



# SOCIETY FOR GERMAN GENEALOGY IN EASTERN EUROPE



## *SOCIETY INFORMATION*

*SGGEE, a society for people of German origin  
Interested in genealogy, culture and history  
of their ancestors who migrated through Poland,  
Volhynia, and surrounding area*

## SGGEE JOURNAL

COMPILED AND EDITED BY:  
EARL SCHULTZ, CALGARY, AB, CANADA

Published quarterly, in print and on the Internet, by the SOCIETY FOR GERMAN GENEALOGY IN EASTERN EUROPE, "A Polish and Volhynian Genealogy Group".

Submission of material for the Journal is welcomed. The editor retains the right to edit, reserve, or reject any material submitted. Although the material contained herein is copyrighted, SGGEE will generally give permission for the reprinting of material originating with SGGEE if credit is given to SGGEE as the source of the material. Permission of the author is required where material originates other than with SGGEE.

ISSN: 1712-7572  
© Copyrighted by SGGEE 2006 March.

SGGEE  
Box 905 Stn "M" Calgary, AB Canada T2P 2J6  
E-mail: [contact@sggee.org](mailto:contact@sggee.org)  
Website: [www.sggee.org](http://www.sggee.org)  
Listserv: [www.sggee.org/listserv](http://www.sggee.org/listserv)

Annual membership:  
In Canada: C\$40.00 Elsewhere: US\$30.00

Back Issues of the Journal:  
In Canada: C\$5.00 Elsewhere: US\$5.00  
Include \$2.50 for postage if ordering one issue. Postage included if two or more Journals ordered together.

**Note:**  
**Membership related items such as membership fees, address changes, e-mail changes, Membership and Pedigree enquiries, and website password problems, should be sent to [membership@sggee.org](mailto:membership@sggee.org) or mailed to the address above, attention 'Membership'**

## SGGEE Executive

President:	Carol Burns, San Francisco, CA
Past President	Dick Stein, Calgary, AB
Vice President:	Earl Schultz, Calgary, AB
Treasurer:	Ken Schultz, Calgary, AB
Recording and Corresponding Sec.	Rose Ingram, Kamloops, BC
Other Directors:	Miles Ertman, Edmonton, AB Karl Krueger, Gaithersburg, MD Don Kronenberger, Marietta, GA Bill Remus, Honolulu, HI

## Past Presidents

Gary Warner	1999 - 2000
Bill Fife	2000 - 2001
Rose Ingram	2001 - 2002
John Marsch	2002 - 2004
Dick Stein	2004 - 2005

## Directors' Responsibilities

Convention:	Miles Ertman
Finance:	Ken Schultz
Journal:	Earl Schultz
Library:	Dick Stein
Membership:	Rose Ingram
Publicity:	Carol Burns
Research:	Rose Ingram
Website:	Karl Krueger

## To Contact us

<a href="mailto:contact@sggee.org">contact@sggee.org</a>	-for General Correspondence
<a href="mailto:kontakt@sggee.org">kontakt@sggee.org</a>	-for Correspondence in German
<a href="mailto:convention@sggee.org">convention@sggee.org</a>	-for Convention information
<a href="mailto:databases@sggee.org">databases@sggee.org</a>	-for Database inquiries
<a href="mailto:editor@sggee.org">editor@sggee.org</a>	-for Journal related items
<a href="mailto:finance@sggee.org">finance@sggee.org</a>	-for Accounting and bills
<a href="mailto:library@sggee.org">library@sggee.org</a>	-for Library enquiries
<a href="mailto:gpvlisterve@sggee.org">gpvlisterve@sggee.org</a>	-for Listserv Administrator
<a href="mailto:membership@sggee.org">membership@sggee.org</a>	-for Membership related items
<a href="mailto:webmaster@sggee.org">webmaster@sggee.org</a>	-for Website related items



## Editorial

by Earl Schultz, Editor  
editor@sggee.org

This is my first issue as Editor of the SGGEE Journal. It is with some trepidation that I follow in the footsteps of Bill Fife who has been the Editor since SGGEE started seven years ago. The quality of his issues will be hard to surpass. However, this is not intended to be a competition but rather the communication of information and ideas about our ancestors in an entertaining and informative way. I hope I can deliver, but I need your help.

I need your stories, articles, genealogical successes or failures that you would like to share with our readers. You do not have to be a strong writer, that is what the editor is for, but you do have to have ideas that you are willing to share. I would also appreciate any old photos that you may have with a short explanation since photos always make the Journal more interesting to read. I am also interested in more stories from Congress Poland to balance the many strong stories we have on Volhynia.

Bill's last issue was on Windmills. I hope you enjoyed the issue but it got me thinking. Where did the technology come from? I am just finding out that many of my German ancestral names may not, in fact, be German but rather Dutch. For example, Lechnitz is a very rare German name. So is Kleps. Both, however, are much more common in the Netherlands with slightly different spellings. Lechnitz becomes Likeness; Kleps becomes Klepsch. I also have a Baar in my ancestry and that name also hails from the Netherlands. Talking with Bill Remus at last year's St. Paul Conference, he mentioned that the Dutch were brought into Central Poland, west of Torun, to help clear the swamps and build dams and, it appears, build windmills.

As a new Editor, I have made some changes to the Journal. The cover design has been modified to highlight SGGEE's logo. I have also changed the style of headings. I expect other changes will also be made as I get familiar with setting up the contents of the Journal. I would appreciate comments and, yes, advice.

So, what do we have in this issue of the Journal? I would normally find it unusual to have two book reviews as main features but that is what we have. Dick Benert's review of Samuel Nickel's book is a good read in itself on the history of the Germans in early Communist Russia. This leads nicely into Gabriele Goldstone's story "The Red Stones of Federofka" which also talks about that era.

The other book review is "Psalms and Potatoes" by Jerry Frank. But don't start there. This whole story started for Jerry with the Mazurians and translating a document about them. Then, serendipity, Jerry kept coming across more information which led him to the book Psalms and Potatoes. Jerry noticed a reference to a Mazurian Polish Hymnal and then Howard Krushel indicated that his brother had such a hymnal in the family. Featured on our Journal cover is a picture of that 1738 hymnal and inside the Journal are the stories about it. Do you find that your research keeps leading you from one treasure to the next? Well, that's how this Journal was put together. One thing led to the next and now I can share all with you.

Finally, a reminder that August brings the next SGGEE Conference. It will be held in Edmonton, AB this year and we're looking to have a fine set of speakers to help you learn and understand genealogical research in our Eastern European areas. As always, our research room with our outstanding databases and our experts will be there to help you with your research. If you can, try to be there and meet others involved with our organization. Many will probably be distant cousins.

---

---

# A Nickel For Your Thoughts

A review article on Samuel Nickel's, *Die Deutschen in Wolhynien*, published in Kiev and Kharkov, 1935, by the USSR Publishing House for National Minorities

---



By Richard Benert

In 1935, Samuel Nickel (German spelling) published *Die Deutschen in Wolhynien*, a work which contains much useful information for anyone with an interest in the history of ethnic Germans in Volhynia. It was written, however, from an unabashedly Marxist/Leninist perspective, a fact which makes it difficult to believe that in the following year, he was convicted under Article 54-10 of the Russian Republic penal code of various counter-revolutionary "crimes" and was sentenced to a Siberian labor camp.<sup>1</sup> Nickel was yet another victim of the climate of suspicion and purging that pervaded Communist Party ranks during the 1930s. He was fortunate only in not being sentenced to death. We will return to his judicial troubles, but first we would do well to learn something about Nickel's earlier life and the contents of his book. (File Photo, courtesy of Alex Brzjezitsky)



---

---

## WHO WAS SAMUEL NICKEL?

Although a few historians have known about this book for many years, it came to the attention of a wider public only in 2004, when *Wolhynische Hefte*, Heft 13, carried a review of it written by Valentin Witrenko of Nowograd-Wolynski. Witrenko accorded it considerable praise as an example of the high degree of culture that Volhynian Germans had attained by the 1920s. Indeed, Nickel rose in these years from humble origins in his birthplace of Andrejewka<sup>2</sup> to graduation in 1924 from the *Hochschule für Volksbildung* in Kiev, prepared to become, at age 21, a teacher of physics and mathematics at the seven-class German polytechnic school in Nowograd-Wolynski. He had joined the Communist Youth League (the *Komsomol*) as a student and joined the Party in 1927. The Party apparently coaxed him into teaching social studies (*Gesellschaftskunde*) for he became active in the education of teachers at a school in Heimtal which used the facilities of the former Lutheran seminary there.<sup>3</sup> For his hard work in trying to combat the "religious and conservative attitudes" of people in the Heimtal community, he earned the respect of the Party Supervisor,

S. Tiede. It may not have hurt Nickel's reputation that someone by the name of Emmanuel *Nickel* had just recently come from the Party School in Odessa to become Secretary of the Party Cell in the Pulin District! Nickel remained in Nowograd-Wolynski until 1929, when he became an officer in the Red Army for a short time.

In the early 1930s, he was made editor of a journal on communist pedagogy and also became a member of the German division of a writers' society named *Pflug* (Plow). Something he said or wrote in this capacity led to a rebuke in 1934 by the Party Committee of *Pflug*, accusing him of supporting "kulakish" literary theories. We can only wonder, in the absence of more information, what this meant. It might seem that this rebuke inspired him to write *Die Deutschen in Wolhynien*, for this book is, if nothing else, a frontal attack on "kulaks"<sup>4</sup>, including those in the German community. However, in his preface he asserts that he had been doing research for the book for two years, which means that he started in 1933, a year before the rebuke. This chronology is puzzling, and it seems that we must content ourselves, at this point, with

uncertainty about the exact circumstances that led to Nickel's work on this book.<sup>5</sup>

This review will attempt to present as well-rounded a picture of the book as is possible in brief space. There is much in the book that is of value. It contains useful tables and statistics. It cites and sometimes quotes interesting documents not found in other books. Nickel's typical Marxist emphasis on economic matters led him to discuss often-overlooked subjects like the Volhynian lumber industry and the role it played in attracting Germans there. On the other hand, one must read Nickel with caution, even skepticism. His sympathies were with the poor and the landless, which is commendable, but about capitalists, estate-owners, kulaks and clergy he could find nothing good to say. These were, of course, the enemies of Bolshevism. Ostensibly incapable of love and concern for the lower classes, they are portrayed as exploiters up to the October Revolution of 1917 and as opponents of the "inevitable" victory of Bolshevik socialism thereafter. I will point out some of Nickel's most egregious errors and distortions, but in other cases I will let Nickel speak for himself, urging the reader, on one hand, to take his assertions with a grain of salt, but on the other, to ask whether there might not at times be some grain of truth in what he says. There is much, after all, about our "GR history" that we have little knowledge of and, being human, we sometimes assume things to be true even though we have little evidence to support the assumptions. Nickel's book is a challenge to our assumptions and it should encourage us to at least ask whether social relations among ethnic Germans in Volhynia were as harmonious as we tend to assume. Yet, his total silence about the exile and death that was being meted out to German "kulaks", even as he wrote the book in the early 1930s, makes it difficult to stir up great sympathy for him in his own subsequent life in exile.

### **GERMAN MIGRATION INTO VOLHYNIA**

Nickel's first section gives us his fairly conventional account of the German settlement into Volhynia. He divides it into three periods. The first, the 1780s and 1790s, was the time when

Mennonites, perhaps up to 1500 of them, moved into the area and established six colonies.<sup>6</sup> Heavy obligations to their landowners forced the early resettlement of some to South Russia in 1834 and 1835. The last Mennonites left Volhynia in 1877-1878.

The second period, the 1830s and 1840s, was the time when German capital began to be invested in the flourishing trade between western Europe and Ukraine which ran through Volhynia. In Volhynia itself land and forests offered opportunity for investment. A case in which a German baron, von Deutsch, was prevented in 1891 from further rapacious lumbering on his estates near Sarny is taken as proof by Nickel of how profit trumped the environment for these capitalists. Their hunger for land led by 1885 to German ownership of 5% of Volhynia (132,046 desiatines). The growing influence of these German estate-owners over the region's economic and political life found favour with the Russian government which saw it (for a brief time) as a welcome accompaniment to its suppression of the nationalistic Polish landowners who had taken part in the Polish Rebellion of 1863. Artisans and poor farmers also began to migrate in larger numbers into Volhynia in this period, so that by 1860, 11,424 settlers, mostly Germans, were living in 139 villages, mostly on rented land. According to Nickel, only 157 desiatines (1 desiatine = 2.7 acres) were actually owned by German "working" (*werktätig*) farmers. (In his mind, kulaks were not working farmers!)

Nickel's dislike of kulaks then colors his portrayal of the third period of immigration, the 1860s and 1870s. It was the kulaks' support of the Russian government during the Polish Rebellion of 1863 that caused their Polish neighbors to revile all German farmers, even the poor peasants who had only remained neutral in the conflict. Yet, in true Marxist fashion, Nickel attributes the heavy emigration from Poland in these years chiefly to economic causes—in this case, to overpopulation and the need for land. The wealthier farmers, he says, remained in Poland, benefiting from their new ability to buy the land of departing Germans at bargain prices.

For the less well-to-do, the move to Volhynia (as is well known) was beset with political difficulties. Officials had to be bribed along the way, and ultimately came that greatest insult (*der grösste Hohn und Spott*), the oath of personal loyalty to the Tsar and his family, a translation of which Nickel provides on p. 20. Difficulties in getting one's name on a local civil list often meant that one's military duty had to be fulfilled back in Poland where the name was still registered. Applications by a settlement to become a colony, with corresponding exemptions from some taxes and from military service (before 1874, when this became universal), could be annoyingly held up by arbitrary officials, the Tsar, or estate-owners. In addition to such political hurdles, the poorer immigrants faced economic difficulties. First there were the "middlemen" who acted as agents between the immigrants and the Polish and Ukrainian landowners who wanted to lease or sell to them some portions of their land. As always, the emphasis is on the shenanigans of the wealthy, such as the insertion of ambiguous clauses into contracts which might force the immigrants to buy a parcel several times over, as "often" happened.<sup>7</sup> Usually, of course, the contract was for rental of land, and here Nickel describes the well-known problem of renters who cleared and drained their land and improved it with buildings only to be forced off the land by the landowner at the end of the rental period by demands for higher rent or by having the land sold out from under them.<sup>8</sup> In either event, the farmer, if he wished to stay on the land, might need to borrow money. Here is where Nickel adds a new wrinkle. The "working" farmers went to the village kulaks for a surely exploitative loan.

**THE ENEMY ALLIANCE**

Where had these Volhynian German kulaks come from? Had the German kulaks not remained behind in Poland? In Nickel's view, a new kulak establishment had emerged from the former middlemen who negotiated the deals with the local noblemen. Many of them had apparently used their earnings to buy large plots of land which they then proceeded to rent and sell to smaller farmers. In addition, since they were not "working" farmers (by his definition) they used poorly paid hired help. Thus they, like the very wealthy estate-owners, became exploiters. The many of us whose families fell into the kulak class may well wonder at this supposed wealth and callousness of our grandfathers!

Kulaks of course were peasants. They had the lowest social standing within Nickel's enemy alliance. Above them stood the large estate owners (*Gutsbesitzer*), the capitalists, and the clergy. The estate owners were the German counterparts to the Ukrainian and Polish landed gentry. Using the table below based on the 1897 Russian census, Nickel shows how vast an area of land was owned by relatively few "exploitive" individuals.

Chief among these German land-speculating families was the Arndt clan, whose properties could be found in almost every corner of Volhynia. Others included Eulenberg (Nowograd-Wolynsk), Jakob Richert (Babitschowka), Heinrich Fidler (Neu-Prutowka), Karl Schlenker (Nowo-Sawod), Peter Schmidt (Pewna), Jakob Janz (Heimtal), Adolf Buob (Januschpol), Adolf Ai (Gorodischtsche), Johann Becker (Melenzi), Oskar Eulenberg (Alexandrowka), and Johann Schmidt (Kurne) (pp. 23, 31). In 1882, the Zhitomir district had 839 estate owners holding 372,378 desiatines of land, an average of 444 per family. Of these,

Size of property	KULAKS -----ESTATE OWNERS-----									Total
	Up to 25 des.	25-60 des.	60-200	200-500	500-1000	1000-2000	2000-5000	5000-10000	Over 10000	
Number of properties	1569	345	119	37	22	12	5	2	3	2114
Area owned in desiatines	18797	12870	9761	13073	15162	15779	14247	10827	81228	191745

about 117 were German. Whether Nickel's accusations against them are true, of course, is an open question.<sup>9</sup>

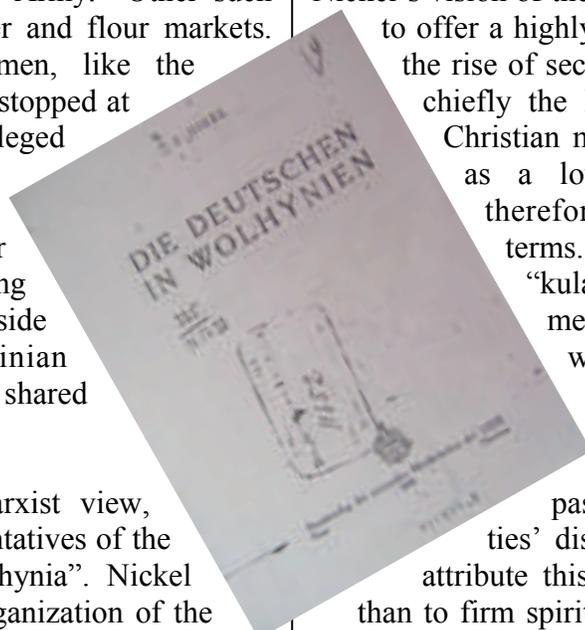
Another group of wealthy Germans were the "capitalists". These, Nickel says, were scarcely distinguishable from the estate-owners because often enough they were the same people. An Arndt was the largest owner of steam-mills in Volhynia. The landowner, Ai, was the greatest "usurer-capitalist". He lived off his interest, and allegedly sold off the houses of his creditors. The "Wurstkönig" Schulz in Nowograd-Wolynski is singled out for his "monopoly" in sausage production. He dominated not only the local market, but also provided sausage to the Army. Other such capitalists dominated the beer and flour markets. Nickel asserts that these men, like the German barons of the Baltic, stopped at nothing to protect their privileged position, converting to Orthodoxy (Arndt), sending their sons to Army officer schools (Richert), and holding governmental offices alongside their Russian and Ukrainian counterparts with whom they shared their class interests.<sup>10</sup>

The clergy, in Nickel's Marxist view, were the "ideological representatives of the German exploiter class of Volhynia". Nickel pays brief attention to the organization of the Lutheran Church and the duties of its pastors, but jumps quickly to the attack. He decries the oppressive number of offerings, contributions and fees the poor farmers had to surrender to the clergy. According to "an old proverb", he says, the clergy had two hands—one to take and the other to hold. He berates Pastor Johanson of Heimtal for turning his 12-desiatine garden into a bean patch whose output equaled that of any kulak! Indeed, the pastors and kulaks generally associated with one another and shared their world view. Together they controlled the schools. Teachers in village schools were appointed by the clergy and were paid, in essence, by the kulaks. In spite of the fact that German schools were placed under government direction in 1881, Nickel says, the pastors

really had a more effective direct control. The location of schoolrooms "under the same roof" with churches and prayer stations he took to be symbolic of this "upper class" domination, made even more vivid by the fact that schoolrooms were always smaller than the adjoining facilities for prayer, a fact noted by a school inspector from Kiev in 1903.<sup>11</sup> The kulak/clergy alliance was nowhere more obvious to Nickel than in the Küster-seminary established in Heimtal in 1904, where teachers were endowed with an "appropriate spirit" to ensure that they would go out and protect the interests of the privileged leaders of the village.<sup>12</sup>

Nickel's vision of the kulak/clergy alliance led him to offer a highly questionable explanation for the rise of sectarianism, by which he meant chiefly the Baptist and the Evangelical-Christian movements. He regarded this as a lower-class phenomenon and therefore explainable in Marxist terms. In fact, many German "kulaks" became Baptists, not to mention the Russian aristocrats who led the movement among their people. There may be a grain of truth in Nickel's charge that the Lutheran pastors shared the civil authorities' dislike of sectarianism,<sup>13</sup> but to attribute this to the class struggle, rather than to firm spiritual convictions, is more than slightly simplistic.

Nickel's Marxist view of society, of course, demanded the existence of such a grand alliance of kulaks, estate-owners, capitalists and clergy, all of whom worked hand in glove with the Tsarist authorities. It is easy for us to simply dismiss Nickel's charges as untrue, but he does provide some evidence for his charges. His documentation is scanty, at best, so we can't be sure in every case that he is telling the truth. Nevertheless, to be fair, we should at least mention some of the episodes he cites in his support.



## EXAMPLES OF EXPLOITATION

Class conflict came to a head, he says, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, around the time of the Revolution of 1905. It is often said that German colonists in Russia remained loyal to the Tsar in this tumultuous time, but Nickel argues that the poorer German colonists in Volhynia were influenced by the workers who went on strike in Novograd-Volynsk, Zhitomir, and elsewhere, and also by their rebellious Ukrainian peasant neighbors. The Russian countryside had always been a fruitful field for rumors, and apparently one such rumor on the eve of this Revolution was that the Tsar would soon grant titles of ownership to all renters. Thus, when in 1904 the Polish landowner, Mesenzow, announced higher rental fees to his eleven rental colonies (including Maruschowka, Nikolajewka and Eugenewka), the farmers refused to sign the new lease, hoping for support from the Tsar. An armed revolt was put down by Mesenzow and the leaders were arrested and ejected from their farms. Pastor Barth, he says, supported Mesenzow. Similar uprisings occurred on Arndt estates and elsewhere, Nickel says. A more peaceful episode occurred in 1905, when a group of newly-mustered Army reservists captured their landlord, Oskar Eulenberg, in a forest and extracted from him a promise not to expel their families from their farms while they were away at war! Perhaps in a fit of pique at such troublesome peasants, however, Eulenberg in 1910 sold his land to the Peasant Land Bank, forcing (according to Nickel) all the renters in Eulenberg's numerous villages (including Segenstal, Junisch, Werschizna, Bartschak, Dimitrowka, and Schereschowka) to leave the farms they had built up from nothing. Frau Ziffermann allegedly did the same to her colonists in Andrejewka, near Zhitomir.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the most reprehensible story (if true) is the one involving a multi-year effort by an Arndt (probably Julius?) to rid himself of his Russian renters in the village of Moissejewka. Allegedly, he gathered a force of his German tenants and marched on the village to force out the Russians and install Germans in their place. This naked attempt to use national hatreds for selfish purposes failed when, in a remarkable display of class

consciousness, the German farmers were persuaded by the Russians that the Arndts were exploiting them all equally. The Germans thereupon withdrew their support of Arndt.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of all the difficulties they faced, renters still made up 40% of the German farming population in 1914, an indication of how hard it was to purchase land. And a substantial portion of those who did acquire land could afford but a few desiatines. The table in fn. 4 indicates that 16% of the landowners in Zhitomir District had less than 5 desiatines. For Nowograd-Wolynsk the figure was 19%; for the district to the north, 28%. These people Nickel classified as the "village poor". Also in this category were day-laborers, cowherds and maids. All of them were subject to exploitation. Nickel illustrates the harsh condition of the poor laborers and servants by quoting the words of a "satirical folk song" "sung by the poor of Volhynia, a rough translation of which would be:

1. Whoever serves a farmer  
Does not, frankly, have it good.  
He gets each year a pair of stockings.  
That's little enough!  
Socks with no heels:  
The farmer is no nobleman,--  
The farmer is a barbarian,--  
Cruel nature!

The following verses are the same, except for the third and fifth lines:

2. He gets each year a pair of boots.  
Boots with no tops!
3. He gets each year a pair of pants.  
Pants with no legs!
4. He gets each year a jacket.  
A jacket with no arms!

Then, to further illustrate the wickedness of kulak exploiters, Nickel describes the "so-called *Einwohnergemeinde*". This was a small dwelling that kulaks often built to house their day or seasonal workers. Such a worker could have his own cow and a vegetable garden and paid no rent. He had instead to work for the owner one or two weeks during the planting and harvesting seasons. At other times, he might work as a handyman, shoemaker or tailor and thus "eke out a poor existence". This might seem, on a relative scale, not too bad a deal, especially when one considers the not-too-luxurious life our kulak ancestors lived. Nickel's

condemnation of the practice reveals his loose definition of “exploitation”. Yet, it must be said that if the folksong actually had some popularity, it must have had some basis in real life.

A word concerning the “middle-farmers” is perhaps in order. Nickel followed Marxist ideology here also, proclaiming that this class tended, in the capitalist system, either to gravitate upwards through land purchase or marriage, or to decline into poverty. One looks through the book in vain, however, for any documentation for this.

### THE “GERMAN QUESTION” AND THE EXPULSION

When he treats the “German question” (that is, the anti-German sentiment in some segments of Russian government and society), Nickel almost seems to set aside his class consciousness and become a German patriot. He is genuinely offended by the hatred of Germans stirred up by the government and by the Black Hundreds.<sup>16</sup> He despises the laws restricting German land acquisition (1892, 1895, and the proposed bill of 1910) as leading inevitably to the Expropriation Decree of 1915. Marxist reasoning reappears quickly, however, when he accuses the Ukrainian estate-owners of instilling in the peasantry a hatred of Germans in order to distract them from their hatred of Ukrainian estate-owners. The land shortage they suffered, they were told, was all the Germans’ fault even though (as he points out in a table on p. 43) Germans in 1897 owned a total of only 191,745 desiatines out of Volhynia’s total of 3,158,004 desiatines.<sup>17</sup> But any national feelings for all Germans that Nickel may have had break down when he maintains that the close ties enjoyed by German estate-owners and capitalists with Russian officialdom and the Ukrainian upper crust shielded them from the worst excesses of the prevalent hatred of Germans which fell upon the poor. At least Nickel does not mention kulaks in this context. Perhaps deep down he recognized that kulaks, for all their faults, were also Germans and also suffered from the reigning *Deutschenhetze*.

The same inability to sympathize with “upper class” Germans characterizes Nickel’s treatment of

the Expropriation Decree of February 1915 and the Expulsion from Volhynia beginning in July of that year. First of all, he says, the military prohibition of using the German, Hungarian and Turkish languages hurt the poor especially hard because they didn’t know Russian. (One might wonder how many of our “kulak” ancestors knew Russian.) But worse was the brazen way in which estate-owners who stayed behind got control of the abandoned harvests and cashed in. He provides two documents offering strong evidence that Arndt in Kurman and B.S. Mesenzow in Neu-Grüntal and elsewhere did just that. In fact, on July 24, 1915, the Volhynian Governor specifically legalized the “liquidation of harvests” of expelled renters by their landowners.<sup>18</sup> Worse yet, some landowners (he mentions Ziffermann, Arndt, Eulenberg and others) actually sold the lands they had been renting to German farmers.<sup>19</sup> When these farmers returned a few years later, resettling on their old farms was very difficult, if not impossible.

Nickel has to admit that kulaks were expelled along with poorer folks. He is at pains, however, to point out that they, along with “people of means”, rode on trains and were not sent to Siberia. They had the means, he says, to find settlement in South Russia and the provinces near to Volhynia. It was the poor and the middle peasants who were sent to Siberia. But once again, no evidence is offered. In truth, people of means, such as the Arndt family, were able to head for non-Siberian locations, but some average farmers also did. In addition, almost all expellees were placed on trains eventually and riding in a freight car is no “privilege”. And surely most kulaks left their homes by wagon, along with everyone else.

To give credit where it is due, however, it must be said that Nickel’s treatment is one of relatively few of the Expulsion by German writers that treat without rancor or condescension the 40,000 Galician refugees who were settled on the vacated German farms. He explains how they were conned by the Russian government and forced by the army and estate-owners to work in return for their “rations”. Seeing how they were being used, many tried to escape and return to Galicia. This was strictly forbidden by the government on July 10,

1916. These are apparent facts that should be taken into account when thinking about how these peasants usually allowed their host farms to deteriorate while they lived in them.

### THE 1917 REVOLUTIONS AND CIVIL WAR

The February Revolution brought only the Russian middle class to power and, in Nickel's mind, such people were incapable of even thinking of rescinding the Expropriation Decree and allowing the expellees to return. Here he was wrong, of course, for the bourgeois Provisional Government did put a stop to liquidating German properties in March 1917, even if the laws themselves were not abolished. Nickel correctly observes that German expellees who took the new government's decree giving them full rights as citizens seriously and tried to return to Volhynia found the return very difficult and were sometimes sent back. But he falsely blames this on the civil government. It was rather due to the army, which objected to civilians clogging the railways in time of war.<sup>20</sup> As might be expected, in any case, Nickel asserts that it was mainly kulaks who could afford the bribery involved who made it back to Volhynia before the October Revolution.

Nickel's chapter on the October Revolution covers only three pages. He points out with obvious satisfaction that the Decree of October 26 (November 8) abolished private property destroying the power of landowners and kulaks. Then the Bolsheviks' "liquidation" (his term) of the Liquidation Decrees of 1915 allowed the Volhynian Germans to return to their farms with the help and support of the government.

Unfortunately (from Nickel's viewpoint), the Ukraine was occupied by German forces in early 1918 and these forces helped to stall the victory of Bolshevism in the area throughout the year. The chief beneficiaries of this occupation were, again, the kulaks and estate-owners. Many colonists returning from exile were met by German troops and shunted off to work for extended periods on the estates of German landowners throughout the Ukraine. Land recently taken over by peasant rebellions was returned to the owners. But eventu-

ally, the German troops did help returning farmers—even small ones—to recover their farms. Kulaks who had managed to sell their farms before the Expulsion were enabled to take them back. The Germans established a "Central Organization of Germans in the Ukraine", led by clergy and kulaks, to offer relief and spread "nationalistic propaganda" against Ukrainians. Kulaks and estate-owners cooperated with this "German imperialism" by joining counter-revolutionary self-defense (*Selbstschutz*) units which were being organized by chaplain Grunwald, a Volhynian German who had attended a seminary in Germany. Smaller farmers refused to join, Nickel implies, and soon, in November, the workers and peasants of the Red Army (Nickel would have us believe) drove the German troops out.<sup>21</sup>

Nickel has not much to say about the subsequent civil war save that the Ukrainian warlords, Petliura and Machno, led "bands of kulaks" who persecuted the Ukrainian poor, and that the German "village poor" and even some middle peasants "actively supported the side of the Proletarian Revolution". They joined the Committees of the Poor (organized by the Bolsheviks for food collection) and helped the cause of de-kulakization. Some kulaks, he says, fled Volhynia along with the German soldiers. Driven by "kulak agitation", a small number of middle farmers also sold out, put their money in a "German Colonist Bank" and fled. Driven by the terrible inflation in Germany between 1921 and 1923, many of them returned, "completely ruined", to Volhynia. Many of the kulaks who stayed in Volhynia joined the "Sokolowsky-Kulak Rebellion", which flourished in the villages near Nowograd-Wolynsk, Emiltschin and Pulin in the summer of 1919. Leaders of this rebellion, he says, were the "German intelligentsia", *i.e.*, the clergy, who wished the return of the "golden occupation time". The poor and middle farmers, however, were now wise enough to see that this meant a return to "the old relationships in the German village" and they did not support the rebellion. Evidence one way or the other Nickel does not provide.

Following the brief occupation of Volhynia by "fascist" Polish troops in 1920, Volhynia was

divided between Poland and the Soviet Union by the Treaty of Riga, March 18, 1921. Nickel predictably, but with a good deal of truth, insists that conditions for the poor and middle farmers in Polish Volhynia remained terrible with high rents and high taxes. Non-Polish nationalities (Ukrainians, Jews and Germans) were suppressed by the “fascist” Polish government. Over half the schools were taught in Polish although Poles made up only 16.8% of the population. “Official” German schools no longer existed, and the use of German in schools was illegal. As before, the teachers were subservient to the clergy and the kulaks. Literacy stood at 31.1%. The German population stood at around 30,000 compared to 75,000 in 1897.

### VOLHYNIA UNDER BOLSHEVISM

Size of farm	Zhitomir District			Nowograd-Wolynsk District		
	1910	1917	1922	1910	1917	1922
Up to 3 dess.	35.0%	46.0%	16.9%	25.5%	34.7%	15.8%
3-6 “	31.3%	33.4%	48.85%	30.2%	35.7%	48.5%
6-9 “	16.7%	11.8%	31.49%	21.9%	16.8%	32.7%
Over 9 “	17.0%	8.8%	2.76%	22.4%	12.8%	3.0%

How different it was under “socialist construction” in eastern Volhynia! Here the Bolshevik government did all it could, he says, to help the expelled still in eastern Russia to return and get settled on their old farms.<sup>22</sup> The German population grew to about 83,000 by 1926.<sup>23</sup> The new government began, “step by step”, to help the villages recover by ending forever the old capitalistic relationships and practices. Of course in making this claim, Nickel totally ignores the fact that the villages recovered during the years of the New Economic Policy, when the Bolsheviks purposely allowed the peasants, in Lenin’s phrase, “to get rich” by selling their produce for as much as they could. Nickel is very frank, and certainly largely correct, in pointing out that the dekulakization that accompanied the Revolution did reduce the number of large farms and provided land for many landless peasants. This redistribution of land, resulting in an enlarged class of “middle farmers”, is well illustrated by a table he provides on p.83, of which the following is a modified version. Figures are percent-

ages.

Redistribution of land, however, was only the beginning of the road to collectivization. The old “chutor” system of independent farms, each with its own family dwelling and outbuildings, had to be overcome. Villages stretching out for 7 to 10 kilometers were not, Nickel asserts, capable of being agriculturally efficient. Between 1921 and 1925, farmer and youth conferences (which Nickel disingenuously calls “party-less”—*parteilos*) were held, and even some conferences for women, to inculcate socialist habits of thought. As was true throughout the Soviet Union, the first steps towards socialism chiefly took the form of cooperatives. Only a few collectives existed before 1929. By 1927, Volhynia counted 17 consumer cooperatives with 2,242 members. By the end of 1928, 4 more cooperatives had come into being, with an additional 1500 members. This meant that 43.4% of German farmers belonged to such cooperatives by 1928. Producer cooperatives also came into being, especially for milk and hops production. Government-sponsored “machine tractor stations” also helped to create the desire to use machinery on a cooperative basis. Associations for

“common use of land” were also formed, by which Nickel probably meant *kommuny*, *artels* and *TOZy*, three voluntary forms of collective farming which the government encouraged during the 1920s.<sup>24</sup> The first collectives in Volhynia were formed in 1928 in Heimtal and in Babitschewka (on the land of the former estate-owner Richert). Other villages to adopt collectivization early were Natalendorf and Neuborn.

Nickel could not, of course, give an account of economic progress without referring to the great obstacles which had to be overcome in attaining it. Capitalists and estate-owners were no longer a problem, but there still remained kulaks and clergy (including now the leaders of the “sects”) who “fought and fought” against the tide of socialism. We, of course, may hold them in high regard for this, but Nickel could only hold them in contempt. They refused to forget the good old days of the German occupation in 1918 and their preparations to celebrate von Hindenburg’s birthday in late 1927

struck Nickel as something close to treason. But the poor and middle farmers rose to the occasion and protested, he says, and the kulaks had to give up on the idea. They soon came up with another “counterrevolutionary” idea: emigration. Pastor Deringer led other clergy, kùsters and kulaks in efforts to help people flee in 1928 and 1929 to Brazil and Canada, aided by their connections to the Lutheran Immigration Board, which was in it chiefly to acquire a “cheap work force for the...American dollar”. Those who emigrated, of course, were soon to be impoverished by the Great Depression, which Nickel notes with undisguised satisfaction. The poor and middle farmers now saw clearly, in 1930, that their salvation lay in collectivization, but the “class enemies” found new ways to subvert progress. This might be done through sabotage (as when they destroyed equipment for draining swamps, burned several machine tractor stations, or placed straw in the walls near the chimney of a new club building in Pulin which burst into flames at its first heating) or by acts of terror (such as the 1933 murder of the Party Cell Secretary, Gen. Bayer). The year 1929 saw 40 acts of terror in the Pulin Rayon alone. More subtle methods included getting kulaks elected to village soviets (which happened everywhere in the Soviet Union!), appealing to the piety of conservative German women, and establishing youth groups in the churches to counter the appeal of the Pioneers and Comsomol.

Nickel admits that the Party itself was partly to blame, that is, those Party members who were part of the “leftist excess”—a sort of political heresy—which pushed so hard for collectivization that they ignored the technical basis for operating a collective farm. They advocated collectives far larger than could be worked without modern machinery and such machinery was still in short supply. The foolishness of this “Gigantomania”, Nickel says, was “used” by the kulaks to support their opposition. But the Party, with Comrade Stalin at the head, “opened fire” on this heresy and quelled it. What Nickel apparently didn’t know was that Stalin himself had supported this “excess” in late 1929!<sup>25</sup> This apparent “gaffe” is not mentioned in the records of his case, but one yet wonders if it may have been noticed by the examining commis-

sion in 1936.

No Bolshevik could have found fault with Nickel’s attack on the famine relief organizations in Germany and Poland which tried to deliver food to the Ukraine in 1933 and 1934. He was fully in accord with Bolshevik thinking in regarding them as merely disguised fascist attempts to hinder the Revolution. Not for nothing did “hundreds” of collective assemblies issue protests against these organizations for to be suspected of cooperating with any suspicious foreign organization could result in arrest and punishment.<sup>26</sup> Thousands of recipients of what the Party called “Hitler aid” were put on a list of suspects. Ukraine security chief Vsevolod Balytskyi noted that, after 60% of the residents of the Pulin Rayon received such aid the spring planting fell far below normal, a sure sign that the aid was connected to German attempts to sabotage the Revolution.<sup>27</sup>

No less than the economic recovery under socialism, Nickel praises socialist cultural improvement, most notably in the schools. He asserts, somewhat incorrectly, that before the Revolution Volhynia had nothing beyond 3-year schools, but by 1928 there were many 4-year and half a dozen 7-year schools. By 1935, many 4-year schools had upgraded to a 7, 8, or even a 10-year curriculum. But equally important to Nickel was the separation of the schools from domination by the church. Many chapels and prayer houses were henceforth to be used only for school. The clergy, kulaks, and kùsters vehemently objected but the poor and middle farmers won the day and got their much-desired secular schools, according to Nickel. As might be expected from this resurgence in learning, (secular) newspaper reading increased, reading rooms sprang up (nearly 60 of them in 1928 and 1929), and illiteracy declined as a result of the proliferation of literacy schools in “most villages”.

While Tsarist Russia had tried to suppress ethnic languages and institutions, Nickel correctly points out that the Bolsheviks’ kinder and gentler nationality policy infused “international-socialist contents” into “national forms”, at least for a time. In the case of Volhynia, many German village soviets were formed between 1924 and 1929 in which

German was spoken. About 50 such German soviets existed in 1926 in the Zhitomir and Korosten districts. By 1929 this enlightened national policy led to the creation of a German Autonomous Region (or *Rayon*) of Pulin, consisting of the former rayons of Pulin and Wolodarsk.<sup>28</sup> This Pulin Rayon becomes Nickel's shining example of what could be accomplished by Germans dedicated to socialism. While in 1929 the Rayon had but 2 collectives, in 1930 there were 32. By 1934, 83% of the land had been collectivized.<sup>29</sup> In spite of the fact that this collectivization had been accomplished mostly by force, had resulted in countless deaths, and had contributed mightily to disastrous declines in farming productivity, Nickel blithely claims that this collectivizing had "greatly elevated the technical basis of agriculture". Perhaps in one respect it did. Dairy farming seems to have become important in Babitschdewka, Heimtal, Wydumka, Marianowka, Pulin, Marianka, Wolwachowka, Pulin-Huta and in other collectives. On the cultural front, the Pulin German Rayon invested heavily in schools (296,400 rubles in 1931, growing to 944,100 in 1934), built two "clubs", two "*kollektivistenheimen*" (probably some form of communal residence) and 23 reading rooms. It contained 76 libraries, 6 movie theaters, 32 radio receivers, a printing establishment, a Rayon hospital, a childrens' clinic (*Kinderconsultation*) and various other medical centers. Last, but not least, the Party conducted a purge in 1933 in which it got rid of the kulaks who had infiltrated its organization, thereby freeing it of its "nationalistic and anti-socialist elements".

### WHY WAS NICKEL PUNISHED?

Nickel then concludes his work with laudatory exclamations about the virtues of socialism and the wisdom of Stalin. Yet none of this adulation was enough to prevent his Siberian internment after an examining commission in Kharkov had rendered a negative judgment on the book. Actually, Nickel had appealed an earlier judgment by a censor named Fondis, who, he charged, was not objective and had twisted "all the facts and conclusions this book contains". Alas, the Kharkov commission of four readers agreed with Fondis. Nickel, they charged, had not included enough photos of

"Soviet events"; there was too little information on German schools in Volhynia, nor did it give proper emphasis to the class struggle in the schools; the participation of German peasants in the Civil War and the building of socialism was not given due recognition. These and other charges are so ludicrous, in view of what Nickel had actually written, as to make one fairly certain that these charges were not the real issue. Perhaps more to the point was the last charge mentioned, that the book did not adequately foster a spirit of "Soviet patriotism", nor encourage readers to fight against nationalism.

Kate Brown has recently pointed out that the Bolsheviks had devoted much energy during the 1920s to developing ethnic nationalism (especially among Poles and Germans in Volhynia), but the failure to reach their collectivizing goals in the 1930s caused them to look for scapegoats. They fastened on the kulaks, of course, but they also developed the idea that those national entities they had fostered must be themselves to blame. Samuel Nickel was closely identified with the German Autonomous Region, and he could not, in all likelihood, divorce himself from its failures. I have mentioned his work as an editor in the Ukrainian national minorities printing and publishing office and it was in this capacity that he also earned condemnation. He was charged with incorrectly translating articles and speeches of Soviet Party leaders "in a counter-revolutionary manner" and even with publishing the works of nationalist writers who were *later* arrested for counter-revolutionary activities!<sup>30</sup> To some degree, it seems that Nickel's troubles stemmed from his ethnicity and to the hazy suspicion that he might be associated with that menacing country to the west—Nazi Germany.

It would be incorrect, however, to think that Germans alone were victims of such blatant disregard for truth and such phenomenal suspicion. Kate Brown discusses the even more tragic case of Jan Saulevich, a Polish Bolshevik who played a pivotal role in developing the Polish Autonomous Region in Volhynia after 1925. He was as dedicated a communist as Samuel Nickel but yet was arrested in 1934 and condemned *to death!* Among

his crimes was doing exactly what the Party wanted him to do in 1925, creating a Polish national consciousness in Volhynia. Since another Polish-Soviet War was feared as much as an attack by Germany, anyone guilty of fostering Polish sympathies was suspect. In such an environment of fear and distrust, one may well concede that Nickel did not have a chance. His condemnation defies all reason, and it is only by trying to understand the depths of irrationality pervading the Soviet Union of his day that we can “understand” why his book not only failed to save him from arrest, but also contributed to the charges against him.

Valentin Witrenko says that Nickel served ten years in the labor camp, but NKVD file #18769 on Nickel records that from 1938 to 1947 Nickel worked as an economist for a state construction company, probably in Khabarovsk Province. In 1947 he was sent, as a “special settler”, to Novosibirsk where he became chief economist in the “Abrasive” plant. In 1951 a KGB officer asked the

Novosibirsk KGB for “all possible discreditable information” on him, for the purpose of “sending him out from Novosibirsk.” In 1956, he was finally given permission to live anywhere except in places he had inhabited before and obtained the right to reclaim all confiscated property.<sup>31</sup> How, when and where he lived after that is not known.

Finally, how should we judge *Die Deutschen in Wolhynien*? Its distortions of historical truth and its blithe acceptance of the human suffering caused by the Bolshevik regime certainly earn for it our condemnation. Yet this review has been written in the belief that one can learn from those whose viewpoint is vastly different from one’s own. There is useful information in this book, and Nickel’s viewpoint led him to discuss topics and events that are rarely if ever mentioned in other treatments of the subject. Perhaps above all, his life itself illustrates some dilemmas of living in Soviet Volhynia which no other source can equal.

#### ENDNOTES

District	Up to 1 Desiatine	1-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-25	25-30	30-40	40-50	Total
Zhitomir	58	608	1248	742	754	291	145	155	53	4054
Nowograd-Wolynski	40	488	854	472	470	178	66	74	19	2661
Isjaslaw, Staro-Konstantinow, Owrutsch	33	47	62	31	57	20	9	14	7	280
Total	131	1143	2164	1245	1281	489	220	243	79	6995

<sup>1</sup> Valentin Witrenko, “Über Samuel Nickel, Autor des Buches „Die Deutschen in Wolhynien”, Kiew Charkow 1935“, in *Wolhynische Hefte*, Heft 13 (2004), p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> His father was Otto Gottfried Nickel; his mother was Wilhelmine Rosin. Two younger sisters were named Marta and Klara. According to Witrenko, p. 146, Otto Nickel, along with a teacher named Helmann, wrote a report for the Party on a Lutheran Synodal conference in Volhynia. Samuel’s political choices were apparently not in conflict with those of his father.

<sup>3</sup> As a teacher, he apparently had his weaknesses. Herbert Henke, a student of his in Nowograd-Wolynski, remembered him as a perpetually grumpy individual who had little control over his classes. He paid no heed to their constant chatter while he lectured. They gave him the nickname, “Fieldmouse”, for reasons we will probably never know. Witrenko, *op. cit.*, p.146.

<sup>4</sup> The term, “kulak”, referred, in Russian usage, to “wealthy” peasants, as distinguished from “middle peasants” and “poor peasants”. Lenin regarded them early on as the capitalist element among the peasantry, and therefore not to be trusted. In December 1929, Stalin made his famous remark about the “liquidation of the kulak as a class” and did his best to follow through on this by the time that Nickel wrote his book. “Kulak” was a slippery term, often applied to anyone on someone’s enemy list. Nickel defined a kulak as someone owning from 20 to 50 desiatines of land. A middle peasant owned from 5 to 20, a poor peasant (*Dorfarmut*) less than 5. The following table (from p. 29) shows the number and sizes of owned properties (not rented) on the Liquidation List of 1915. From it, one can judge the relative size of these three “classes” of German farmers in this area.

<sup>5</sup> To add to the mystery, the NKVD file #18769 in the Zhitomir State Archives (found by Eugene Timirajev at the behest of Don

Miller) records that Nickel was arrested in October 1930, for violating Article 54-10. Unless this date was in error, it would seem that Nickel's problems began even before 1934.

<sup>6</sup> These were Kotusowka and Gross and Klein Neumanowka (on Crown Land), and Karlswalde, Antonowka and Jadwonin (on the estate of Jablonowsky).

<sup>7</sup> To illustrate the customary harshness of the contracts, he reproduces the 1842 contract by which the renting farmers (mentioned by name) of Annette purchased their lands from the owner, Markus Madolinski. It is an interesting document, but its stipulation that Madolinski himself would be responsible for encumbrance problems (in the absence of title insurance) makes one question its "harshness".

<sup>8</sup> One of Nickel's several references to renters who had their farms sold out from under them is on p. 21, where he mentions a case in 1866 when farmers from Rokin, Serniki and Bogoljubach appealed to the Governor-General in Kiev to allow them either to continue renting or to buy the land. The appeal went unanswered, and they were "handed over to the Sadow village administration".

<sup>9</sup> Nickel provides very little support for his charges. The Arndt family, or at least that branch of it that produced Nikolaus Arndt, the current head of the *Historischer Verein Wolhynien*, is portrayed quite differently in Nikolaus's *Die Shitomirer Arndts* (Wurzburg, 1970). On p. 96 he indicates that Johann Arndt's rental fee (in 1890) was a "reasonable" 1-3 rubles per desiatine and the contract extended a full 20 years. In addition, Johann built the roads, bridges and main water ditches for the properties.

<sup>10</sup> Again, Nikolaus Arndt's picture of Johann Arndt differs from Nickel's vast generalizations. Johann converted to Orthodoxy not primarily to secure political advantages, but because, in 1894, he married a young woman of Orthodox faith. His political activities (he was elected to the first representative body in Volhynia—the Zemstvo) did not serve only his "class" interests. He refused to join the "nationalist-monarchist-fascist" party known as the "Black Hundreds" and also withheld his membership from a Ukrainian nationalist party that sought his support. His interests were, says Nikolaus, to secure a good administration for all the people in the *Kreis* Zhitomir. Partly at his own expense, he founded a credit union for farmers. He protected, and got along with, the Jewish community. In general, Nikolaus's portrayal of the Arndt family is, as one might expect, quite different from Nickel's. See Arndt, pp. 91, 103-108.

<sup>11</sup> In this context, it is worth mentioning that Johann Arndt, as a member of the Zemstvo, opposed giving public money for construction of an Orthodox church, but did release the funds when the church finally agreed to add a schoolroom onto the existing church, on the German model! Arndt. p. 107.

<sup>12</sup> Nickel may have been correct in pointing out a social bond between the clergy and the natural leaders of the German community, many of whom would undoubtedly have been classified as "kulaks". But this does not mean that their affinity for one another caused injury to the poorer farmers. In fact, in 1906 a group of Volhynian pastors in the areas of Belowesh, Emiltshin and Kowno issued a formal complaint about how large landowners arbitrarily changed rental contracts and raised the rents of helpless farmers. This is noted in Dietmar Neutatz, *Die "deutsche Frage" im Schwarzmeergebiet und in Wolhynien* (Stuttgart, 1993), p. 151, n. 4.

<sup>13</sup> On pp. 38-39, he cites a case in 1909 in which four farmers (Ernst Kenenberg, Adolf Schneider, Hermann Frant, and Ludwig Wirschke) asked permission to join the Evangelical-Christian Church established that year in Tschernjakow, Horoszki, Iwnizi and Alexandrien. Permission was denied (presumably with support from the Lutheran clergy) by the Vice-Governor. He also denied their request to have their church books legitimized.

<sup>14</sup> Nickel, p. 16. German farmers were not allowed to borrow from the Peasant Land Bank. The Bank's purpose was to increase Russian landownership. The Frau Ziffermann mentioned must be Auguste Siffermann, sister of Johann Arndt. Again, the person portrayed in Arndt (pp. 53-56) seems incapable of such dastardly treatment of her tenants.

<sup>15</sup> Nickel, pp. 35-36. Nikolaus Arndt provides two facts which might lend credence to this story. One is that Julius Arndt apparently supported a Ukrainian nationalist party (which might tend to make him somewhat anti-Russian). The other is that the government had used Moissejewka as a place to settle undesirable people from interior Russia and the village had the nickname "*Slowdijewka*", or "Thiefsvilla". In fact one of its inhabitants did actually steal Julius's horse and carriage, probably in the 1880s. See Arndt, pp. 49-50, 87, 105.

<sup>16</sup> The Black Hundreds were paramilitary groups serving the Union of the Russian Peoples, a proto-fascist organization formed in 1905, supported by the Tsar. It was, as Orlando Figes describes it (in *A Peoples' Tragedy* [New York, 1996], p. 196), "Anti-liberal, anti-socialist and above all anti-Semitic." He might have added, "anti-German".

<sup>17</sup> Nickel does point out (p. 49) that the Ukrainian peasants did not fall for the anti-German propaganda. They knew full well, he says, that the cause of the war and their poverty were the Tsar, the German Emperor, the capitalists and *Gutsbesitzer*, not the "working" German farmers.

<sup>18</sup> Nikolaus Arndt, pp. 126-127, says that Johann Arndt purchased the harvest, the inventory and the rental rights of his tenant, Rink, in Sulshinowka, and that his administrator, Eduard Müller, bought "much" grain for harvesting, but then adds that "the money was then sent to the deported colonists at their new addresses." It is true that Arndt was not expelled, but his wife was sent to Byelgorod. Among his other positions, he was a major supplier of horses to the Russian Army, which may help explain any favors shown to him.

<sup>19</sup> On p. 82 Nickel reproduces a petition filed on May 4, 1921, by Julius Wölke of Schepetowka to the Land Office in Polonnje, complaining that his landlord, Radow, had sold his farm even though his lease extended to May 14, 1922.

<sup>20</sup> Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire. The Campaign Against Enemy Aliens During World War I* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), p. 149.

<sup>21</sup> Actually, German troops had to leave Volhynia because of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The Red Army did not fully control Volhynia until 1921.

<sup>22</sup> Nickel provides (pp. 80-81) two archival documents of the Zhitomir Land Commission from early 1921 concerning the return of expellees who were then traveling through Moscow. The Peoples' Commissariat in Moscow urged the local authorities to settle the returnees but, in case their old farms were occupied, they were to be settled on vacant land and on a "collective basis" if possible. Needless to say, returning farmers gained only the use of their land, not its ownership!

<sup>23</sup> The figure is for three of the four administrative districts created in 1925, namely, Zhitomir (which he labels here "Wolhynien"), Korostenj and Schepetowka. The fourth was Berditschew. The most heavily populated *rayons* were Pulin (17,411), Nowograd-Wolynsk (8,691), Wolodarsk (8,571), Gorodnizi (6,791), Baranow (6,571).

<sup>24</sup> The TOZy (Association for the Joint Cultivation of Land) made up about 70% of collectives throughout the Soviet Union in 1928. Members retained ownership of tools and machines, most livestock, and control over their land. In *artels*, (about 26%), members retained ownership of their homes and a garden, but used land, livestock, seeds and machinery cooperatively. Least popular were the *kommuny* (communes, making up about 8% of the total) in which almost everything was done communally, sometimes including living and eating arrangements. Altogether they comprised only about 1% of the land in the Soviet Union in early 1928, this figure rising to about 8% by late 1929, before the great push for collectivization drove it to 57% in March 1930. Nickel seems not to specify which type of collective took root in Volhynia but on p. 97 he refers to Heimtal and Babitschewka as "Kommune" while others were "Kollektiven", which only serves to blur the picture since a Commune was a Collective. TOZy were no longer allowed after 1929.

<sup>25</sup> This fad in 1929 took as its model a large collective in the Urals ("The Giant") of 135,000 hectares, uniting 84 smaller collectives. Not only Stalin was taken in by Gigantomania. *Pravda*, on January 6, 1930, dismissed as "sheer stupidity" the idea that tractors were needed for large-scale farming. See Dorothy Atkinson, *The End of the Russian Land Commune, 1905-1930* (Stanford, 1983), p. 361.

<sup>26</sup> See, for many examples, Donald M. Miller, *Under Arrest. Repression of the Russian Germans in the Zhitomir Region, Ukraine, in the 1930s*, (Zhitomir, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), pp. 125-26. This excellent new book sheds much light on the Soviet repression of ethnic Germans, placing it in the context of the growing suspicion of all non-Russian nationalities in the 1930s.

<sup>28</sup> According to Nickel, the Pulin Rayon consisted of 20 German, 5 Ukrainian, 1 Russian, 1 Jewish and 3 Polish village soviets. The 20 German soviets included a total of 60 villages. Of a total population of 26,566 in this Rayon, 14,134 were German. Adjacent to the Pulin Rayon toward the south, the government had created in 1925 a Polish Autonomous Region. On this, see ch. 2 of Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place*.

<sup>29</sup> Nickel may have been exaggerating. Official reports expressed great disappointment that in the Pulin District, collectivization had been accomplished on only 34 % of the land, a fact explainable only by the continued resistance of kulaks and other disloyal Germans. See Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, p. 124.

<sup>30</sup> The charges against Nickel are listed in the NKVD file #18769, vol. 4, p. 224, in the Zhitomir State Archives.

<sup>31</sup> These details of his later life are found in the Archive of the Internal Affairs of Zhitomir Oblast, Special Letters Fond, File 9930. These documents were obtained by Don Miller from Alex Brzhezitsky.

## VOLHYNIAN ADVENTURE TOUR

May 15-29, 2006

Visit the villages of your choice in Russian Volhynia, roughly from Zhitomir to Rozyszcze, in a small, intimate "hassle-free" group limited to twelve persons with an experienced guide. Discover your ancestral roots while immersing yourself in the rich culture and warm hospitality of the Ukrainian people. It's still a place "where time stands still".



Don Miller  
Tour Guide

**For a brochure, contact:**

Don Miller, 12814 NW  
Bishop Road, Hillsboro, OR  
97124 or E-mail: [dnmiller@whiz.to](mailto:dnmiller@whiz.to)  
Telephone: (503) 647-5858



"It was the dream of a lifetime – a never-to-be-forgotten experience!" --Gabriele Goldstone, Tour Member

Website: <http://inthemidstofwolves.com>

---

---

# The Red Stones of Federofka

---

By Gabriele Goldstone, Winnipeg, MB

(photo on page 16) [ggoldstone1@shaw.ca](mailto:ggoldstone1@shaw.ca)

---

My parents were from the ‘old’ country and I, born a year after they arrived in Canada back in the fifties, wanted nothing to do with the old country. I was a proud Canadian and not too eager to swallow the Saturday morning German school classes and the old fashioned German Baptist outlook on life.

As I got older, I did try to understand. But I focused on my father. He was a German-German, born in Germany. He’d been a pilot for the Luftwaffe. His stories about the Nazi times were exciting, perhaps because they were mainstream. I could see movies about my dad’s past and I was intrigued by a Germany that had let someone like Hitler take control. (Curiously, I now realize that my dad did not say much about the later war years when he was part of the military police fighting the Soviets.) But I did know that my father spent more than five years in the Soviet gulag system. After his sudden death about ten years ago, I started paying more attention to my surviving parent.

My mother, Else Schroeder nee Ristau, was not a German-German. She was a Russian-German — a Russian German Baptist, born in Ukraine. I had a right to be confused. Now she is a Canadian but her German-ness still defines her. I admit to being impatient with this strong attachment to her German-ness. After all, she’s been in Canada more than fifty years and, besides, she was not even a “real” German. But now I think that I understand.

Federofka. There was a time when I could not pronounce or spell the word. I definitely could not find it on the world map taped on the rec room wall as I was growing up. It was just another part of my mother that I could not understand. To me she was an enigma.

But, using modern magic, (aka the internet), I was able to learn about Federofka and the surrounding Volhynia area. Don Miller’s book, *“In the Midst of*

*Wolves”* introduced me to the German Baptists of Russia. It was the beginning of an incredible journey. A photograph of a child in his book was recognized by my now 85 year old mother. It was of her long forgotten cousin, Sofie. Letters between Omsk and Winnipeg were exchanged and the serendipity just kept on happening.

In May 2004 I went to Federofka on a tour hosted by Don Miller. It was an adventure in time travel—a safari into the wilds of the Soviet Union of the 1920’s and 30’s. Volhynia was, in those years, a most dangerous place.

Like an iceberg that only shows its tip, there was a lot of my mother that I could not understand. Once, during the 1920’s, there was a little girl growing up on a farm in Federofka, near Zhitomir in the area known as Volhynia. Then, in 1930, politics started to interfere with the simple farm life of the German colonists. And my mother became involved in one of the major tragedies of recent history.

Stalin! He is the one who eventually brought my parents together. Curiously, I did not see any of Stalin’s statues when I visited the Zhitomir area that spring, only Lenin’s. But I felt his shadow. And the darkness of Stalin was always there in my childhood as I grew up in the fifties and sixties, safe in the middle of Canada, in the City of Winnipeg. His darkness was manifested through silence. They did not want to talk about the past. My parents were starting over and they focused on the future. But it was the silence of the past that brought me to the now humble village of Federofka.

With the help of Helena Nickel, a local Federofka woman in her eighties who speaks German and still remembers my mother’s family, I was able to find the empty field where once the German school stood. I was shown the blooming irises in the middle of the woods that mark forgotten graves of Ger-

man family members. Straw thatched houses built of pine timbers are still scattered throughout the Volhynian countryside. Although my mom's family home is gone, I can imagine what it looked like.

It was the windmill, however, that my mother hoped I would find. Built by her father, Eduard Ristau, it was on a slight hill overlooking his 17 hectares of red soil. But I was to be disappointed in this quest. According to Helena Nickel, the windmill was dismantled by the manager of the new collective soon after it was expropriated. Back in 1930 my mother's family was exiled to Siberia and their farmland collectivized. Today, only the red granite rocks that formed the windmill's foundation remain. I walked on the slightly raised land and imagined the windmill while remembering the story my mother told me.



Author's grandfather, Eduard Ristau, centre and mother, Else Ristau, upper right, with siblings Albert and Berta on left and Helena, bottom right. (1931)

Once she had hidden in the windmill when she was playing hooky. It happened when Stalin first decreed that children go to school on Sundays. My mother was the only child of the village whose parents insisted she actually follow the new orders. So she skipped out, hiding in the windmill and eating the cherries that had been meant for the teacher. I looked, but no, there were no cherry trees growing from the discarded pits beside the windmill's foundation.

The Federofka of today (now called Kaliniwka) is a depressingly poor place. Alcoholism is destroying the men. Suicide takes the young who don't manage to escape to the big cities. This leaves too

much work for the women who are lacking needed medical attention. But there is hope. Outside of Federofka a new company called Red Stone is breathing much needed economic activity into the area. We stopped and talked with the entrepreneurs. They appreciated our interest. And now an idea is growing in my mind. Perhaps some day I can use a red granite boulder from Federofka to remember my grandfather and the many thousands like him who were executed and then thrown into a Zhitomir ditch. Today the weed-strewn ditch gives no hint of the bones that lie there. That brings me to another exciting part of my trip.

I was able to visit the former party archives in Zhitomir. With the aid of a most helpful interpreter, I read through pages and pages of documents pertaining to my grandfather's arrest and subsequent execution. My great uncle, Gustav Ristau, and Gustav's son, Bernhard, met a similar fate. With the information gained, I was able to retrace my grandfather's steps before the fateful June 4th, 1937 arrest. I was able to see his signature on the papers that condemned him to death as an enemy of the Soviet regime. A couple of months in jail and regular beatings made innocent prisoners guilty. It was ironic to learn that the main interrogator was himself executed later, in 1940, for mistreating his prisoners. I also learned that my grandfather, along with the others, was officially "rehabilitated" in 1958. The evidence against him was not based upon fact.

And so my journey began and ended with graves. When we were first picked up from the Borispol airport, a flat tire gave us an unexpected rest stop at a Kiev cemetery. I marveled at the beauty and colour of the graves. My grandparents both lie in unmarked graves. My grandmother, Matilde, lies somewhere near Tomsk. My grandfather lies in a Zhitomir ditch.

Still, the red stones of Federofka mark the place where the windmill once stood. And my life here in Canada is founded on my mother's enigmatic past.

---

Gabriela Goldstone's new book of historical fiction, "The Kulak's Daughter" will be published in 2008 by Blooming Tree Press.

---

---

# The New Rozyszcze Records

---

**By Bill Remus**

---

In July 2005, the Family History Centre released new microfilms of Lutheran Church records in western Volhynia, mostly from Rozyszcze Parish. The film numbers are listed in the section "Lutheran Records for Volhynia, Podolia, and Kiev" in the Parish and Archive Records page of the SGGEE website at : [http://www.sggee.org/church\\_parishes/LutheransInVolhyniaKievPodolia](http://www.sggee.org/church_parishes/LutheransInVolhyniaKievPodolia). The original church books are held in the AGAD Archive in Warsaw, Poland.

The newly available records from Rozyszcze Parish in Volhynia are really quite good. These are important records tracking the major migrations of German people to Volhynia both in the 1830's and 1860's (as well as the other years in the 19<sup>th</sup> century).

The German migrations to Volhynia were motivated by both economics and revolution. The first major migration was in the 1830's in response to the opportunity to produce cloth inside the Russian empire. Previously most of these settlers were living in Russian Poland and left in the wake of the Polish uprising against the Russians in the 1830's. They settled between the Polish border and Kiev and until 1862 there was only one parish, Zhitomir parish. In 1862, a second parish was established and headquartered at Rozyszcze, a location west of Zhitomir. Thereafter records were

kept separately for both areas. The newly available Rozyszcze records start from the year the parish was established.

The second migration occurred in the mid 1860's. At this time the serfs were freed in the Volhynia and many serfs chose to leave the service of the nobility. So the nobility was interested in selling or leasing land to German farmers; earlier, land in both Poland and the Ukraine was largely available only on long term lease. Also, again there was another Polish uprising against the occupying Russians so German settlers living in Russian Poland left for Volhynia. During this period, the large number of German residents led to the creation of other parishes in addition to Zhitomir and Rozyszcze.

The Rozyszcze records were made for parish use whereas the St Petersburg Archive records were a copy made for the Lutheran Church Russian

headquarters in St Petersburg. The Rozyszcze records are now available to the late 1800's so also differ from the St Petersburg Archive records that are available only to 1885 (later St Petersburg records exist but are not available on microfilm or indexed online). Also they have more detail than the St Petersburg records and are more



The gates of the Rozyszcze Church

clearly readable when viewed on microfilm particularly in the later years. But the new records only cover Rozyszcze parish and not Zhitomir and the

other Lutheran parishes in Russia.

### **The Birth Records**

The Rozyszcze Parish birth records are only on microfilm and are available at your local Family History Center. The records run from 1862 to 1899 and all are clearly written (film #2380017 to #2380023). They are in the order that the pastor traveled rather than birth or baptism date but that is interesting since it groups the records by village. Also following the route which the pastor traveled can be helpful in establishing the location of your village. In each year in the 1880's there were about 2000 babies born in this parish so it is tedious looking through the records.

Luckily, there is a microfilm (#2380024) with three sets of birth indexes. The first covers the whole period (some records are quite light and hard to read), the second index covers 1862 to 1881, and the third index covers 1882 to 1899. The indexes first show all the A surnames in the order on the microfilms, then B surnames in the order on the microfilms, etc. In most cases, the child's name is listed followed by the father's name and then the year and record number. Do note that unlike the online St. Petersburg records, you cannot use these successfully without looking at the original record to find necessary details like the birth date (although birth year is provided), baptism date, mother's name, and village.

The records are in clear German script until 1891. Thereafter the records are in clear Cyrillic Russian although the child's Christian name and father's Christian and surname are in parenthesis in German script. So dates need to be translated from Russian and also the mother's Christian and surname (this can be tricky). To help out, the index film (#2380024) does show the indexes up to and including 1895. That is, the records are not indexed beyond 1895. But after 1895, you can still extract records by just reading through the records.

### **The Marriage Records**

New marriage records for Rozyszcze are also available. #2380026 is a superb microfilm for those whose ancestors who married in Rozyszcze parish between 1862 and 1880. The records are written

clearly and in relatively modern German script. The quality of the images is very good. Most of the marriage records include the names of the couple, their ages, the parent's names, and where they were born. These are much better than the St Petersburg summary records in many ways. They allow you to go back a generation with the listing of the two sets of parents (the mother name often includes her maiden family name). In most cases, the village of birth is clear and whether it was in Volhynia, (Russian) Poland, Prussia, or another German state. However you may wish to scan or copy the marriage record so someone on this list can help you find the location of the village in Prussia, Poland or Germany. Many of these villages are similarly named or perhaps no longer known under the name of that era. And the county name (Kreis) is generally not given. Do note that part of the above Rozyszcze marriage records (1862 to 1872) have been available for a long time on microfilm #905256.

More marriages are on #2380027 (1880 to 1886) and #2380028 (1887 to 1890) (and #2380029 1890 to 1895). The years after 1885 are neither currently available in the St. Petersburg microfilms nor indexed online. The new Rozyszcze records are in German at least up to 1891. There are listings on the St. Petersburg list not in these records and vice versa so missing records can show up. But the overlap up to 1885 is likely. Also, it is useful to note that it was not unusual for people in other parishes to travel to Rozyszcze to be married rather than wait for their own pastor to travel to them.

### **The Death Records**

The newly available death records from Rozyszcze Parish in Volhynia are also quite good. The records run from 1862 to 1895 and all are clearly written (film #2380030 to #2380033). Again they are in the order that the pastor traveled rather than death or burial date but that is interesting since it clumps the records by village. In each year in the 1880's there were about 800 deaths in this parish so it is tedious looking through the records. Note that the St. Petersburg Archive death records on the web only go to 1885 so these also cover new ground.

Unluckily, there is no index so you have to read

though all the records. The good news is each deceased person's place of birth is listed so you can find out where your family might have come from prior to Volhynia. This is usually a place in Russian Poland. Other good news is that for children usually the names of the father and mother with maiden name are provided. For older people, the spouse's name (or maiden name) is provided. And the village of the death is listed. Since this is a death record, this village is the village where they lived.

The records are in clear German script until 1891. Thereafter the records are in clear Cyrillic Russian although the dead person's Christian name and surname are in parenthesis in German script. The dates need to be translated from Russian and also the other names in the record (this can be tricky). But after 1893, the records seem to be presented twice for each year; that is, there are two versions of the annual records. In these post 1893 records, it seems there are several hundred Rozyszcze records in one set but the other set is about double the size. So in 1893 to 1895 more villages are included.

### **Other New Records**

Although the parish churches played an important part in Lutheran life in Volhynia; the village chapels (which often doubled as one room schools) also were important. Other new microfilms contain records from several village chapels (bethaus).

When a child was born, the child would be taken to the village chapel and baptized by the local Lutheran teacher (Kantor). The Kantor had full authority to conduct official baptisms. He would record the baptism in his chapel book and later the pastor would simply transfer the info to his parish book, and then again into the consistory book sent to St. Petersburg. The pastor was not required to formalize the process and he did not rebaptize.

Each chapel book contains records of birth and death plus marriage banns (three readings to the congregation for couples who wished to be married) from only that village. If you are lucky like me, your village might show up. My Beretstovitz (Stary Berestowiec - Adjunct to Tuczyn on #2380035) village chapel did - to my delight. Other chapels included in the new films are Tuczyn (town

of Tuczyn only, adjunct to Zhitomir #2380034-35), Amelin (adjunct to Tuczyn on #2380034), Wlodzimierz (adjunct to Rozyszcze #2380035-37), Antonowka (adjunct Rozyszcze or Wladimir Wolhynsk depending on time frame #2380038), Elisabethpol (adjunct Rozyszcze or Wladimir Wolhynsk depending on time frame #2380038), Swiczewka and Mariendorf (adjunct Rozyszcze or Wladimir Wolhynsk depending on time frame #2380038), and Boguslawowka (adjunct Rozyszcze or Wladimir Wolhynsk depending on time frame #2380034).

There are also new Rozyszcze confirmation records. These records include a parent or parents as well as the place of birth of the confirmand. The location information which can be extremely valuable, especially if it is a pre-Volhynia location since you can learn of children born prior to the family's arrival in Volhynia and also where the family lived prior to arrival in Volhynia. The Rozyszcze 1862 to 1875 confirmation records have been available for a long time on microfilm #905256. The new Rozyszcze records on #2380025 also include 1876 to 1881.

All the new records discussed above were micro-filmed in the Warsaw archives. There is more good news in that more chapel books are still there to film.

\* End \*

---

## **Lutheran Cemeteries in Central Poland**

Many of the German villages in Central Poland had their own cemeteries. Some of these cemeteries might be of interest for people who do genealogical research in neighboring areas.

You might find the results of the "Cmentarze Project" interesting:

<http://www.upstreamvistula.org/Cemeteries/Cemeteries.htm>

Jutta Dennerlein [www.upstreamvistula.org](http://www.upstreamvistula.org)

---

---

# The Mazovian Brethren in the Swamplands Around Pinsk

From Articles about the Millennium, Reprint from No. 13 and 14 of the "Mazovian" for the year 1911

Editor's Note: *This is a translation of an article originally written by Pastor Z.A. Loppe in 1911. Pastor Loppe served the community of Neudorf on the Bug from 1904 to 1911 and then later in Lutzk from 1911 to 1914. This article was given to me by my friend, Harold Ziprick. He obtained it from his brother in about 1989 and the translator is unknown. I have modified the translation slightly to make it a more readable, rather than word for word, translation. I have also added a few clarification notes in italics and contained within square brackets [ ]. Because we do not have a copy of the original article written in German, we cannot verify what parts of the translation might be translator comment.*

---

**Edited By Jerry Frank**

---

Probably all readers of the "Mazovian" are aware that their compatriots for centuries have lived in East and West Prussia, on the borderlands of the Polish kingdom. In particular they were in the provinces of Plock, Lomza and Suwalki, which constitute a part of the Mazovian lands of old. However not all Mazovians know that their compatriots and coreligionists also live on the swamp lands of Pinsk on the Volhynian Polesie, some 400 versts [*a verst is almost the same as a kilometre*] from their native country.

*(Ed. Note: You will note that this article uses the term Mazovian instead of Mazurian which is used in the other articles. In our next Journal, we will explain the differences between these terms and why they are often used interchangeably.)*

How they got there and how they are doing on their distant foreign lands will be the contents of this story.

After the unfortunate Polish insurrection in the part of the Polish Kingdom which had been annexed by Russia, there started, in the year 1864, an exodus of the Evangelical peasantry towards the east. This was partly caused by the change of social relations and partly by overcrowding of their native farmlands.

Because of their involvement in the national insurrection, the Russian government restricted the

rights of nobility and clergy, as well as some of the urban and rural population such as merchants and artisans. Religious, political and economic freedoms were curtailed. This applied not only within the Polish Kingdom but also in Lithuania and Ruthenia.

Roman Catholics, especially those living in Lithuania and Ruthenia, had many of their churches, monasteries, schools and charitable institutions closed. Crucifixes along the highways were cut down and village chapels were destroyed by the police. In many places the celebration of divine services, religious lectures and processions were prohibited. Priests were not permitted to travel beyond their parishes without the permission of the Russian authorities.

In Ruthenia, Greek Catholics were cruelly treated with rifle butts, flogging, and imprisonment to convert them to the government approved denomination, the Russian Orthodox faith.

The Polish people, without regard to their occupation or religion, were forbidden to acquire any land in Lithuania or Ruthenia.

Everybody in these provinces was fired from government jobs. Restrictions were imposed upon people engaged in commerce and industry, likewise on students in lower and higher schools.

Upon the whole country a high war contribution

tax was imposed (an extraordinary penal tax for the insurrection) which, with the help of the Cossacks, was mercilessly collected for a 30 year period from the Polish population. This oppression affected not only Poles and Catholics, but all inhabitants of this country who were not of Russian nationality and Orthodox religion. Quite a few property owners had to sell their inherited lands for very little, or even abandon them as a gift when leaving in search of a refuge in some foreign country.

Thus many German and Ruthenian settlements appeared in Lithuania and Ruthenia, mostly in the districts of Chelm and Volhynia. The general wandering trend also seized the Mazovians living in the neighborhood of the town of Suwalki in Poland who, in their native country, could not find any suitable farmlands, meadows or forests. Having learned that such treasures were available in Volhynia, they decided to go and settle there together with others.

Having sold all their property in the year 1876, some twenty or so Evangelical Mazovians from the village of Czerwonka in the county of Goleniowo, the village of Lipowo in the county of Zaboryszki, and from the villages of Wodzilki and Ruda in the county of Pawlowka, left for Volhynia.

For the information of their relatives and friends, I am giving the family names of these emigrants.

Abramski, Berek, Borkowski, Broowski, Byzio, Cyprik, Czarnecki, Dora, Czerwonka, Halwas, Kalina, Klenczan, Klimach, Koperek, Kopicki, Krys, LasKo, Marcowka, Nikol, Olbrys, Przepiora, Rynko, Sadowski, Smolnik, Szyperek, Zacharyasz

*[Note that Czarnecki = Schwartz; Cyprik and Szyperek = Ziprick; Zacharyasz = Zacharias. Czerwonka is also the name of a village north of Suwalki. It is not known if the original list combined surnames with places of origin with that feature being missed by the translator, or if that is also a legitimate surname.]*

The German Evangelicals linked up with Ruthenian Old Believers and as a group they started out

towards the northern part of the country, the county of Kowel, in Polesie district in Volhynia, to the swamplands of Pinsk.

There they acquired from Count Edward Krasicki, a whole farmstead consisting of 4650 acres under cultivation, as well as meadows and forest, for 5100 rubles which they paid immediately, receiving in exchange from the count, a Deed drawn by a Notary confirming their purchase of the property.

Unfortunately this Deed was never confirmed by the Governmental Land Office of Volhynia because the purchasers of the land were not Russians. In spite of their suspended right of ownership, the Mazovian settlers remain until this day, exploiting the land which they had acquired, without any interference. And how would you describe this land purchased several scores of years ago? It is most emphatically expressed by the name of the village of Niewiara (in English "Faithless") and in the community of Wielka Glusza (in English "Gloomy Solitude"). As a matter of fact the colony of Newir today is still surrounded by quaggy swamp, dense forest, and quicksand, only passable in the winter on the ice and snow, or during the summer on a roundabout road on a light cart.

The hardworking Mazovians established themselves quite well on this land of swamp and sand. First they used up the lumber which Count Krasicki had left for them, building cottages and fences. Then they began digging ditches and building dikes to dry up the fields and meadows, planting fruit trees, grain and potatoes. They not only have enough for themselves, but just before harvest and seeding time, they are able to give some of their surplus supplies to their uneducated, lazy, and poor neighbours, the Ruthenian peasants.

Principally however they breed cattle which they fatten and sell to the Jews for slaughter and export to the cities. They are unable to sell other farm products, such as grain, dairy products, butter, eggs and fruit because the nearest railway station is some 40 versts away. Consequently they consume their products, and thus are well fed and healthy.

Although they are surrounded by Ruthenians and

tempted by the Orthodox clergy, the Mazovians in the Newir district have, for 34 long years, faithfully stuck to their Polish nationality and their Evangelical faith. Although they are completely deprived of school and church, the parents themselves teach their children, as well as they are able, to read and write, to sing hymns and pray, read the Bible and memorize the catechism. Therefore they choose the best educated and honest farmer from their midst to be their preacher, to act as their pastor every Sunday and every Holy Day by conducting the divine service, and baptizing their children, instructing their teenagers, reading their marriage laws, burying their dead, and maintaining their Vital Statistics records. *[This chosen person was known as a Kantor. It is possible that the phrase "marriage laws" should actually be "marriage bans" - announcements of upcoming marriages that had to be made in church services several weeks before the event occurred.]*

Several pastors, the Reverend Joseph Mandzikowski, from the neighbouring county of Kobryn, the Reverend Edmund Schulz from Nejdorf, *[Neudorf on the Bug]* (in 1869) and the writer of this story, visited the Mazovians twice a year. It took them a whole day to travel by train and horse drawn carriage, to bring to their brethren the consolation of God's message, the Lord's Supper to strengthen their spirit, and to advise them in their many problems. Also to distribute among them books and periodicals on religious and economical subjects. *[We know that for some periods of time, this region was served by the pastor(s) from Rozyschche because statistical records appear in that church book. This service of pastors from other regions also explains why some of those records are not readily available, if at all. The Neudorf (on the Bug) parish was served through the Warsaw Consistory of the Evangelical Church while the Rozyschche parish was covered*

*by the St. Petersburg Consistory.]*

Therefore the arrival of the pastor is eagerly awaited on the day he promised to come. The next day a few candidates for confirmation are received. Nearly all members of the church come to Holy Communion with the exception of those who are ill. During the divine service everybody listens attentively to the reading of the Word of God, and receives the Holy Sacrament of the Altar with deep devotion. Nearly all remain after the service to attend the baptisms and marriages, and cheerfully pay their contributions for missions, foreign and domestic. They also contribute to the fund for the support of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the Russian Empire, whose activity reminds us of the Gustav Adolf Society in Germany.

When at last the divine service comes to an end, when all religious activities are duly arranged, the pastor must say goodbye to the brethren assembled, and start on his homeward journey. Many of them with tears in their eyes, thank him for the word of God delivered to them, for his good advice and his consolation.

Their earthly pastor, in his soul prays to the Heavenly Shepherd to keep His flock in the Faith and Love and in the Hope of Life Everlasting.

The number of Mazovian families that had settled at Nevir 34 years ago has not increased, and their farm lots have not changed in size, because many of those who came from Suwalki, unable to establish themselves at this place, returned to their native countries. Many of the younger ones went to Prussia or emigrated to North America to find employment. Thus the present Newir community now consists of no more inhabitants than there had been at the start. Those who left their families as a rule get married abroad and do not return to their native farmlands. \* End \*

**UKRAINE-RUS'**, a leading Ukrainian cultural traveling tour operator, is offering an **ethnic tour** of the Ukraine. Two main itineraries are offered for visiting the most significant cultural heritage monuments of Ukraine. One focuses on Eastern and Central Ukraine; the other on Western Ukraine.

If you are interested and would like to get more detailed information on programs and conditions, please contact: Ms. Catherine Romanyk and Ms. Maria Suchenko - **e-mail:** [agency@ukr-rus.kiev.ua](mailto:agency@ukr-rus.kiev.ua)  
**tel/fax:** 380 44 483 0512/2374 **website:** [www.ukraine-rus.kiev.ua](http://www.ukraine-rus.kiev.ua)

---

---

# Mazurian Serendipity

---

By Jerry Frank

---

Serendipity is the “faculty of making fortunate discoveries by accident”. Felix Kuehn gave us numerous examples in a presentation at the very first SGGEE meeting, before we had established ourselves as a Society. Serendipity was responsible for uncovering the article about the Mazurians who settled in northern Volhynia and in the discovery of the book, *Psalms and Potatoes*.

For several years, my church friend Joan has been researching her family - a mix of Volga, Black Sea, and Volhynian Germans. I helped her a little bit using the St. Petersburg microfilms to add a few unknown tidbits to her family information. Her Klimach family had lived in the Gross Gluscha and Niwa district north of Kowal in the Pripiat Marshes. It is a difficult region to search in. It’s remoteness from the church parish centres meant that pastors did not visit frequently and records were poorly kept. The Klimachs, along with Zipricks and others from this village eventually settled in the region of Roblin, Manitoba.

Although of the Lutheran faith, Joan was always perplexed by the strong Polishness of her ancestors in customs and language. It went beyond the mere ability to speak the language as needed for communication with neighbours or for use in the marketplace. I could only assure her that most of the Germans in Volhynia had come from Russian Poland and that there was probably some undue influence because of that. I further suggested that while the Klimach name was not yet found in the records of Russian Poland, we would surely encounter it some day. I was right about the latter but wrong about the former.

Last fall I received an email from a lady in England requesting some help in finding a village in the Suwalki region, the far northeastern part of Russian Poland bordering on East Prussia to the west and

Lithuania to the north. She was researching her husband’s roots and his surname was Klimach. Serendipity! Klimach is certainly not a common surname so my suspicions about a connection were immediately aroused. As we continued our correspondence, I noted other names like Ciprik (= Ziprick) which were identical to the family names of Gross Gluscha and Roblin, Manitoba. I became convinced that there was a migrational connection.

Well, it just so happens that Monday night (in Prince of Peace Village where I live) is designated pool night and one of the regular attendees is my neighbour, Harold Ziprick. At my next opportunity I asked him about his ancestry. Yes, he was born in Roblin. Serendipity! In fact, he was a cousin to the Klimach family through his grandmother. Serendipity! In fact, he had a family history book that had been compiled for a reunion in the 1980s. I asked to borrow it and once again came across all those familiar family names from the Gross Gluscha region. Also, in an envelope in this book, I found the copy of the article that appears elsewhere in this Journal written by the pastor from Neudorf. Serendipity! This article not only confirmed my conviction about the migration from Suwalki but once again repeated many of the surnames that participated. This article also introduced me to the term “Mazurian”.

Back to my new found friend in England, in one of her emails to me, she provided a paragraph quote that was credited to a book called, *Psalms and Potatoes* by Karl Krueger. Serendipity! The quote intrigued me so I did some digging for more information about this book. I discovered that it was all about the Mazurian Lutherans of East Prussia, many of whom had migrated to specific regions in the States, others to Suwalki. Although this was not my own history, I decided to obtain a copy of this book because there is so little literature in the

English language that can help us with an understanding of our European roots.

This book led me to the understanding that the Mazurians were not German at all but rather a group of people from East Prussia who were ethnically Polish but spoke a Polish dialect. They had come under the influence of the Germans during the time of the Prussian occupation and, after the Reformation, many turned to the Lutheran faith. Still others later became Baptists, some of whom migrated to Volhynia to begin the Baptist community there, northeast of Zhitomir. The Lutheran Mazurians also migrated to the Suwalki district in the late 1700s and were served by the German Lutheran Church in that region. It was descendants of this latter group that migrated to the Pripiat Marshes region in the 1860s and then on to Roblin, Manitoba. Other Lutheran and Baptist Mazurians settled in northeastern Wisconsin, east of Minneapolis, and in the

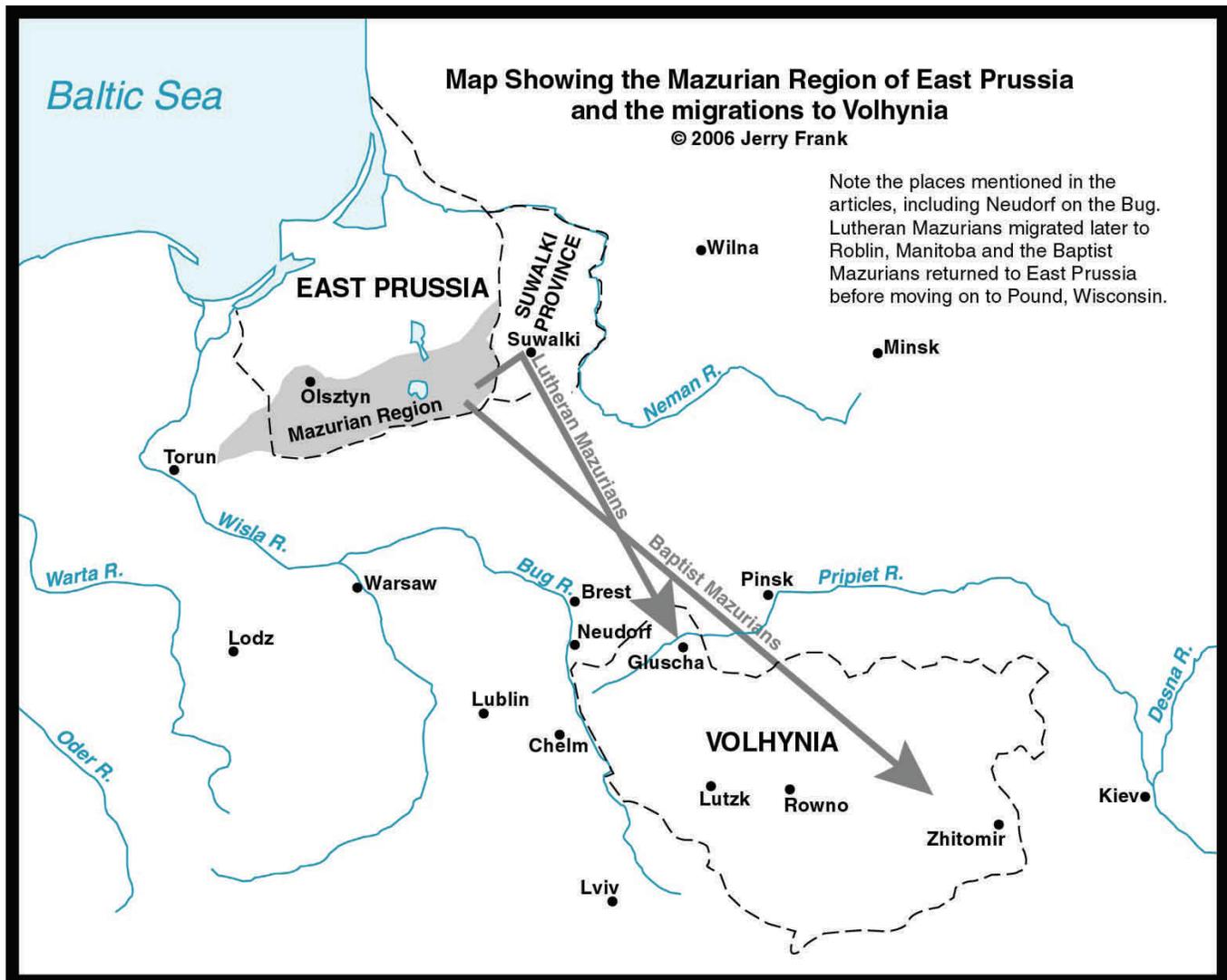
Scranton, Pennsylvania region. We are still working on whether or not some of these Mazurians also migrated directly from East Prussia to Volhynia.

You will find a book report about *Psalms and Potatoes* on the next page in this Journal.

We not only now know the origins of the Klimach family but we also know why they were so Polish. These Polish people had been deeply influenced by the faith of their German neighbours to the extent that one almost thought of them as German, yet they still retained their core Polish identity.

So - never give up asking questions. You never know when serendipity may strike for you in your research.

\* END \*



---

---

# Psalms and Potatoes

The congregations of the Polish-speaking Protestant Mazurians  
in East Prussia, Suwalki, Poland, and the United States

**Dissertation by Karl Krueger<sup>1</sup>, Ph.D, 1992**

Library Director & Associate Professor of the History of Christianity  
Lutheran Theological Seminary - Philadelphia, PA

---

## Book Review By Jerry Frank

---

Even though SGGEE was created to serve German genealogy, the migration, history and culture of the Polish Mazurians so closely parallels ours that they must be included in our studies. This book serves that purpose.

In his dissertation, Dr. Krueger introduces us to the Mazurians which, by definition are a Polish community of Protestant believers originating in southeast Prussia and speaking a corrupt Polish dialect. He begins the story with the German crusaders in the Holy Land just before 1200 AD. The returning Teutonic Knights are directed by their king to the Prussian wilderness where they establish several fortresses in an effort to take over the land. This may seem like boring old history but it is important to the understanding of the German presence in Prussian regions.

The knights expand German control over this region. The Polish Crown makes several attempts to take back the land. A treaty is signed in 1343 and relative peace continues for many generations. With this peace, the Germans begin the colonization of their Prussian territory. The relationship of the peasant to the Teutonic Order is described in good detail and introduction of the Catholic Church to this region is also covered. Another battle with the Poles at Tanneberg results in defeat for the Knights. The Catholic Poles were assisted by non-Christian Tatars in this battle.

Descendants of Moravian Brethren will be interested to learn that there was important Hussite influence in Poland during this time. Battles

continued back and forth with Prussians taking and plundering Mazurian territory but they are unable to defeat the Polish attacks.

The Reformation begins with Luther's posting of the 95 Thesis on the Wittenberg Church door and Duke Albrecht turns to him for advice. Lutheran influence has an impact on royalty and nobility throughout the Prussian region and this clearly affects its relationship with Poland. The development of the church is controlled by the state and has a significant impact on both education and culture. It is interesting to note that, in spite of official Polish Catholicism, the gentry within Poland actively promoted Lutheran reform. Once again the Bohemian Brethren (= Moravian Brethren) migrate into Poland influencing the population greatly. Although the Mazurian region generally remained loyal to the Catholic Church, the Prussians continued with the establishment of Lutheran Churches in the area. The influx of German settlement continued and eventually Polish speaking Lutheran congregations were created.

The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries bring war and strife to the area but in peaceful times the church and its education system flourish. The Lutheran Church sees the need to minister to the Poles in their own language and many materials such as the Bible, catechism and hymnal are translated from German to Polish. Some of the royalty come to embrace Calvinism and the Reformed Church which later undergo an enforced merger with the Lutherans. Baptists come into the Mazurian region and convert many of the Lutherans. Interestingly enough, they refuse to give up their cherished Polish language

---

<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: Karl Krueger, above, is not the same Karl Krueger who is an SGGEE director.

Lutheran hymnal.

Krueger does an excellent job of describing the development of the Mazurian culture in the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and on through the 19<sup>th</sup> by addressing their demography and agriculture, and by dealing with issues such as transportation and education. He also makes reference to the reasons behind the significant Mazurian migration to the Suwalki region of Russian Poland in the late 1700s. Several pages are devoted to the later 1860s migration of Mazurian Baptists to Volhynia where they are among the first to establish themselves in the region northwest of Zhitomir. Another group of Lutheran Mazurians migrated from Suwalki to the Pripiat marshes north of Kowel in Volhynia, settling on land owned by noblemen from Pinsk in Belarus. It is after the establishment of the Second German Reich in 1871 that the ethnic understanding of the Mazurians begins to blur with the Germans. "In an effort to reduce their number [that is, the number of languages] in the realm, the government invented elaborate schemes that justified the labelling of the Mazurians as Germans." Krueger also describes and provides numerous examples of how the Mazurian dialect became influenced by the German language. One example of this is: English - grandmother; German - Grossmutter; Mazurian - groska; Polish - babka.

The last two chapters deal with the distinctives of the Baptist and Lutheran Mazurian communities and their migration to North America. Interestingly enough it is Baptist Mazurians from Volhynia who first return to East Prussia and then convince many of their brethren to carry on with them to North America where they form a major community in the area of Pound in northeastern Wisconsin. Others migrated to Detroit. Some of the Baptist pastors who served these churches were from Volhynia. Other Polish Baptist Churches, primarily Mazurian, were founded in Buffalo and Rochester, NY, in Philadelphia, PA, in Newark, NJ and in Milwaukee, WI.

Many Lutheran Mazurians also migrated to North America, mostly to the States. Because the Lutheran Churches (many of them German) were

already well established, the Mazurians tended to blend in with the German culture and religion. They were scattered about with early arrivals heading to such places as Milwaukee, WI, Buffalo, NY, Detroit, MI, Reading, PA and to Decatur, IL. A large contingent ended up in the farming community of Benton County in Minnesota where they established the first Lutheran Church where Polish was spoken and preached. Krueger offers a lot of detail in how these and other Polish parishes were created and served as more Mazurians arrived there and in other places. Further pages are devoted to the evolution of the Mazurian Lutheran community in Suwalki and their migration in large measure to Scranton, PA. He also mentions and provides detail about the Lutheran Mazurians from Volhynia who settled in the Inglis and Roblin regions of Manitoba where services were held in Polish through 1955.

Karl Krueger's 516 page book is a thorough description of Protestant Mazurian history. His resources include a variety of German and Polish language materials and all sources are well documented (Chapter VI alone lists 162 citations). This book is a MUST read for anyone whose ancestry includes the Protestant Mazurian culture. It is a recommended read for others whose migration routes follow the patterns of the Mazurians. We should be grateful to have such an important work available to us in the English language.

This dissertation is available from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in unbound format for \$41 US. The easiest way to order is through their on line service at:

[http://www.umi.com/products\\_umi/dissertations/disexpress.shtml](http://www.umi.com/products_umi/dissertations/disexpress.shtml)

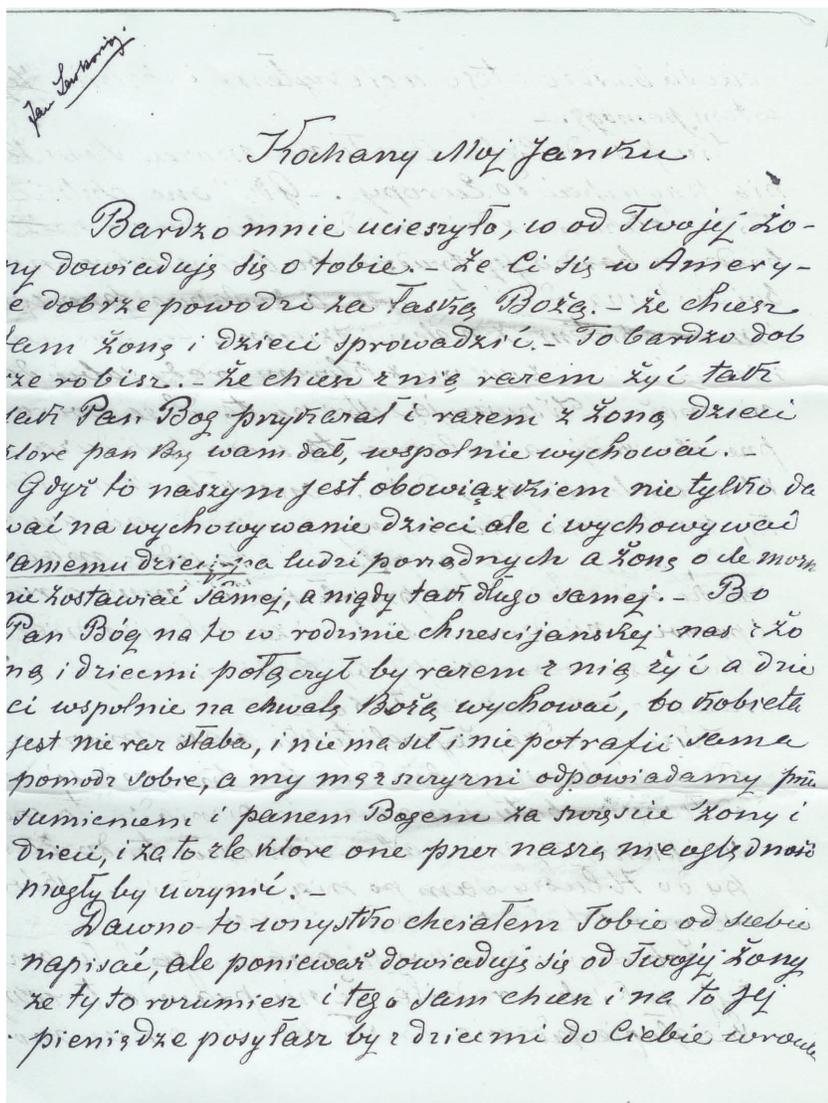
\* END \*

# A Letter from Count Lubienski of Gluscha, Volhynia

By Howard Krushel

Isn't the Internet a marvelous tool?

Back in 1997 several of us were on-line, discussing the movement of people into Gluscha, Volhynia. In our cyber conversation, John Lewkowich from Victoria, B.C. indicated that he still had a letter written to his grandfather in Canada by the Count of Gluscha. His grandmother, Marcella, served as a nanny to the Count's 3 children.



First page of Count Lubienski's Letter to John Lewkowich

As was often the case, John's grandfather immigrated into Canada, ahead of his wife and two boys, in order to earn enough money to bring them out at a later date. Often it would take some time to save sufficient funds as the immigrant worked to establish a new home perhaps by clearing the land, digging a well, and erecting suitable shelter.

In this letter from Count Lubienski<sup>1</sup>, we see several forces at play; a very kind Count, a father far away in America, and his family in Gluscha anxiously waiting and worrying about the ordeal involved in migrating to a distant foreign land.

The letter begins:

My Dear Johnny

I was very happy to learn from your wife that you are, by the Grace of God, well, in America, and want to bring your wife and children there as well. This is very good, that you want to live together with your wife, as the Lord has instructed, and to raise the children that the Lord has given you, jointly with your wife. Since it is our duty to not only bring up our children in an orderly fashion but to also not leave the wife alone, and alone for a long time.

For this reason the Lord God has united us as Christian families, so that we may jointly raise the children to the Glory of God; and since the woman is sometimes weak and does not have the strength to do everything alone, we men are responsible, to our conscience and to the Lord God for the happiness of the wife and children, and for the problems that may occur because of our inconsiderateness.

It has now been for some time that I have been wanting to write to tell you this, but now I have learned from your wife that you realize all this, and want to have your wife and children to join you and have sent money for that purpose; I am very happy for this and am willing to help her.

So now I am writing to you to ask if you could come to Europe for her. She would gladly immediately come with the children, by a bird, but how very uneasy she is because she is horribly afraid to travel this distance alone, through water and sea, by ship, with small children, very rambunctious boys. Everyone frightens her about this long trip, through foreign countries and across water so extensive that many will not make it.

She's a weak woman traveling by herself and not healthy, never having traveled anywhere, can only speak Polish and with this language will not go far. She came to me to ask for advise and help. It is not unusual for her to be afraid for herself and the children, even though her desire is so strong to want to see you and live together with you and the children.

So my advise is that if you can spare 2 or 3 months away from a job and if you have the money, you will not regret the time and money in order to come to Europe, to Gluscha for her and the children, and take them back yourself.

You will see for yourself with your own eyes how she lives and has managed; and that all those stupid stories and gossip about her that some may have written, is not true.

If you do this it will be considerate in that one should not expose one's wife, the mother of your children, to the dangers and much suffering that she would have to endure traveling alone.

If you cannot come, write to me, indicating through which country and with which agent she should travel, as she will not know how to do this by herself.

I think that that if you can't come then I'll send her through the city of Krakow which is in Austria?,

three miles from the Russian border beyond Czestochowa; there is a Company called "Providence" which would safely take her, in a Christian way, to Canada in America.

She could not go with children, without the Gubernial (Provincial) Passport. It would be sheer stupidity to try to smuggle herself alone, with the children, across the border without a Passport. If the Russian guards caught her at the border, things would go quite badly; she would have to pay a fine; they would take all her money and escort her back home. She might manage to escape through the border without a passport or she might not and that would be bad.

Therefore it would be best that Marcella should obtain a passport from the Provincial Governor for herself and the children so that she can safely and peacefully pass through the border or that you send her a Canadian Passport if you are already a Canadian citizen. For all of this to proceed you need to write back to me here directly in Gluscha and I will help her. Your children are healthy; they are learning to read and write in Polish because they are being taught by a teacher here in the Manor; a teacher whom I have brought here so that she can teach the colonist's children to read and learn the Catechism.

But for Marcella to raise the healthy and robust boys by herself is hard as she is weak and they don't listen to her; what is needed is your help to raise the sons to be good citizens.

Be positive, stay healthy, may the Lord God help you in your work, and don't forget your Catholic faith, your country of Poland and us in Gluscha. For your remembrance of me, I am sending you a small book which you can often read when you have free time from work.

Count Wincenty Lubienski

Gluscha, 20 June 1909

A year later in June of 1910, Marcella Lewkowicz left Gluscha with her two sons Anthony, age 11,

*(Continued on page 31)*

# Mazurian German? What Am I?

By Howard Krushel

We were German. This I knew to be true, in that we spoke German and worshipped in the local Lutheran church, the service of which was also conducted in German.

As I grew older and more inquisitive, I queried my mother as to whether those Germans with names ending in "ski" were also German. "Well" she replied, unperturbed "if they are German, their name will end in "sky" "AND they spoke Ukrainian AND did not attend the local Lutheran

church.....end of story.....well this satisfied my curiosity for a while but then a Ukrainian family changed their name to end in "sky" and joined our Lutheran church; "would they now be German" I asked my mother. Well, she said, she was much to busy cooking a large chicken for Sunday dinner, to answer my question; besides, company was coming, and had I washed behind my ears this morning?

I was changing...from playing baseball, hockey,  
*(Continued on page 32)*

*(Continued from page 30) Letter from Count Lubienski*  
and Walter, age 7, sailing steerage from Avonmouth, Bristol on the SS Royal Edward, arriving in Canada with the grand sum of \$25 dollars.

They adjusted from life on an estate in Gluscha to life on the Canadian frontier, successfully integrating into the Canadian Mosaic, adding to the many and varied settlers who helped in making this

country as great as it is today.

## END NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Count Vinceslaus von Lubno-Lubienski, owner of Gluscha, was born on Jan. 17, 1862 at Pokrzywnica; married Countess Maria Kasimira, Nov. 16, 1886 in Warsaw, and had 2 sons and a daughter; Count Joseph Lubienski, Count Sigismund Lubienski, and Countess Adele Lubienski; all of the children were born at Gluscha.

O twojey narodziacy wiece o twoim wrogu  
Polsce i o nas w slany. -  
Dla Ciebie na pamietki odemnie posyłam  
mały kszyczek, ktore jak masz wolny od  
pracy chwile czesto odczytaj. -  
Wincenty W. Lubienski  
Hlusca 20 Czerwca 1909 r  
n. Бориславъ Лубенскі  
Каменно Рудне село Трынама

Part of the last page of the Count Lubienski letter showing his signature and the date

*Mazurien German? What Am I? (Continued from page 31)*

soccer, listening to radio dramas and, of course, "The Lone Ranger" .....to reading books.

In one of these books I read about this tough, fiercely-proud race of people known as Mazuriens, living in East Prussia, who embraced Protestantism after the Reformation but refused to change to Catholicism during the turbulent time of the counter-reformation movement, which swept through Poland.

I knew that my mother was a "storehouse" of information on our family history. Every time I discovered a new piece of genealogical information and meant to surprise her with my success, she would say "Oh yes, that was when...." And she would throw a switch, lighting up another section of the family tree.

Having read about Mazuriens, I was sure that my grandfather, Karl Topnik, must have descended from this noble race, but usually when I inquired about this, my mother tended to steer the conversation to her mother's side, a Scharein, and continued to leave me wondering.

Now being fully convinced that grandfather was a Mazurien, I still wanted to verify this observation. My bold plan was to startle my mother into admitting this; so one day, out of the blue, in a loud clear voice, I said, "We are Mazurien". The immediate reply was, "No, we are not Missourian but General Council" a reference to the Lutheran Church Synod we belonged to.

Foiled again.

In time I began to realize that there was a great deal of confusion regarding the Mazuriens in that many had assimilated and that many attended the German speaking Lutheran church.

It was only last year, that confirmation of my grandfather's heritage was confirmed, by the fortuitous discovery of his original hymnal, brought over to Canada in 1888.

It was entirely in Polish except for a German

dedication by Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm and a scripture verse stamped into the front cover.

Very likely the religious books published before 1738 were in Latin and these were the first books published in Polish for the Mazurians of East Prussia.

On the cover it read: "Lord, you are my strength and power, my refuge in time of need."

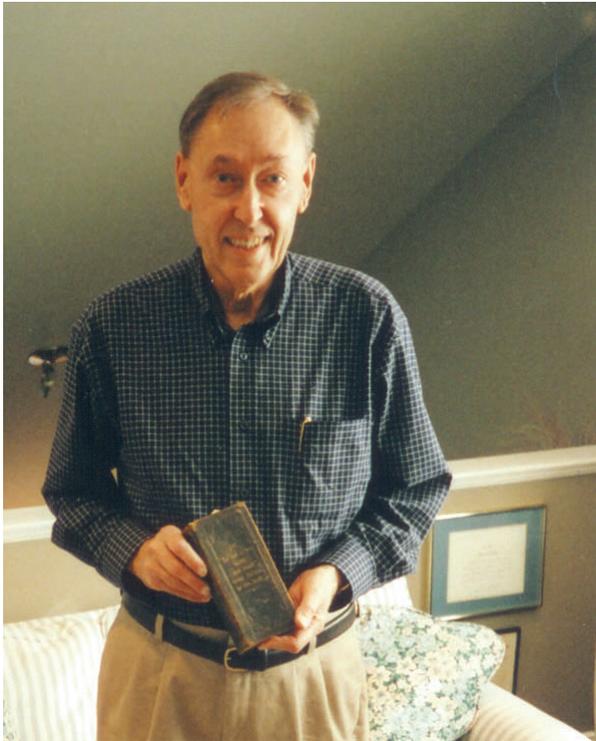
Inside, the dedication read:

We, Friedrich Wilhelm, by the grace of God, King in Prussia; Margrave of Brandenburg; Sovereign & Supreme Duke of Silesia; Sovereign Prince of Orange, Neuchâtel & Valangin; Duke in Gelderland, of Magdeburg, Jülich, Kleve, Berg, Stettin, Pomerania, the Kashubes, the Wends, Mecklenburg, Krossen; Burgrave of Nuremberg; Prince of Halberstadt, Minden, Kammin, the Wends, Schwerin, Ratzeburg, East Friesland Mörs; Count of Hohenzollern, Ruppin, the Mark, Ravensberg, Hohenstein, Tecklenburg, Lingen, Schwerin, Buren, Leerdam; Lord of Ravenstein, the Lands of Rostock, Stargard, Lauenburg, Bütow, Arlay, Breda, etc. etc. ascertain and confess herewith, that we grant and allow Johann Heinrich Hartung, printer at Koenigsburg in our Kingdom of Prussia to finally bring to print, the Polish Bible, the Polish New Testament, the Hymnal edited by Rogall our late Consistory Counciller, so that the beneficiaries of Collegio Friedericiana<sup>1</sup> in remembrance of Koenigsburg, may finally receive a Polish Hymnal.

We also herewith and by virtue of my power, hire and give the printer, Johann Heinrich Hartung, the exceptional privilege to organize previously mentioned spiritual books, and also to print aforementioned, with large or small letters, in large or small format, in our city of Koenigsburg, and as the opportunity arises and circumstances require, to sell privately or singly, to pay for any debts that arise, otherwise surely no one or anyone be allowed to contradict our Prussian Montem Pietatus<sup>2</sup>. A fine of one hundred Spezies-Ducaten will result if anyone prints the aforementioned books under another title or brings a copy printed in another country to sell.

On the contrary, the printer Johann Heinrich Hartung shall print the more well-known books, in a timely manner, with good workmanship, and not abuse at anytime, the most gracious privilege herewith granted to him.

Finally, we also herewith order our Prussian Government, to properly guard against the alteration of all contents and as necessary, maintain original entries.



Howard Krushel with the Mazurian Hymnal

In deed, we have personally signed this document of Privilege and given permission to attach the King's Grand Seal hereto. This has occurred and happened in Berlin, May 17, 1738.

### Friedrich Wilhelm

So there you have it — the story of how a grandson discovered his grandfather's Mazurien heritage, and of course I have since realized that Prussia was a huge melting pot of many tribes and races, most of whom assimilated into the greater German population.

Does this take away from our sense of heritage?

Definitely not; rather it adds to the pride one should have for the courage, stamina and determination shown by our forefathers, to venture out into this distant and foreign land in order to begin a new life, full of hope and expectations. And the land too was good to them. And here we are 100 years later enjoying the fruits of their labor.

### END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Collegio Friedericiano or Fredericks College was a college established in Koenigsburg in 1698 to which Mazuriens were allowed to attend, thus enabling them to enter University after graduating from College.
- <sup>2</sup> Montes Pietatis are early charitable institutions established to off-set the extremely high interest rates charged by the early money lenders. They would lend only to those who were in need of funds to carry them through some financial crisis, such as misfortunes, scarcity of food, etc. These institutions did not make a profit but used all profits that might accrue to them, for payment of their employees and to expand the scope of their charitable work. In time they became government or municipal corporations.

### “Genealogy”

Begins as an interest

Becomes a hobby

Continues as a vocation

Takes over as an obsession

And in its last stage is an incurable disease

Anonymous

Courtesy of Martha Jacobs

---

---

# How Accurate Are Those Names and Dates???

---

**By Bill Fife**

---

---

When I was young my grandmother always said she had two birthdays. I never understood why. Now I know. She was born September 8, 1893 under the Julian calendar being used by Russia at the time. When she moved to Canada, September 8 became September 21 because of the loss of 13 days in converting to the Georgian calendar so she celebrated on both days. Now which date do I use for her birth date?

My uncle writes: "My journey through life began in a small community in Russia geographically identified as Volynska, Gobernina, Ojesda, Nova Richka, on the second day of August, 1923 - but because my parents were unable to register this event within the prescribed time limit and because there was a penalty for late filing, my birth was recorded as being the eleventh of August."

Jerry Frank states: There have been some good remarks about possible reasons for the errors in dates. An important genealogical principal is:

"The closer the record is to the actual event, the more likely it is to be accurate."

For example, a date of birth on a marriage record is probably more accurate than a date of birth on a death record that occurs 50 years later. Death records or tombstone information can be especially bad because this is a very emotional time for people and they are likely to provide incorrect information. My grandfather's 1918 death certificate here in Canada states that his mother was Rosalie Solomka. In actual fact, his mother was Dorothea Steinwand and he was born in the village of Solomka in Volhynia. He died in the Spanish flu epidemic and three of his children also died within the same week. His son is buried in the same coffin with him. My surviving aunt, at the age of five, was sharing a bed with her older sister. The older sister died in the bed beside her. It is no

wonder that my grandmother was too emotional to provide accurate information. Similarly, a baptism record will probably have a more accurate birth date than the marriage record. If your family kept a diary, then the mother's information provided a few days after the birth would be considered more accurate than that provided at a baptism a month later.

In all cases, there is the possibility of error. In all cases, whatever date you use in your own records should indicate the source. If it came from a family Bible, it might be more accurate than a tombstone, depending on when the information was written down. And so on.

Another consideration is the location of the record. If a person was born and married in parish A, then both records you find there should be reasonably accurate as the pastor at the marriage would refer back in his book to the baptism record. However, if the person was born in parish A and married in parish B, then the marriage record might be more likely to contain an error because the pastor could not refer back in the books.

My father's gravestone gives his date of birth as April 1, 1908 when, in fact, his death certificate gives it as March 19, 1908.

While you may believe one source is more correct than another, you can not automatically assume a date is correct because 'it is from the gravestone' or 'it is from the marriage record', or even 'because it is from the birth record'. Most importantly, record the source.

\* END \*

---

---

# The Care and Treatment of Your SGGEE Username and Password

---

---

By John Marsch

---

---

A username and password are required to access SGGEE's Members-Only area website pages. This procedure has been put in place to protect SGGEE's unique databases, but more importantly to protect each member's privacy, even those who do not use a computer.

SGGEE members pay for most of the database information from sources not generally available to the public, therefore the data should not to be disseminated to those individuals or institutions choosing not to become SGGEE members and do not share the cost through membership fees.

The issue of member's privacy is of utmost concern. All SGGEE members have provided contact information with email and postal addresses in order to facilitate communication with SGGEE's administration and with other members to discuss common genealogical matters. Many members have also provided their pedigree information to be shared with others of our Society, but **not** for use by non members.

To prevent the misuse of the privileges afforded by your username and password, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. **Do not** leave your username and password where non members can use it e.g., in a public library.
2. **Do not** give your username and password to a friend or relative but encourage them to join SGGEE and help the Society in its endeavors.

## The Missing Peace of a Heritage Puzzle

A Memoir Uniquely Set in a Vanished Sudetenland



Frank Koerner

If your German ancestors or family come from the Sudetenland area, then Frank Koerner's new book "The Missing Piece of the Heritage Puzzle" may be of interest to you. SGGEE's area of interest does not extend to the Sudetenland but this book has received some good reviews on Amazon.ca. Check them out if you are interested.

Koerner's book is available in hardcover, paperback, and e-book at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca), and [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk). One can get a brief synopsis of the book there as well as an introduction to the book's content. The book is also available through booksellers, by domestic telephone at 1-800-288-4677, international telephone at 00-1-402-323-7800, or by postal mail at:

iUniverse  
2021 Pine Lake Road, Suite 100  
Lincoln, NE 68512 USA



**2006**

# **CONVENTION**

**"MOVING FORWARD BY LOOKING BACK"**

A genealogy convention for people tracing their Germanic roots that can be found in Congress Poland, Volhynia, and peripheral regions.

**AUGUST 11,12,13**

**COAST TERRACE INN  
EDMONTON SOUTH**

4440 Gateway Blvd.  
Edmonton Alberta Canada

For more information see our website at:  
[www.sggee.org](http://www.sggee.org)

or contact us at:  
e-mail: [convention@sggee.org](mailto:convention@sggee.org)

SGGEE Convention  
Box 905 Stn. "M" Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2J6



## Registration Form

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Surnames \_\_\_\_\_  
 Villages \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total Number Attending \_\_\_\_\_

	<u>Member Convention Fee</u>	<u>Non-member Convention Fee</u>	<u># people</u>	
Before July 11, 2006	\$50 CA or \$44 US	\$60 CA or \$53 US	x	_____
After July 11, 2006	\$55 CA or \$48 US	\$65 CA or \$57 US	x	_____
Saturday Evening Banquet (Prime Alberta Beef)		\$36 CA or \$32 US	x	_____
Total amount enclosed: \$CA _____	<b>or</b>	\$US _____		

**Please make your cheque payable to “SGGEE” and indicate either \$CA or \$US.**

Will attendee(s) be staying at the Coast Plaza Hotel?    Yes \_\_\_    No \_\_\_    Possibly \_\_\_

Will attendee(s) participate in the optional Friday evening reception dinner? (The cost of this dinner is not covered by the Convention or Saturday banquet fees.)    Yes \_\_\_    No \_\_\_

How did you hear about the SGGEE convention?

SGGEE publications \_\_\_\_\_ Posters in Church \_\_\_\_\_ Poster or advertisement in other Genealogical Society publication \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send the above registration form with your cheque to:

SGGEE Convention  
 Box 905 Station “M”  
 Calgary, Alberta  
 T2P 2J6, Canada

Convention enquiries should be directed to the above address or [convention@sggee.org](mailto:convention@sggee.org)