

JAN KOZMIAN (1896-1975) from Wierzchowiska

Fragments of Memories

(Edited and translated by Elisabeth Kozmian-Ledward, his only child,
with some brief notes about Polish history)

KOZMIAN' S coat of arms is Nałęcz.



PART ONE

I was born in Zaraszów, our father's estate, in January 1896. Zaraszów was part of the Gałęzów estate, the seat of our family, for almost 300 years. The manor house consisted of a wooden part centuries' old, and a new two-story brick annex. Our house was surrounded by a beautiful park full of old lime trees, larches and hornbeams.

In those distant times, Zaraszów was located in an area remote from all communication, the nearest road was 20 km away, and to the railway station in Lublin it was as much as 30 km. When the time of thaw came, or more rainfall, the roads became impassable and all communication ceased. Our life carried on in the circle of the closest neighbours and some representatives of the intelligentsia from the closest small town Bychawa; we were cut off from the world at large.

My childhood with our group of 6 siblings was full of carefree happiness and health. Our group of children loved visiting our grandmother Marie Kozmian, née Rzedkowska - in Galezów itself (parish Bychawa), and the seat of Koźmian family for hundreds of years.

All six of us used to set off in a small carriage pulled by grey ponies, sitting in one seat together with our pug Nero. The moment our grandmother's housekeeper saw our carriage approaching the manor house, huge panic always arose! - All the poultry were herded away - to protect them from arrows and slings of my older brothers. We would run into the porch with wild screams - to sit down straight away to a delicious tea party prepared by the housekeeper, called ' little missy'. There was Everything! - coffee with cream in lovely clay jags , freshly made bread, a variety of shortbread cookies, fruit cheeses and jams – all home-made in those days, and various fruit...all that was devoured in no time, and we waited for more! ...

Grandmother sat in a Voltaire style (French philosopher's) large armchair telling us stories from the old days: about beautiful parades in elegant Saski Square in Warsaw, about the colourful impressive appearance of the national Polish army, about the terrifying Russian Grand Duke Konstanty, who froze people with his wild eyes ... (all of Poland was occupied in the 19th century by Russia, Prussia and Austria). During these stories my grandmother, always dressed in black, was not wasting time, her hands were busy with needlework for the church .Deeply religious in spirit she also worshiped God with the work of her hands...

One of her actual experiences during the tragic times of the 1863 Uprising (to liberate Poland) remains in my memory:

Near Gałęzów there was a battle known as at Batorz, where a strong unit of insurgents faced a much stronger group of Russian troops, who were armed with a large number of cannons. The roar of the cannons was clearly heard in Galezów. The householders prayed in front of the house's small altar, begging Our Lady for victory for the Poles. After the day long battle, the Russian superiority of weapons and numbers of men caused a defeat and scattering of the fighting Poles. Towards the evening, a dozen or so armed insurgents run up to the manor. Their uniforms were in rags, their faces black from gunpowder, and their eyes showed despair and fear. They begged to hide them. Grandmother told them to hide in the sheep shed and to lie among the sheep. There was no other way, so although such a deed could have ended tragically for the inhabitants of Galezów, patriotism and pity won. The soldier's grabbed quickly offered foods and, blessing the whole household, quickly went to the sheep shed. It was high time.

A moment later a unit of Cossacks appeared at a gallop, followed by infantry. A senior officer stood in front of the porch on horseback, and gave the order that the owner of the manor should stand before him. When he saw a woman dressed all in black, who was leading by hand her two young sons, Wick and Władzio, he declared that he was informed that insurgents were hiding there. Dressed in a colourful, richly decorated with gold uniform and a large Mikołajewski cloak (in the style of Emperor Nicholas) with a scarlet lining, he ordered in a stern voice to show him the place of hiding of the insurgents. He also stated that if his people found the refugees, the whole farm and the manor would be set alight, and the inhabitants driven out! The horror of the situation was intensified by the red glare of a burning village nearby, the red sky, and the wild bearded faces of the Cossacks sitting on small hairy horses.

The desperate woman, sobbing, denied the presence of any insurgents. The officer changed his tone ... maybe the sobbing children reminded him of his own ... maybe deep down he was an honest man only carrying out higher orders ... After a while he said: "Since there are no insurgents here, I will abandon the search and leave the house and property alone, if you swear - in front of your God, on the heads of these innocent children, that there are no insurgents here!" So grandmother put her hands on the children's heads and made the oath. The officer thanked her in perfect French (the elegant language of upper classes in Europe at that time - ek), then he bowed low and galloped away from the porch, followed by the wild Cossacks. The Polish Matron, in the person of my grandmother, could not forgive herself this perjury (false oath) - until her last days. And she wasn't sure if God would ever forgive her that sin.

As for the Uprising- Galezow's female neighbours and cousins took an active part in it, as couriers delivering weapons, food and orders, and as nurses. Adult property owners did not take an active part, fearing not only death on the gallows, but also the confiscation of Polish lands which would be handed over to Russian generals. These were the orders of the secret National Government anyway. At the same time however - secret meetings of insurrection commanders were often held in the gentry's manor houses. And young people from the gentry, from the town's intelligentsia, craftspeople, priests, office workers – actively took part in the Uprising. But the peasants, charmed by false promises of the tsar 'Batiuszka' ('our daddy' in Russian) to give them land, favoured the insurgents only in rare cases, and more often helped the Russian authorities. Politicians of the National Government did not clearly support the demands of the peasants ... that was probably a strong part of the tragedy of the fall of the Uprising (if the peasantry had joined victory may have been possible).

Gałęzów was administered by my father Wincenty Kozmian's cousin, Jan Koźmian, called 'Samowar' because of his obesity - he was a type of personality hardly met later on - he danced brilliantly and lightly despite his weight, he was also distinguished by sharp wit and cleverness, despite the lack of higher education; 'He did not; pour his drink behind his collar' (Polish expression meaning 'enjoying your drink'), was a passionate hunter, but he didn't shoot well. He was a brilliant storyteller though a bit over the top. We children we loved him very much.

Our uncle, another Jan, but from Wierzchowiska, my godfather, often visited us in Zaraszów. He was a handsome bachelor with a refined appearance and a cheerful disposition. Sometimes he would arrive on horseback. It was

exciting for us children when he brought a leg of deer or roast wild boar- an unknown animal in our part. This uncle was a very wealthy man - he bought another property, Bystrzejowice, adding that to Wierzchowiska which was inherited from his father. His farming of these estates was not exemplary, despite the fact that Jan graduated from the agricultural faculty in Halle. But his management was economical and his lifestyle not wasteful so he did not diminish his fortune. This seemingly strong and healthy man died early - at the age of 49! - After an unforeseen operation.

He left this world in December 1901 - and gave all his fortune to me! I was then only 6 years old and I became the owner of a large, beautiful estate (over 1,600 hectares). According to his will, the administration of Wierzchowiska was to be by my father - until I came of age.

We left Zaraszów forever (it was sold to Mr. Konstanty Przewłocki) and we settled in that new, beautiful seat. But first we lived in Lublin for 2 years, the older siblings went to school there and a nanny took me to the Saski Garden. Later, as the road from Wierzchowiska is only 16 km - my siblings went to schools in Lublin (historical capital of the county with a neo-gothic castle on the hill, where a medieval church has well preserved wall paintings inside; many old houses, two city gates; some influences of oriental architecture as it was on the trading route to Lwów then the East! (Lublin's county Jewish inhabitants were killed in the concentration camp nearby during WW2, their part of the city destroyed)

My eldest sister Maria died of tuberculosis at the age of 24, - unfortunately the treatments in Switzerland did not help; brother Andrzej unexpectedly had haemorrhages, but fortunately was cured in Switzerland; brother Henryk was treated in Zakopane; and I started to fever. At that time, no cures for tuberculosis had yet been invented. So for 6 winters I went with my parents to Menton on the Mediterranean Coast, where I completely recovered and developed there my interests in travelling and the sea. The income from Wierzchowiska saved all siblings, apart from Maria, because our parents could afford the expense of the entire family's stays abroad.

Families who could afford that sent their children to be educated in Galicia where education was in the Polish language, so my brothers were sent to Krakow, and me in 1906. We were so called 'Privatists' – we studied at home with tutors and once a year took exams in Krakow to move to next class. This system had a negative side because there was not much contact with children of the same age, and not much experience of socialising. The positive side was healthy living in the countryside, and getting fit and strong with various sports. My two good home tutors helped with my favourite subjects: history, geography, and French and German languages – I had no problems and was really very good. But mathematics, geometry, physics and chemistry were a real problem for me and I had to study additionally during summer holidays. My sisters were sent to boarding schools in Dresden.

Our peers from the neighbourhood visited us frequently, we enjoyed tennis competitions, horse chase of foxes and target shooting. Our neighbours at that time included the families of Bieliński, Florkowski, Grodzicki, Kisielnicki, Michalski, Rułkowski, Rzewuski, Wybranowskie and Scypio-del-Campo (this family supposedly descended from an Italian courtier of Italian Queen Bona who came from Bari; we are still friends now).

In 1910, my older brothers, after passing their high school exams, left for Dresden, where they entered the Polytechnic. I went to Vienna to study agriculture, unfortunately that was interrupted during the World War One and later due to the revolution in Austria.

KOZMIANS DE RZECZYCA. FAMILY HISTORY AND OUTSTANDING PEOPLE.

In the land records of the administrative district there is an entry stating that at the end of the 15th century, two brothers, Andrzej and Alojzy, owned the great estates of Trzydnik and Rzeszyca - hence the nickname de Rzeszyca. The coat of arms and surname, perhaps from Koźmin, indicate the origin of the family from Wielkopolska. During the reign of King Jan Olbrycht, the knighthood of the Republic of Poland, led by this king, took to the war with Turkey in 1492. The Koźmian brothers, at the head of a troop composed of the nobility of Lublin, took part in the

fighters as leaders of county gentry. Around 1650 appears as the owner of the Old Village - a Jakub Kozmian married to Łuszczewska; then Andrzej married with Maliszewska and Józef with Dowgiałłówna, and then - my great-grandfather Andrzej Alojzy.

This Andrzej distinguished himself with brilliant education he acquired at the Lublin bar. His good social manners, intelligence and beauty made him very attractive to Anna Skarbek Kielczewska, descendant of the old Skarbek family of the Abdank from Mountains coat of arms. She chose to marry Andrzej who then became her partner in the ownership of the great fortune that she inherited from her father and two childless uncles - as an only child. Anna's great-grandfather became famous due to his good fight in the Battle of Grunwald (battle which defeated the cruel Teutonic Knights. This famous crucial battle is depicted on the huge historical painting by Jan Matejko – displayed in the National Museum in Warsaw). Unfortunately, his bloody temper led him to hurt a priest during a Corpus Christi procession ... and horrendous act led to Skarbek being subjected to a curse by the Church. And as a penitent he made a pilgrimage to Rome on foot to beg the Pope to forgive him the crime, which The Pope made the condition that he would build a new church in Kielczewice, so he changed his name to Kielczewski. The line of the Skarbeks from Góra Kielczewska died out in the 18th century, and the only heiress Anna married Andrzej Alojzy Koźmian.

Andrzej became heir of many estates and villages in the Lublin and administrative districts. He was elected a judge of the Lublin and Piotrkowski Tribunals (whoever is curious about the office of this tribunal passing sentences for the entire Republic of Poland, I can refer them to the diaries of Kajetan Koźmian), he won the favour of King Stanisław August Poniatowski (the last king of independent Poland – ek) and was awarded the orders and ribbons of St. Stanisław and of the White Eagle; I had in my collection the king's handwritten letters addressed to my ancestor, some with invitations to the famous Thursday dinners in Łazienki. (unfortunately this and most Kozmian family papers were destroyed in Warsaw during WW2)

The young couple settled in Galezów. The old manor house was built at the beginning of the 17th century, it stood among old lime trees, larches and poplar trees on a steep hill, and in the wild parts there were various classical style statues, and large seats. This manor was later sold to a related family of Przewłocki in 1908. The Andrzej had four sons and two daughters.

Wincenty, my great-grandfather inherited Galezow, Kajetan settled in the old castle in Bystrzyca and later in Piotrkowice, Józef the bishop Kujawsko-Kaliski lived in Kalisz or Warsaw, and the youngest Jan in Wronów.

Andrzej lost his life at the age of 52 in 1802 while hunting with hounds, his horse suddenly collapsed at a gallop and the rider, having broken his vertebrae - died on the spot...

Kajetan Koźmian from an early age showed great talent in the field of literature, including political writing. Later in life he shone as one of the most famous classics of his time and as a politician. In his youth, he often stayed at the court of Count Czartoryski in Puławy - at the old Duke Adam. (Czartoryski were very important in the Polish émigré fight for freedom centre in Paris – a famous aristocratic family with contributions to culture - ek). During the uprising under the leadership of Tadeusz Kościuszko in 1794, Kajetan performed the function of Kościuszko's agent in the Lublin area, he also proclaimed the principles of the May 3rd Constitution which proposed the equalisation of all social groups, and the enfranchisement of peasants. When, in 1809 the uhlans of Count Józef Poniatowski liberated Lublin - Kajetan welcomed Count Józef, with his famous 'Ode to Napoleon's Eagles', and was then appointed to the authorities of the Duchy of Warsaw, where he served as state counsellor and then minister. (Napoleon promised to give Poland freedom; he manage only to create a Duchy of Warsaw).

After the fall of Napoleon, Kajetan withdrew to the quiet countryside ... he wrote his great epic poem 'Landed gentry'; it was his time of intense work in the literary field. In the Congress Kingdom, he took a seat in the government as a castellan.

In the November 1830 Uprising out of the young Koźmians, five joined the ranks: Wincenty's sons - Henryk (my grandfather) and Aleksander joined the Horse Riflemen as lieutenants, and the sons of Jan of Wronów, Stanisław, Adam and Jan, chose the Uhlan' colours. All the youth from noble families fought, alongside the city folk, ... unfortunately the mistakes of politicians did not encourage rural people to join the uprising..., they were not given a specific promise of release from serfdom ... The victorious battles went to waste and the uprising collapsed.

Andrzej Edward (1808-1864) son of famous Kajetan completed his studies at the Sorbonne after 1830; later for a few years he moved to the large estate of his wife Skrzynska née - Dobrochów, located in the Sub Carpathian region in Galicia where he could live as an emigrant(that was not allowed in the Russian occupied part). When Stanislaw and Maria his children grew up - Andrzej moved to Paris, where he lived until 1864 and devoted himself to literature, art and politics.

He had brilliant relations with the elite of the Parisian society and often visited political salons. He was friends with the poet Zygmunt Krasiński, often met Chopin and sometimes visited Adam Mickiewicz the Romantic bard; he was friends with Aleksander Walewski, son of Napoleon the First and Polish Pani Walewska, also with the house of the Czartoryski family. Andrzej was a sincere patriot - his thoughts were how best to dispose favourably the emperor to the Polish cause - through the influence of Walewski. Napoleon II, a man of brilliant intelligence and a skilful politician, did not distinguish himself however with a constancy of his intentions. As one of the winners of the Crimean War, he was not friendly with Russia, and brought the Polish issue to the international forum demanding its independence. He excited the minds of emigrants and also of patriots living in Poland and their feverish minds believed firmly - in the help of Western powers, especially of the government of Napoleon II. But when the Uprising broke out, Napoleon II did not keep any of his promises and did nothing for Poland.

Andrzej devastated by the defeat of Poland and the bankruptcy of his efforts - re turned to Dobrzechów and died a few months later. His son Stanislaw, already an adult, took over the management of the Dobrzechów estate. He was against of the Uprising - considered it madness to attack the might of Russia - and later explained his reasons in the book 'The Year 1863'. Andrzej Edward left behind letters written to the family from 1831 to 1863, later published in print - as many as 1,500 pages; these letters give an interesting picture of Paris- from the reign of Louis Philippe, then the Second Republic and the Second Empire; he wrote about arts, politics, social life, and to famous people.

Stanislaw Koźmian 'Krakowski' ('of Cracow') (1836-1922) - son of Andrzej Edward and grandson of Kajetan, after studying at the Sorbonne settled in Kraków. He was not interested in agriculture at all, so the estate inherited from his father, Dobrzechow he gave up to his sister, Countess Michałowska - and devoted himself completely to journalism, politics and art. He wrote many political articles and critical writing. He was one of the leaders of the conservative party 'Stańczyk'. His work 'About 1863', was characterized by realism and was a critique of the Uprising in the Russia' occupied area - which, in his opinion, could only worsen the situation of Poles. On the other hand, his father, Andrzej Edward, supported the project of the Uprising when in Paris - and sought support and help for Poles at the court of Napoleon III.

Stanislaw took over the management of the 'Stary' (Old) theatre in Krakow where he worked for many years. Under his management many future famous actors, such as Ludwik Solski took their first steps on the stage. (he staged the brilliant and patriotic plays by Stanislaw Wyspiański most famous for his artworks – ek; Stanislaw was an important reformer of theatrical arts, still recognised now). In later years, he settled in Vienna, where he was in a close relationship with an actress, Mrs. Hoffman, with whom he had a son ... he also had a grandson in his old age (we do not know anything, sadly, about the son or the grandson).

My (Jan's) grandfather, Henryk Koźmian (1808-1863), wrote a diary from the period 1830-31 and from his exile - I had the manuscript of this diary - but unfortunately it was lost during the conflagration in Second World War. I remember a few excerpts from the stories his wife my grandmother was telling:

The winter of 1831 for exceptionally cold and snowy, very painful for the travelling exiles (because of the failed Uprising – ek). At last they arrived in Wologda, capital of the province of the same name. Dozens of exiles were sent to that city, whilst others were scattered throughout eastern Russia and Siberia, and were placed in town dwellers or peasant houses. The officers were separated from soldiers - these were then often included in the tsarist army. The exiles were obliged to report to the gendarmerie office every day, but otherwise they could engage in various jobs for money and spend their time at their will.

As my grandfather recalled, the winter was cruel and the frost reached minus 40 degrees, so the young men spent their days and evenings indoors, not leaving the warm rooms. Their distant and unhappy homeland was remembered, military and patriotic songs were sung ... Henryk was a handsome and slender young man with good manners – and he drew the attention of a local governor who turned out to be a good man. On learning that Henryk was fluent in French and played the piano, he employed him as a teacher to his adolescent daughters. Henryk was treated by that Russian family as someone close, and no word was ever uttered that could offend his Polish dignity; he was not treated as an exile. In his spare time, a passionate hunter, Henryk hunted in the forests surrounding Wologda. These enormous forests gave the opportunity to come across - bear, lynx, elk, and he shot numerous white-tailed hares near the town - these he gave away to his colleagues. After three years of exile, Tsar Nicholas deigned to issue a partial amnesty.

Henryk found his father still alive at his home of Galezów, and his mother, née Kicińska. Eventually he became the heir of Galezów with adjoining properties, took Czyżewska from Czarnogóra as his wife and they had two daughters, later Mrs. Krzymuska and Fisherowa. This happy marriage suffered a terrible blow - death unexpectedly wrenched his beloved wife from among the living - Henry turned grey overnight. Several years have passed and he met Miss Marie Rzedkowska from Jeziorko, a person of virtue and beauty. Love bloomed soon; the wedding was in 1855. Soon the young couple had two sons - my father Wincenty and his brother Władysław.

I can still see in my mind those beautiful moments when Henryk's wife, our grandmother, whom we often visited as children, told us stories from the old days - sitting in her large Voltaire style armchair.

Henryk's heart condition got worse hearing about the upcoming Uprising, from which he did not expect anything good for Poland. He was sitting in this very armchair, when the news that the Uprising started was brought by a horse messenger to Galezów from a neighbouring estate. After he read that letter Henry's heart could not withstand it - and he died instantly!

The uprising was ended soon anyway, and national mourning engulfed almost the entire society. Universities and schools where Polish was the language of instruction were closed; the former name 'Kingdom of Poland' (the area occupied by Russia which had some independence – ek) was changed to 'Przywiślański Kraj' (land near Vistula river). Galezów in the hands of our grandmother, with the help of kind neighbours, survived these hard times. Years later - there was even a big improvement in agriculture, and during the war with Turkey, grain prices soared so much that Galezów could give Kozmian sons a good upbringing and education.

Our father Wincenty married Irena Krzymuska from Wierzbie in Kujawy. My parents lived in Zaraszów and all my siblings were born there, a small crowd of six. I was the youngest, born in 1896.

I was 5 years old in 1901 when Uncle Jan Koźmian, my godfather, left this world at a young age, after a short illness. He was a bachelor and in his will he gave me his entire property, estate, manor house and animals. My father Wincenty became the administrator in accordance with the will - until I came of age. Our whole family lived in the large manor house recently built by my uncle.

Our father was a good farmer and administrator, so he raised the value of the farm in quite a modern way - both in the cultivation of fields and in the construction of various farm buildings, mostly using iron beams. He also created a small plantation of hops, which turned out to be a source of large income.