

The Borderland: our little Europe 30

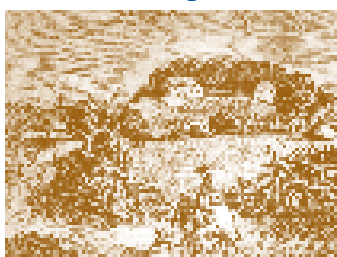


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DEAR READERS,



We present you the last issue of our publication. At the same time we finish the activity planned within the framework of the project "Transborder Centre for Education and Civil Information in Białystok." We hope that during the project we encouraged you to become more interested in integration and intercultural cooperation, especially in its transborder aspect.

The year 2008 was pronounced by the European Commission the year of Intercultural Dialogue. When we commenced our project in 2005, we did not even suppose it would integrate so well with activities on the pan-European level! The decision of the Commission confirms how important is understanding other nations, their religions and cultures. Especially, if those nations live beside each other, and in the process of the European integration and abolition of state borders they become direct neighbours. We hope the demonstration of the variety of our part of Europe in a historical perspective, enabled you to understand the wealth of this region and see its enormous potential. Thank you for the common trip around our cultural heritage.

*Chairman of Amicus Society
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To learn and understand our separateness and our “community,” which make our uniqueness...

The Borderland: our little Europe

The Transborder Centre for Education and Civil Information in Białystok (TCEiO) is the name of the project which the Association “Society Amicus” established in Białystok has implemented since December 2005. The Association is a non-government organization which has been conducting for many years a wide informative and advisory activity within the framework of the Podlasiian Centre of European Information, the Information Point Europe Direct and the Point Eurodesk. We also provide trainings and consultations on the regional policy of the EU, and advice on project management. Among the recipients of the project implemented by us are the unemployed, whom we help start their own businesses, teachers, people suffering from family violence and the handicapped.



The Association also runs educational activities for young people, including those international.

The project Transborder Center for Education and Civil Information in Białystok is co-financed by the European Fund of Regional Development within the implementation of the Program of Neighbourhood Lithuania - Poland - the Kaliningrad District of

the Russian Federation INTER-REG III ANTACIS 2004-2006, which supports transborder cooperation. The project is a so-called soft project (i.e. not infrastructural). His main goal is to become more familiar with the cultures, traditions and people of the Borderlands of these countries, where influences of different ethnicities and faiths cross.

During the two years of the project, the Association “Society Amicus” ran a lot of activities towards this goal.

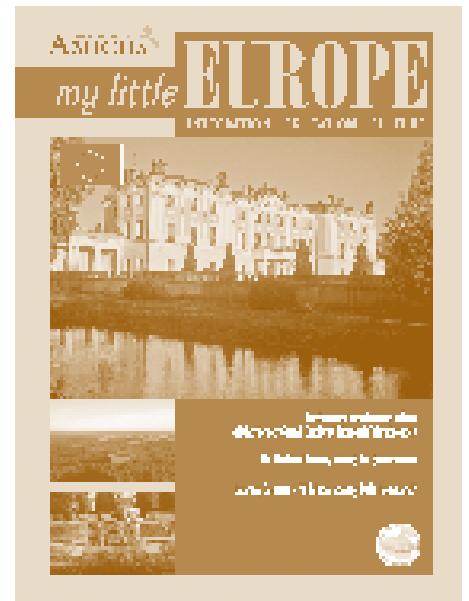
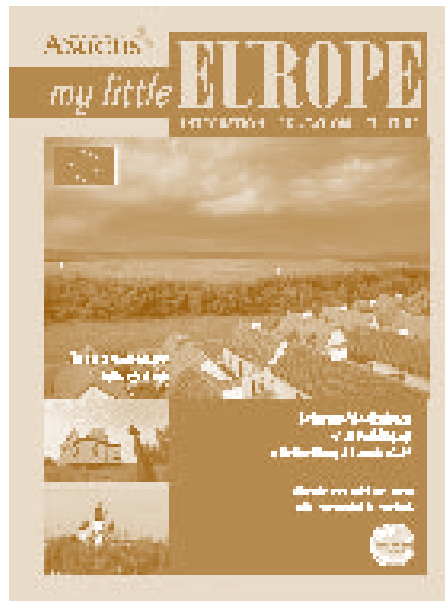
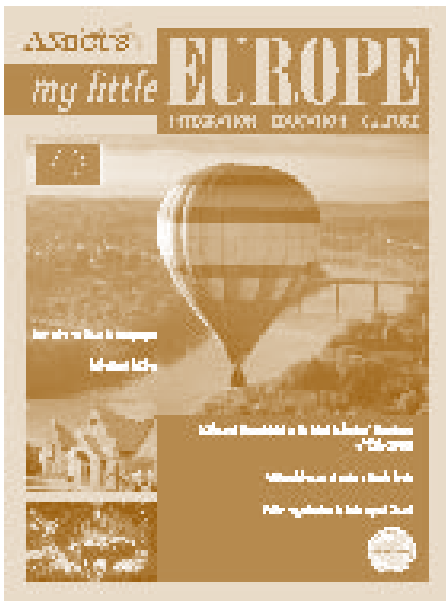
Between Poland, Lithuania and Russia

TCEiO rose as a project coordinating centre, simultaneously performing informative and promotional activities for meeting and integrating the Borderland communities. The information was spread foremost through the website (www.informacjaeuropejska.pl), on which, in five language versions (Polish, Lithuanian, English, Russian and Belarusian), one may find information concerning the project implementation, the electronic versions of the Association’s publications, as well as the database, run by TCEiO, of non-government organizations in Poland, Lithuania and the Kaliningrad District, acting in favour of ethnic minorities and preserving cultural heritage and tradition of the Borderland.

However, this big enterprise implemented for two years would nev-



The participants of the International Camp for young people (August 2007), young people from Poland, Lithuania and Kaliningrad



Publications "My Little Europe"

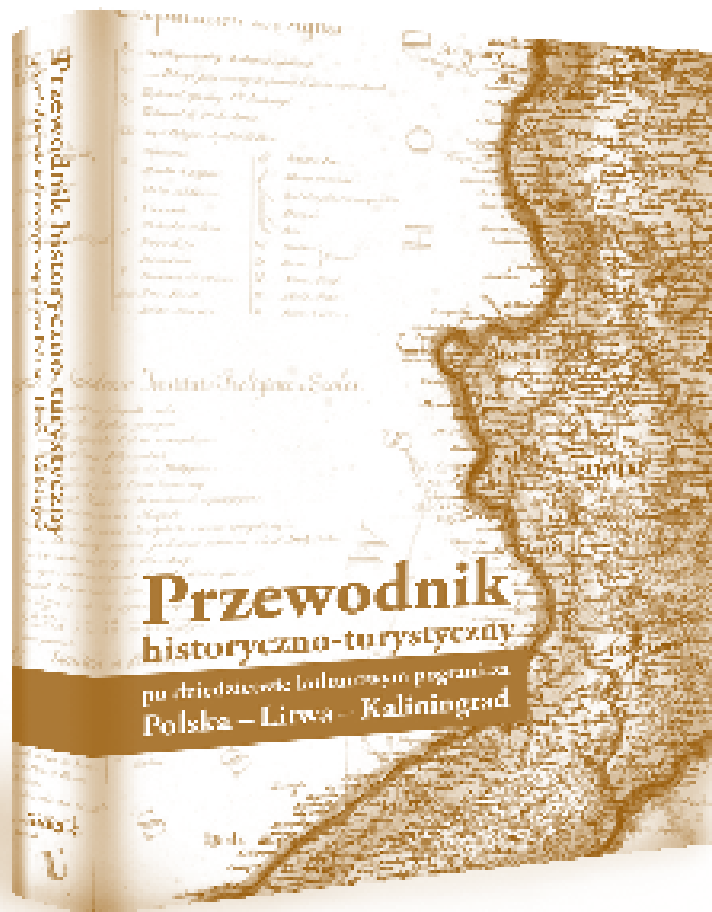
er come true without a cooperation with our partners on the Polish, Lithuanian and Russian sides. In Poland our works were substantially and organizationally supported by the Białystok Scientific Society and the Society of Friends of Bakalarzewo Land. On the Lithuanian side we cooperated with the Foundation Mysteries of the Past (*Rėmimo fondas „Būtovės slėpiniai“*) from Vilnius and with the Commune Lidvinavas. Our partners on the Russian side were: the newspaper "Głos znad Pregoty" (of the Kaliningrad Polonia) and the District Teachers' Home in Kaliningrad

Legacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

One of the key stages of the project was the publication of "My Little Europe." In seven five-language issues we have published several articles on such subjects as common historic roots, culinary customs and the beauty of nature of the Polish-Lithuanian-Russian Borderland. We also told the readers about interesting places, which

are worth seeing and people worth meeting. The aim of all these articles is to learn and understand our

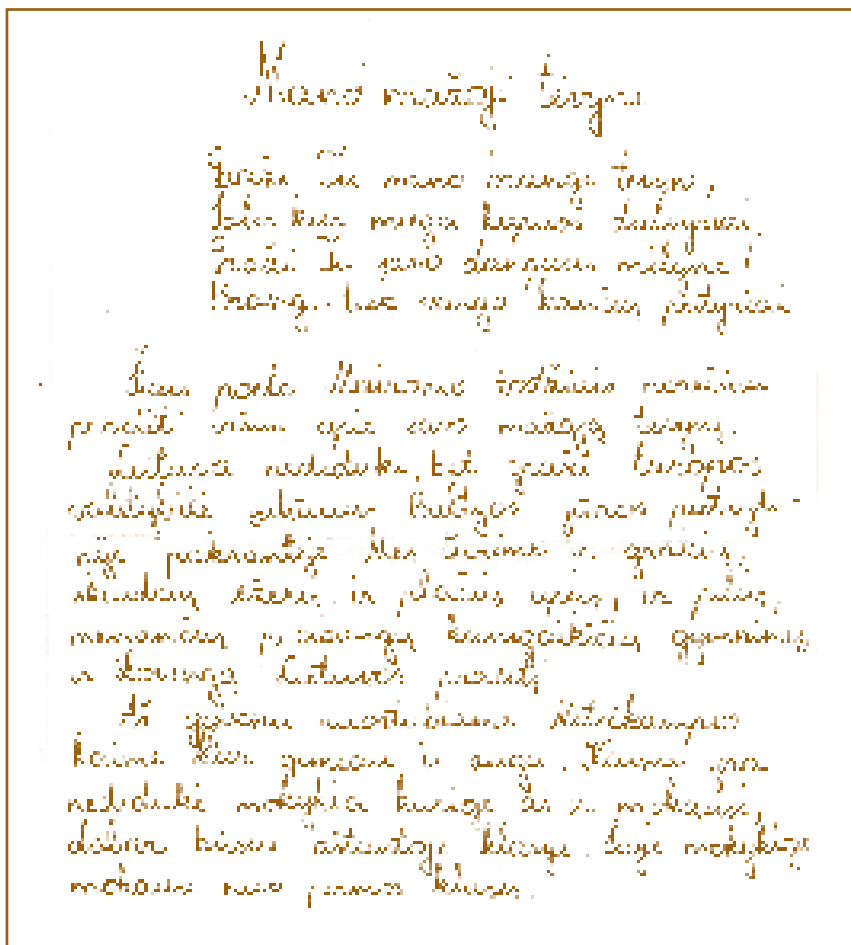
separateness and our "community," which are components of our uniqueness.



"Historical-Tourist Guidebook of the Cultural Heritage of the Borderland: Poland – Lithuania – Kaliningrad," a publication within the project TCEiIO

This was also the goal of the members of a research team which included sociologists, historians, journalists and other experts, who worked on the publication of the historical and tourist guidebook of the cultural heritage objects of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was the tradition of the GDL which was “the spirit” of this project, for it was this state structure and this mosaic of the cultures of various ethnic groups and religions, where one could find the precursor of today’s ideas of the UE community structures.

The documentary film “Pogranicze” (Borderland) is a significant product of the project. It was shot in three countries: Poland, Lithuania and the Kaliningrad District. The idea of the film was to present tourist attractiveness of the Borderland as well as the common cultural heritage of this area. In addition to tourist information there appeared some practical tips for the people visiting the presented countries: about restaurants, hotels and cultural places as well as the local people’s accounts encouraging potential tourists to visit these charming places.



J. Byskyte essay sent for the literary contest “I’ll Show You My Little Europe”

Little homelands, great emotions

Today, at the end of the project, we are positive that the origi-

nal assumption of activating the young generation was not only well-grounded but also turned out to be the greatest value and the longest-lasting effect of our project. This value is difficult to measure with product or result rates. We are positive, however, that the bonds and relations tied during the project between the Polish, Lithuanian and Russian children are the most effective and the longest-lasting form of breaking through divisions, differences and stereotypes.

We have made the children of the three countries interested in the subject of homeland. We organized a literary contest, which we entitled “I’ll show you my little homeland.” In the essays sent



The participants of the international camp for youngsters at the Gala of Cultural Output in Bakalarzewo, 12 August 2007

by the children, through their eyes we could see the picture of little homelands located on the three sides of the border but how similar! These little homelands are our most important values. Despite linguistic, cultural and religious differences, they are all close to our hearts and refer to our childhood memories. The sent compositions were moving and full of emotions. They demonstrated the fact that we appreciate the same values: home, family and homeland.

The laureates of the contest, thirty-two children from the three countries, spent two weeks together on the international camp in Olecko. Those two weeks were not only the time of common playing and using the charms of the beautiful lake Olecko Duże. It was also the time of meeting the nearest neighbours through cultural and language workshops, common trips to historically important and attractive sights.

We were in the sanctuaries Święta Lipka and Studzieniczna. We visited the synagogue in Tykocin and the mosque in Kruszyniany, as well as the Orthodox monastery in Supraśl. We were in Wolf's Lair, Hitler's war quarters in Gierłoż and admired the Monastery in Wigry as well as charming lakes in Smolniki.

Not only memories of common campfires, games and trips, and photos stayed in our memory, but also friendships and fondness, which do not know what borders are. The "after-camp meetings" confirmed this. For the first time after the camp the children from Poland and Lithuania saw each other in the Commune Ludvina-vas as early as the end of August. The next meeting took place on 23



A meeting of journalists from Poland, Lithuania and Kaliningrad – Białystok, November 2007, organized within the framework of the project TCEiO

November. On invitation from the Commune Ludvina-vas children from the school in Bakalarzewo visited Lithuania.

Galas, meetings – contacts

An important element of our project was also the International Gala of Cultural Output organized in Bakalarzewo on 12 August 2007. Dancing and singing groups from Kaliningrad, Lithuania and Poland gave their shows. Local people, tourists and foreign guests enjoyed themselves until late at night by the sounds of folk and pop music, admired the guests' performances and took part in numerous contests. During the gala, one could taste traditional regional delicacies prepared by local associations, as well as buy and admire craftsmen's

products presented by exhibitors from the three countries.

We also arranged meetings in the three neighbouring countries, in which numerous non-government and local self-government organizations took part. These meetings contributed to exchanging experiences and presenting good practices in the implementation of EU projects in favour of preserving the cultural output of ethnic minorities and the tradition of the Borderland. The most important effect of these meetings, in which c.60 people from the three countries participated, was getting in direct contact between people and organizations. These contacts, hopefully, will fruit in numerous initiatives and mutual enterprises for maintaining the values and the uniqueness of the Borderland.

The results of the opinion poll among the young people – participants of the international language camp

Breaking stereotypes, building bonds

Three months after the end of the international language camp in Olecko, organized within the project “The Transborder Centre for Education and Civil Information in Białystok,” we asked the participants what and why they liked it on the camp, whether they would like to repeat such an event and what remained today of their camp friendships...

A conception of evaluation research

The main emphasis in the research was put on the evaluation of the International Language Camp as one of the parts of the project, which is expected to have a certain effect on the attitudes of the participants in the activities. The direction of this influence is determined by the project goals and is connected with activation and intercultural education aimed at meeting the ethnic groups living in the borderlands of Poland, Lithuania and Russia. In the evaluation proceedings an opinion poll was planned among one of the categories of the project beneficiaries: young people from the border territories of Poland, Lithuania and Russia who took part in the camp.

Młodzież to szczególnie ważny uYoung people are especially important participants and subjects of activities aimed at building bonds and breaking through barriers among the communities inhabiting the borderlands. It is young people that will shape mutual relations between the nations through passing their opinions to their peers, older people and, in the future, next generations.



The international camp for youngsters – Olecko August 2007

At the same time, young people are open to new information; their views are relatively easily shaped and usually they do not have established stereotypes including those concerning different ethnic groups.

The meeting of the participants in the International Language Camp arranged on 23 November 2007 by the mayor of the Commune Ludvinavas, Lithuania, was an opportunity to conduct the opinion poll. Ten participants come from this region.

Young people (and their councilors) from Poland and Lithuania took part in the meeting. Due to some organizational obstacles, the young Russians failed to arrive, and consequently, their opinions were not reflected in the survey. Altogether 16 out of 21 people were questioned, which is over three quarters of the Polish

and Lithuanian participants in the camp.

To evaluate the influence of the project on the final beneficiaries a quantitative research method was chosen with a standardized interview questionnaire. This method allowed to register quickly the participants' opinions during the meeting in Lidvinavas which lasted a few hours. The research tool (an interview questionnaire) was translated into English and the interviews with the Lithuanian youngsters were conducted in this language. The received answers were immediately translated into Polish and put down in the questionnaire.

It was a well-spent time

All questioned young people declared decisively their wish to participate in a similar camp. The largest number of the respondents, almost 90 per cent, justifying why they would go to the camp again,

said “I liked it.” About 40 per cent of the respondents indicated possibilities of meeting new people and contacts with people from other countries. And almost a third of the respondents pointed at the attractions accompanying the camp. One fifth, on the other hand, underlined the possibility of mastering their command of English.

From the rich offer of activities prepared by the organizers, the most popular were campfires and sport games. 50 per cent of the respondents indicated these attractions. English classes and discos were recognized as favourite attractions by 40 per cent of the surveyed. A little fewer, c. one third of the surveyed pointed at the trips and the gala which was held at the end of the camp as the events that they liked especially. And every fourth person remembered the beach as one of the major attractions of their stay in Dworek Mazurski.

About 70 per cent of the surveyed participants in the camp called the nicest memory from it various events prepared by the organizers, such as games and competitions, the fashion show, the “baptism” of the campers, the gala, discos, trips and campfires (specially that at the end of the camp). Over 40 per cent of the respondents remembers with a special pleasure the friends they met (especially foreign ones) and talks; 12 per cent praised “a well-spent time.” Single responds to the question about the nicest memories from the camp (constituting altogether a fifth of all the answers) concerned: the place of stay, the lakes, the English classes, the night with falling stars and night outings to make practical jokes.

Almost 40 per cent of the respondents while asked what they did not like on the camp, answered there was not such a thing. In this context the participants paid attention only to the classes of intercultural education, which were perceived as those which required the most work and intellectual effort, and included the fewest elements of fun.

Wolf’s Lair (Wolfsschanze) and old sacral architecture

In the evaluation questionnaire there was also a question what interested the participants most during their stay on the camp. In the first place (one third of votes) were various attractions prepared by the organizers: games, discos, the “baptism” celebrations, the campfire and the gala. Trips and contacts with the Lithuanians (in the case of the young Poles) or with the Poles (if the respondents were Lithuanian) were indicated by a quarter of the surveyed each. Almost every fifth respondent chose the English classes as the most interesting, and 12 per cent of the people indicated the contact with the culture of an-

other country. Single answers within the category “others” (30 per cent of the answers) concerned the interests of the youngsters: “new information about the region,” “watching the falling stars,” “the bunkers in Gierłoż,” “the Lithuanian school system.” One of the young people responded: “I was interested in everything.”

Among the most interesting pieces of information on the visited region which were best remembered by the surveyed participants in the camp, those connected with the bunkers in Gierłoż and Hitler’s stay in the Wolf’s Lair are leading; nearly two thirds of the respondents pointed at this construction of the war time. The information of old architecture, especially sacral architecture (18.7 per cent), of the Muslim minority in Podlasie and those that concerned the towns visited (12.5 per cent each) were the second most frequent choice from among the most interesting knowledge they acquired.

Contacting the peers from the neighbouring countries met on the camp is common among the surveyed people. Only 18 per cent of the respondents do not keep in



The participants of the international camp for youngsters in Supraśl (the Province of Podlasie) - August 2007

touch with the acquaintances met on the camp. The remaining use mainly the Internet to communicate with their foreign friends (emails, Internet communicators: more than a half of the answers), and the telephone (mainly through text messages, because of the costs).

A conclusion? The formula proved effective!

The camp was surely, in the opinion of the participants, a successful event. The decisive declarations of wish to take part in a similar event again on the part of all the young people are the best evidence.

From the point of view of the organization of the whole project, it is very important: an attractive form of passing the content connected with the intercultural and historical communication, as well as breaking through the barrier and bringing the participants of different nationalities closer and the civil activation conducted on the camp, enhance the message of the project and facilitate its acquisition.

During the camp the youngsters made easily, as it is with young people, a lot for friends and acquaintances. What is important, the friendships were continued after the event was over. We know that c.90 per cent of the young people from Lithuania and Poland keep in touch through the Internet and text messages sent from their mobiles. Among the nicest memories there was meeting new acquaintances and conversations with them. It is worth to note that especially strong bonds were tied between the Lithuanians and the Poles. A contact with the young Russians from Kaliningrad, what was pointed at

by some respondents, was hindered by the language barrier. The Polish and Lithuanian youngsters communicated in English. The Russians spoke almost exclusively in their own language, unknown to the rest of the participants.

The participants in the camp appreciated opportunities of contacting their peers. Critical opinions about the intercultural education classes did not affect significantly the implementation of the goals connected with the mutual learning of national cultures by the campers. The youngsters' knowledge of the complex history of north-eastern Poland, where

numerous contacts and mixing of different ethnic groups and cultures have occurred for centuries, was undoubtedly enriched with new input of information.

During the camp the young people, taking part in trips, had an opportunity to learn the history of Podlasie, the Suwałki region and Masuria. What stayed in the campers' memories for good were: visiting the bunkers in Gierłoż (the quarters of Hitler), as well as numerous examples of old architecture and the information about the Muslim minority inhabiting Podlasie and the visit to a mosque near Białystok.



An "after-camp" meeting - Ludvinavas, Lithuania (23 November 2007)

And it was as follows...

On 23 November 2007, on invitation of the mayor of Lidvinavas, Irena Lundskiene, we went to Lithuania to a meeting organized for young people from Poland and Lithuania, participating in the international camp in Olecko. The joy of the meeting on the part of the youngsters was enormous, since although they had kept in touch through emails and text messages all the time after the camp, nothing could replace the meeting "live." We were received with a delicious dinner and then we saw a show of dancing groups from the schools of the Commune Ludvinas. And there were great things to see: from folk dances through ballroom dances to modern dances, from the youngest pupils through those finishing school.

After the show the youngsters had a good time at the disco and, at the same time, the guests invited by Mayor Lundskiene with the representatives of the Society Amicus considered the possibilities of further cooperation on projects for the integration and meeting of young citizens of the European Union.

The meeting finished very late, but even so the youngsters found it difficult to depart.

A composition distinguished in the contest "I'll Show You My Little Homeland" - Monika Gajewska, Sadłowina, Poland

Sadłowina yesterday and today...

My little homeland is Sadłowina. It is a small village in the Suwałki region. There are no interesting old buildings, monuments, places mentioned in various guidebooks, restaurants, bars, discos or hypermarkets. Despite this it is worth coming here for a holiday or just for a weekend. Greenery around, a picturesque lake, fresh air, woods, meadows, fields, trees, orchards, they all make you want to live.

Sadłowina yesterday and today...

The name of the village comes from the Szablowski family, who used to live in the mansion on the territory of their property. The mansion stood on the left of the road to Bakalarzewo (in the present day orchard of the Pietrewiczes in Nowa Wieś). The farm buildings were on the opposite side of the road. The so-called czworaki or flats of the people working in the estate were in the place of the present common room. In the big storeyed buildings the following families lived: Gorlo, Iwanów ?, Chmielewski, Wijas, Biziewicz nad Przekop. There was also a school, a dairy, a would be farmers' machine park, and there were far more houses than now...

The school

The school was built by Mr Skorupa, Mrs Bujnowska's grandfather, but it was called "the Woźnickis' school." It was between the present



Sadłowina (the view from the side of the road)

farm of the Stankiewiczzes and the Domelas. It was a big building with two chimneys, housing 7 classrooms. The teachers were, successively: the Burba married couple, I.Niederhouse, Z.Jankowska, R.Towgin, S.Górski, Socik and just before it was closed down, Barbara Świątkowska.

Soon after the war the school was moved from Sadłowina to Gębalówka and then to Karasewo.

The dairy

The name was the name, but reality was reality.

In truth it was the place where milk was received, a centrifuge separated milk from cream, which was transported to Bakalarzewo and then to Olecko. The strained milk returned to the farmers. In the dairy people from the village worked but not only they. The dairy ended up

like the school. Today there is no trace of it.

The farmers' machine park

A real farmers' machine park was in Nowa Wieś, and they used to talk about building a farming school in Sadłowina. However the machine park did not stay long. It was divided between three farmers.

1939-45

Soon after WWII broke out the German Konieczko took over the whole property in the village. The German troops burned the villages near the border, and when they managed to catch the fleeing people, transported them to Germany. Some preferred to hide than to leave their family home. Not for everybody did it turn good.

Mrs Brodowska brought out three children (the youngest was 7 months old) to the bushes but she wanted to return and fetch the cradle... She was stopped by German gendarmes. Neither did they speak Polish nor did she speak German. She was straining towards her children left in the bushes with their grandma and, on the other hand, the Germans were not able to explain to her where and why they were taking her, and all the more that they were going to release her safe and sound.

They not only shot her but also stabbed her with the knife. The children's father did not return from the several days' mobilization.

So the three orphans were left with their grandma only.

There was one radio in the village, the property of the Strzałkowskis, the pre-war owners of the estate in Sadłowina. The inhabitants of the village often gathered to listen to the news. The following song was popular then:

“The German’s lurking us winter summer, winter summer,

But we don’t care a damn for it!
But we don’t care a damn for it!”

A few days later the Germans captured also this radio station. When the Russians attacked Poland on 17 September, the Russian troops reached also Sadłowina but did not stay long. From 1939 to 1944 the Germans ruled there. When the Russians came over with their offensive to Lake Sumowo, the Germans suddenly began to withdraw. They took the people, animals and even things such as furniture, pots and foremost decorations and jewellery. First they reached Szczecinki where they took young men to work with trenches. Some of them fearing the trenches fled to Olecko, which was another place of “a stopover.” But even there the Germans selected people and took them to the trenches.

In Olecko one had to be registered. The Germans allotted people to different estates and places. It was good if you happened to deal with a decent German, like for example Mrs Przekop did. The clerk warned her “if you want to register, don’t take the children with you but leave them in the corridor. Write down that they are eighteen/nineteen years old and you’ll be taken to the estate and you’ll live OK, and otherwise they will chase you as far as Kurpie.”

Mrs Przekop took his advice and she and her kids got to the es-

tate in Gryzy, and then in Chechły (Kielchy?) In that estate people lived a few families in one house and suffered from typhoid. Whole families had typhoid.

In the spring 1945 when the Russians, whatever to say, liberated from the German occupation, those who had survived began slowly to return home. Everything was ruined, nobody had anything, so slowly, step by step, our great-grandparents started to rebuilt Sadłowina.

The old appearance of the village or who and where used to live (according to the account of Stanisław Gajewski)

- in the Stankewicz family’s house – the Skarzyński family
- in the Przyborowski family’s house – Franciszek Woźnicki, Janina and Waław Bujnowski, Wiesław Przyborowski (rents to the Leszczyńskis)
- in the Jankowski family’s house – Józef and now his son Witold,
- in the Domels’ house – Antoni, Kazimierz and currently Henryk
- in the Sypers’ house – Konstanty, Stanisław, and currently Krzysztof Syper (the sołtys – head of the village)
- near the Sypers lived Jan Zakrzewski who moved in after the war,
- Wiktor Zakrzewski (near Jan Zakrzewski),
- Between Mr Zakrzewski and the next Mouse live Zygmunt Jackiewicz,
- Opposite Mr Jackiewicz lived Aleksander Domel,
- In the Sobolewski family’s house – Wiktor, Stanisław, Józef, now Dariusz
- Behind the Sobolewskis lived the Ostrowskis,
- In the Karpowicz family’s house – Franciszek, Tadeusz Kwiatkowski, Wiesław Karpowicz,

- Behind the Karpowicz family lived Stanisław Buza and further Franciszka Naruszewicz,
- In the Gawrych family’s house – Waław Jankowski, Stanisław, and now Zygmunt Gawrych,
- Before the Gawrychs lived Konstanty Janczuk, and then Zygmunt Gawrych (the father),
- In the Domels’ house (“na padołach”) – Piotr, Stanisław, now Henryk,
- In the Pietrzeniuk’s house – Adam, Zygmunt, Adam Pietrzeniuk,
- In the place of Mr Jaroszyński lived the Brodowskis (their son Erwin lives in Raczki Wielkie),
- In the Traczkowski’s house – Bronisław Brodowski, Józef Goro, Józef and Jakub Traczkowski
- The residence of the Plaga family is occupied by holidaymakers,
- In the Sojkas’ house – Julian, now Wiesław,
- Behind the Sojkas – Bronisław, Tadeusz Kosak,
- In the Dąbrowskis’ family: Władysław Dziobkowski, Bronisław Dąbrowski,
- In the place of the common room was the Chmielewskis’ farm,
- On the hill – Bolesław Sojka, Klemens, now Edward,
 - In the Gajewskis’ house – Józef Przekop, Stanisław Gajewski, currently Bogusław,

After the village, once densely populated, only a few farms remained.

Part of the farms were purchased by tourists who fell in love with our village and have plans connected with it. A lot of new summer houses have been built. Kayaking and camping are very popular. Our beautiful area attracts like a magnet.

Monika Gajewska

A composition distinguished in the contest "I'll Show You My Little Homeland" - Ruslan Doncov, Tylza, Russia

One cannot work and live in the land about which one does not know anything.

Without the knowledge of the history of the region the spiritual life of the Kaliningradians is poorer: one cannot work and live in the land about which one does not know anything. I was born in the town of Sovetsk and learn at school in Zhylin. In the time free from school classes I read, ride a bike, play football in the stadium and when the weather is bad I play computer games. I like the bright, clean, second biggest town of Sovetsk (former Tilsit). It is also called "the northern gate" of the region, because numerous guests from Lithuania, Germany and close foreign countries arrive to the region through it.

During the East-Prussian operation on 20 January 1945 our troops captured Tylza (Polish name). In 1946 the town received its new name, Sovetsk. The present Sovetsk is an important industrial centre of the region. What contributes to it is its favourable geographical situation: it is located on the railway, motorway and water crossroads. It is located in a picturesque area on the left bank of the River Neman. There are a lot of industrial plants in the town. The Paper-Cellulose Mill is of economic importance. It produces cellulose, paper, carton, ethyl spirit, fodder yeasts. It is the biggest offset paper supplier. Its products are delivered to many towns and countries.

There is wood industry, a furniture factory in Sovetsk. The prod-

ucts of the textile factory enjoy a great demand from the inhabitants of our region. Various food articles are produced in the town: kasha, cold meats, sweets, crab fingers etc. In Sovetsk there is a drama theatre, which is called "Tylsit" anyway, which enjoys a deserved reputation among the viewers. In the town there is a school of cultural-educational personnel, the cinematic technical secondary school.

In old photographs Tylza is charming. It was a European town with compact layout of buildings. Vividly emphasized silhouettes of the temples, the Town Hall, the turrets of Queen Luisa bridge added charm and poetics to the town. If we remember that complexity is the most important quality of architecture, the town was created as an architectonic complex. There was logic in "what" and "how" it was erected.

On the bank of the River Memel (Neman) a monastic church was built. Near this church was a building of the Town Hall with an openwork tower. Unfortunately none of the wonderful buildings can be found now. They were destroyed by WWI and the people's indifference.

The turrets of the southern portal of the Queen Luisa bridge were stylized as Baroque ones in 1907. Everything together on a small square represented a well-planned architectonic complex built with love.

An important characteristics of Tylza is its embedment in the landscape.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century the architectonic and landscape environment around the town lake was formed. The silhouette of the church, the school-dormitory and "the castle," as erroneously the building was called, were a kind of still music. The ideally maintained slope near "the castle" was beautiful with flowers and decorative bushes. Blue spruces, thujas, beeches, and an Argentinian hawthorn remind, even today, about the high culture of the urban landscape. On the old map of Tylza we can see whole districts "in orchards" and the name "little orchard." It is commonplace to say that green areas are "the lungs" of every town. Thoughtless destroying orchards and old groves is not only just a sign of urbanization. It proves rather lack of reasonable planning of Sovetsk and the indifference of the people who are directly responsible for the present appearance of the town. The redbrick buildings of the town hospital, the School no 10 and the school-dormitory include some elements of the Tylza architecture. The symmetry of the elevation solutions and the asymmetry of the solids in the backyards combined make a picturesque whole. Various repeating architectonic solids form the outside appearance of the School

no 10 yard. Its soaring windows are very pretty.

Thus, we see a lot of buildings around us, which resemble, with their details, the rational German architecture. In this context what is really characteristic is the building of the Children's Home "a spark," a former presbytery and yet before Frankschevilla.

Up till now we are delighted with the fundamental buildings of the town administration, the office building of the Cellulose Mill, the School no 1, the technical high school no 14, the hospital, and the cinematic technical high school. The private character of the buildings explains why we observe decorative elevations and modest annexes in the yards. Apparently, the land for buildings was in some places more expensive whereas in the others cheaper.

Let's appreciate the owners' aspirations to make each house pretty and to contribute to creating the unique town. In the book by Peter Just and Igo Keller "The old

and the New in Tilsit" it is not incidental that Professor Bociek from Koenigsberg's words are quoted, which read: "Tilsit is a town to which no other is equal."

What can be done is to look and see and do something so as not to lose the rest of what is left.

Mr Murdzin emphasized that the Polish in the former East Prussia rebuilt the German architecture as the heritage of human culture. The reconstructed old Klajpeda is also an evidence that Lithuania woke up before us. The Klajpeda architect Yuri Bahitov tried to help Sovetsk but he didn't find understanding there. He draw a tentative design of the restoration of the timber framing house in Pushkin Street, but by that time the ownerless house had been demolished for, now desirable, building materials.

The fate was merciless with the town. Even today one can see holes in the sides of the streets. The houses were destroyed by bombings and the empty spaces after them look like pulled out teeth.

Just looking at old photographs we can imagine what was the main street of Tylza like. Sovetsk eliminated the roofs covered with ceramic tiles. The old elevations, balconies and gutters are in a horrible state. Paved roads and sidewalks, apparently eternal, are disappearing. And the stones to pave the streets used to be brought on barges from Scandinavia. Cobblestone did not turned into rubble as easily as contemporary concrete cubes of dubious quality. We must state an irrefutable fact: the architecture, the landscape and the surroundings of the town are irrevocably degraded. I'll be happy if my subjective point of view does not prove true. It is so tempting to believe that changes are possible.

Why, the nearly forgotten melody of the Prussian construction art used to be full of great ideas and today it is able to convey to us the sound of the streams of time, which go past by centuries and millenniums over this Baltic region.

Ruslan Doncow

A composition distinguished in the contest "I'll Show You My Little Homeland" - Zilvinas Akelis, Ludvinavas, Marjampole, Lithuania

Such is my homeland

I came to this world in the capital of Suduva, Marjampole. Here, from south northwards flows the longest river of Suduva, the Sheshupe. It flows through its very middle. This is a land which used to be covered with vast thick forests long time ago.

It is a beautifully maintained town, whole bathed in the green. Strolls are very interesting here.

The Commune Marjampole originated in 1795. Then the new Prussian authorities organized the Starapole district. Its status wasn't changed until 1950. Then it was restored in 1994.

Marjampole is the capital of the Lithuanian part of Suvalkija (Suwalszczyzna). From the north southwards it is cut by the railway. Marjampole is the seventh biggest

town in Lithuania. It covers the area of 2050.7 hectares. The River Sheshupe divides it into two parts connected, on the other hand, with six bridges. The largest part of the town is located on the eastern bank. In Marjampole we may admire the St. Michael the Archangel's Basilica Minor. Just next to it is St. George monastery (Marian). We also have St. Vincent a Paolo's church (the

end of the 19th century), belonging to the Vilkauskio Diocese, and a Lutheran church. In the town centre is the Jonas Basanavičius Square. In the quarter Degučiai a district hospital works. There are also two foster homes: St. Michael the Archangel and the Holiest Virgin Mary.

As late as the end of the Middle Ages, the surroundings of the town were inhabited by the tribes of the Yotvingians. The fortress in Marjampole, undermined and damaged by the River Sheshupe, remembers those days. Also the fortress Kumeilionys, located by the city border, remembers them. Supposedly, by the 16th century in the place of the present town, there was a wood. It is commonly believed that Marjampole was founded in 1667 (according to "The History of Sudavia-Suvalkija" by Father Jonas Totoraitis, a historian). The town originated with the village of Posheshupis, then situated in the place of the present J. Basanavičius Square and belonging to the Prienai district. In the documents found there are records from the year 1626 with a note about the village of Posheshupis.

The starost of the town of Pienai, Countess P. Butlerienė built a monastery and a church. The church village overgrew the commercial town in the 18th century.

After building a Marian monastery, the town was named Marjampole. In the year 1792 King of Poland and Great Duke of Lithuania Stanisław August Poniatowski granted it the Magdeburg rights and a coat of arms. In 1812 on his way back to Warsaw, Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte went through Marjampole. During the uprisings of 1831 and 1863, fierce combats between the kosyniers (soldiers armed

with war scythes) and the tsar's troops took place.

The first school was originally established in 1777. In 1840 a four-year school was brought here from Sejny, and in 1865 it was transformed into a school of pedagogy, and finally in 1866, into high school (gimnazjum).

Near the present high school a wonderful stadium was built, where circus companies always stay while visiting the town with their shows.

Many representatives of progressive intelligentsia studied at this school. They were, the outstanding linguist J. Jabłoński, the community and academic activist J. Basanavičius, the poet and publicist W. Kudirka, the educator and children's writer P. Masziotas, the poet W. Mykolaitis-Putinas, the writers K. Boruta, A. Wencłowa, the poetess S. Neris and many others.

Apart from the high school in Marjampole there are currently 7 secondary schools, a college, a vocational preparatory centre, 2 libraries, a cinema and 8 museums. The latter are: the Countryside Museum, the unique Museum of Guerilla Fighters and Refugees of the Taurogian District, the Museum of Memory of President Kazys Grinius of Lithuania, the Museum of the Logistics Battalion of Great Duke Vytenis of Lithuania and the College Museum in Marjampole. Three museums are located in schools: the High School History Museum, the Secondary School No 2 History Museum, the Secondary School No 5 History Museum in Marjampole.

Marjampole is an industrial centre of about 70 thousand inhabitants. There is the oldest sugar-refinery in Lithuania "Arvi cukrus."

In our town there are three leisure areas:

- leisure zone by the River Sheshupe, where the inhabitants spend their pastime,
- Park Posheshupis with plenty of trees and bushes, where you can listen to birds singing. There is also a sport pitch.
- Town health path leads to another, old park where you can find yet hundred-year-old trees.

On the River Sheshupe, by an old dam swans swim all year round. My brother and I often bring them some food.

We have also a big culture centre, where concerts and shows as well as other cultural events are held. Every year the Days of Marjampole are arranged with plenty of artistic performances and other events. Every year also the festival of "The Strongman of Suwalki Region" takes place. The most powerful athletes of Lithuania and other parts of the world take part in it. One of them, Saulius Brusokas, comes from my home town. During competitions we support him the most! A lot of known people came from Marjampole or lived there. Suffice it to mention Rimantas Jukėnė, one of the casualties of 13 January, who died that night, and Darius Songaila (born 1978) from the basketball representation of Lithuania, an NBA player. In the old town cemetery the writer Žemaitė, the poet Petras Arminas-Trupinėlis, and the author of the Zaniemenie history, Father Jonas Totoraitis.

Football matches are played in the town stadium. I always go to the matches to support my club "Suduva" and see my friends.

Such is my little homeland, Marjampole, proud not only of its beautiful nature but also of its rich past.

Žilvinas Akelis

Determinants of cultural identity of the Euroregion Neman area

„There went to Królewiec a young man with a wicina...”

Not everybody knows what the words of the very popular “Spinner,” the song by Stanisław Mo-niuszko and Jan Czczot: “There went to Królewiec a young man with a *wicina*...” refer to. A *wicina* was a river boat on board of which goods were transported along the Neman. And that young man is a raftsmen or a nobleman, who carried grain and other crops from his little estate to the port in Królewiec (Koenigsberg).

Today it is almost forgotten that the River Neman, one of the most beautiful on the territory of the former Commonwealth, used to be navigable and the *wicinas* used to float thereon. The river connected and not divided communicatively and commercially, culturally and politically different areas of the Euroregion Neman (Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Russia).

Beauty of wooden synagogues

The forestry character of the terrain resulted in the fact that the buildings that existed here in the past were almost exclusively wooden. Sporadically, stone/brick castles, places and temples were erected. And, since wood is not a stable building material, after one hundred years the wooden objects become nearly totally destroyed. One should have great maintenance skills to prolong such buildings’ lives. Lack of the strong medieval guild carpentry, which occurred for example in Little Poland and in Silesia, led to



Drohiczyn. Benedictine Nuns’ church. A renaissance pulpit (1623) (now in the church in Milkowice Maćki).

the situation that the Euroregion Neman does not have such marvelous old buildings. The only examples of wonderful carpentry

were royal and magnate residences (now nonexistent, unfortunately), as well as incredibly valuable wooden Jewish synagogues.

The latter, once to be found only on this territory: Podlasie, eastern Masovia and the Grodno region, should be counted among the determinants of the region's cultural identity.

The most splendid were the synagogues in Zabłudów, Grodno, Wysokie Mazowieckie, Wołpa, Janów Sokółski, Suchowola and others. All were built in the 18th century and were wooden imitations of the most important brick synagogue in Tykocin (1642). The Tykocin Jewish Kahal belonged to the most influential in the country. They did not allow the Jewish within the territory of their activities to build brick/stone synagogues. They had to do with wooden ones. Because they were not allowed to put up synagogues higher and larger than Christian temples, they made up for this with ornaments and internal proportions of their buildings. These wooden, nonexistent synagogues imitating the type of the 9-field brick buildings, belong to the most important achievements of the old Commonwealth's carpentry.

European bison: a royal symbol of forest

Royal and elector's forests were hunting places. On the territory of the Euroregion there are places where used to be hunting mansions of the rulers: Białowieża, Wigry, Knyszyn-Wodziłówka, Merecz, Miedniki, Berszty, Kundzin, Goniądz and Rominta. Hence one of the most important determinants of this area's cultural identity is today undoubtedly the European bison. As early as the 16th century it was peculiar-

ity of the Białowieża, Knyszyn, Przełom, Perstuń, Merecz, Rudnik, Miedniki, Berszty and Rominta forests. Reserved as an object for hunt exclusively to the rulers of the Jagiellonian dynasty, it was, in 1521, a curiosity to show in Rome to Pope Leo X by the delegation of Bishop Erasm Ciołek and the Podlasiak Mikołaj Hussowski (Gąsowski). The bison protection was mentioned in the Lithuanian Statutes as early as 16th century. King Zygmunt August announced his decree threatening those who would dare to kill a bison without the royal permit with death. In spite of that the population of bison decreased and their habitat shrank. The animal survived in Białowieża until 1919 when it became extinct slain by poachers.

European bison survived, however, in a small number, in zoos in a few European countries and, in 1929, they returned to the Białowieża Forest, to the specially prepared zoo.

After WWII the Białowieża Forest was divided with the state border: the western part stayed Polish whereas the eastern part became Belarusian. In the Polish part there were breeding reserves with surviving 17 bison. The successful development of the breeding allowed the bison to return to nature. The first two bison left the reserve in 1952. On the territory of the whole Białowieża Forest, in 1998, lived 536 free bison altogether (298 in the Polish part). It is the largest population living free in one forest complex. The bison is an important symbol of natural values of the Euroregion Neman, the former lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.



Knyszyn. Parish church. A mass chalice founded by Mikołaj Radziwiłł in 1520. Engraved portrait of Zygmunt August (by the painter Wirgiliusz Soli in 1562). J.I.Kraszewski, Wilno od początków jego do roku 1750, t. I, Wilno 1840, after p. 216.

Stones, oaks and holy waters

Lithuania was the country where paganism survived the longest. Christianity there is relatively "young," since it came in 1387. We can encounter on this territory stones connected with pre-Christian beliefs. In the Province of Warmia-Masuria, in Stare Juchy; in the Province of Podlasie, in Święcko-Trzeciny near Wysokie Mazowieckie, Święcki near Sejny, Kamień near Sztabin and Ramiga near Ragneta by the Neman.

The cult of trees is marked with the existence of worshipped oaks. The residues of such pagan worship places are met in the place-names, where they were continued by Christian churches, for example: Dąbrowa Wielka, Dąbrówka Kościelna, Korycin Dąbrówki, Dąbrowa Białostocka, Krasnybór,

Studzieniczna (the Podlasie Province).

Another cultural determinant is the existence and popularity of sacral centers with healing water. This undoubtedly pre-Christian cult survived in: Święte Miejsce (Holy Place) near Dowspuda, Studzieniczna near Augustów, Święta Woda (Holy Water) near Wasilków, Krynoczek near Hajnówka, Stary Kornin near Orla, formerly in Białystok in Kaskada near St. Roch, Knorydy near Boćki, Miłkowice-Maćki near Drohiczyń, Grabarka near Siemiatycze, Hodyszew near Brańsk, Płonka near Łapy, Vilnius by the Brothers Hospitallers of St. John of God Church. It was important that the Uniate Metropolitan Lev Kiszka, in the 1720s, commenced a program of making the majority of such places Basilian missions. By 1839 they had been common cultural heritage both the Roman and the Greek Catholics. Part of them



Renaissance tile found in the hearth of a stove in the old royal mansion in Knyszyn. Drawing by Wojciech Boryszewski.



Knyszyn. Parish church. A mass chalice founded by Mikołaj Radziwiłł in 1520.

turned Orthodox after 1839 and, like Grabarka, have served this denomination until now.

Oaks marked its presence with the use of oak tans by tanners. Hence the popularity in this area of sheepskins in red-brown. Until recently clothes of this type were very popular in the countryside as comfortable in sledge trips. The application of sheep wool and natural dyes as well as natural food, resulted in the fact that the inhabitants of the present Euroregion Neman were free from allergic diseases, milk intolerance and other civilization diseases.

Treasurer Tyzenhauz's heritage

The existence of the royal domain of the Jagiellons on this ter-

ritory and later on royal estates: Grodno, Olita (Alytus) and Brest, resulted in the court cultural models permeating in the local culture. Perfect examples thereof were double-warp carpets, common on the territory of the Grodno estate, today known as the double-warp Podlasie (or Janów) carpets.

In the period 1765-80, Court Treasurer Antoni Tyzenhauz, governing the table property of King Stanisław August, introduced manufactures in this area. To use them he employed foreigners, who brought here this unique and, simultaneously, very simple weaving technique. The Grodno manufactures were located in numerous towns, including Sokółka and Janów. The local people, instead of serfdom, were employed in the Tyzenhauz manufactures.

They brought the construction of the looms observed there, dyeing skills and patterns home and imitated what they had learnt in the royal workshop. Consequently, even today, we can find on the Podlasie double-warp textiles we may find almost identical patterns with those on Polish belts of the 18th century and tapestries.

Despite the fact that Treasurer Tyzenhauz went bankrupt, in the folk tradition even today one can find uniquely attractive woolen textiles, healthy, warm and functional. Passed down from generation to generation as dowries, they were used to decorate churches, wedding benches, covers on seats in coaches etc.

Queen Bona and the Narew sour cucumber

Especially important in this area was the period of an agrarian reform implemented by Queen Bona and King Zygmunt August in the Podlasie royal estates in the mid 16th century. Spreading of consumption models, vegetables and especially those of Italian origin, resulted in shaping consumption tastes in the 16th century, which have survived until today. Sunday cabbage-soup with a “powerful” portion of meat inside, cold soups, borsches, as well as skills of meat storage (smoked, and not kept in hot water after the game were killed) and cheese-making; these are just a few examples

of the consumption whose origins come from royal courts in Knyszyn, Grodno and Vilnius.

It is Podlasian sour cucumbers that turned out uniquely successful. This crop was introduced in the royal districts by Queen Bona. Their quality and taste resulted from the skills of conservation: in oak barrels immersed in rivers. As early as 16th century, the royal estates in Podlasie were famous for the skills of souring cucumbers, and there were, so to say, whole cucumber ‘basins,’ for example in the Kleszczele district near the Białowieża Forest, by the Narew and the Biebrza near Waniewo, Tykocin and Knyszyn.

Houses among gardens, along wide streets

Zygmunt August, by living in his Knyszyn court, implemented a renaissance ideal of harmonious co-existence with nature. The earliest attempts at urban planning compatible with modern conventions appeared there. They are different from the previous ones because of a very regular check-board street layout and the integration of gardens and fields with houses, which was a clear popularization of the antique, Roman, urban models.

Spreading vegetable and fruit growing encouraged to measure a suitable plot for a garden near the settlement plot. Towns were devoid of protecting functions, which encouraged to design extensive layout of wide market squares and widened streets (despite a low number of population in the new-established towns).

It was probably the influence of the humanistic turn towards nature, the need for staying among



Wysokie Mazowieckie, Synagogue, drawing by Zygmunt Gloger „Kłosy,” 1874, no 471, vol. 19., p. 24

the greenery, for possessing a patio, an arbor or a gazebo. An incredibly high number of plots in the designed towns implies that not all of them were immediately covered with buildings, but were a reserve of building plots, temporarily serving as gardens. They were towns erected as the result of works during the agrarian reform called “pomiarą włóczną” (drug measurement). The models from royal properties were conveyed to magnates’ towns.

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Determinants of cultural identity, recurring on the territory of the Euroregion Neman, most frequently reach back to the renaissance and Jagiellonian tradition. One may say this area is a land of renaissance. It did not manifest in monumental pieces of art but through permeating models and esthetic principles for royal courts to village cabins and burgesses’ houses. The order in space, consumption or even in the coexistence with nature were not, however, the most important. What was the most important, was the harmony in the interpersonal relations. In spite of the fact that this area was inhabited by the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Ruthenians, the Germans, the Tartars and the Jews, there

have never been either religious wars or ethnic fights on this territory. The community living there used to live in harmony, renaissance harmony indeed. What brought disharmony were only absolutism, partitions, bolshevism, Stalinism and Hitlerism.

However, none of the native groups having lived there since at least the 16th century, was an animator of the conflicts and crimes of that type. None was involved therein in a special way. Harmony in community coexistence is the most important determinant of cultural identity of the lands combined within the Euroregion Neman. It should be maintained and continued.



Białowieża. King Stanisław August's hunt mansion, drawing, 1828, J. Brincken. Memoire descript sur le foret de Białawieża en Lithuanie, Warszawa 1928

The Governor of Prussia of Polish origin

Bogusław Radziwiłł: a myth and reality

The older generation of the inhabitants of Kaliningrad certainly remember Prince Bogusław Radziwiłł, the character in Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel "The Deluge" and a film of the same title by Jerzy Hoffman.

The prince marked his place in common memory as a cynical political intriguer and an insolent seducer, attempting, in futile, to sell Fatherland at the highest possible price and to deprive Miss Alexandra Billewicz, the main character Sir Andrzej Kmicic's fiancée of her virtue. However, a few know that the prototype of the literary and film character, after fleeing from Poland, took the post of the governor of Prussia and, in 1669, was buried in the Królewiec (Koenigsberg) Cathedral at Knipawa (Kneiphof).

As a result of merciless war and political catastrophes of the 20th century, Prince Bogusław and his wife Anna-Maria's tombstones built in the Cathedral wall, suffered dramatically. In 2003, during the memorable visit from President Aleksander Kwaśniewski of Poland, an offer of renovating the epitaph was brought up, regardless of the ambiguous political image of Prince Bogusław Radziwiłł, for he is a significant



figure of Polish and European history.

The Polish conservators, currently working in the Cathedral, restored entirely the missing parts of Prince Bogusław's epitaph (from the same black "tan" which is still extracted near Gdansk, but to lower extent than in the 17th century). The completion of the first stage of the conservatory works, the reconstruction of tombstones with epitaphs, is planned for the beginning of December 2007. Furthermore, in the future their decorative border of marble or alabaster (this issue is still discussed) is planned to be restored.

The client: Consul General Jarosław Czubiński of Poland in Kaliningrad is satisfied with the cooperation with the administration of the Cathedral and maintains that the character of Prince Bogusław may become especially significant nowadays: *It is obvious, he was a man of his era and cared foremost for the affairs of his feudal clan. But in his deeds one can also see strokes of the ideas that led to the creation of the united Europe. Radziwiłł was not a common and straightforward man. He was a Polish magnate of Lithuanian extraction, having stayed for some time in service of Sweden and Prussia. Perhaps for the present day people this figure will be-*

come a sort of spiritual and cultural "bridge" between countries and peoples. And the fact that the common consciousness accepted just the image of the historic personality created in Sienkiewicz's novel and Hofman's film? Well, such is the power of art!

By the way, Prince Bogusław Radziwiłł is also significant in Russian culture. It is he who preserved in his library collection in Królewiec (Koenigsberg) a unique copy of the old-Russian chronicle which later was called Królewiec (or Radziwiłł) Chronicle, and now is one of the most valuable sources of Russian history.

*Maria Ławrynowicz
„Głos z nad Pregoby”*

The Neman: the river of nations

“When others are looking for the sources of the Nile in the heat of the subtropical sun, when they excavate the ruins of Troy or die in polar ices, I’m heading towards you, my home Neman, to hear your currents and your banks’ confessions, to taste bread and salt under the Neman thatched roof and have a chat with the multitude of your villages,”

Zygmunt Gloger “Dolinami Rzek” (Along Rivers’ Valleys).

The Neman, called Nyoman in Belarusian, Nemunas in Lithuanian, Nyeman in Russian and Memel in German, Niemen in Polish, flows through the territory of Belarus, Lithuania and Russia (the Kalininograd District). It is 937 kilometers long. “South-east of the little town of Uzdy, in a forest retreat of the former Ihumen district, between the villages of Borki, Oziorce, Huszczyce and Zabłocie (water-wood names!) in the detailed topographic map there is a small stream marked, meandering south-westwards to the little town of Piaseczno. At Piaseczno the stream joins two much bigger creeks: the Usa and the Łosza and becomes the navigable River Neman, which, having encircled Mogilno and Mikołajowszczyzna, enters Poland and runs north-westwards up to Moryń. From Moryń, near Blelica, Orla and Mostów the Neman describes a semicircle south-westwards and from Grodno on it takes the northern direction and having cut with numerous semicircles and bendings the Lithuanian plate reaches the little town of Ruszyszeki,” as Michał Szymbielwicz wrote in “Ziemia Lidzka” no 5-6, 1938. All has remained un-



“The Neman is th The Neman is the river of the Lithuanians as the Vistula is the river of the Poles”

changed, save one detail: now the Neman does not flow through the territory of Poland.

Whose rivers is it?

The Neman is the river of the Lithuanians as the Vistula is the river of the Poles,” reads in the “Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich” (A Geographic Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and other Slavic lands) by Filip Sulimierski, Bronisław Chlebowski and Władysław Walewski 1880-1904. It is undisputable. At the same time, one can by no means agree with this statement, since the Neman is the most Polish of the Polish rivers. Geographically, it is nonsense, since not a kilometer out of a near thousand along which the river flows is on the territory of Poland. Culturally, it is the most sincere truth. The Neman as a literary topos, has no nothing equal. Probably no Polish river, not excluding the Vistula, has been sung of so passionately, ten-

derly and bombastically. No river has held such an important place in the Polish culture. None has ever stimulated the poets’ imagination, foremost the National Prophet, Adam Mickiewicz.

The Lithuanians will surely claim the Neman. The Polish will defend the Polishness of the river with the sense of inalienable right. It was no one else but Master Adam who wrote in the poem “To the Neman”:

Neman, river of my youth, where are the waters

*I once scooped with my infant hands
Waters which I later swam to its wild retreats*

Seeking to cool my turbulent heart
(transl. Marcel Weyland)

And if it is not enough, there is “Pan Tadeusz,” a national epos, a semi-sacred text for every Pole. And in “Pan Tadeusz” the Neman is not only a beautiful literary motive but the river-symbol, without which the whole poem could never exist.

*Meanwhile, bear my soul heavy
with yearning's dull pain,*

*To those soft woodland hillocks,
those meadows, green, gleaming,*

*Spread wide along each side
of the blue-flowing Niemen,*

*To those fields, which by various
grain painted, there lie*

*Shimmering, with wheat
gilded, and silvered with rye;*

*Where grows the amber mus-
tard, buckwheat white as snow,*

*Where, with maidenly blush-
es, clover flowers glow,*

*And all as if beribboned
by green strips of land,*

*The balks, upon which scat-
tered quiet pear trees stand.*

(transl. Marcel Weyland)

The problem is that the most important text of the Polish culture and national consciousness commences with the words: "Lithuania, my country!" However, as Professor Jerzy Bralczyk writes in his "444 Polish Sentences" this most significant and the most commonly known Polish sentence "was written in the 1830s a emigrant from the Russian Empire whose ethnicity is still discussed. It opens a poem written in the capital of France about Belarus which is called Lithuania."

What is more, the Russians will also claim the Neman, since geography speaks for their right to co-ownership. And the Belarusians? "My eyes are full of Belarus. I'm looking at Provance and I can see the hills near Oszmiana. I'm looking at the Danube and I see the Neman, I can see the other bank of the Neman misty with a mild sadness," wrote Tadeusz Konwicki in "Kalendarz i klepsydra."

There is no simple solution of this mess. There is not, if we accept

strict geographic, political, national and historical categories. Even the so-called cultural belonging does not change much. In all these fields there is always a "but", and all compromises become necessarily partial only. However, if the problem is considered from the point of view of an individual identity, national belonging chosen personally, felt on the spiritual level, and not territorial, the contradictions disappear and debates are replaced by the community of references to the beauty of poetry. In other words, if we do not divide ourselves according to the lines drawn on maps and long-lasting conflicts, but we join in the love of poetry and the sentiment towards the childhood land, this "Lithuania, the homeland" in "Pan Tadeusz" becomes a common idyll, a common extra-national myth, reconciling ethnic feuds and making claims to both the Neman and Mickiewicz less important.

The Border of Civilizations

"Between the district (Kalininograd District, editor's note) and Lithuania there is no natural border if not counting the not wide Neman and only in the north. Lithuanian bushes, plains and meadows look the same as beyond the borderline. Before the war, at least by the Hitler era, one could here the same language and the same songs on both sides thereof. The Lithuanian, although not very numerous, inhabited the surroundings of Tylża and Gąbin-Gumbinien (present Sovietsk and Gusyev). However, border was and still is very clearly felt. Crossing it before the war, a traveler from Lithuania reached a world of higher civilization, brick and stone houses

instead of wooden ones, better cultivated fields, cozy European towns instead of poor villages and little towns, and asphalt roads. Today this difference is also apparent, though in favor of Lithuania, which has developed within the last 50 years, whereas the lands of the former East Prussia, unfortunately, declined" writes Tomas Venclova in the text "Kalininograd, the vestibule of Europe."

The probably best known contemporary Lithuanian poet in the world, essayist, writer, researcher and translator of belles-lettres, determines a border on the Neman, which physically results from territorial divisions but has also enormous symbolic significance. Venclova repeats, in a way, a gesture made by the greatest eulogist of the Neman, Mickiewicz, over one hundred years ago. In "Pan Tadeusz", already cited, the Neman is not only inseparable element of the childhood idyll, a blue band around the poets little homeland, but also a border between two worlds, that ruled with knout and the other giving hope for desired freedom and independence. He who had heard the news of the Legions, who became "infected" by liberty, who desired to join the Napoleonic Army...

*Through forests and through
marshes would secretly steal,*

*By Russians chased, until
him the Niemen concealed,*

*Would, submerged, swim across
to the Grand Duchy's strand,*

*There to hear a warm greeting:
"You're welcome here, friend!"*

*But, before leaving, step on a cairn,
and from far*

*To the Russ 'cross the Niemen call:
"Au revoir!"*

(transl. Marcel Weyland)

The Neman is here not an obstacle. On the contrary, it is a gate to Europe; to the Europe to which the Neman land had always spiritually belonged, and which had been torn off by force of a barbarous Muscovite order, the tsar's pride and greed. One should not only not feel ashamed of one's Neman origins but should find spiritual support therein. In his poem "To Joachim Lelewel," Mickiewicz builds a concise and clear model of a modern national identity:

*Father's feelings fill the child's breast,
When thou art young the customs' fetters
oppress.*

*Thou often thinkst, that thou
hast a statement invented,
But it is sucked out of maternal bread;
Or a teacher watered your ear therewith,
Always part of his own soul
mixing in the drinks.*

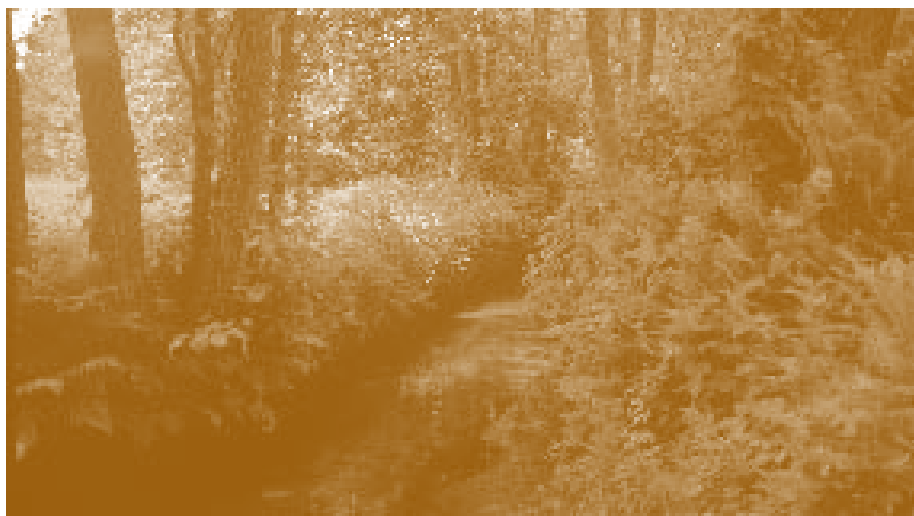
*And so, wherever thou turnst,
every step of thine will give away*

*The truth that thou art from
the Neman land, that thou art
Polish, an inhabitant of Europe*

These verses will soon enjoy their bicentennial, and it seems that they are still valid. One may say that along with Poland joining the European Union, they could become a tip how to build a national identity in the multicultural and multinational community. But it is another subject...

Let us return, for a moment, to the irreplaceable Mickiewicz. It is he whom we owe determining another borderline, half mythical, half historic and cultural, on the Neman.

*The Niemen separates the
Lithuanians from their foes:
On one side temples' peaks shine*



In a forest nook of the former Ihumen district the Neman is a little stream meandering south-westwards.

*And forests sough, habitats of gods;
On the other side, on a hill, a cross
Stuck, the Germans' emblem,
hides its forehead in the sky,
Dangerous arms stretches
out towards Lithuania,
As if it wanted all the Palemon's lands
From above embrace and
gather thereunder.
Thus the Niemen, once famous
for hospitality,
Connecting sister-nations' possessions,
Now was to them just a
threshold of eternity;
And no one, without losing
his life or freedom,
Could cross the forbidden water.*

The beginning of Konrad Wallenrod is a description of a sort of clash of civilizations. On one side Christianity, on the other Paganism, the western civilization against the eastern idyllic life. This division is weird and may raise a number of controversies. Again the conflict is not real. We can understand the Poet's intentions, even without referring to the parabolic meanings of the whole Konrad Wallenrod. Suffice it to see the poem as the manifestation of sorrow after the loss, of

enormous nostalgia for the culture of the pagan tribes having lived the Neman forests, exterminated by the Teutonic Knights' Order. It will turn out that the clash between the Western and Eastern civilizations, or Christianity and Paganism, is not the point. It is rather an ancient conflict between civilization and culture on one side and nature on the other, and, on the highest level, the natural harmony of life and the artificial human order.

An idyll on the river of poetry

Humorously one may remark that some of Mickiewicz's verses could be placed on the standards of not only the supporters of the united Europe but also radical ecologists... And seriously speaking, Mickiewicz once again makes the Neman a symbol of an ancient idyll, the paradise lost, the river on whose waters feuds lose their energy and the whole nature seeks for a common harmony:

*Only a twig of Lithuanian hop,
Lured by the charm of a Prussian poplar,*

*Rambling on willows and
on water weed,
Bold, as once, stretches out her arms
And jumps over the river with
a pretty wreath,
On the foreign bank rejoins her lover.
Only nightingales of the Kaunas
oak woods,
With their brothers from the hill behind
the forest,
Conduct, as once, their Lithuanian
talks
Or, having sneaked with their free
feathers,
They are flying with a visit to common
islands.*

This part of Konrad Wallenrod as well as Pan Tadeusz and the whole image of the Neman created by Mickiewicz, must have found a faithful reader and admirer in the person of Eliza Orzeszkowa. The vision of the river in the novel *Nad Niemnem* (On the Niemen) seems a prosaic development, “painting out” into the cycle of single photographic shots of the Poet’s output. It is similar in its ideological layer. The Neman of Orzeszkowa is an enormous and tenacious river and, at the same time, calm and certain of her inexhaustible power: “reflecting in its waves the blue of the sky and the dark wood, the quiet and calm Neman flew.” The river feeds, is an object of love, but also hides its numerous secrets. Orzeszkowa is clearly fascinated not only with the natural beauty of the river, but also with its symbolic, or even magical, power. Besides, nobody who has ever dealt with the river has resisted its magic. Even down-to-earth and practical authors of guide-books seemed to give in to a poetic vein while in contact with the Neman and its surroundings. In *The Geographic Dictionary of the Kingdom*

of Poland and Other Slavic Lands, already cited, the Neman’s “wavy curves resemble a creeping snake with the raised head.” The authors are delighted by the water flowing “between picturesque high banks,” through “green meadows and forest hills,” whose slopes crown the villages and towns amphitheatrically located around, where one can see residues of fortified castles and graves of Lithuanian heroes.”

All those who would like to go on a trip on the Neman, can be recommended to read the description of such an expedition in “Dolinami Rzek” by Zygmunt Gloger. This little masterpiece is full of poetry (both in form of numerous quotations and the traveler’s remarks full of excitation), and, besides, is a ‘bandit’ book. Well, where can you find a tough adventure which commences with caulking a wooden boat with oakum and tar? The beginning of the expedition alone is full of impressions: “How poor our *czajka* (boat) in which we were about to trust our lives seemed to us now. It was 7 ells or 14 feet long, and 3 feet wide. Each of its sides consisted of just one one inch-thick board, 12 inches wide, and for a turn for the bottom a half-third of such board was used in the

middle. (...) What was the worst, the *czajka* after the repair, leaked to the same degree as before. (...) after bringing the things onto the *czajka*, Gustav’s entering thereon, and finally mine, our vessel immersed so deep that only four inches stayed from the water level to the side edges of the boat. However, I thought to myself, on these few weak boards we have to sail along the Neman for 40 miles of the water road (...) and to find room the expected trophies, excavations, minerals and what interesting God happens to let us find on this road.” Probably only canoeing trip may give a substitute of that of Gloger. To those who would like to try I recommend to read the diary of such a trip, at http://www.wuja.republika.pl/artykul_6.html. The title of the text is remarkable “*Rzeka Obojga Narodów - Niemen*” (The River of Both Nations: the Neman). We may contract it to “The River of Nations,” the river of the community of cultures, poetry and imagination; the river which flows through the territories of three different countries but also through the common spiritual heritage of the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Byelorussians and the Russians.

Jan Kowal



“I’m looking at the Danube and I see the Neman, I can see the other bank of the Neman misty with a mild sadness”

Ghosts and spectres of Podlasie

On exorcisms performed with a machine gun burst and mummies in the Podlasian pyramid

In one of the previous articles I mentioned a Supraśl ghost chased away with a machine gun burst. In letters from the Readers I found a lot of requests to tell the whole story.

So it was as follows...

A sprinkler and prayers against the ghost

Just after the Second World War had finished, one of the so-called wavers' houses in Supraśl became haunted. First something moaned in the chimney. Then it slammed the door. One could also hear some steps in the attic. In the middle of the night mocking laughter burst forth and a horrid curses were cast, interestingly, in Russian. But when the inhabitants climbed the loft, they did not see anybody there. In the meantime the mysterious sounds spread more and more frequently and louder and louder. The inhabitants of the house lost their will to live and could not sleep. They went to the priest for help.

The parson did not believe them initially, but after long persuasions he agreed to visit the haunted house. He brought holy water and a sprinkle. He ordered all the inhabitants to gather and tell a prayer aloud. Then he sprinkled all the nooks and that ill-fated attic. He prescribed frequent prayers, observing obligatory fasts and living in concord, love and peace.

That night no sounds could be heard from the attic. The inhabitants sighed with relief and, for the



Podlasie is a region full of various magic sources, spots of power, magic rocks and forest sacred spots

first time in many weeks, peacefully fell asleep.

Blasphemies and motor saw roar

During the first few days the people prayed solemnly and observed the fasts. However, man is not an angel and after some days they had an argument about a trifle. Not only did they quarrel but they used very unparliamentary words.

They did not wait long for effects. The same night a mocking laughter and blasphemies shouted out loudly. This was not all! The ghost, probably wanting to make up for the couple of silent days, included motor saw sounds in his repertoire!

What to do? It was not done to go to the priest again, since he had ordered to live in concord and peace. They, however, did not meet this condition. In addition to the haunting house, they could have

been pointed at from the pulpit and there would be a shame before the whole town. What to do?

And then somebody had an idea, that since the ghost uses Russian curses, it would be good to call a Russian so that he find out why the ghost was so mad. They did as they decided.

To curse the cursed with curses

At that time a Soviet military unit stationed in Supraśl. One of the soldiers was asked to visit the haunted house. He agreed. He listened carefully to the inhabitants' account and promised to chase the ghost away. As an award he demanded half a liter of hooch. The payment was delivered in advance. The soldier drank the vodka and waited for the supernatural forces' "show." Soon a laughter and loud curses could be heard from the attic. What was ex-

actly said then, the witnesses do not remember. But the soldier felt very insulted. He started up from the table and, red-faced, replied the ghost with a load of such obscenities that the flowers withered in the pots. After that he grabbed his machine gun and released a long burst over the ceiling.

The plaster and dust filled the whole room. The soldier swore once again and left slamming the door. Silence took over the house. And, they say, no laughter and no curses have been heard ever after. The ghost has left for ever.



Somewhere in Podlasie – one of the forest ranges

This story was once told to me by Mieczysław Czajkowski, the author of the wonderful book "Legends of Supraśl." (Legends of Supraśl). If he who likes stories about ghosts should definitely look in this book. There are more similar stories there: about the White Lady haunting one of the rooms of the former monastery of the Salesians of Don Bosco, and about a devil in the wardrobe, who scared a communist party lecturer, and about a hanged man, who stopped the mill. I do recommend this book.

A pyramidal legend or a miracle of nature?

Of course Podlasie cannot complain about the shortage of ghost stories. It is a region, more than the others, full of various magical sources, places of power, magical stones and forest sacred spots. It is here, even nowadays, that in many places diseases are still healed with whispering. It is here, that whisperers and medicine-men live. Not only that! We have even our own pyramid! The most genuine! With mummies inside!

It is the tomb of the von Fahrenheit family. And the stories attached to it are incredible. The tomb was built at the beginning of

the 19th century. The founder was Baron Friedrich von Fahrenheit, fascinated by the culture of the ancient Egypt.

The tomb was erected far from any buildings, probably at the place where some unusual force lines or earth radiation cross. Geomancers and dowsers can feel them.

Hardly had they finish building than the three-year-old daughter of the owner died. The local people whispered that it was the unusual tomb that demanded its first victim. From then the place was avoided. They say that during one of dinners poisonous mushrooms were served by mistake and one day the whole family moved from the palace to the tomb. The bodies were so poisoned that, instead of turning into dust, still preserve their natural appearance.

It is not true. The family of Baron von Fahrenheit did not die during one meal. What is true is that the bodies indeed, instead of decaying, became mummified.

During World War I the tomb fell victim of looters. The soldiers opened the coffins in search of precious things. The corpses of the

former owners were thrown outside. Soon a plague decimating cattle burst out. And somebody spread a gossip among the villagers that it was just those bodies of the people who died long ago, were wandering from village to village and suck blood out of everything living.

On the next day, the heads of all the bodies were cut off and placed at the feet, which is supposedly the best method to prevent the dead from visiting the living. During the next war, also those heads disappeared.

Wojciech Koronkiewicz

You may find out more about the pyramid from the article by Aldona Kowalewska "Pyramida von Fahrenheitów w Rapie" in the periodical "Czwarty wymiar."

You may also see the unusual construction yourself. It is in the place called Rapa, near Banie Mazurskie, just near the border with the Kaliningrad District. The pyramid is currently closed but the curious look in through a small window to see the residues of the coffins and the mummified bodies of the former owners of the property.

I was not courageous enough to peep the dead. What if one of the heads were not cut off properly?

Borderland Cuisine

Myth or reality?

The borderland cuisine! How many stories, myths and legends coloured with a note of nostalgia for paradise, and maybe for the lost youth it is! In numerous academic dissertations the problem of the Borderlands is considered on a few planes: historical, social and economic, or as a special symbolic space. I think the latter will be the most interesting while evaluating our national relation to borderland specialties. Probably it was affected by the opinion which was shaped by culture and arts. Especially those of the time of partitions, created “so as to cheer the hearts.” And our grandmothers and grandfathers’ tales worked too, through giving our imagination pictures, which would be hard to find today.

Idyllic borderlands

We treat both the Borderlands, as well as their cuisine, as a lost love. And this reaches deeper in our soul. A kind of myth arises, which is ruled by its own principles transforming our individual reception. This is how Zbigniew Opacki presents these questions in his collection of studies entitled “In the kitchen and at the table. Distances and penetration of cultures.”

In a symbolic dimension the mythology of the Borderlands as the land flowing with milk and honey, land of idyllic Arcadia, where a noblemen and then a landowner (read: a Pole) lives affluently, surrounded by respect and love from his subjects and then neighbours, younger brothers: the Lithuanians



and the Ruthenians, was shaped by Romantic literature. The mythologization of the geographic space came along with the mythologization of the social space, the Polish gentry. It was the Polish gentry who personified Polishness in collective imagination, and although their history is not the history of the whole people, in the conditions of the dominating social and ethnic order, their historical consciousness was the conveyor of the national memory. Political events

which resulted in changes in socio-ethnic situation of the gentry and the whole Polish community, the Borderlands shrinking and, subsequently, their ultimate loss, intensified the mythologization of this layer as well as the lost space. The both processes interfered and complemented each other. Especially emphatically this occurred on the pages of memoirs and diaries. Written mainly by representatives of well-to-do gentry of both genders, for their descendants and

often with a presumption that they would never be published, they reconstruct the world that passed with a higher or lower degree of realism, but almost always with a sentimental tear of idealism. They present the traditional lifestyle of the Borderland gentry, in which “the culture of table,” very rich and sophisticated, constituted its important part. The idealizing procedure, often unconscious, involved ignoring or belittling social tensions, not noticing the archaic form of being. On the other hand, it presented the idyllic life, brotherhood and the spirit of solidarism between the representatives of the same sphere, as well as in relations with “younger brethren.”

A kitchen smothered in the soot from peasants' stoves

To distinguish each national or regional cuisine one should assume some constitutive characteristics. The first is probably the cultural circle in which the culinary specials are created.

The very term Borderlands has changed in the stream of history, from the lands of the southern Ukraine through Vilnius and Lvov. Religion was also of great impor-



tance. Another factor characterizing the particular cuisines is the closed geographical area where the recipes are invented. And the third condition is the climate which specifies the products available in a particular cuisine.

If we extend these three conditions over the area from Samogitia through the Wild Fields, it is difficult to find and coherence between them. Although in pragmatics there would be a certain clarity, one “but” arises. Apart from this, as described above, idealized or, as we would say today, virtual national-borderland cuisine, there is also the cuisine which is very well set in reality. The cuisine lost in ancient noble manor houses and burghers' dining rooms. The kitchen smothered in soot of peasants' stoves. Perhaps not as clear as national cuisines, but real. It is enough to

scrutinize the cultures of particular peoples who built them. And sometimes it results from intuition and a Borderland soul.

Palatal bliss...

How important was food in the old Polish tradition is seen in the fact that Zbigniew Kuchowicz opens his book “Obyczaje staropolskie w XVII i XVIII wieku” (Old Polish Customs in the 17th and 18th centuries) with the cuisine. Our ancestors placed the greatest pleasures they desired in the sensual sphere. And what could be more available than the pleasures of the table?

Unfortunately, not everybody was given to use these pleasures so much. Simply, there was not enough food for everyone. The table abundantly set was at that time the tes-

timony of wealth and social status. Not quality but quantity proved the value of food. A little amount of protein resulted from climatic conditions, especially in Lithuania and Samogitia. Therefore, the rule was copious portions and higher frequency of meals consumed.

Poorer classes could afford to gorge only during festivals. Especially Easter was very attractive. But there were also other methods of satisfying appetites. Well, maybe at least “virtually,” because the plebeian literature is full of descriptions of heaps of meat, sausages and pork fat. It may be count among curiosities that women accused of witchcraft did not talk willingly about their collusions with the Devil but told colourfully about parties held on Łysa Góra (Bald Mountain).

...of the poor and the rich

Zbigniew Kuchowicz divides the ancient cuisine into five categories, between which there were colossal differences. He writes straight about different cuisines. And so they follow:

- poor cuisine of landless peasants and urban paupers
- basic cuisine, to which he counted moderately rich peasants, servants, poorer groups of urban population and lesser nobility
- middle cuisine dominating among affluent peasants, manorial servants, middle class urban population and poorer nobility
- lordly cuisine of affluent nobility, some inhabitants of big cities, higher clergymen and professionals (e.g. physicians)
- court cuisine of church and secular oligarchy and, of course, royal courts



With the course of time the peasant class became dramatically poorer and practically one could find just one cuisine, the peasant cuisine.

The Borderland cuisine drew the most patterns from the two above mentioned types: the middle cuisine and the lordly cuisine. This resulted from a few reasons. The lordly and court cuisine were the most prone to Italian and French influences, which affected significantly the shape of the Polish cuisine. The middle cuisine embraced with its range foremost small noble manor houses. The Sarmatic model popular with the nobility blocked effectively an access of the French or Italian cuisines to the kitchen. This helped to preserve ancient recipes and customs. The basic cuisine, be-

cause of its relative modesty, was perhaps a specific conveyor belt transporting the culinary models of other countries to its own soil, as well as the treasure from which the Lithuanians, the Russians, the Byelorussians and the Ukrainians derived their ideas.

At the end of this cycle it is a good idea to solve the hypothesis posed at the beginning of the article: whether the Borderland Cuisine is just a product of culture or the actual culinary fascination of the Polish, which has been erased by the winds of history?

Everyone should find his/her own answer to this question. And one may find it in old home recipes or in stories told during festive or family delicious feasts, which I wish to you and myself.

Andrzej Fiedoruk