

KRESY-SIBERIA NEWSLETTER

December 2013



RESEARCH + RECOGNISE + REMEMBER

Poland's citizens' fight for survival and freedom
against Soviet and Nazi German invaders
in the Eastern Borderlands and in forced exile
during World War II

www.KRESY-SIBERIA.org

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2013 FUNDING PARTNERS

(listed by size of grant in 2013)

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Editor and Design:

Anna Pacewicz

Contributors:

Stefan Wiśniowski

Antoni S Kazimierski

Dr Mark Ostrowski

Peter Muskus

Sophia Turkiewicz

Beata Zatorska and

Simon Target

Tim Bucknall

Krystyna Szypowska

Aneta Hoffmann

Eva Szegidewicz

Irena Lowe

Anna Pacewicz

Letter from President Stefan Wiśniowski

Dear Kresy-Siberia friends

As many of you know from the photos posted at www.goo.gl/2uwC0V, I spent this past September in Poland, meeting with Kresy-Siberia staff, funders and potential partners from various ministries, associations, museums and other groups. Since some people had asked, let me assure you that I personally donated every penny spent on this month-long working trip. But Kresy-Siberia has given a lot to me as well, more than you might have suspected over the past few years. In the toughest of times in my personal life, Kresy-Siberia was always there for me, like an extended family.

For those who don't know, I left a high-powered university executive job in 2010 to face a number of major personal challenges which included the removal of excruciatingly painful kidney stones, which was followed by an agonising year supporting my teenage child who was suffering a complex mental health condition. Other challenges included my wife going overseas to nurse her ill mother during the last months of her life — and following my open heart operation I struggled with clinical depression, a condition which often follows cardiac surgery. Then, one year ago, my father, whose 1940 deportation to Siberia as a 9 year old inspired me to start the Kresy-Siberia Group in 2001, died from a sudden stroke.

Finally, with our two children now grown up and starting university, my wife, Anne-Marie, and I decided to sell our family home and amicably go in our separate directions after 35 years together, to follow our very different dreams and passions. All this, within 3 tumultuous years!

Throughout these emotionally challenging times, Kresy-Siberia was my only constant. It was inspiring to meet and interview so many World War II Survivors, giving them a chance to have their stories finally heard and recognized. It was also uplifting to meet with so many Kresy-Siberia people throughout the world. I have had the privilege of being perhaps the only Kresy-Siberia group member to have personally met so many other group members in so many countries – Poland, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Dubai, New Zealand, UK, Ukraine and the USA.

My fellow Kresy-Siberia leaders were a great help through these times, especially Kryisia, Aneta and Louise stepping up to shoulder more work as I recovered from my operation. They were joined by Eva and Anna, with their huge inputs, as well as by Linder, Mirka, Witek and Maria on our Warsaw-registered Foundation Executive. We poured ever more time into Kresy-Siberia, driving forward our Foundation and its affiliated charities in Australia, Canada, UK and USA, set up to help raise money for our Virtual Museum and to give people tax deductions for their donations. Many dedicated volunteers also joined in

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this work, contributing their time, talents and money into our heartfelt mission throughout the world. Together, we worked to research, recognise and remember Poland's citizens fighting for freedom and survival in the eastern Kresy borderlands and in forced exile during World War II.

It was good to have an urgent mission to take my mind off my own situation. We all realised that we had very little time left before the generation of Survivors passed away, taking their stories and their knowledge with them. So we gathered nearly 1,000 Survivor Testimonies, over 10,000 photos and documents, and over 60,000 names in our Virtual Museum www.kresy-siberia.org. We also launched over a dozen online and physical exhibitions and held scores of public events. Most important, we helped people to heal, at least in some small part, from past personal and family traumas. We helped people to discover their roots, to find long-lost family members, and to learn something important about themselves in the process.



After passing through all this, I am glad to now be experiencing a renewal on many levels. I am returning to my professional life as an executive consultant. I am also rediscovering positivity in my personal life, including a new relationship with someone equally dedicated to Kresy-Siberia. I am lucky that Anna is also a leader in our shared mission, and that we are both very aware of the need to carefully manage how we work together for the Kresy-Siberia cause in the positions that we are entrusted with.

My recent month in Poland also made me think about Kresy-Siberia and our opportunities for renewal and growth. The Foundation also has been going through some tough times recently, with shrivelling grants forcing us to vacate our Warsaw office and lay off all our staff. And after many years of dedicated service, the time is coming for us to allow some of our leaders to take a well-earned rest. We are reviewing our people and processes to create opportunities for others to come along and make their mark. In 2014 we will carry on as an all-volunteer team to make sure that our discussion group and website are not shut down, no matter what. We hope that we can secure new funding to continue our serious recording, scanning and education work while there is still time.

The latest news has been promising, with our win of an EMC Corporation grant for a Polish Navy special exhibition, and with some very heartening member donations. Thank you to all our 2013 donors, listed on the back page, and to our Funding Partners listed on the cover. In Poland, I found a lot of people interested in partnering with us on the KSVM, so I hope that many of you will visit Poland and Kresy from 12-18 September 2014 during our Kresy-Siberia global convention and see for yourself. Circle the dates and start making plans now, more news soon — **do zobaczenia!**

PLEASE DONATE TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION AT www.tinyurl.com/ks-contribute

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What does the Kresy Siberia Group mean to me?

by Antoni S. Kazimierski

It was in March 1939 that we, as a family living at our osada Wojskowa near Połoneczka, woj. Nowogródzkie, suffered a shock when my father Maciej, together with my uncle Antoni Kuźmicz, were called up into the pułk piechoty in Baranowiczach. After a short spell there they were posted to a military base near the Czechoslovak border, because the German armies were advancing eastwards from Germany, Austria and towards Poland. We did not know what had hit us, especially as only one osadnik out of eight had to join the forces. Mother had to deal with all the work on our farm land and as it was springtime the crops had to be sown and potatoes planted in addition to all the daily chores dealing with our animals and three children as well. We had to attend school in Połoneczka, about 2km away. It was frightening and although I, being the eldest at 11 years of age, helped in some way, we had to have a great deal of help from our relatives and friends as well.

On the 1st September that year we had the answer. It shocked all of us and although the action on the Western Front was so far away, we were extremely frightened. Hearing how Polish Armies were defeated we were afraid that both my father and uncle we would never see.

On the 17th September there was even a greater horror as that evening we could see great fires in the Eastern sky and no one close to us could explain what was happening as all communications ceased to operate, save for a bush telegraph, which was not all that reliable.

As a family, we were threatened by some local groups, which included some people we knew and as a result we did not sleep in the same place very often. Our grandfather organised shelter for us with our neighbours and friends in the village of Szczerbowicze. Late in November father returned home and it was a little more comfortable but scary.

On the 10th February 1940, like all other osadnicy, we were woken up early in the morning by a group of people, who with three Red Army soldiers and two NKVD members, loaded us onto a sleigh and conveyed everyone to the nearest station of Pogorzelce. They loaded us into the cattle trucks standing in a long line; receiving many other people, not necessarily osadnicy, and pushed everyone into the empty trucks; no mercy and certainly not accepting any pleas to be left alone.

Little did we know what was in store for us; a long journey via Minsk to Moscow and further North towards Archangelsk to Vologda and eastwards to Velsk, where one station onward the rail line ended and we were billeted in a local town's building awaiting sleigh transport towards our destination in the tajga forest. Several days later we arrived at a tiny posiołek in the middle of nowhere; just 6 forest huts, a bania an office (kontora) and some other huts where some Russian people lived. They were our security and organizers of working parties in the dense forest. It was a very cold winter and in the huts little metal stoves hardly gave us any warmth; the windows had ice cm thick. The working groups were to fell trees and strip branches to clear an area for some purpose, but none of us knew what it was. We were there just a few weeks and then along the frozen river we were taken and delivered to a much larger posiołek called Jeglec in Rowdinskij rajon. At this place more than 450 of us were housed and we had a school, where all of us youngsters attended; a bolnica (medical centre of a kind); a shop where we got our rations; a largish building to



Nowicki's and Kazimerski's 1941

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hold meetings occasionally and show propaganda films; a small tiurma (jail) as well and only used occasionally, as I recollect. The camp commandant and his assistants had another building for administration and communications. In addition, there was a section of the camp where bricks were made and three kilns for firing and drying bricks. Also, there were small repair shops for hand saws and some to repair tractors used in pulling logs out of the forest and along a wooden rail track onto the river bank. The logs were stacked in huge banks ready for floating them in the flooded river to the sawmills at Kotlas. There were horse stables too, as it was necessary to use horse-power for pulling trees out of the very dense forest where the tractors could not reach.

When Germany attacked Russia in June 1941 we were granted an 'amnesty' in August and we were informed that we can move out of this posiolek and as there was a Polish Army forming in southern Russia we were allowed to travel at our own cost. But as many of us had no money or food reserves, we decided to hoard as much as possible in the winter of 1941 and then travel southward in the Spring of 1942; that is what my father and many friends did and in January 1942 started our trek to join the forming army in the South. As my father was an infantry man he wanted to join infantry unit near Tashkent. I am not sure how he knew where to join, but that is what we aimed at. We set off into this most difficult travel by rail from Velsk to Moscow and southwards; the trek proved to be extremely difficult as at that time the German Army was advancing eastwards and the Russians were falling back under a very severe pressure from the German forces with frequent attacks by the German Air Force. The journey was very hazardous and full of problems as the trains were zigzagging between Moscow and the Ural mountains; often delayed by the military needs and trains carrying Russian wounded soldiers. It was early in March that we reached Dzal-al-Abad in Kazakhstan. Sadly, just before reaching our destination my father died at a place called Turkistan. His body was taken off there for an unknown burial. I joined Junactwo at Dzal-al-Abad and was taken out to Persia in one of the first waves of transports; eventually reaching Palestine and Szkola Kadecka at Barbara camp.

It was in 1945 that I volunteered to join the navy and in May of that year arrived in Scotland and moved to Polska Szkola Morska at Landywood in Staffordshire. Completing Liceum there I entered English Merchant Navy. But that is another story.

In the mid 2000's I found, on the internet, a Kresy-Siberia Group and Forum, which intrigued me and having read some of the comments on this site, I thought I might be able to help and answer some of the questions members were asking. I spoke Russian which I learnt at the posiolek so I could translate documents for those who wanted to know what was written in them. A sluice gate opened a flood and the questions poured in at a terrific rate; dozens and dozens were sent and I had to form a priority for those who said that the answers were urgent. I did all this voluntarily and I felt quite happy to do this service. At that time, I believe there were almost 300 or so members, and the group originally founded in 2001 was growing in numbers. Today it is in excess of 1200. Archival searching was small and difficult. At first we just had a 1941 census of names which included all those families at the posiolki in USSR, but not those imprisoned elsewhere. We discovered Karta site and Memorial in Moscow and our good friend Dr Guryanov, who provided a list of deportation trains which were published by Karta. This information allowed us, at least in part, to discover how we got to our camps in Siberia. Then came the Hoover Institute Archives which added a greater access to records.

By joining Kresy I discovered a new world-wide family and friends, with whom I still keep in touch on various occasions; thanks to the internet; and I am pleased about that. In addition, there is the Kresy Siberia Virtual Museum and the Wall of Names, so ably arranged by our volunteer administrators working behind the scenes to provide and keep records of our personal history. Also to keep alive the memory of those who lost their lives without a trace; this becomes their memorial. We must express our gratitude to the Founders of the Group and those members who devote so much time, skill and dedication to keep going this 'Research, Remembrance and Recognition of Poland's citizens' struggles in the Eastern Borderlands and in Exile during the World War II'.

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Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum Update

Wall of Names - New archived lists recently added:

3rd Carpathian Rifle Division (Basic information concerning the soldiers of the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division that appear on this list were provided by the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division Association in London, from: "Spisu żołnierzy Trzeciej Dywizji Strzelców Karpackich" Volume II, published by the " Trzecia Dywizja Strzelców Karpackich 1942-1987", London 1991.)

Cemeteries in Africa (Graves in the former Polish settlements in Africa during WWII. Tombstone and Death Register information has been gathered by students from Krakow, under the direction of Professor Chudzio.)

Recently digitized lists, soon to be added: List of those buried at Lenino and Polish War Graves in Scotland

Lists currently being digitized: Polska Walczaca: Names of Poles evacuated from the Soviet Union - Published as supplements to 17 editions, between April and August 1943. Includes names of children evacuated to India.

Hall of Memories - 11,670 Items in 232 Collections

Of particular note are the following Collections:

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Maria (Nowotarska) Kołodzińska | Prociuk Family |
| Genowefa Franczyk Matkowski | Artur Nowaczyk |
| Pateluch Family | Daniela Toth |
| Michał Karpa | Ryszkowski/Misiewicz |
| Pniewski Family | Antoni Nalepa |
| Aleksander Malczeniuk Collection | |
| New Zealand's First Refugees – Pahiatua's Polish Children | |
| Monument to 2 Corps in Koltubanka, Orenburg, USSR | |

Hall of Testimonies - 715 recorded and digitized interviews

The following new interviews will soon be added to the Hall of Testimonies:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Canada: | 19 interviews in the Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg areas |
| UK: | 30 interviews in the London and Manchester areas |
| USA: | 10 interviews in the L.A. and Chicago areas |
| AUS & NZ: | 13 interviews in NSW, VIC and N.Z. |

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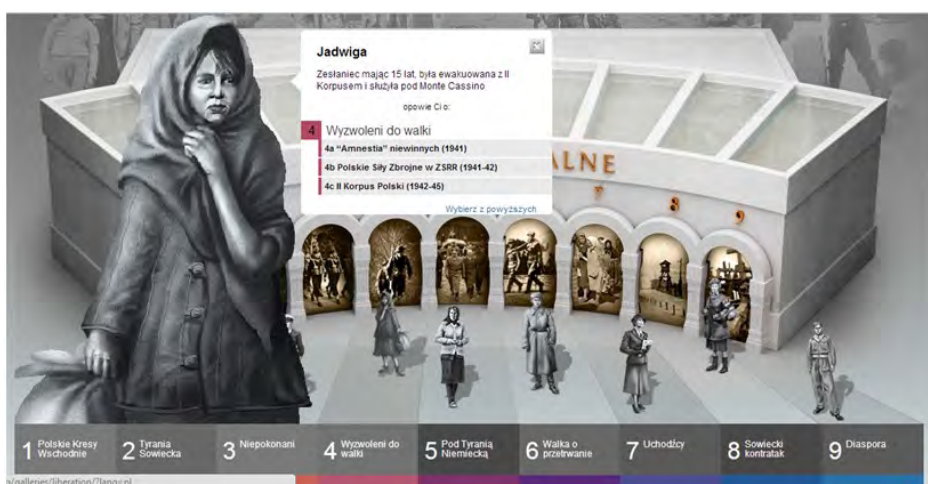
English Galleries Overview and Polish Galleries Overview

The “English Galleries Overview” were launched in December 2012. These permanent exhibitions take us from Historical Kresy, through the 2nd world war and finish with the Polish refugee diaspora.

There are 29 Rooms in total, organised into 9 Galleries. Each Room features an introductory audio narration and a selection of photographs, documents and testimonies. This project has been made possible from funds provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland in 2012.

In 2013 we received a grant from the Polish History Museum in Warsaw to translate this whole Overview into Polish. Work on this is almost completed.

The English and Polish Galleries Overview are now the “landing page” (entry) for the KSVM Galleries.



Special Exhibits on the 1st Polish Armoured Division and Berling's Army

December 2013 we will launch two new Special Exhibits:

1. The battles of the **1st Polish Armoured Division under General Maczek** – the progression of the Division from northern France, through Belgium, Holland and into Germany.
2. The **1st Kosciuszko Infantry Division under (then) Lieutenant Colonel Zygmunt Berling**, including the 1943 Battle of Lenino .



These projects were made possible from funds provided by the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Poland in 2013.

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Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum Update

Two new galleries have just opened in our Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum. They are currently available in Polish. We hope that they will be translated into English soon.

New KSVM gallery: Polish 2nd Corps (1942-1945)

The new Gallery on the Polish 2nd Corps includes interesting historical facts not only about well known battles, but also it's main divisions, various technical units, it's medical service and the fates of the soldiers. There are also rarely-seen photographs from private collections.

<http://kresy-siberia.org/2-corps/?lang=pl>

In addition, the "Biographical Index of 2nd Corps soldiers" for the KSVM Wall of Names (which started in 2012 with the digitalization of 27,000 names of the 3rd Carpathian Division) has continued in 2013 to add new biograms of 2nd Corps soldiers.

http://kresy-siberia.org/won/?page_id=178&lang=pl



New KSVM Gallery Polish Refugees in Mexico (1943-1946)

This Gallery opened to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the arrival of Poles to the Santa Rosa camp near Leon, Mexico. A group of around 1500 Poles found their temporary, safe home on Mexican land. For many of them Mexico stayed in their hearts forever. Please visit our gallery to find out facts about their life, hear their testimonies and see them in photographs from the private collections.

<http://kresy-siberia.org/mexico/?lang=pl>



In addition, we have added more information to our "List of Polish refugees in Santa Rosa" on the Wall of Names. Please let us know if you have any information that can be added.

http://kresy-siberia.org/won/?page_id=91&lang=pl



News from Kresy-Siberia Foundation, Poland

As 2013 is a year of important anniversaries, Poland's team has focused on :

Anniversary of Wolyn genocide in 1943:

- July 2013 – core celebration

Anniversary of the arrival of Polish refugees to Mexico:

- September-October 2013 – promotion of the Santa Rosa KSVM Gallery
- Screening of the documentary film “Santa Rosa – Odyssey in the Rhythm of Mariachi” by Slawomir Grunberg)

Anniversary of the creation of Berling's Army and the Battle of Lenino:

- October 2013 – attendance at 70th anniversary celebrations at Lenino (in present-day Belarus)
- Co-organiser with Akademia Obrony Narodowej and Sybiraks Association in an academic conference on the Battle of Lenino and the fates of Polish soldiers.

Educational workshops for history teachers with IPN:

- Aneta Hoffman ran a 1-year workshop for history teachers, with IPN. The aim of this project was to impart to teachers the fates of Polish citizens under Soviet occupation. This included various presentations and meetings with students & public audiences.

Representing the Kresy-Siberia Foundation at many important events:

- Marsz Sybiraków / the March of the Sibiraks in Białystok, September 2013
- Katyń conference, held at the Royal Castle, Warsaw with Alexander Guryanov (Memorial)
- Osadniks Reunion in Warsaw
- Commemorative event on the 17th September 2013 at the Deportation Monument, Warsaw

Polish War Cemetery, for the anniversary of the Battle of Lenino 12.10.2013 (present day Belarus).

Far right: Aneta Hoffmann at the memorial.

Q&A following screening of the “Santa Rosa” documentary film in Warsaw—Aneta Hoffmann, KSF, Slawomir Grunberg, Director and Joanna Matias, character in film.



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Welcome to Kresy-Siberia's new social media channels by Tim Bucknall

Twitter #KresySiberia

My Name is Tim Bucknall. My family was basically adopted by a wonderful family from Kresy when my mum went to work for them. Those were wonderful times, ended only by my becoming ill. I clearly remember hearing the stories of deportation and terrible suffering this kindly family endured and I still experience a flicker of recognition when I read similar stories. Add to that my Dad's positive memories of serving with Poles in the British Army in the 1950's, of working at a camp for Displaced Persons and his obvious admiration for Poles and Poland. So Poland has always been a presence in my life.

The Kresy-Siberia Foundation have kindly let me manage the Twitter, You Tube & Google+ social media channels. The Kresy-Siberia You Tube channel has just been approved for Google's charity grant status.

With Twitter my intention is to post an **"On this day in history" feature** with events related to all the ethnicities of the Kresy, exile life and some general Polish history. I am a firm believer in Kresy-Siberia's statute that since Kresy was multi-ethnic and multi-religious we must welcome everyone. You will start to see "On this day" extracts from the diaries of Kresy survivors and other unique content relating to Kresy's culture - explorers, authors, war heroes & musicians. Eventually you'll hear how, for example, the amazing city of Lwow gave the world street lighting, the typhus vaccine and the world's first newspaper and how it became the pre-war radio capital of Eastern Europe. We re-"tweet" material in all the languages of Kresy but until my grasp of Polish improves the majority of our original tweets are in English.

I feel an obligation to support (with re-tweets) various organisations working for the "Europeanisation" of Belarus. Call it my small digital tribute to Pilsudskis "Prometheanism" if you like! Of particular note is Radio Racja which broadcasts to Grodno & Brest in Polish on weekends. It is my sincere privilege to re-tweet information from Polish Consulates all over the world but particularly in Grodno, Lwow, Lutsk, Wilno, Kazakhstan etc.

I'm also keen to promote special events in the Polish (& Belarusian) Disapora. Feel free to send me details at Tim.bucknall@googlemail.com, as far in advance as you wish. Researching/compiling material for our social media feeds has been a total joy and a great way of educating myself on Poland, Kresy & the Polish language. Sometimes research for the twitter feed can lead to promoting wider knowledge of Kresy subjects. In a recent case our inquiries into the fate of Kresy's Czech population has lead to the creation of a Wikipedia page on a subject that previously was so little known that not even the archive of the Czech Foreign Ministry had any information.

In closing I must express my thanks to the Latvian History twitter feed which was one of our first followers and publicised us repeatedly in our early days while we found our feet.

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Kresy-Siberia Social Media Channel Update

The “social media” team have been hard at work creating and integrating all of our social media channels:

Tim Bucknall runs our Twitter channel :

Twitter # KresySiberia

Our Kresy-Siberia Facebook channel has hit over 1,200 “Likes”! Many of our posts are shared across our other social media channels. On our Facebook homepage, you will find events, photographs, interesting articles and also links to our Twitter and You Tube channels:

<https://www.facebook.com/KSF.FKS>

We finally have one consolidated Kresy-Siberia You Tube channel. This is updated regularly and you will find videos ranging from an introduction to Kresy-Siberia from Founder & President Stefan Wiśniowski, to survivor interviews to historical videos of pre-war Kresy:

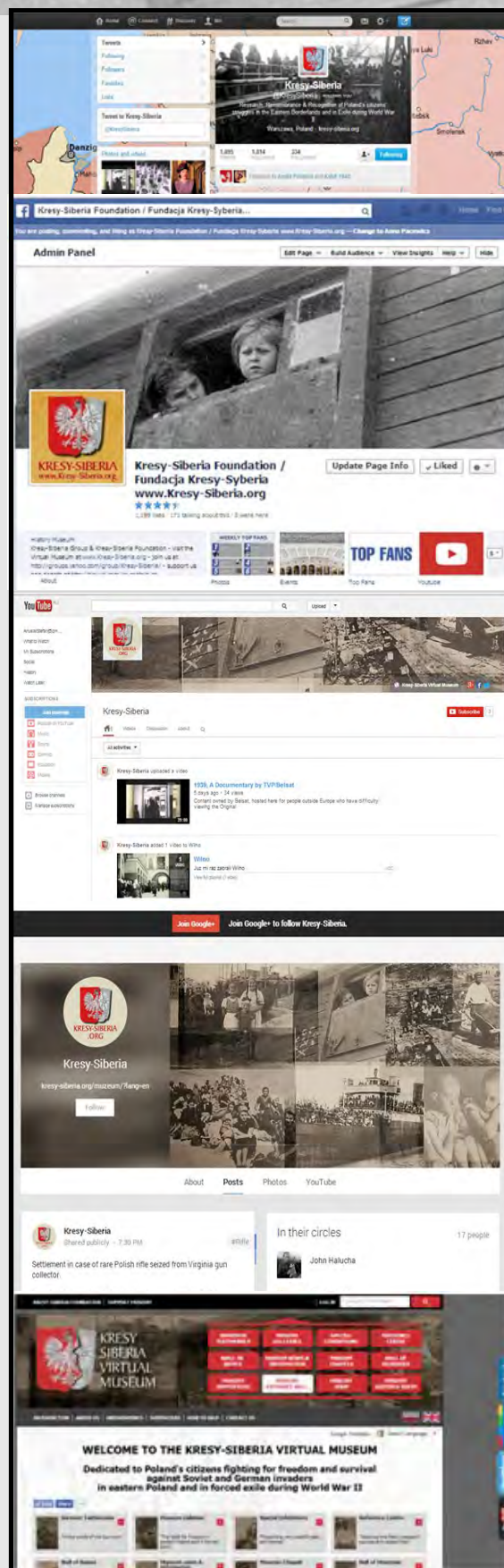
<https://www.youtube.com/user/KresySiberiaTube>

With the help of internet “guru” Andrew Stephen, we have also started our Kresy-Siberia Google+ channel.

This is a work in progress and we are in the process of refining our content strategy and calendar for our various social media channels.

Finally, all of these social media channels are now fully integrated with, and feature on, our Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum. See the Facebook, Google+, Twitter and You Tube “tabs” on the right hand side of the home-page. Scroll over each “tab” to see the latest updates.

www.kresy-siberia.org



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News from Kresy-Siberia New Zealand

A Kresy-Siberia Group has been established as a sub-group of the Polish Association in New Zealand Inc. Membership fees and donations in NZ are tax deductible if made to the Kresy-Siberia Committee that is associated with "The Polish Association in New Zealand Inc". Membership fees and donations will be forwarded to Kresy-Siberia Australia unless donations are explicitly specified for Kresy-Siberia work in New Zealand. Please donate by either:

- 1, Cheque to "Polish Association in New Zealand Inc : Kresy-Siberia Committee" and send to Kresy-Siberia Committee, PO Box 853, Wellington 6014. Please include your name and return address. The Kresy-Siberia Committee will issue a tax deductible receipt **OR**
- 2, Direct transfer to the following bank account "Kresy-Siberia Committee" ANZ Bank 060501 0064897
03. Please also email KresySiberia@polishcommunity.org.nz your name and details. The Kresy-Siberia committee will issue you a tax deductible receipt.

In 2014 in New Zealand we will be celebrating the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Polish children from Iran who were first settled in a camp in Pahiatua and became known as the Pahiatua Polish Children. To honour the anniversary, the Kresy-Siberia Foundation will open a New Zealand Gallery on the Virtual Museum. This will focus on the arrival of a group of 733 children, mainly orphans and 105 adults who arrived in New Zealand as the result of an invitation by the NZ government for temporary refuge. However due to the Yalta conference decision to leave Poland under Soviet Union control, and the loss of their homelands in the Kresy, the children's temporary stay was changed to permanent settlement although a small number did return to Poland.



The NZ government also invited the children's relatives who remained in Europe after the war to settle in New Zealand. Homeless Polish people from the Polish Free Forces and Displaced People from camps in Germany continued to arrive in NZ throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s each with their own unique and interesting stories.

The NZ Gallery is using texts from publications and archival material in the form of photos, documents, memoirs and interviews to tell the story of these Polish immigrants to New Zealand. To minimise reinterpretation of history, the story will be told using voices or creditable biographical sources of the Pahiatua children and adults; and the resettled homeless Polish immigrants arriving after the end of World War 2. The work has started but there is a long road ahead of us as there is a richness of material to be collected and collated. We welcome anyone who would like to join our workgroup in or outside of Wellington. Contact the working party us by sending email to irena.lowe@KRESY-SIBERIA.org.

In August our member Jackie Rzepka in Auckland organised a Kresy-Siberia stall at the New Zealand History Fair in Auckland. There was a lot of interest from New Zealanders especially those who had lived in the vicinity of Pahiatua. It was a busy three days but a worthwhile event. Our sympathies go to Jackie and her family on the death of her mother in September this year.

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News from Kresy-Siberia Canada

Kresy-Siberia (Canada) Inc.

The directors of this charitable organization: Joining Henry Sololowski, Krystyna Piotrowska-Freiburger, Krystyna Szypowska and Stefan Wisniowski are:

Barbara Charuba is a long-time member of the Kresy-Siberia discussion group, and valued volunteer on the Virtual Museum who assisted greatly with the development of the "Refugees in India" gallery.

Claire Turenne-Sjolander is Vice Dean, Graduate Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, and Professor of Political Science, at the University of Ottawa. She is the author/editor of 5 books and hundreds of book chapters, articles, and papers. She is/has been a member and/or chair of numerous boards, and has extensive fundraising experience.

Recent Events in Canada

Presentations at the Senior Home and several Polonia groups in Winnipeg; Joint Kresy-Siberia and SPK event "Not your grandfather's war" in Toronto; Participation in Remembrance Day events in Toronto and Winnipeg; Participation in Haller's Army event in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario; Grant Applications for 2014 submitted to Polish Consulate in Toronto and Montreal

News from Kresy-Siberia USA

In 2013 we have welcomed two new Directors to the Kresy-Siberia Foundation (USA). They join Maria Szonert-Bienienda, Dr Witold Lukaszewski, Lisa Frac, Eugene Bąk, Dr Marek Jan Chadakiewicz and Stefan Wiśniowski.

Dr Maciej Siekierski

Curator of the European Collections at the Hoover Institution Archives and a research fellow at the Hoover Institute, Stanford University. The Polish Collection at Hoover is the largest and the most important research collection on 20th century Poland outside Poland itself. This includes The Wladyslaw Anders papers, the records of the Polish Embassy in the Soviet Union and the records of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation. This includes more than 30,000 original depositions by survivors of the Polish deportations to the USSR in 1940-41. See:

<http://www.hoover.org/library-and-archives/collections/east-europe/poland>

Piotr Uzarowicz

Writer and Director of the award-winning Katyn film "The Officer's Wife". He is a Kresy-Siberia group member, the son of a Chicago Sybirak and grandson of a Katyn victim. Piotr now lives in Los Angeles, working with Sony Pictures in Hollywood. He speaks both Polish and English. For more information about Piotr's film please see

www.theofficerswifemovie.com



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News from Kresy-Siberia United Kingdom

Wojtek Album

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Wojtek the soldier bear's death in Edinburgh Zoo on 2 December 1963, a collection of all the photographs, eye witness reports and anecdotes will be published at the end of 2013 in a limited edition album of 1000 individually numbered copies.

This unique book has been compiled by Krystyna Mackiewicz Ivell and Vic Baczor and is available to purchase at £70.00. To buy a copy please go to http://www.wojtekshop.co.uk/contact_page_3.html

Photograph courtesy of Zosia Biegus, K-S member



“Santa Rosa: Odyssey in the Rhythm of Mariachi” Film

Kresy-Siberia (UK) was pleased to welcome Sławomir Grünberg, Emmy Award Winning documentary film producer, director, cameraman and editor from Los Angeles to the UK Premier screening of **‘Santa Rosa: Odyssey in the Rhythm of Mariachi’** which K-S UK organised in two major cities - Manchester and London.

“Santa Rosa” reveals an unknown chapter in the history of World War II – the fate of Polish deportees into the Soviet Union who found unlikely refuge on Mexican soil. Joanna sets out on a personal journey through her family’s unique past, discovering numerous stories of those whose memories of Santa Rosa remain vivid 70 years later, in Poland, in the U.S., and in Mexico.



Sławomir Grünberg and Eva Szegidewicz (K-S UK Director)

Sławomir took part in Q&A sessions after the screenings and met people who had family members in Santa Rosa. Thanks go to: Łukasz Lutostański (Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Manchester) for providing funding; Kathleen Menzies (Trauma Film Group) for providing the Lecture Theatre at MMU; Krzysztof Piskorski (PON) for co-organising the London event.

PLEASE DONATE TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION AT www.tinyurl.com/ks-contribute

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News from Kresy-Siberia United Kingdom

Manchester Survivor Testimonies Project

Kresy-Siberia (UK) recently completed a project to interview and record 20 survivors from the Manchester area and to electronically scan their personal photographs and documents thanks to a £3000 grant awarded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MSZ) via the Manchester Consulate. The interviews were carried out by Joanna Dudzic who is a Polish born photographer and journalist living in Manchester. Plans are being made to exhibit the project in Manchester as well as including the recordings and material in the Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum <http://kresy-siberia.org/hot/?lang=en>

EMC Heritage Trust Project Grant Applications

On 31 July 2013 Kresy-Siberia (UK) won the Grand Prize grant of \$15,000 in an EMC Digital Heritage Trust contest after submitting an application to do a project to develop the Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum. On the 19th December we won a second application of \$10,000 for a Polish Navy Special Exhibition on the KSVM! The Polish Navy was an elite service, numbering only 3,720 officers and sailors on 1 July 1945. Yet the achievements of the Polish Navy to the Allied WW2 effort were both distinguished and heroic and included the major theatres of War. A chapter of the exhibition will focus on the (approx) 840 recruits in the Polish Navy from "Kresy". Our Facebook social media campaign to promote voting attracted over 44,000 views! Thank you to all our members, friends and supporters who voted. The Polish Navy exhibition will be produced in 2014.

KRESY-SIBERIA WON THE WW2 POLISH NAVY GRANT!



"The Officer's Wife" Screening in Ireland

The documentary film "The Officer's Wife" by Piotr Uzarowicz was screened on Friday 22 November as part of the Foyle Film Festival in Derry-Londonderry. K-S (UK) Director Helen Bitner worked extremely hard to organize the event which resulted in approximately 100 Irish and Polish people attending including the local Saturday school teacher and the Polish priest who had travelled 50 miles especially to be there. Thanks go to the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Edinburgh and the Consulate of the Republic of Poland NI in Belfast for their support and also to Agnieszka Luczak Polish Abroad Co-ordinator in Derry for promoting the event.

Who Do You Think You Are?

On 20-22 February 2014 K-S will be exhibiting for the third time at "Who Do You Think You Are? LIVE" the world's largest family history/genealogy show in Olympia, London. The theme for 2014 is the centenary commemorations of the First World War and K-S member Frank Pleszak from Manchester will be doing a workshop talk on the little known battle of Lake Narocz on the eastern front in Spring 1916. This highly significant battle, on what was to become Kresy lands just to the east of Wilno, changed Russian military strategy and may have also contributed to the Russian early withdrawal from the Great War. Why not come and see us and take part in this fantastic 3-day annual event!

www.whodoyouthinkyouarelive.com

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News from Kresy-Siberia (Australia) Ltd

The Kresy-Siberia (Australia) Ltd Board consists of Stefan Wisniowski, Chairman & Public Officer, Anna Pacewicz, Director & Secretary, Robert Czernkowski, Finance Director and Lucyna Artymiuk, Director.

Key fundraising events and activities in Australia in 2013:

- * Travel for inter-state fundraising events made possible via a grant of AUS\$2,500 from the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Sydney
- * “*The Officer’s Wife*” screening and KSF fundraiser in Melbourne, organised with the Association of Polish Syberaks in Victoria and Rodzina Katynska
- * “*The Officer’s Wife*” screening in Brisbane & Polish Community Council of Australia AGM
- * “Sybirak Families and Friends” gatherings in Sydney, Northern NSW, Melbourne & Canberra
- * Radio Interview with 3ZZZ in Melbourne & article about Kresy-Siberia in paper Tygodnik Polski
- * Dinner with Count & Countess Krasicki and Professor Ed Byrne, Vice-Chancellor of Monash University in Melbourne to discuss collaboration opportunities
- * Adding collections to the Hall of Memories and profiles to the Wall of Names – Artur Nowaczyk, Polish Navy; Count Krasicki Family; Bielski Family; Prociuk Family; Halina Miros; Alexandra Copley
- * “*The Officer’s Wife*” screening in Newcastle, with the Polish Association in Newcastle
- * Attendance and stall at the Polish Festival, Federation Square, 17 September 2013
- * Screening of “*Once my mother*” documentary film with Director Sophia Turkiewicz and Producer Rod Freedman, Polish Embassy in Canberra with Stefan Wiśniowski as MC for the Q&A
- * Attended meeting at the Polish Consulate with Radek Sikorski and Anne Applebaum during their trip to Sydney in May 2013. Attended lectures by Sikorski and Applebaum
- * Guests at Constitution Day at the Polish Consulate and also working meeting with Ambassador



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President's visit to Poland, September 2013

In September 2013, Stefan Wiśniowski and Anna Pacewicz had a 4 week 'Kresy-Siberia' working trip around Poland (please note this was entirely self-funded). Irena Lowe from N.Z. & Aneta Hoffmann from Warsaw joined us for the Białystok Sybirak March. The Warsaw meetings were also attended by Aneta Hoffmann. Here are just *some* of the highlights with the opportunites for Kresy-Siberia going foward:

| | |
|---|--|
| Prof. Zbigniew Wawer, <u>Polish Military Museum</u> , Warsaw | Agreement to collaborate - digitise Anders Army interviews, share archival materials |
| " <u>Under the Boab Tree</u> " African Refugee Reunion, Wrocław | President to share names of members with KSVM for Wall of Names and contacts |
| Szczepan Siekierka, President <u>The memorial association for the victims of the Ukrainian and Nationalist Crimes</u> , Wrocław | Agreement to co-operate - digitalise the list of Wolyn Massacres for Wall of Names www.stowarzyszenieuozun.wroclaw.pl |
| Marek Mutor & Dr Wojciech Kucharski, Directors <u>Remembrance and Future Institute</u> , Wrocław | Formal collaboration agreement to digitise oral & written histories and documents from Sybiraks |
| Kmdr por. rez. Mgr Walter Pater, Head of History Department <u>Polish Navy Museum</u> , Gdynia | Formal collaboration agreement to digitise Polish Navy list 1939-1947; 1,200 memoirs and exhibitions |
| Barbara Tuge-Erecińska, Dyrektor Departamentu Współpracy z Polonią i Polakami za Granicą, <u>MSZ</u> | Information on grants and update on the work of KSF within Poland and Polonia |
| Sławomir Z. Frątczak, Head of the <u>Katyn Museum</u> , Warsaw | Collaboration for English language Katyn Gallery KSVM Digitalisation of Katyn victims and biograms |
| Zygmunt Stępiński, Deputy Director, <u>Museum of the History of Polish Jews</u> , Warsaw | Formal collaboration agreement - Polish Jewish deportations, Jewish history in Kresy, Polish Jews in Polish Army, KSVM temporary exhibition Sept 2014 |
| Artur Kozłowski, Head of the Cabinet of the President of the <u>Senate of the Republic of Poland</u> | Speaker of the Senate visiting Australia and NZ Feb 2014. Opportunity to organise event in Canberra |
| Andrzej Person, Senator, Commission for Immigration, <u>Senate of the Republic of Poland</u> | The Senate does have money for conferences Andrzej Person visiting Australia in Feb 2014? |
| Dr Jan Ciechanowski, <u>UDSKIOR</u> , Warsaw | Meeting and advice on grants. Dr Ciechanowski is visiting Australia in Jan 2014 – veteran events |
| Mieczysław Wójcik, President and Vice-Presidents <u>Association of Families of civilian and military settlers in Kresy</u> , Warsaw | Continuation of formal collaboration agreement.. Share & digitise all interviews and archives |
| Robert Kostro, Director, <u>Museum of Polish History</u> , Warsaw | Formal collaboration agreement - exhibitions, education, projects and 'A Forgotten Odyssey' distribution |
| Łukasz Kamiński, President and Agnieszka Rudzińska, Deputy President, <u>IPN</u> , Warsaw | Collaboration on further development of Karta Index of the Repressed (for WoN) and education |



Book “The Long Bridge: Out of the Gulags” by Urszula Muskus Review by grandson and Kresy-Siberia member Peter Muskus

Urszula was arrested with her two children aged 11 and 14 by Stalin's Secret Police in Poland in 1940. They were locked in a cattle wagon and exiled to Kazakhstan. Urszula survived 2 years forced labour on the collective farms, 10 years hard labour in the gulags and 4 years eternal exile in Siberia. She came home from this without a shred of bitterness and a love of the many nationalities with whom she had been locked up. She wrote her story over the next 15 years, the rest of her life, keeping alive the memory of all her friends, many of whom had died, or as they said in the camps – ‘released themselves’.

Writing a review of my Babusia's memoir is never going to be entirely objective, and is unlikely to be taken seriously, so I direct you to the 101 five star reviews on amazon.co.uk. Suffice to say that most readers are amazed by her strength of character during 16 years of imprisonment and are inspired and uplifted as “*She writes of her own privations and sufferings with dispassion; of the sufferings of others with compassion.*”



Urszula Muskus in Rawa Ruska 1938



Urszula in Long Bridge, Siberia 1955.

The memoir describes her deportation journey and the kolkhozy (collective farms) in Kazakhstan, concentrates on the stories of those she met during her 10 years in the gulags and concludes with 4 years ‘eternal exile’ in Siberia and a joyous train journey back to Poland arriving on 1st Jan 1956.

I will concentrate on her time as an embassy Delegate to give a personal addition to the diplomatic relations that I have described separately. It was because of this work distributing aid that Babusia was charged with espionage and sent to the gulags. Last year I was lucky enough to receive some of the reports that Babusia wrote in Aktyubinsk as Delegate and are now held in the Sikorski Museum.

Following the German attack on the USSR all the Poles were moved out of the cities to the kolkhozy, but were allowed to return a few weeks later. She writes in her memoir, “*Shortly after my return to Aktyubinsk, groups of Poles released from Soviet prisons and concentration camps, began to arrive. They were half starved, in rags*



Review of “The Long Bridge” by Peter Muskus (continued)

and without means of existence. They needed immediate help. ... One day I learnt that a rallying point for former POWs had been organised in Totskoye. ... I sold one of my dresses and with the permission of the authorities bought a ticket. [After a 3 day journey she arrived at General Anders hotel at 23.45hrs the evening before he was due to fly to Moscow for a meeting with Stalin.] When asked who was to be reported I answered: ‘A woman from Kazakhstan’, and was welcomed immediately. ... I was nominated relief officer for Polish citizens in the Aktyubinsk region. I also received the first money grant and the joyful news that we would shortly receive help in kind from England and America. ... We would often extract nothing but corpses from the wagons. The Polish Ambassador Kot and General Anders did all they could to help these Poles, but encountered hindrance after hindrance set up by the Soviet authorities. ... I remember how, time after time, they [the Polish prisoners] found notes written by British or American students who collected and packed these gift parcels. Letters sending them fraternal greetings, encouragement and hope for the future. ... I would like all those who donated clothing and other gifts for these poor people to know that not only did they warm us up, but that these kind words expressed in the short messages found in the pockets of the clothes gave encouragement and hope.”

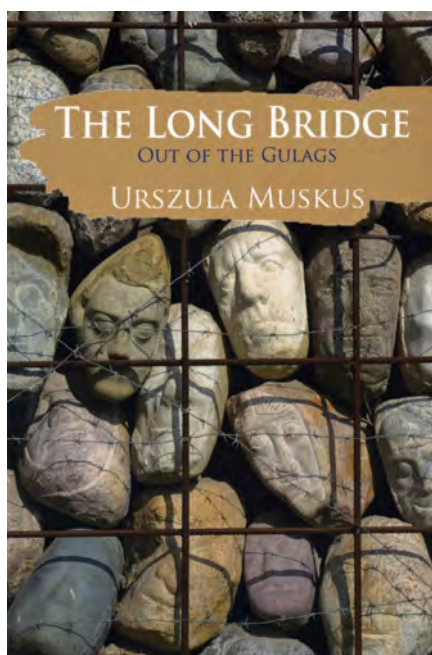
Babusia's reports written as a Delegate are more formal and factual, but exude frustration. This sample is from 29th October 1941. “The civilian transports for Polish citizens are still just as chaotic, exposing people to great distress and suffering, and causing many problems for the Polish Missions to sort out. The transports are not provided with food, the Soviet authorities do not provide the people with any money for the journey or their daily expenses. The result is that people get off at major rail stations and go into town in search for food. Transports then depart and those who are foraging the town are left without their papers and belongings. The Polish Missions have no financial means and are unable to provide these people with any food or a place to sleep. The Soviet Authorities do not want to take care of them and refer them back to the Polish Missions. This causes complaints for our Mission. Therefore, I ask for the appropriate order that the civilian transports are organised on a par with the military transports; and are provided with food, or with food vouchers, by the Soviet authorities.”

While walking home from a meeting on 10th May 1942 Babusia was arrested and charged with espionage. She must have been one of the first Delegates arrested. After an interrogation lasting several months in Alma Ata she spent the next 10 years doing hard labour in the Karaganda gulags. As Robert Lambolle writes in his editorial report, “*Urszula never boasts, but from her refusal to buckle under or to indulge in self-pity, her concern for the welfare of her fellow-prisoners, her love of nature (there are wonderful descriptions of sunrises and landscapes), and a spirituality that is entirely without grating piety, one gains an impression of a woman of exemplary humanity and fortitude, at once sensitive, caring, resourceful and tough.*”

For more information about Urszula's book “*The Long Bridge*” please visit http://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Long-Bridge-Out-Gulags/dp/1905207557/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1386659322&sr=8-1&keywords=the+long+bridge .

Please buy the book at the Amazon Kresy-Siberia shop: <http://astore.amazon.co.uk/kresy-siberia-uk-21/detail/1905207557>

For a timeline of Polish-Soviet Diplomatic Relations 1941-44 (as well as reviews, updates & photographs) please go straight to the link at my blog: <http://3650daysinthegulag.com/2013/12/02/polish-soviet-diplomatic-relations-1941-44/>





Osada Ostrowek : A Personal Journey through the Archives

By Dr Mark Ostrowski

My grandparents died when I was quite young. I never got a chance to ask the questions that for some reason I needed to know. My father was also in Siberia but was much too young to remember anything. All I knew was that they were somewhere in the Arctic. They cut trees. My aunty died there. They broke in to a Russian train to steal food. Granddad was a medical orderly in the Polish 2nd Corps and was at Monte Cassino. That was it! Pretty much the rest of my life has been devoted to filling in the gaps. Why did I grow up in England? Why did my family not return to Poland? What happened to them in the Soviet Union. Ok, so the first part took 5 years research and a PhD. Why my family did not go back to Poland I pretty much understand and I addressed the issue in my PhD thesis which can be found here:

<http://www.angelfire.com/ok2/polisharmy/>

But what about the rest of it? I joined the Kresy-Siberia Group in 2009 and since then, and largely because of the group, I now have a better understanding of what happened to my family from 1939 to leaving the Soviet Union in 1942. What follows is a chronicle of what happened to the Poles in Osada Ostrowek, a small village near the Community [Gmina] of Ruzana, Kossow County [Powiat] in the voivodeship of Polesie. It is based entirely on contemporary primary archival sources.

The Red Army arrived in Ostrowek in a column of tanks followed by infantry. The first thing they set about doing was establishing a militia to search for weapons and to make an inventory of the village. The church and school were closed. This first period was also used by some of the Byelorussians to settle old scores – a number of Poles were murdered, including the director of the local school. Many also took the opportunity to relieve the Poles of their livestock. The owner of Folwark Ostrowek, the major landholding in the area [Majatek], Sergiusz Siemiaszko and his brother Teodor were immediately arrested; as was their *gajowy* [forest ranger] Bronisław Kaczarowski.

In October 1939 the Soviet authorities held a plebiscite to arrange the transfer of Polish Polesie to the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. Many compulsory public meetings were held in Ostrowek to announce this fact and elections were organized to send deputies to Moscow. On polling day [the 28th] the villagers were taken to the nearby village of Szczytno to vote. They were handed sealed envelopes and told to write their names on them and give them to the electoral commission who put them in the voting urns. Everyone, even the elderly and the sick in their beds was made to vote. Who they had voted for nobody knew.

At dawn on the 10th February they came to the *Osada*. The families were given minutes to pack and could only take what they could carry. It was a cold winter. The temperature was close to minus 40. They were transported the 27Km to the station by sleigh and kept under armed guard. The train was already waiting for them when they arrived. The children were put to sleep on the floor of the wagons but the children's hair instantly froze to the floors and walls so the parents had to use knives to cut the hair to free them. On the train there were 1206 people and 23 guards from 226 Regiment, Red Army 15th Brigade. With their luggage, they were tightly packed from 50 to 60 people to a wagon.

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The train passed through Baranowicze before heading into the Soviet Union proper. For the first three days there was no food until the train reached the Polish border (of 1939) but on crossing into the Soviet Union on the 14th the passengers were given soup and bread every day. On the 28th February the train arrived in Arkhangelsk Oblast Plesetsky District, Kholmogory station to begin the “Special Settlement”. They waited for two days in the snow before being taken to their new home – Vodopad.

When the Poles arrived in Vodopad, the lice and cockroach infested barracks were already waiting for them. Each was to be shared by two families. The Poles were given two days rest to make the place as habitable as possible before starting work cutting and hauling timber.

Much of Soviet labour was organized on piecework – the harder you worked; the more you got paid. Wages varied from 2 to 8 roubles for an 8 to 10 hour shift. While the Poles had energy in the early days to work hard, the money was good. Later it became harder to reach the targets that were set. By April 1940 hunger was beginning to set in. Things improved marginally when the spring thaw set in. They managed to supplement their diet by eating wild berries and mushrooms but if caught this was punishable by 3 or 4 days confinement with no food. If a person missed a day's work they were fined over 6 months with a loss of 25%. Bread was 1 rouble 5 kopeks per kilo. The workers could visit the canteen twice a day and buy soup (of varying and decreasing quality) from 7 to 18 kopeks a plate. A worker was allowed two plates. Non-workers were allowed only one plate. The nutritional value was limited. Mostly it was noodle soup [lapsha] made from fish heads.

To date it has been possible to establish 686 inhabitants of Vodopad, 126 of whom came from the Osada Ostrowek [18.4%]. All but 5 of the “Special Settlers” came from the (Soviet defined) Brest Oblast. In fact this was part of the clearance of the Kobryn and Kossow areas in the Polish voivodeship of Polesie. There were 145 families in the settlement, although certainly many of the family groups were related to each other.

In the Ostrowek group there were 62 females and 64 males. At the time of deportation 64 of the group were 18 years or younger [50.1%]. 7 were over 60. From the group, during their time in the camp, it has been possible to establish 10 known deaths [7.9%]. From the whole population there were 40 known deaths in Vodopad [5.9%].

The amnesty of August 1941 did not bring the immediate benefits that the Poles had probably hoped for. The war situation meant that food was harder to find. The quality of the soup worsened as supplies became scarce and the bread ration was cut from 1Kg to 800gr for a worker and from 500gr to 400gr for a non-worker. The sense of relief at being “free” was also fairly short lived when it was realized that they would not be going anywhere soon. They had one more winter to survive before they could think about freedom. On the 20th December 1941 the NKVD Regional Commander Ogarkov came to Vodopad and proposed 4 possible destinations for the Poles: Czimkient, Akmolinsk, Aktiubinsk and Uralsk. Most chose Aktiubinsk. Far from opposing individual travel, he offered to help those who wanted to go. The Polish Embassy, through its delegate Jozef Gruja suggested to the Poles that it would be better to wait until the spring when an organized transport could be arranged. Again, most followed this advice. The NKVD



Osada Ostrowek : A Personal Journey through the Archives (Continued)

By Dr Mark Ostrowski

issued identity papers, the "*Udostvorenje*", and at the same time released them from compulsory work. However, most of the Poles then reapplied for their old jobs as free Polish workers and they continued to work because they needed to eat.

When the Polish Embassy made contact with the camp it recorded there were 645 inhabitants [December 1941]. On the 6th January 1942 the embassy brought supplies to Vodopad: 7 ladies coats, 20 blankets, enough socks for everyone, 20 duvets, several pairs of shoes, scarves and sweaters, 80 cans of condensed milk, some jars of Bovril, 50 Kgs of sugar, 70 bars of chocolate and a small first aid kit. They also came forward with money to supplement the income of the Poles. Between the 24th October and the 31st December 1941 they paid 4000 roubles in four payments to assist welfare in Vodopad.

All that was left was to wait and survive.

At the end of January 1942 the Soviet authorities made a "razchyot", a final accounting and paid any wages due to the Poles. Many of the Poles also spent this time selling off everything that was left of their possessions in order to get extra cash for the journey. They were delivered to Permilovo railway station and had to wait in the snow for 3 days for the train to arrive.

The train left in the night of the 2nd February 1942. The train consisted of 4 18-ton freight wagons and 4 "Cargo Pullmans" – freight wagons usually referred to as "cattle trucks" converted to transport personnel. The 18-ton wagons had no fires until the Polish men installed them at the station. Approximately 540 people left the station – by the time they reached Vologda 30 were dead, mostly children and the elderly. On the 28th January they had all received three days bread ration of 400gr each per day. They received their next bread at Nyandoma on the 6th, and they only received that because Jan Obara, the Polish group leader and 4 others managed to get to the station in advance of the train and finagle the food. And from the 9th to the 15th – the Nyandoma -Yaroslavl leg there was no food at all. The train stopped on route but it was forbidden to the locals to sell food to the passengers. However, along the way at Danilov [Vologda-Yaroslavl line] the Poles did manage to "liberate" some food from a train going in the opposite direction. In fact they acquired 10 sacks of flour, 10 sacks of kasha, 10 sacks of sugar and some crates of dried potatoes from a sealed military train. Of course this led to repercussions from the authorities who threatened investigations and arrests, but they were let go after Jan Obara promised that such an action would not be repeated. It is most likely that this appropriation of food saved many lives in the group. Here the train turned east towards Aktyubinsk.

Somewhere near Yaroslavl the train was by met Alfred Powiecki who sent his report to the Polish Embassy in Kuibyshev that the train was en route and he related many of the details of the journey.

At 1700hrs on the 1st of March the train arrived in Kuibyshev where it was met by representatives of the Polish Embassy. The train passengers were fed with bread, sugar, fish and sausage. It left that night continuing to Aktyubinsk. The details after that are somewhat sketchy.

The group spent some time in Guzar and were signed up at Army Recruitment Office No.7 [K.U.7]. On the 30th March they were in Krasnovodsk about to join the 30,305 military and civilian evacuees who had already left for Iran.

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On the Morning of the 1st April they boarded a ship and arrived in Pahlevi on the evening of Friday 3rd April 1942, the twelfth ship to land, just in time for Easter. There was a mass on Easter Sunday, the 5th, attended by many of the Poles in the tented refugee camp. It was held in the wooden chapel that had been constructed there. They were the survivors and they had a lot to be thankful for. By the 25th April all the evacuees had been transferred to other camps, mostly around Teheran.

One final point, and something that only became apparent when doing the research for this paper, the train seems to have been fast tracked through the system – possibly to make the “final” evacuation that was to have ended on the 2nd April. It seems that all the healthiest soldiers in the group were earmarked to supplement the 1st Armoured Division being formed in Scotland; mostly to the 10th Dragoon Regiment and the 1st Anti-Tank Regiment. All the soldiers drawn from the group who were killed in action served in France – this is an anomaly, given the assumption that they would have served in the Second Corps. There is scope for more research here.

As a post script, today nothing exists of the Osada Ostrowek. Whilst the village remains, the *Osada* was ploughed into the fields of the local collective farms. All that remains are the field marks of the tracks that once led to the houses.

So where does all this information come from? Historical research is a painstaking process involving the scouring of a lot of archival material. Starting from no knowledge at all, as I did, then the first stop would be Karta: <http://www.indeks.karta.org.pl/pl/wyszukiwanie.jsp> the Polish database of victims. Assuming that the family member is here, a time and location of deportation can be established. It would then be possible to find out who else was at the camp. The search engine does offer to find the place “*Miejsce represji*” but, for example, under “Wodopad” there are only 5 entries – the group not from Polesie mentioned above. Unfortunately to get more information the next tier has to be searched: the *Powiat / Rajon ZSRR* – this produces 3,488 results for *Plesiecki*. This large body then has to be sifted to find the particular camp of interest. An Excel spreadsheet is very useful for compiling the information. With a working knowledge of the Russian alphabet it may also be possible to get the slightly more information from the Russian equivalent at memo.ru: <http://lists.memo.ru/index1.htm> and once the names have been established it is possible to find the occasional person who got lost between the Russian and Polish databases. In this case study there were 11 such cases. The Russian source is also very good because it give the residence of the individual prior to deportation or arrest, as well as often giving education and/or profession.

Since most researchers will want to know specifically about their family members there are a number of archival sources available. For background reading on what was happening in the Soviet from 1941 onwards, the *Documents - A.7.307 Polish Embassy in Kuybyshev, Subgroup 307, Social Welfare* are worth looking at. They contain a valuable insight of post-amnesty conditions. They can be found here: http://www.pism.co.uk/page1_documents.htm If nothing else, it should tell you how many Poles were still alive in a particular camp when the Polish Embassy made contact. This number can be used to verify the accuracy and completeness of the records collated from Karta. In the Vodopad case the record is off by one person.



Osada Ostrowek : A Personal Journey through the Archives (Continued)

By Dr Mark Ostrowski

Of more direct personal interest, but also more hit and miss are the Hoover archives.

Office file of the Social Welfare Department, 1941-1944 arranged by region in Poland: <http://szukajwarchiwach.pl/800/35/0/-/46#tabJednostka> and onwards has many adult and children's testimonies. As does:

Poles deported to the Soviet Union, 1939-1945

<http://szukajwarchiwach.pl/800/41/0/-/117#tabJednostka> and

Reports of Polish deportees, 1941

<http://szukajwarchiwach.pl/800/41/0/-/217#tabJednostka>.

And there is the huge General Anders collection. Thousands of individual names are organized alphabetically at: **Personal card index**

<http://www.szukajwarchiwach.pl/800/1/0/-/1#tabJednostka> and onwards. If the name is there, it will be assigned a number which relates to a report organized numerically at:

<http://www.szukajwarchiwach.pl/800/1/0/-/35#tabJednostka> and onwards.

Even if there is nothing from one's family, there is a good chance that there will be something from someone who was either from the same village, or in the same camp, or shared the same evacuation experience... they might even mention a relative. It is just a question of looking.

~*~

Here is a link to the Vodopad Special Settlement, Plesetshii Raion, Arkhangelsk Oblast database of the nearly 700 deportees . The link is a DROPBOX file so that readers can download it. I think this is the most complete set of data for any Soviet Special Settlement.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/kjnn80x5p5pze1j/WODOPAD%20OSTROWEK%20DATABASE.xlsx>

Death certificate of baby Janina Ostrowska who died in exile in 1940. The death certificate was registered in Iran, 1944.

| DEATH CERTIFICATE METRYKA ŚMIERCI | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|------------------|--|
| Nazwisko i imię zmarłego (jej) Name of the Deceased | | OSTROWSKA JANINA | | | |
| Nr. ewidencyjny | Przydół | Stopień | | | |
| Wyznanie | Roman Catholic rzyms. kat. | Stan | Child dziecko | Zawód cywilny | |
| Data urodzenia Date of Birth | 10.10.1939r. | Miejsce urodzenia Place of Birth | OSTRÓWEK POW. KOSÓW WOJ. POLESKIE | | |
| Relacja zmarłego, zawód i przydół ojca Parents | FRANCISZEK JANINA 20. ZIELIŃSKA | Miejsce zamieszkania rodziców Parents Address | OSTRÓWEK POW. KOSÓW WOJ. POLESKIE | | |
| Imię i nazwisko najbliższej osoby (matki) | | Miejsce jej zamieszkania | | | |
| Data śmierci Date of Death | 10.2.1940 | data i godzina śmierci Time of death | 10.2.1940 | | |
| Miejsce zgonu Place of Death | W transporcie do Z.S.R. KOSÓW WOJ. POLESKIE In transport to USSR. Kosow, Polesie | | | | |
| Data pogrzebu Date of Burial | 11.2.1940r. | Miejsce i numer grobu Place of Burial | KOSÓW WOJ. POLESKIE | | |
| Przygotowanie śmierci | | 2 świadkowie śmierci wzr. świadectwo lekarza Witnesses | KACZOROWSKA HELENA OSTROWSKA JANINA | | |
| Kto asystował przy pogrzebie mogiło i przydzielił ks. kapłana | | Karta zawiadomienia ks. Kapł. rolnictwa, Czyż, zagon, Sw. Sędziów | | | |
| Uwagi Poch. zgonu w porządku Ks. F.J. MACIASZEK PROB. KIDUGALA-TANZANIA-HERZKA dn. 22.2.1944r. | | | | | |
| Pogrzeb zgonu zgłoszony w Główną Księgę Zgonów Prof. Budziszewski w Iranie | | | | | |
| Zam. 1944 Rok 1944 Str. 105 Lp. 1242 | | | | | |
| Registered in Iran, 1944 | | | | | |
| Zgłoszenie śmierci zgłoszone w Księgę Metryk, stwierdza M. p. dnia 7.12.1944r. L. 191/Budiszewski | | | | | |
| Certificate Issued in Tanganyika | | | | | |

Kresy-Siberia Newsletter

December 2013



“Once my mother” documentary film by Sophia Turkiewicz

Polish Australian film maker Sophia Turkiewicz's new feature documentary “Once My Mother” had its premiere at the Adelaide Film Festival Australia in October 2013, where it received the Audience Award for Best Documentary. The film tells a personal story of Sophia's relationship with her mother Helen, who was one of the 1-2 million Poles deported to Siberia during the Second World War.

Since its premiere “Once My Mother” has also won Best Film, Canberra Film Festival, and Best Feature Documentary, ATOM Awards, as well as being nominated for Best Feature Documentary at the national film industry AACTA Awards, to be held in Sydney on January 28th 2014.

Kresy Siberia is proud to have been involved in this project. Sophia says: *‘I had grown up with family stories of my mother's wartime experiences in Siberia but I had no historical/political context for them. When I discovered the existence of Kresy-Siberia in 2007, a door suddenly opened and I was able to see how these stories fitted into the big picture.’*

A number of private fundraising events for the film were held under the auspices of Kresy-Siberia (Australia) Ltd. Sophia says *‘Kresy-Siberia's support got us to first base. They helped us raise sufficient funds to employ an editor to do a ‘rough cut’ of the story. This is what we used to successfully attract production funding from Screen Australia.’*

She adds: *‘What inspired me to tell this story was that I wanted my mother's life to matter. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to record her life and discover her true story. She was an ordinary person who was swept up in extraordinary events, a pawn in a political game. I hope ‘Once My Mother’ helps to shed light on a forgotten chapter of World War Two history and to honour the lives of the Poles who went through the same horrific experiences as my mother once did.’*

Screenings are now planned for Sydney and other cities around Australia early in the new year, when a DVD will also be on sale. You can register your name on the www.ancemymother.com website and you will be notified when the DVD becomes available. Internationally, the filmmakers have plans to show the film in Poland in 2014. It has also been submitted to a number of international film festivals, including FIPA in Biarritz, where it will screen in competition in January, with the filmmakers in attendance.

View the Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/75190074>



PLEASE DONATE TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION AT www.tinyurl.com/ks-contribute

Kresy-Siberia Newsletter

December 2013



Launch of “Sugared Orange” by Kresy descendent Beata Zatorska and Simon Target, in Sydney November 2013

Kresy-Siberia Australia had a wonderful evening recently at the launch of “Sugared Orange: Recipes and Stories from a Winter in Poland” by Beata Zatorska and Simon Target. © Tabula Books.

This book follows on from the huge success of “Rose Petal Jam: Recipes and Stories from a Summer in Poland”. Serious cookbook, part memoir and part travelogue, “Rose Petal Jam” won the prestigious Gourmand Award at the Folie Bergere in Paris. Rave reviews include Anna Raczowska, from The Polish Times, naming it “a priceless gift and cookery guide for Polish migrants” and Michelle Rowe, from The Australian, calling it “One of the loveliest books of the year”.

Beata Zatorska grew up in the Karkonosze Mountains in Poland with her grandmother, Józefa, a professional chef. In “Rose Petal Jam” Beata reminisces “Józefa loved the south-western corner of Poland where we lived, but she did not grow up there. She came from Lwów, hundreds of kilometres to the east, from the Kresy or Borderlands. After the Second World War, the Kresy became part of the USSR. Poland’s borders moved to the west, and so did my family. Józefa had lost her husband in the war. He was only 30; she 26. A young widow, she set off to start a new life on the other side of the country with her parents Julia and Dimitri, her sisters Janina and Izabela, her six-year old son Jasiu, and her two-year old daughter Lidia—my mother”.

In Beata and Simon’s new book, “Sugared Orange”, we are treated to some recipes from Eastern Poland, particularly the part of Lwów / Brzeżany where Beata’s grandparents came from. Kaszak, a sweet barley cake, is still sold in the streets of Lublin. Kutia, a wheat / barley and poppy-seed concoction, is an old Slavic, pre-Christmas dessert. Because this is our December newsletter we have chosen one of our favourite Christmas Eve recipes to share with you from Beata’s book. This is barszcz with wild mushroom dumplings (see opposite page).

If you would like to buy “Sugared Orange” please see below for some links and suggested retailers:

Amazon USA http://www.amazon.com/Sugared-Orange-Recipes-Stories-Winter/dp/0956699227/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1384913801&sr=8-1&keywords=sugared+orange



Amazon UK http://www.amazon.co.uk/Sugared-Orange-Recipes-Stories-Winter/dp/0956699227/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1384913888&sr=8-1&keywords=sugared+orange

Book Depository - Australia, South Africa and Argentina, with free worldwide shipping.
<http://www.bookdepository.com/Sugared-Orange-Beata-Zatorska/9780956699220>

The book is also featured on News Corp websites in their top travel books for 2013 e.g.
<http://nz.totaltravel.yahoo.com/news-opinions/news/a/-/19825899/books-for-the-travel-hungry/>



Beetroot Soup (with Wild Mushroom dumplings)

barszcz czerwony z uszkami

To make the soup

2 kg (4 ½ lb) beetroot (beets)

3 carrots, chopped

1 onion, chopped

1 small celeriac, sliced

1 stalk celery, sliced

1 small bunch parsley, chopped

1 bay leaf

1 clove garlic, crushed

1 teaspoon caster (superfine) sugar

2.5 l (c. 4 pints) water

1 tablespoon lemon juice or apple vinegar

Add the carrots, onion, celeriac, bay leaf, parsley and celery to a large saucepan with the water. Bring to the boil and simmer until the vegetables are soft. Peel and grate the beetroot using the largest holes in your grater. Add to the pot and simmer on low heat. After 15 minutes add the lemon juice or apple vinegar. After a further 15 minutes strain and add crushed garlic, salt, pepper and sugar.



To make the Dumplings

For the filling

150 g (5 oz) dried mushrooms

1 large onion

vegetable oil

For the Pastry dough

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) plain (all-purpose) flour

50 g (2 oz) butter or 3 tablespoons vegetable oil

warm water

Cover the mushrooms in water, and soak for a few hours. Bring to the boil and simmer for ten minutes. Drain and grind in a food processor. Dice the onion finely and fry in a little oil over a low heat until translucent. Add the mushrooms and fry for a few minutes. Add salt and pepper.

Mix the flour and butter or oil on a large wooden board with your hands. Add a little warm water to make an elastic dough. Take a tennis-ball-sized lump of dough and roll it out on your floured board to 3 mm (¼ in) thick. Use a small inverted tumbler or pastry cutter – about 6 cm (2½ in) in diameter – to cut out pastry circles. Repeat until all the pastry has been used.

Place a teaspoonful of the mushroom filling on one half of each circle and fold it over to form a dumpling. Use your thumb and second finger to seal the folded semicircle, pinching all along the rounded edges in a shell-like pattern. Then fold the two outer tips of your dumpling and join them together by pinching. This creates the classic uszka shape ('small ears') like Italian tortellini. Cook the dumplings in a large saucepan of salted boiling water. This will only take a couple of minutes – they are ready when they float to the top. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain. Serve 4–5 dumplings or uszka per person in a bowl of hot beetroot soup.



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(listed alphabetically in each category of giving in 2013, updated as of 24 December)

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