

Bucharest City Center – at Night! ... After departing the café we began a long and circuitous walk through the City Center. Bucharest is beautiful at night. The wide avenues with their wide sidewalks are made for walking. People everywhere ... parks full of young people, benches occupied by the old, quietness and the urban din is down and the stroll to Parliament Square is enjoyable. A film crew is filming a commercial of sorts ... the crowd is enjoying the ruckus, we proceed down the avenue in conversation. Finding a taxi takes time but we are finally headed back to the flat. Laurentiu drops me off ... then takes a trolley back home, 15 minutes away. Tomorrow – we leave for Ukraine. We hope for a good night's rest – if only the dogs would shut up.

The road that leads “back home”! ... Bags are packed, breakfast finished, goodbyes in order ... we start our trek to the North. With the typical Bucharest morning rush in full swing, Cristi is elected to drive through the city to a location just outside of Bucharest where, with one final check of the ARO, the car is handed over to us. Cristi takes the bus back to town ... we are left on our own. Time 9:30AM. One glance in the side view mirror, we pull onto the main road, start shifting gears with reckless abandon, speed up to catch the traffic and leave our fate in the hands of the Gods ... 10 hours and 500 kilometers before we sleep in Chernivchi (Chernowitz), Ukraine.

As we were told in advance the roads in Romania are “not bad” ... which to a fair degree is true. Within 30 minutes of departure we were in the country, clipping merrily along, traffic moderate to low and the sight of the sub-Carpathians Mountains on our left. Taking the low road, the Eastern route to Ukraine, we proceed to Buzau, Bacau, and Suceava before arriving at Siret – the border control point between the two countries. Along the way we went through moderately-sized towns with the usual Soviet-style landscape, abandoned collective farms, national forests in the distance, small villages that time almost forgot and that perennial sight on any road – the horse drawn cart. Agriculture was everywhere with roadside produce vendors every 200 meters. The scenes were pastoral ... ambiance was serene. Gasoline was readily available and road construction was everywhere. Twice we took the wrong route as the navigator misread the signs. At 5PM we arrived at Siret ... made good time. A border control point, especially vehicular, tells a lot about the attitude and the mentality of the country when it greets its visitors. The Romanian side was efficient, speedy and professional. 25 minutes, obligatory search of the car trunk, a question or two and our passport was stamped and we were allowed to proceed to the Ukrainian side. Now it was time to hurry up and WAIT! The line was only 4 cars long but the Ukrainian had no interest in speeding things up. Questions everywhere ... review and re-review all documentation ... passport check and re-check ... and then the obvious situation – pay up! Bringing an ARO into Ukraine? That will cost you ... \$3 USD for Laurentiu the Romanian ... \$9 USD for this American visitor. Why the difference? Who knows ... pay up ... but, they also ask for a “donation” of an extra \$5 USD to “speed it up”. Ukrainian border crossing is equivalent to State-sanctioned extortion. Time consumed – 1 hour 45 minutes. Finally, with passports stamped we were waved on and crossed into Ukraine.



Reality was not far ahead. If Romanian roads were “good”, Ukrainian roads may well be described as “primitive”. Forget about reaching Chernivchi in 30 minutes ... it will take over 1½ hours to travel 40 kilometers. Besides the road, the landscape changed from Romanian pastoral to Ukrainian hardscrabble. But, we marched onward with the knowledge that Olesya, our guide, would meet us at the hotel. It was dusk as we reached Chernivchi and, of course, our sense of “where are we” failed us as all signage was in Cyrillic and neither of us could read Ukrainian. Asking for directions resulted in our reaching the Cheremosh Hotel (left) at 8PM ... modern looking and catering to Westerners ... our haven for the next two nights. We met Olesya in the lobby (she left Lviv at 4:30AM and was waiting for us since 11AM), checked into our rooms, stored the ARO in a secure parking lot, and talked our way into a closed dining room for a late meal. Meal was quite tasty ... their idea of a salad is sliced vegetables. Main entrée was “meat” (actually chicken). Cost was reasonable ... \$9 USD for three. Ukraine really knows how to gouge the Western tourist ... Olesya as a Ukrainian national pays only \$13 USD per night

for the room (we paid her expenses) ... we paid \$75 USD for a similar room. Why the difference ... because Westerners can afford it, obviously! Plus ... parking costs an extra \$3 USD per night for the privilege of not having someone break into your car on the hotel grounds. Welcome to Ukraine ... pay up!

First day in Ukraine, where are the Archives? ... The night was reasonably peaceful (no barking dogs) but the humidity was high and sleeping was tenuous. Hot water ... not available. Personal hygiene is going to be tough over here. Met Olesya in the dining room (we were the only dining guests) ... had an excellent breakfast of cold cuts, cheeses, eggs, ham, bread, jam and coffee. Asked for second cup of coffee ... surprise, that's extra. The agenda for the day was ambitious ... do some currency conversion from USD to Ukrainian hryvnas ... locate the State Oblast (County) Archives and try to secure access to books ... visit the Chernivchi cemetery and attempt to locate grandfathers grave ... find and visit the City Center ... locate and tour the Chernivchi railroad depot where grandfather labored.

By 9AM we were a little early for the Archives so we toured (with map) trying to locate the main town cemetery. Having found it, we walked the grounds getting our bearing and located the main office. We asked to meet with the person in authority so that we may determine if any records exist for this cemetery indicating who is buried where. That person would not be available until after 3PM. We left our card, our intention and promised to return. In walking back out we noted that grandiose grave markers from the near-past Soviet regime, at least on the main access road, bound this particular cemetery. The grounds were poorly maintained with weeds as high as the proverbial elephant's eye. Walk one step into the weeds and you are lost. It seemed an impossible task but worth the effort. We arrived at the State Oblast Archives and attempted to meet with the Director. Surprise ... on a holiday for the next 45 days. Olesya arranged to meet with the Assistant Director (Piotr) and Chief of the Archives (Maria). We were politely received and were given the opportunity to state our mission ... which was, to introduce the organization we represented (The East European Genealogical Society) and to request the Oblast's consideration of a mutually advantageous working relationship between our two organizations. In essence we were seeking access to the inventory list for this oblast allowing genealogists like ourselves to do meaningful research by knowing what books the Oblast possesses. To a Ukrainian this is like asking for the keys to the State Secrets. Impossible ... without the Director making the decision, which would most likely be a “No”. However, we spent the next hour politely discussing how genealogy is conducted in the West and in Lviv and how much benefit would be derived by all with the inventory list for Chernivchi being available. We ended our discussion with a promise to communicate with the Director (by mail) upon her return. Then we made a request that was strange to them and took the Assistant Director by surprise ... may we be given the opportunity to research a few books, on a personal level. We said that we are here from America and will only be in Chernivchi for this one day. Our father and his siblings were all born in Chernivchi and we would appreciate confirming some facts, which could only be done by a personal search of the archived books. Sensing our polite demeanor and wishing to make a positive statement, the Assistant Director indicated that the Oblast is closed to any research, but would make an exception to us since we would be there only one day. He agreed to allow us to research the books we asked for, but only in the presence of the Chief (Maria). The cost would be \$20 USD. We asked if we may photograph any records located and the Assistant Director gave us permission. NOTE: We were told in advance that being considerate and polite, as well as patient and understanding, would win over any request. This was proven correct and our wishes were met. Of course, a Rozylowicz is always polite ... being argumentative and disagreeable is not in our makeup. 30 minutes later ... the books were brought down. What an exciting moment.

Nothing can explain the sense of awe as one touches a book dating back 100 years that potentially has one's family surname inside. In advance we knew that the only record we were seeking was the death record for our grandfather ... John Rozyłowicz, Chernivchi, 1919. And it was Laurentiu who located that record (below - right). (Fact ... we specifically asked Laurentiu to scan a particular book knowing full well that that particular record should be there. We wanted him to have that sense of discovery about his great-grandfather.) The record we located was direct confirmations that death occurred on January 28, 1919, cause male muscle deterioration (?), and that at the time he was a locomotive operator for the railroad and that his wife was Antonina Koscinska.



We pored over the balance of the books locating known records but still enjoying the experience of seeing the originals. One by one we found and filmed each record (left - right)... Emma, Marian, Julia, Helena, Stephan, Jadwiga, Leo (no Ladislaus or Bronislava, but no matter) ... until, a mild surprise. For the birth record of Sophia Rozyłowicz (September 7, 1895) another name was included in that same record ... a Maria. It seems that Sophia and Maria were twins, born the same day, baptized the same day, and with the same parents according to the record. Now instead of 10 confirmed ... John



had 11 children in all (at last count). That's one of the benefits of doing personal research, uncovering tiny additional details. Another detail that we discovered was that each archived record included the street address at the time of birth. Maria, the Archive Chief, was certain that we could match the old archived addresses with the present-day street names by looking up old address books stored in another Oblast facility. She volunteered to meet us there and to help trace these street names. Why would we be interested in this trivial information? For no particular reason except that, in the event we return to Chernivchi in the future, we could try to pinpoint the exact house where each child was born in ... if that house still stands. The information was free for our taking.

15 minutes later we met at the "other facility" (right)... an old church that now serves as an archive. Climbing the back stairs to a third floor room we spent the next hour poring over old address and phone books for Chernivchi for the period 1900-1935. Maria was generous in her time and was able to convert older-1900's address to present-day street names. The rest was up to us to locate them. Time did not allow us to explore those streets ... but upon our return, we will! Maria then volunteered to give us a brief but informative walking tour of the near-city-center area of Chernivchi and detail some of the Soviet-era history. We accepted willingly and off we went in the ARO. The tour was informal but exciting. The old Romanian Government Administrative Building, Cathedral of Holy Spirit Orthodox Church, Franz Joseph Plaza, Memorial to Fallen Soldiers of Soviet Conquest of Germany, Austrian Plaza and Court, the Drama Theatre, the University of Chernivchi, and the Prison are some of the sights we explored (see slide show CD). We drove Maria back to the Archives and extended our warmest thanks for her time and indulgence. You see ... it pays to be nice, you may be rewarded back in kind.



It was 3PM ... back to the cemetery (left). No luck, no records are available ... destroyed during the war. We asked for directions to the "oldest"(1900's) section of the grounds so that we may do a little cursory searching. There, there and there were the only suggestions. We talked with the head grounds-keeper on the difficulty of caring for the cemetery due to a lack of funds. He knew quite well over 70% of the readable headstones and does not recall ever seeing a "Rozyłowicz" ... but was willing to accept our calling card in the event something ever popped up on the remaining 30%. Slim ... but at least he expressed an interest. What more could we ask for. We separated into two groups, Laurentiu / Olesya and ourselves and proceeded to walk ... crisscrossing the grounds in the faint hope that



something would spring up. Forget it, was the short order. Everything was overgrown ... weeds proliferating and choking footpaths and markers. Poison ivy everywhere ... where one steps is often mud or a hole. No sense of direction ... no order to the layout of the graves. Hopeless ... we give up after 30 minutes.



Back to the Hotel. Wrote postcards, took a 15 minute reprieve from the hectic day ... an early supper of Bukovinian "meat", a salad, a beer and a small dessert (\$10 USD for three) ... and a decision was made to see the City Center on our own, with Olesya as our interpreter. No electric buses nearby so we hop on a private micro-bus, pay 45 kopecs (about 9 cents each for the fare) and head "downtown". Our guide Olesya ... a 37-year old mother of three ... is quite striking and can still turn heads. Her luck ... have an inebriated fellow gets on at the next stop and proceeded to make unwanted overtures. We were ready to take action in the event things got out of hand but, to her credit, Olesya proceeded to dress-down this dude in fast order. Although not giving up, the fellow did slow down and was even reprimanded by another male passenger for his "ungentlemanly conduct". We got off at the City Center ... but so did this dude. We went this way and proceeded to lose him. Welcome to Ukraine ... home of the perverts. After hours, Chernivchi is another walking town. Streets are clean and appear safe. The vendors and beggars are gone ... walking is slow and enjoyable. The streets are dimly lit and the glow from open businesses is welcoming. Peeking into storefronts and the narrow alleyways is our pastime. City Hall, illuminated at night, stands guard over the square and Mihai Eminescu (right), the Romanian Poet, stands majestically across the street. Did grandfather John walk these streets? Catching a taxi back to the Cheremosh we celebrated the end of our first day in Ukraine. We met the challenge ... we enjoyed some success ... our journey is progressing well.

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