



Prince Polonia

Max Cegielski

A retro road novel

Rights: World, All Languages

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Modern & contemporary fiction

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For rights information, please contact:

[monika@syndykatautorow.com.pl](mailto:monika@syndykatautorow.com.pl)

or

[renata@redrockliteraryagency.com](mailto:renata@redrockliteraryagency.com)

### Keynote

*Prince Polonia* is a fascinating and irresistibly surreal story of friendship, love and smuggling set in the times of the social and economic transformation of the late '80s in Eastern Europe.

## Book description

Szczecin (Poland) in the mid-1980s: empty shelves in the shops and the first 'young wolves' out there wanting to make money on the cross-border small trade.

Beginner smugglers Radek and Jan, two friends from school, are in love with the same girl. When Magda leaves for India with her father, they decide to follow her there. They are not the only ones – more and more Polish smugglers go eastwards, following in the footsteps of the Polish Himalayan mountaineers.

The Radek and Jan start with crystal glassware, hairdryers and alcohol from Eastern Europe and UAE, quickly progressing to electronics and then gold smuggled from Singapore to New Delhi via Kathmandu. They don't yet know that dark clouds are gathering over their heads at the highest levels of power, both in the Polish People's Republic and in India. Their undertakings are closely watched by a member of staff from the Polish embassy in Delhi.

Can one escape Poland and politics?

Will friendship survive the battle over money and love?

Will the East bring them wealth or enlightenment?

## More information about the book

*Prince Polonia* with its thriller elements is also about the encounter with the exotic, same in any era, from Conrad to Kapuściński. The book brilliantly deals with the myth of objectivity of reportage and shows that it doesn't in fact exist. Even though the novel is based on facts, it proves that imagination beats reality. It shows it both on the formal level – by intertwining different narration lines which are not mutually consistent and compatible – and in its content, showing the protagonists' audacity which turns them from small-town boys into international smugglers.

It is also a coming-of-age story, filled with nostalgia for the lost youth and male friendship. It ends with both protagonists rethinking their past and inevitability of fate, even though at the time their choices seemed free and undetermined.

This is also a story of the forgotten beginnings of Polish capitalism, of the Polish People's Republic's diplomatic secrets and betrayals. The descriptions of places are highly visual, filled with a lot of detail, thanks to the author's personal experiences as well as his good research.

## USPs

*Prince Polonia* is inspired by the real events and stories of smugglers of various luxury goods and gold operating on the Silk Road of the '80s: East Asian - India – Eastern Europe.

- [Here's a link to a documentary](#) directed by Max Cegielski that reveals the history and secrets of this contraband:
- *Prince Polonia* was the name of a hotel in Mumbai that became a central place to the contraband operations.

The story begins in the mid-'80s and shows fascinating and very often the surreal cultural, social and economic transformation of Polish communism into early so-called wild-west capitalism.

Funny dialogues, fast-paced action, poetic descriptions of Indian and Polish People's Republic realities of the '80s.

The little known, insanely interesting plot in the recent history of Poland, served as an addictive adventure story.

*Prince Polonia* is a beautifully crafted mixture of contemporary fiction, thriller, travel writing and reportage from one of the best Polish travel writers and journalists.

## About the author



**Max Cegielski** (born in Warsaw, 1975) – is a newspaper journalist, writer, curator, and explorer of the world and its cultures.

He is the author of several reportages, novels and biographies, including: *Masala* (2002), *Apocalypso* (2004), *Drunk with God* (2007), and *The Eye of the World. From Constantinople to Istanbul* (2009) (for which he received the Mosaic literary prize), *In the Footsteps of the Rechowiczs* (2011) and *The Great Player. From Żmudź to the Roof of the World* (2015).

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He worked with *Jazz Radio* and *Radio Bis*. He wrote cultural and travel contributions for major Polish media outlets and newspapers such as: *Dziennik*, *Metropol*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Newsweek*, *Machina*, *Fluid*, and *Tygodnik Powszechny*.

Max is also a co-founder of Masala Sound System, with which he was awarded the title of "Antifascist of the Year 2004".

Until 2015, a tv presenter at TVP Culture where he co-hosted of *The Departure Hall* show for which he received the Grand Press award.

Currently, he co-runs *The Bookshop* (*Xiegarnia*) show on TVN24, for which he received the Laura award from the Polish Chamber of Books and hosts his own show at [Newonce Radio](#).

### In the press (click the links):

[Culture.PL](#) – Author's profile

[Krytyka Polityczna](#) – Author's articles

[Newsweek: Max Cegielski](#) - A rebel or a conformist?

[Polityka: Prince Polonia](#) – book review

## Additional information

- The ©Poland Translation Program (run and organized by The Polish Book Institute) offers translation and production grants for foreign publishers. For more information, follow the [link](#)
- Over 4,000 copies sold since the book release in June 2020
- 5,000 words English sample translation by Anna Blasiak is available on request.
- Readerships 20+



Ideal literary adventure for readers of acclaimed backlist titles such as *Shantaram* by Gregory David Roberts, *Mr. Nice* by Howard Mark, *Marching Powder* and *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, as well as of recently published bestsellers, such as: *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens and/or *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri.

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