



There are no strangers in Kraków

2021-12-28

On the last day of February, 1881, an obituary notice appeared on Kraków's notice boards, informing that "Father Eugeniusz Tupy, Canon Regular of the Order of St Norbert, parish priest in Zwierzyniec, president of the Bishop's Court in matrimonial matters, deputy dean, member of numerous academic societies and president of several school councils, former inspector of people's schools in the suburban district, etc., passed away at the age of 68 years following a short illness after receiving all Sacraments on 27 February 1881." On the obituary found in the depths of archives, somebody added "taken to the Czech lands" in pencil.

It is actually true – the remains of Father Eugen Tupy were laid to rest at Vyšehrad, where the Czechs bury the most outstanding members of their nation. The choice of such a worthy burial place was not unreasonable. Father Eugen Tupy, who wrote poems under the pen name Boleslav Jablonský, was a prominent Czech poet.

However, it was not his Czech poems that made the eyes of the residents of Krakow well up, when they said goodbye to the deceased parish priest of Zwierzyniec – or zoszlęło nejedno polské oko, as someone aptly said. The grief was sincere, for although Father Tupy certainly missed Prague, he served the local community well, despite having numerous pastoral and social duties – including his service for the municipal council of Zwierzyniec, as he held the position of a councillor for many years. The council honoured his memory at its first meeting after bidding the late pastor a final farewell, and remembered him for many years. This is confirmed by an event that took place on 20 March 1889, eight years after his death. On that day, the Imperial and Royal Starosty of Kraków sent a letter to the Zwierzyniec municipal council, asking for "a payment for the late fees of the late Father Tupy, in the amount of 54 zloty 40 kr." Presumably it concerned some sort of a settlement of a school fund – as the readers probably know, many social activists hardly know their way around the intricacies of bookkeeping. In the minutes of the session held on 14 April 1889, we read: "The council decided to cover the late fees from municipal funds, in honour of the deceased."

Immigrating Czechs

Father Tupy was not the only Czech who came to Kraków in the 19th century. In fact, he was one of many Czechs, who came to Małopolska after the first partition, mainly Austrian officials at the time. The authorities in Vienna thought that people speaking Slavic languages would certainly do better in Galician Barenland – the wild country of bears. After 1846, when Kraków became a part of the Habsburg monarchy once again, it saw another influx of new people from the banks of the Vltava.

Although the Czech poet returned to his homeland after his death, many of his compatriots decided to make the City of Kings their new home. Everybody knows that Jan Matejko's father was a Czech. Few people remember, however, that Jozef Polivka, the grandfather of Adam Polewka, author of the unforgettable poem *Któż wypowie twoje piękno, Krakowie prastary?* ("Who will speak of your beauty, old Kraków?") came to Kraków from northern Bohemia, from the town of Dubá. The Holoubek family came to Kraków fairly recently as well – even the artist's father – Gustaw Teofil Marian, was born on 21 April 1923 in Čáslav near Kutná Hora.

Kraków's history prominently features two men by the name Antoni, both of Czech origin. After



all, everyone knows where to look for Hawełka and navigated through the Matecznego roundabout at least once in their lives. A lot has been written about Antoni Hawełka, but the most convincing proof that his fame went beyond the borders of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy is the fact that even Warsaw had the Bar à la Hawełka before the Great War. Antoni Mateczny came to what was then Podgórze near Kraków in the 1880s. According to all available sources, he was a man of extraordinary business acumen, running his own construction company. The end of the 19th century was a time of intensive growth for Podgórze, offering many opportunities for talented and hard-working people – such as Antoni Mateczny – to earn money and invest them in a reasonable way. Mateczny did so by purchasing land on the edge of town, at the end of Kalwaryjska Street. The investment turned out to be very profitable due to a mineral water spring. In 1905, engineer Antoni Mateczny opened his spa, offering drinking water, as well as therapeutic baths.

Do not forget about the Bulgarians

Czechs in Kraków had their Czech Beseda which was located in a townhouse at. Lubicz 9. The Bulgarian populace of Kraków, who came there probably in the first years of the 20th century, used to meet for some time in one of the townhouses on Batorego Street. As far as the presence of Bulgarian emigrants is concerned, Kraków was hardly an exception. Bulgarian gardeners previously came to Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv, usually in organised groups. After their arrivals, they leased several acres of land and started working. As Zbigniew Klejn, an outstanding expert in Polish-Bulgarian relations, wrote: “Their success was based on a great deal of physical toil, and working from dawn to dusk, using simple but remarkably effective methods of cultivation and specialised tools, such as those for planting seedlings. They used solely Bulgarian seeds, heavily fertilised their soil and grew their seedlings in the so-called steamers.”

Knowledge and intensive work quickly brought results. Some of the Bulgarian gardeners were returning to their homeland with their hard-earned money. Others remained permanently in Kraków, or rather in its suburbs. Even these days there are legends about their extraordinary wealth. These accounts often mention the legendary dog kennel – according to some, it stood in Ludwinów, while other storytellers claim it was in Prądnik Czerwony. Legend has it that somebody unearthed a chest of gold coins underneath it. If this was indeed the case, this gold was a result of decades of hard, honest work. Even the gardeners in Kraków, who would be hard-pressed to admit any sympathy towards the strangers, admitted that Bulgarians were characterised by “extraordinary diligence and perseverance, as well as low needs in life.”

In contrast to Polish gardeners who had a preference for early vegetables, Bulgarians specialised in late, autumn ones. Autumn would also see Boykos coming to Kraków with their plums. At first, they brought fresh fruit from orchards, the remains of which can still be found today by hikers traversing the Carpathian paths. Later, to some displeasure of the local merchants, they showed up with dried plums. The streets of Kraków were also frequented by more exotic strangers, such as Slovak wiremakers, Albanians selling walking sticks and pipes, and even Italians offering “stuff made of marble.” The people of Kraków welcomed all of them, for – as Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski wrote in one of his short stories – there are no strangers in the world.



**Magiczny
Kraków**

Michał Koziol