

Kresy-Siberia “Generations Remember” 2015 Conference

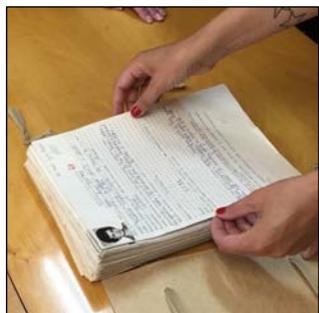
A personal perspective from Marek and Iwona Krason, London



Sybirak Memorial Oak planting at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier



The personal files archive at the Związek Sybiraków headquarters.



Biographical files of 100,000 Sybiraks still waiting to be digitized



Kresy-Siberia’s wreath ready to be laid at the Sybirak Day ceremonies



With sculptor of Monument to the Murdered and Perished in the East

BACKGROUND

Iwona has been a member of Kresy-Siberia for a while. Her father Ryszard, though born in Łódź, was living in Czortków in September 1939. As his father was in the military, Ryszard, his mother and sister were deported to Kazakhstan in the second wave of deportations. Following amnesty he left his mother and sister to join the Anders Army with whom he fought in the battle of Monte Cassino and in the Italian Campaign. Iwona’s mother and family lived on an osada, Chorów nad Horyniem, Wółyń. As settlers they were in the first wave of deportations to Wologda. Following amnesty, Iwona’s grandfather and eldest Aunt joined Anders’ Army and the rest of the family followed the army as dependants.

Marek, being the dutiful husband has supported her interest in genealogy by attending the “Who Do You Think You Are” Exhibitions, searching out books and DVDs for her, attending meetings in the UK and taking part in the Kresy-Siberia conference in 2014 in Warsaw.

At that conference, Marek realised that both his mother and his father also originated from the Kresy. My mother was born in Riga, but was part of the Polish community there. She was deported to Siberia but made her way to Persia and joined the Anders Army. His father, though born in Tarnobrzeg, lived in Drohobycz, south of Lwów, where he was one of the trainers of the local football team – Junak Drohobycz. In 1939, he made his way through the Balkans through to Palestine where he joined the Brygada Karpacka, fought in Tobruk and then fought at Monte Cassino in the 3 Dywizja Strzelców Karpackich.

Both Marek and Iwona have both become more interested and supportive of the work of Kresy-Siberia and Marek has become more interested in the genealogy of his family.

They arrived in Poland on the 4th September to spend time with their family in Poland, prior to participating in the conference, which was to be from the 17th to the 19th September.

They explored bookshops and found the Księgarnia Atlas which they can recommend as it has copies of pre-war maps of Poland, Kresy, Lwów, Warszawa and other historical maps for sale.

TUESDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2015

However, for them, and others who were attending the conference, events actually started on the 15th September following the receipt of an invitation by E-mail sent to any participants in the conference who were already in Warsaw, to the ceremonial planting of the “Memorial Oak for the expelled to Siberia” on the 75th anniversary of the first mass deportations of Poles to Siberia and Kazakhstan.

This took place at the Ogród Saski, by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier near Pilsudski Square. The planting was attended by the Major of Warsaw Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, the president of the Związek Sybiraków Warsaw Chapter Mieczysław Pogodziński, representatives of the public services and participants in the conference. This was followed by a

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Conference venue: Museum of National Independence in Warsaw

wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb. They met friends from Scotland, South Africa, Australia and the USA, first met at the 2014 conference.

They were invited for refreshments to the nearby HQ of the Związek Sybiraków. Whilst there, they saw the personal biographical files of 100,000 Sybiraks, compiled since 1989. The cataloguing was incomplete and they needed to be digitised. It was agreed that this was a piece of work that needed to be done in order to save this information for posterity. They left asking themselves how this could be taken forward and what role could there be for Kresy-Siberia in this task?

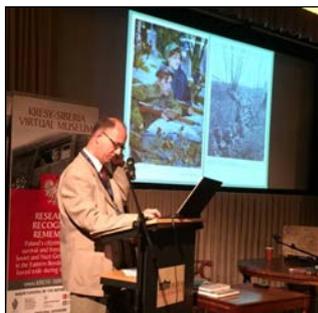


Foundation President Stefan Wiśniowski opens the conference

THURSDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 2015

The 17th September is the National Day of Siberian Deportees. This is the date in 1939 on which the Soviet Union, in agreement with the secret protocols of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, invaded Eastern Poland.

For them the conference started with Kresy-Siberia participation in the Official Memorial Ceremony. For Stefan Wiśniowski and Anna Pacewicz the day started earlier, representing Kresy-Siberia at the opening of the new Katyn Museum at the Warsaw Citadel.



Tomasz Kuba-Kozłowski presents on “the Pre-war Kresy Melting Pot”

At 4 pm they met up at the “Battle of Monte Cassino” Monument, where the first set of photographs were taken. From there they marched, with their wreath, escorted by the Police, to the “Monument to the Murdered and Perished in the East”.

The “Memorial Ceremony” commenced at 5pm. There were speeches by various dignitaries, prayers for the Deportees by representatives of 4 religions, the singing of the Sybiraks song and finally the laying of the wreaths as the red sun set behind the monument. The heat of the day and evening left them grateful to the guides and scouts who distributed water to all present.



Historian Ihar Melnikau speaks on Katyń Massacre’s “Belarusian List”

After the ceremony a group went to the “Specjały Regionalne” Restaurant (<http://www.specjalyregionalne.pl>) on Nowy Świat for supper. New friendships were made and old ones renewed over plates of pierogi.

FRIDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2015

The event took place in the Museum of Independence, previously known as the Lenin Museum, on al. Solidarności.

The Conference commenced at 9am with opening and welcome speeches by Jolanta Dąbek (Deputy Director, Museum of Independence), Mieczysław Pogodziński (Executive Committee Member, Association of Siberian Deportees), Stefan Wiśniowski (President, Kresy-Siberia Foundation) and others. Then started a journey of the world.



Geographer Colin Forsyth on his “Kresy Ghost Villages” project

First up was Polish historian Tomasz Kuba-Kozłowski from the “Dom Spotkań z Historią” who gave a talk entitled “the Pre-war Kresy Melting Pot”. Mark and Iwona had attended an event earlier in London where we had heard Tomasz speak about Lwów and had found him informative and his talk riveting. He had the same effect on everyone at the Conference.

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Stefan Szewczuk & Cobus Rademeyer on refugees in Africa



Anna Pacewicz & Anastazja Pindor present Alicja Edwards' paintings



Jan Kasprzycki-Rosikon speaks about making the "Trail of Hope"



Sculptor Maksimilian Biskupski describes his historical monuments



Film-maker Arkadiusz Olszewski presents his new film "Genocide"

Historian Ihar Melnikau from Belarus then shared his Belarus perspective on that part of the Kresy before and during the war. He lives near the old Polish/Russian border and has travelled along its length collecting items from this period some of which he shared with us.

Colin Forsyth from Calgary in Canada shared his multi-media mapping project to recreate the “Kresy Ghost Villages” that had been destroyed during the war by the Germans, Soviets or Ukrainian nationalists. His Kresy Babcia had inspired him to use his mapping skills to overlay old maps of the Kresy region onto current maps. His intention is to open his map up for others to put in details of other villages that have been destroyed and add a brief note as to the circumstances of their destruction, if known.

See <http://wolynmap.s3.amazonaws.com/GhostVillages.html>).

Then the narrative moved across the ocean to Africa. Dr Cobus Rademeyer and Stefan Szewczuk from South Africa introduced their project, which documents the Polish refugees in Africa from 1942 – 1947. This was of particular interest to Iwona as her mother, aunt and grandmother had been sent to Uganda, after they had escaped from Siberia.

Next was America, the home of artist Alicja Edwards. Anna Pacewicz and Anastazja Pindor gave a commented multi-media presentation of Alicja’s amazing paintings, depicting her personal journey to freedom.

(See www.kresy-siberia.org/hom/element/english-paintings-and-drawings/alicia-r-edwards-paintings-of-life-in-kresy-and-in-siberia)

The conference was then treated to a talk and shown photos by the Polish photographer Janusz Rosikon and his son Jan Kasprzycki-Rosikon, about their collaboration with historian Dr Norman Davies (UK) in writing the “Trail of Hope” (“Szlak Nadziei”). This book is a pictorial history of the people who answered the call by General Anders to form an army and of their journey through Russia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand and Africa. It contains extracts from memoirs and eyewitness reports and pictures collect by a worldwide Internet Appeal. The Kresy-Siberia Foundation was one of the acknowledged contributors.

The sculptor of the “Monument to the Murdered and Perished in the East”, Maksimilian Biskupski was the next speaker. He spoke about the monument, his past and future projects.

The final presentation was by Polish producer Arkadiusz Olszewski. He screened a fragment of an animated film that he is currently working on called “Genocide” which is about the persecutions of Poles by Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia and Ukrainian Nationalists during World War Two. This was followed by a lively question and answer session with Arek.

Following the days programme we had a couple of hours of free time which was followed by the Kresy-Siberia Feast at the “Kamanda Lwowska”. This was very well attended and enjoyed by all there. It was yet another opportunity to meet and talk to fellow supporters of Kresy-Siberia.

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Enjoying Kresy food and beer at the “Kamanda Lwowska” restaurant



Visiting the newly opened Katyn Museum at the Warsaw Citadel



Signing the Kresy-Siberia & Katyn Museum Co-operation Agreement



Katyn Museum Director Sławomir Frątczak leading our private tour



Conference cake donated by UK-based member Izabela Spero

SATURDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2015

This was the final day of the Conference and took place in the new Katyn Museum at the Warsaw Citadel. As the visitors descended down the entrance hall next to moving silhouettes of “prisoners”, they knew that they were entering an “experience”.

The Director of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw, Dr hab. Zbigniew Wawer, gave a welcome to the day. A co-operation agreement was signed between the Kresy-Siberia Foundation and the Katyn Museum for future joint projects. Dr Ewa Kowalska from the Katyn Museum then spoke about plans for a 2016 conference on “Underage Victims of Katyn”.

The highlight of the Conference was next – the very first private tour of the Katyn Museum. The guide was its creator, Sławomir Frątczak. As he took the group around the museum he gave not only a commentary of what was being seen but also an insight into the development of the new museum, the reasons behind some of the project decisions and plans still to be implemented.

AND FINALLY...

The wide range of topics covered shows that there are still many things that need to be done in order to “research, recognize and remember Poland’s citizens fighting for freedom and survival in occupied eastern Poland and in forced exile during WW2”.

Iwona and Mark wanted to thank Stefan Wisniowski and Anna Pacewicz for organising the event, Grażyna Tydda (floral tribute), Anastazja Pindor (amazing and challenging translation work), Izabela Spero (refreshments on the Friday especially the Kresy-Siberia cake) and all the others who contributed in some way to the success of the Conference. Having seen examples of some of the work that has been done, they are committed to support Kresy-Siberia to achieve its aims.

KRESY-SIBERIA “GENERATIONS REMEMBER” 2016 CONFERENCE

The Kresy-Siberia “Generations Remember” 2016 Conference will take place in Warsaw from Saturday, 17TH to Monday, 19TH September, jointly organized with the Związek Sybiraków, History Meeting House and Katyn Museum and supported by the Office for Veterans and Victims of Repression. Once again, there will be a Generations Remember March to the Sybirak Day Ceremonies, a tour of the Katyn Museum, interesting speakers, a Kresy Feast and chances to meet Survivors and descendants from Poland from all around the world. The keynote speaker will be Senator Anna Maria Anders, the daughter of General Władysław Anders.

For more information and to register, please go to:

www.GenerationsRemember.org