

Cultural Identity of Markowa Village

The origins of the Markowa village date back to the second half of the 14th century. Back then, the Polish king Kazimierz Wielki (*Casimir the Great*) and his magnates pressed for the Polish Kingdom's eastward expansion into the lands of Ruthenia with their minds set on an extensive settlement campaign.

It was then when many German incomers, mainly from the lands of Saxony, settled in the recently founded city of Łańcut (originally known as *Lanshut*) and in the villages of Albigowa, Gać, Handzlówka, Hussów and Markowa (initially known as *Markenhof*). Of these villages, Markowa was the largest, as it covered one hundred hides (12,000 acres). It is also likely that a parish dedicated to St. Dorothy was established soon after the village had been founded.

For centuries, the parish has most strongly shaped the identity of the village and its residents. As of the 1860s, following the launch of the autonomy of the Galician province, the authorities gave a green light to new opportunities for self-government and civic activity, all of which developed in Markowa as well. Some of these activities, strictly religious in character and conducted by various goodwill societies, centered around the parish. The societies included the Confraternity of the Living Rosary, which started in 1876 and successfully grew to include around 450 members in ten male and nineteen female "roses", in the 1930s. The Markovians were also active in the Brotherhood of Temperance, the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Tertiaries (members of the so-called Third Franciscan Order). In the period between the two World Wars, circles of the Catholic Association of

Male and Female Youth and the Catholic Women's Association were established in the parish.

The parish was blessed with an exceptional parish priest for almost the entire interwar period. Father Władysław Tryczyński (1864-1935) was the parish priest in Markowa for thirty-four years. Father Tryczyński was a widely recognized leader and a respected authority, and his social involvement repeatedly transcended the boundaries of his parish. As early as before World War I, Tryczyński was a member of the Przeworsk District Council and School Council, an activist in one of the people's political representations and a multiyear vice-deputy to the Council of State in Vienna, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Tryczyński had also founded a relief and loan fund, a library with a reading room, a fire brigade, a branch of the Catholic Social Union, the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament plus a paramilitary organization of the Polish peasants: the Bartosz' Squads, right before World War I. He was also the founder of a new church, built in 1904. It was the third church in the history of Markowa, (but the first one made of brick). The church was dedicated in 1905 and consecrated in 1910. On his initiative, but after his death, an orphanage was established and was run by the Servite Sisters of Starowiejska. Close to one hundred children were raised in this orphanage.

Upon Father Tryczyński's death in December 1935, Rev. Dr. Ewaryst Dębicki (1900-1981) ran the parish of Markowa up until 1952. Father Dębicki, a Doctor of Canon Law educated at the University of Strasbourg, had previously served as the notary and chancellor of the Roman Catholic Church Curia of Przemyśl. Dębicki exercised his activities differently from his predecessor and was not always understood by the Markovian villagers. However, among other things, he helped to develop the activities of the Roman Catholic associations. Markowa's unquestionable proof of the village's rich spiritual and religious life was corroborated by seven priests of

Markovian descent, all of whom had graduated from diocesan and monastic seminaries in the period of the Polish Second Republic (1918-1939).

It was also at this time that the confrontation between the Roman Catholic organizations and the leftist organization of the Union of Rural Youth of the Republic of Poland called "Wici" intensified. The strongest and most vocal center of the leftist "Wici" movement in the area close to Markowa was the W. Orkan People's University founded in the Gać village and created by a charismatic leader Ignacy Solarz. It is worthy of note that this competition for the souls of the younger generation took place in a situation of a truly dramatic rural crisis and in the conditions of a political confrontation between the majority of the peasants living in the Little Poland region (Malopolska) and the ruling government of the Second Polish Republic, dominated by the so-called "*sanation parties*".¹

As a result of clashes between the peasant activists (or *guards*) and the police during a widespread peasant strike in August 1937, over forty peasants were killed. This led to a radicalization of a part of the "Wici" movement and their activities proved not only anti-government but anti-clerical as well. As a result, this also divided socially active residents of Markowa.

However, the impending war and the defense of Poland in September 1939 had united everybody and the ranks of the people's underground were joined by supporters coming from all of the currents of the people's movement.

It is not easy to determine the exact time when Jews became permanent residents of Markowa. Undoubtedly, they constituted a fixed part of the Markovian society in the 19th century. In the 1930s, over 20 Jewish families totaling 120 people lived in Markowa and had their synagogue. In spite of

¹ These were Poland's political parties focused on healing the various political and economic maladies of the Polish state in the years 1926-1939.

the obvious cultural and religious differences, the Jews were treated by the other villagers as “their own”, which helped to avoid significant conflicts and misunderstandings. In the interwar period, some of the Markovian Jews moved to the city of Łańcut and other cities in the region, which meant that during World War II more Jewish people went into hiding in Markowa than had actually lived in the village right before the war.

Undoubtedly, the fact that at least twenty Jews survived the war hiding in Markowa presented valid proof of the existence of mutual kindness between the Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of the village. It is worthy of notice that this was possible despite the tragedy of the Ulma family and the Jews the Ulmas helped to hide.

Another sign of the openness of the Markovian non-Jewish inhabitants was the fact that they received two waves of Jewish refugees during World War II. In 1939/1940, the first wave included 300 refugees evicted from their homes by the Germans in the western and northern regions of Wielkopolska (*Great Poland*) and Pomerania. In 1943/1944, the second wave brought 1600 refugees escaping pogroms by the Ukrainians in the eastern provinces of Małopolska (*Little Poland*) and Wołyń (*Volhynia*). Interestingly, a proportion of those Jewish refugees chose to permanently settle in Markowa, when the war was over.

Wociech Baliński

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