go behind the lines in Poland. Under the leadership of the communist party and General Jaruzelski, the country has just declared a state of martial law. Gorska transforms into a revolutionary to make the pope and the world's top cop, President Reagan, happy.

The novel is a love letter to Poland's Catholic priests and the laborers of the Solidarity movement who helped to topple Poland's Communist regime. Gorska functions as a composite of several historical figures, while his mission, although exaggerated to the point that he receives special forces training from the US Army, is a snapshot of the democratic world's final victory over the USSR in 1989.

An omniscient narrator waters down Gorska's story, depersonalizing its very personal elements and downplaying Gorska's bravery. Gorska's family's backstory is included, detailing their suffering during the German and Soviet invasions of 1939. It is an unnecessary addition and adds a whole section to an already crowded tale. Still, Gorska is constructed in thorough detail. The story that surrounds him is less cohesive.

At its start, the novel works to encapsulate all of Poland's history—from the height of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the nadir of Poland's three-way occupation in 1795. Related writing is impersonal and akin to reportage, and the work is too broad. This history telling feels cramped inside of the speedy political thriller, with digressions heaped upon digressions.

When the novel transitions into Gorska's story, its pace picks up, though the writing remains detached, even through emotionally involving accounts of Gorska and his homeland. Gorska's final stand against the empire makes for compelling reading, even if it is sometimes difficult to buy into his transformation from a priest to a secret operative.

*The Sheriff's Dream* is a fascinating and dense story about Cold War-era Poland and the fight for democracy.

BENJAMIN WELTON (May 8, 2019)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*