

Poznań 12 July 1995

Professor Richard Rapacz
Director of General Education
Massasoit Community College
One Massasoit Boulevard
Brockton, MA 02402
U.S.A.

Dear Richard Rapacz,

I am truly sorry for not writing to you earlier, I intended to, four months ago, but did not manage, due to a combination of circumstances too uninteresting to relate. Generally, I had a very difficult academic year and am relieved that it has just ended. To process the material I finally received I needed some time and a mind free of frantically running thoughts.

Let me proceed in the chronological order, from the point relevant for this account, which means, back to the first week of August 1994, when I spent around a week in Nowy Sącz, my home town, in the south of Poland. While there, I met my friend Agata; her husband, Andrzej, was born and grew up in SANOK, relatively close to the region you are interested in.

They both go to Sanok to visit Andrzej's family and take hiking holidays in the nearby mountain woods of BIESZCZADY. My friends know the region well enough to move around there freely. When I asked for instructions they made me aware of difficulty number one -- the lack of public transport between the villages in the area. The only possibility is to go by car, and since I have not got one I had no chance of making the trip myself.

Instead, they agreed to do the search on the occasion of the holidays they were planning at the end of August. I left them the details concerning your parents, the maps, and the money. I also translated the seven suggestions you passed on through Sharon Brown.

At the beginning of October I went down to Nowy Sącz (my Grandpa died unexpectedly). I talked briefly to Agata and Andrzej, who had been to BEREZNICA. They needed some time to process the information they had gathered there, had some photos to develop, and were waiting for replies from various offices they had written to.

Enclosed please find all the materials they sent to me in January 1995:

1. photographs from BEREŻNICA,
2. a letter from the registry office of the local commune (Polish smallest administrative district in the country, but not in town),
3. my translation of the letter,
4. two addresses, the latter seems a possible contact.

The letter (2 above) holds answers, or actually the lack of them, to some of your questions. Chances of finding any official records are slim, for the sadly obvious reasons it seems (what follows is my attempt at throwing some light on the contents of the letter):

(a) When the indigenous population was forced to leave the area after WWII it would have been "improper", from the regime's point of view, to keep any records of where the inhabitants were sent, in fear of them being able to prove that they were born in the eastern region and had the right to the land. Part of the territory, with the pre-war name of MISZKOWIEC, as you know, fell east of the post-war Polish-Russian border, and its pre-war population was probably resettled further east in the USSR.

(b) Moreover, the United Church birth records might have been removed (destroyed) either during the WW II, or soon after the war ended (1947 -- my speculation), to remove any obvious evidence as to their numbers, perhaps. The deportation was done rapidly and probably did not allow for collecting church records.

The lack of the records emphasises "white spots" in our post war history. Apparently, the real problem in the south-east started at the end of WW II, when different nationalities and groups of different political orientation tried to influence the post war order. One such group was the Ukrainian Resistance Army (UPA -- the abbreviation in Polish), who were fighting for the independence of the Ukraine, and during the war had been on Hitler's side, and after the war were active in the Bieszczady region. After they ambushed and killed a Polish general Karol Swierczewski, that was enough for the post war regime: they retaliated with forced migrations (see below). (This is obviously cutting the long story short).

(By the way, you may have access to better books on the subject of WW II and its aftermath in Poland, than we do here, since the war history we were taught at schools until mid, actually even late 80s, had more to do with propaganda that suited the Communist block than with presenting facts in an objective way.)

In April 1947 the Polish authorities evacuated the entire population of Bieszczady and Beskid Niski (Akcja Wisła - "Operation Vistula"). Inhabitants were given two hours to pack and to leave with whatever they could carry. Family members were separated during the "resettlement", with no possibility of contacting one another.

My late Grandpa, born in 1904, and Dad, born in 1934, were describing the situation in Nowy Sącz region with regard to the so called "Rusini" (ŁEMK, LEMK), historically close to the Ukrainians. The different ethnic groups had lived fairly peacefully since

15th century, but were brutally removed in what looks to me as a case of ethnic cleansing. West of Nowy Sącz not all the ŁEMKS were involved in the political struggle, yet they were lured to better living in the former German territories. My Grandma, whom I did not know, as she had died three years before I was born, was ŁEMK and they got this offer, but refused to go. Luckily for them they were not moved by force. There was no such option for those who lived east of Nowy Sącz -- they all had to leave.

And just one final remark on the witnesses now - Agata wrote on the back of one photo that a family at house number 13 in the village of Bereźnica Wielka looked after the graves. They refused to give their name or to have their photo taken. Agata and Andrzej said that their interlocutors were reluctant to answer any questions, suspicious of the cause of the enquiry. Another thing is that they probably did not know much themselves. Until not so long ago it was better "not to know", not to mention carry out an open enquiry. The story is painful on the human level and I am sorry for painting such a grim picture.

Poczta WOŁKOWYJA

her address at work DYREKTOR
SZKOŁA PODSTAWOWA
UHERCE k.LESKA
woj. przemyskie

URZĄD GMINY
38-710 Czarna
ul. Krowo
65-1517
S.O. 5114/I/21/94

Czarna, dnia 1994.11.10

Pan

Andrzej Zarych
ul. Nawojowska 327
33-300 Nowy Sącz

W odpowiedzi na Pana pismo z dnia 1994.10.17 w sprawie poszukiwania rodziny Pana Dick Rapacz - Urząd Gminy w Czarnej informuje, że nie jesteśmy w stanie pomóc Panu w tej sprawie, ponieważ tutaj USC nie posiada oryginalnych ksiąg urodzeń z miejscowości Michniowiec obejmujących interesujący Pana okres. Los tych ksiąg jest nam nieznany / dot. ksiąg greko-kat. Księgi rzym.-kat. zostały prawdopodobnie przekazane do Kurii Biskupiej w Przemyślu /.

Jeżeli natomiast chodzi o dokumentację dot. zamieszkiwania na naszym terenie ludności przesiedlonej w latach 40-tych na tereny dawnego Związku Radzieckiego, czy też na zachodnie i północne tereny Polski - tutaj Urząd nie posiada i nigdy nie posiadał jakichkolwiek danych na ten temat.

Nie informowano nas również nigdy o tym, gdzie takiej dokumentacji można szukać i czy ona w ogóle istnieje.

W związku z powyższym w interesującej Pana sprawie jesteśmy bezradni.

- Otrzymują: -

1. Adresat
2. A/a

z up. Wójta
[Podpis]
inż. Bogusława Wojciechowska
kierownik USC

Wszystkie odpowiadai są tego typu co to.

In reply to your letter of 17th October 1994 with the enquiry about Mr. Dick Rapacz's family - we (the Commune Office in Czarna) are sorry to inform you that we are unable to help you in this matter. Our registry office does not have any Birth Records for the village of Michniowiec from the period you are interested in. We do not know what happened to those records (namely the Greek Catholic Records). The Roman Catholic records might have been handed over to Curia (Bishop's chancery in Przemyśl).

As for the records of the inhabitants of this area who were moved (**deported** - *emphasis mine*) to either the Soviet Union, or "resettled" to the West and North of Poland - our office does not have, and has never had, any whatsoever information.

Neither have we been informed where to look for such documents, or if they at all exist.

As a result, we are helpless with regard to solving your problem.

Copy:

1. Addressee,
2. File .

Agata added a hand-written comment: All the replies are similar.

Dear Ray and Elly, Mike and Mary, and all & me,

Please note that the following pictures were taken by Poles, Agata and Andrzej, who are friends of Elzbieta (Ela) Majocha, also Polish. They live in Sanok which is the largest town near Berezne. Ela is the Polish anthropologist who befriended the two Galbighters I sent to Poland in the Summer of '94.

Also note that text above each picture was written by Agata and translated by Ela. I had to put that text on paper to accompany the pictures which are copies I had made up from the originals.

Dick



Śwob męża Rozali Janko, Stefana, chyba
ostatniego ciotnika, który mógłby powiedzieć
coś na temat tej rodziny.

Steven's grave, he was
Rozalia Janko's husband. He
was probably the last person
to know something about the
family's "mis-fortune".



Kościół w Bereźnicy (dawna cerkiew)

Church in Berežnica
(formerly a Russian Orthodox
church)



Kościół w Bereźnicy (dawna cerkiew)
Na tym zdjęciu w małym dolnym rogu
prawdopodobnie groby rodzeństwa Julii Jankos:
Mikołaja i ...

Opiekują się nimi rodzina, która mieszka
w Bereźnicy Wielkiej 13. Nie podali nam
nazwiska

Church in Bereznica. In the right
hand-side bottom corner of the
photo there are (most probably) the graves of
Julia Jankos's siblings: MIKOŁAJ and ...
The graves are looked after by a family from
BEREŻNICA WIELKA at number 13. They refused
to give their name.



Dom, w którym mieszka ostatnia żyjąca osoba
o nazwisku Janko, Ma ona około 90 lat
silny skłon do. Adres: Rozalia Janko
Bereznice Wielkie 24

Kobieta ^{nie z synów braci} to jest prawdopodobnie żoną jednego
z braci (Stepana) Julii Janko.

Here lives the last person whose
surname is Janko. She is in her
90s and suffers from

Rozalia is probably wife of one of Steven's
and Julia's brothers or sons' brothers



Cmentarz w Bereznicy ~~wielkiej~~ Wielkiej.

The cemetery in Great Bereznica

