**Poland and I**

(Autobiographical essay)

Poland and I…

It is a strange expression, because, in fact, I have never been in Poland.

Neither in childhood, nor in adolescence.

Neither in the youth, nor in the current years.

Never.

However, was Poland far away from me during all these years? – That is the question.

So how can I answer it? - “No, She was not”? or, maybe…

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I have never been in Poland in my childhood.

Nevertheless, I knew She was not far away from me…

*“Nasz rodowód, nasz początek…”(*“Our origins, our beginning*”)[[1]](#footnote-2)*

…She invisibly came to Russia with the family of *szlachcic* [[2]](#footnote-3) Baranowsky, who was my great-great-grandfather, exiled to South Siberia with his wife and four-year-old son in 1880-s.

Her wife, who was my great-great-grandmother, had lived in the exile not very long time and stayed forever in the ground of Siberia then.

His son Józef Baranowsky, who was my great grandfather, connected his life with Russia. His daughter Olga was born here in 1921.

Here too, they were forced to flee secretly from their villages to escape from “*dekulakization*”[[3]](#footnote-4) in 1930-s.

Lake Baikal...

East Siberia...

Far East...

The coast of the Pacific ocean**…**

Really *“…los nieznany rozsypywał nas po kątach”(* …the unknown fate scattered us over the corner*…)[[4]](#footnote-5),*

Here too, in the Far East Olga married my grandfather who worked as military doctor, and she adopted the surname of her husband.

His name was Roman Kaczyński.

And from my early childhood I knew firmly, that surnames of my ancestors, Baranowsky and Kaczyński, are of Polish origin.

…The many years had passed. All of us speak Russian in our family. But sometimes in a speech of my grandmother Olga instead of “*zabyla*”[[5]](#footnote-6) sounded “*zapamiatowała*”[[6]](#footnote-7) and instead of “*Ne nado shalit’*”[[7]](#footnote-8) sounded “ *Nie nado szkodzit’*”[[8]](#footnote-9)

… And what delicious *pierogi[[9]](#footnote-10)* she cooked ! (By the way, perhaps, she was the only who can cook this meal in the village where she lived later. Because it is not quite typical dish in the Russian province. )

I know, these are just a crumbs, but these are crumbs of that Poland, from where my ancestors arrived 125 years ago.

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I have never been in Poland in the years of my adolescence.

Nevertheless, when I once had visited Lvov, She was next to me again.

She was embodied in buildings of John Casimir University and of the Lvov Opera, in the architectural ensemble of Market Square and in the stone poems of Potocki Palace and ofLubomirski Palace.

She wordlessly watched me by the eye sockets of windows of Latin Cathedral and of Dominican church.

“*Serdecznie przywitamy… dobrze, że pan przyjechał*”[[10]](#footnote-11) - She whispered me by the leaves of trees in the High Castle Park and in the Kościuszko park.

And since then up to the present day She lives in my memories connected with the city.

*“Więc gdybym miał kiedyś urodzić się znów,Tylko we Lwowi….”(* Ah, if once again I could be born, Only in Lvov!*)[[11]](#footnote-12)*

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I have never been in Poland in the days of my youth.

Nevertheless, She came to me again from the book pages.

Where I experienced the fury of medieval battles and being enchanted peered into the patterns of Polish history together with the heroes of Sienkiewicz’s Trilogy.

Where I anxiously watched the fate of professor Rafal Wilczur and laughed at the career of Nicodemus Dyzma together with Dołęga-Mostowicz.

Where for the first time, stumbling over every word and glancing in the dictionary, I had made an attempt to read in the original the poem “*Pan Tadeusz”*. (The attempt was failed and I had read it in translation. But it is never too late to try again ☺)

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I have never been in Poland in the current years.

Nevertheless, She was next to me.

She looked at me from the pages of textbooks of the Polish language.

She looked at me from reproductions of noble coats of arms, when I worked on compiling the genealogy of our family...

She looked at me with the Internet-pages, where I could see a photo of Polish cities, listen to Polish songs, watch Polish films.

And I am pleased to know that today it is only a matter of time to come as a tourist to Poland.

To the country where no one of our family has not been for 125 years .

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However, was Poland far away from me during all these years? – That is the question.

Perhaps, now I know, how to answer it correctly…

1. ## Fragment from the famous Polish song” Żeby Polska była Polską” (“So that Poland would be Poland”)

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. *Szlachcic* – a noble man (in Poland) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. *Dekulakization* - the Soviet campaign of dispossession of millions of the better-off peasants and their families in 1929-1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Fragment from the famous Polish song” Żeby Polska była Polską” (“So that Poland would be Poland”) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. zabyla - “I have forgotten” (in Russian) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. zapamiatowała (more exactly – “zapomniała*”*) - “I have forgotten” (in Polish) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ne nado shalit’ - “Don’t misbehave” (in Russian) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. szkodzit’ (more exactly – “szkodzić*”*) - “to harm” (in Polish) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Pierogi – the kind of dumplings, Polish national dish [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. “Warmly welcome… it's good that you came” (in Polish) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Fragment from a famous Polish song “*Tylko we Lwowi*”(“ Only in Lvov”) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)