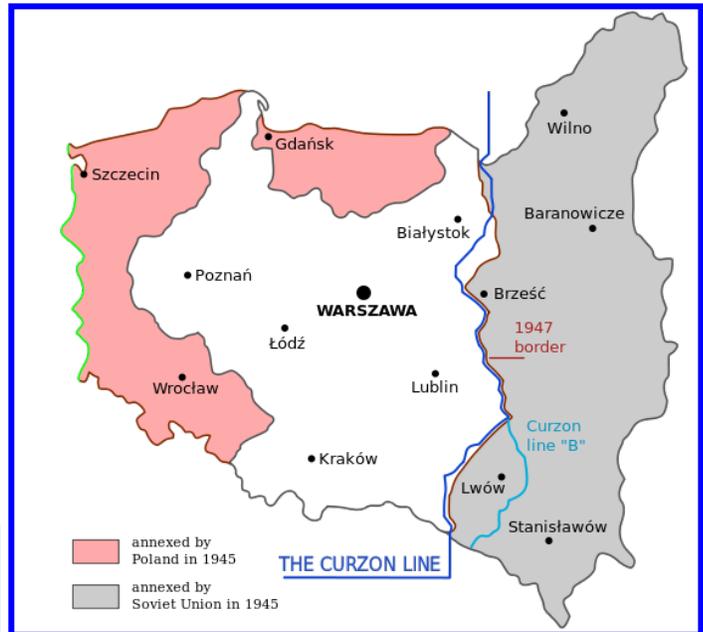


Introduction

In 2009, we made a trip to meet newly found cousins in Poland after a 10-year search through genealogical sources. They lived in a small rural community in west-central Poland. The name of the town: Kożuchów, Nowa Sól County, Lubuskie Province.

Under normal circumstances, an initial visit to any new place should not make an instant impact on a visitor. The newness, the novelty, the expectations of things "different" take some time to leave an enduring dent on one's perception. Yet, our first reaction to Kożuchów was unexpected ... even before we were introduced to its uniqueness. There was something medieval about this settlement ... something dated, exceptional, and compelling. We sensed that this place had a story to tell us and that we would not be satisfied until we got to understand its history.

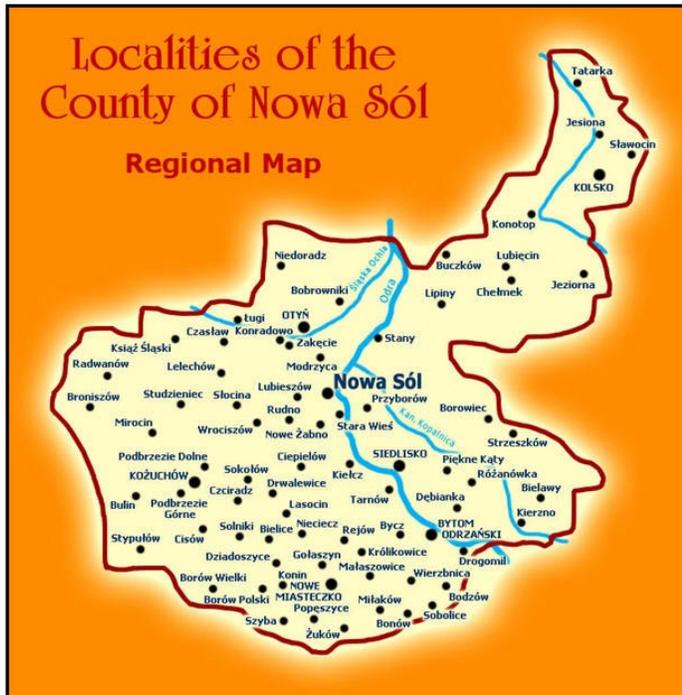
For students of history, one must understand that at the conclusion of World War II, the victorious Allies played loose in carving up Poland ... for one, to placate the Soviet Union and then to punish Germany. Following the decisions made at the Potsdam Conference of 1945, at the insistence of the Soviet Union, Poland's borders were redrawn. The eastern Polish territories, which the Soviet Union had occupied in 1939, were permanently annexed, and most of their Polish inhabitants expelled. Today, these territories are part of Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania. The line that formed this annexation was called "The Curzon Line" (right, blue line).



As a compromise, Poland received the Free City of Danzig and all former German territory east of the "Oder-Neisse Line" (left, yellow), consisting of the southern two-thirds of East Prussia and most of Pomerania, Neumark (East Brandenburg), and Silesia. The German population was forcibly expelled before these "recovered territories" were repopulated with Poles from central Poland and those expelled from the eastern regions. Area Königsberg was lost to the Soviet Union.

Before 1945, because Kożuchów lay in former German territory, its history to Poles was of no interest and inconsequential. What was lost in Poland's eastern annexation by the Soviet Union now became historically moot and likewise of no

further interest to present day Poles. This dilemma of newly-acquired western land's history was pronounced in that, from 1945 onward, Poland had to discover, from scratch, precisely what it acquired and document its past so that those people living there could understand their inheritance.



Because our cousins lived in a historically rich region (Lubuskie Province) we were immensely drawn to the Nowa Sól County (left) immediate environs. And because our brief exposure to this area was the village (wies) of Kozuchów we elected to learn as much as practical about its past in our limited time there. Researching material at the *Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna* (The Public Library) in Nowa Sól for the historical background of over 80 towns and villages of the Nowa Sól area, our intention was to sift through the history of urban and rural districts until 1945 and to develop a chronological framework based on the availability of factual material. Unfortunately, in the postwar years, attention has been focused mostly on urban areas. This cannot be said for anything rural. However, what we found provided a comprehensive outline of the history of these villages that in many cases are very scarce. It is interesting that many of the villages within this

region, despite their rich history, were never discussed in the past, with the exception of the work of A. Foerster's *Geschichtliches des von der Dorfen Grünberger Kreis* (published in 1905), devoted principally to the history of pre-war rural district of (nearby) county of Zielona Góra. The main sources that we encountered in the preparation of what will follow were registers of documents presented in the monumental work of *Codex diplomaticus Silesiae* publication, pre-war German histories, post-war regional development, and the materials the *State Service for Protection of Monuments* in Zielona Góra. Helpful materials were also presented in the prewar and postwar local newspapers, archival photos and historic art, publications, and statistical information (eg: *Adressbuch*) and cartographic sources.

At first exploration, Kozuchów was unremarkable. In some manner, it was contemporary in the face it presented to the visitor ... normal public buildings, shopping, transportation, venues for dining, and the compulsory public parks and places for leisure. Beneath this façade of conformance to expectations, Kozuchów displayed, although in a subtle yet uncompromising way, it's very uniqueness. The town plan, its streets and buildings, was devoid of any sense of order. Whereas most recent towns were laid out according to an orderly and logical plan, Kozuchów was archaic and seemed haphazard. The architecture was antiquated, mostly crumbling, lacking the most minimal upkeep to retain its former magnificence, and on the verge of becoming a blemish. That was the first impression. However, given time to absorb the town's landscape, it became obvious that there was more than met the eye.

As described above, Kozuchów and its environs only became part of Poland after the end of the Second World War and this region, called Silesia, was annexed from Germany. This shift in "ownership" did nothing to change or alter the character of the land and its towns ... they still maintained the history of their bygone, and often glorious, days. And this history, never forgotten and only now exploited, is what prompted us to get to know Kozuchów in all of its nuances. More than the town itself, the region beckoned us to learn as much as practical of its roots, its beginnings, and its evolution through the centuries and how its present makeup is the result of its storied history ... to understand what it is today based on what it was yesterday.

On our initial foray to the lands of Koźuchów we visited three historic communities that formed the nucleus of our interest. Because of our personal and intimate contact with these enclaves, we yearned to understand precisely their detailed history. The result of our interest is reflected in the following synopsis which consumed our time since 2009.

Although it is not of academic value, our précis is worthy of review. In a nutshell, it compares what we experienced in 2009 with what we learned of its past. That comparison should give the reader a balanced view of the towns and this region. We trust that its reading will bestow a greater awareness of the many historic places in Poland.

Edward F. Rozyłowicz, June 2011

NOTE:

Lubuskie County Map: *Miejscowości Powiatu Nowosolskiego* – Localities of the County of Nowa Sól,
Muzeum Miejskie w Nowej Soli – City Museum of Nowa Sól

Curzon Line Image: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Curzon_line_en.svg

Oder-NeisseLine Image: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oder-neisse.gif>

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