

Ithaca, N.Y.
6.I.1940

[1/1] My Dear Colleague!

[1/2] Thank you for the cards and congratulations. I [1/3] have not written you in for a long while because I did not receive [1/4] any answers to two letters [1/5] and I did not know what that meant. To Bloch [1/6] I wrote often and without results. I even had [1/7] the impression that he went back to Poland.

[1/8] With me everything is in the best order. [1/9] I have familiarized myself with the regulations [1/10] and shortly I will begin applying for a non-quota visa. [1/11] I was told by the National Refugee Service that the matter is [1/12] easy. I only have to sign a few papers, [1/13] but that usually takes a while.

[1/14] My parents sent me news that they are alive [1/15] and healthy. They are in the Russian portion. In Warsaw and [1/16] in the German part in general there are supposedly [1/17] some horrific things happening.

[1/18] I have nothing from Steinhaus. Zygmund¹ will probably [1/19] arrive at M.I.T. for next [1/20] semester. I was told² that Marcinkiewicz and Kaczmarz³ [1/21] were shot because they were officers.⁴

[2/1] All of it is monstrous and sometimes⁵ I just don't want to [2/2] think about it.

[2/3] I hope that you are doing well [2/4] and that you are satisfied like I am.

[2/5] Have you had any news from Ludwik⁶?

[2/6] Please write something concrete.

[2/7] Sincere greetings and hugs,

[2/8] M.K.⁷

¹ Antoni Zygmund (1900-1992) worked in analysis, in particular in harmonic analysis. He created one of the strongest analysis schools of the 20th Century. Zygmund obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Warsaw in 1923 for a dissertation written under Aleksander Rajchman's supervision. In 1940 Zygmund escaped with his wife and son from German-controlled Poland to the USA. He created a major analysis research centre at the University of Chicago.

² The first few words of this sentence are barely legible, however, the context suggests that something like "I was told" would be most appropriate here.

³ Stefan Kaczmarz (dates unknown) collaborated on many papers with Marcinkiewicz during the mid-1930s and it appears both of them were heavily influenced by Antoni Zygmund.

⁴ Marcinkiewicz, Jozef, (1910-1940) already had by 1933 obtained important original mathematical results, in particular, he had found a continuous periodic function whose trigonometric interpolating polynomials, corresponding to equally spaced mesh points, diverge almost everywhere. Marcinkiewicz went to France and then to England. He was there until August 1939 when the deteriorating political situation and years of military training as an army reserve officer made him decide to return to Poland.

⁵ Illegible—this is the best guess for the word.

⁶ This could either be the newspaper editor Ludwik Rubel who survived World War II and also helped Dr. Birnbaum get to America by giving him a position as a foreign correspondent, or Ludwik Sternbach, mentioned in a letter from Ala Manelska as having ingested poison upon realizing his imminent capture by the Germans.

⁷ Mark Kac, (1914-1984), a student of Steinhaus, friend of Professor Birnbaum, held many posts in universities in the United States. He pioneered the modern development of mathematical probability in

particular its applications to statistical physics. The method of quantization now in use involves the Feynman-Kac path integral, named after Richard Feynman and Mark Kac. The Birnbaum collection contains some correspondence between Kac and Birnbaum.