

FORUM

6501 Lansing Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44105
216-883-2828

www.naforumcle.com

www.polishcenterofcleveland.org

email: paccleveland@gmail.com

POLISH-AMERICAN



John Paul II

CULTURAL CENTER

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The Center is trying to continue some activity during difficult times of the pandemic. On Sundays, we serve “Polish Plate,” sharing with guests the best dishes of Polish cuisine. Everything is done in compliance with all necessary sanitary standards. On Saturdays at 10 AM, we offer our members free of charge yoga classes that everyone can attend.

On October 10, Polish-American Day in the Heritage Garden turned out to be a delightful event. Ray Vargas and Gary Kotlarsic managed to organize a mini Polish festival, where Polish wonders were served. The weather was great, the beautiful sun encouraged people to sit quietly at the tables in the tents, and the potato pancakes tasted delicious. Among the guests there was a charming little kitten family, which was immediately in the center of everyone's attention.

In addition to all this, the first book club meeting was held at the Center on the initiative of Hermina Kaczmarek. The first book we read and discussed was Ronald Balson's "Once We Were Brothers."

If you want to join our meetings, we cordially invite you! We provide all details regularly on our Facebook page.



Agata Wojno***My heart belongs to Poland...***

Looking back from the perspective of our current social isolation, my meeting with Mr. Marian Bajda which occurred before the pandemic hijacked our lives,



feels absolutely magical.

In itself, the meeting was not only very interesting, but uplifting as well. These days we look back with nostalgia to the good old days when one could go on a luncheon date in the company of others without overriding concerns about health and safety.

Actually, from the beginning to the end, the entire interview with Mr. Bajda evoked sentimentality for me because as I listened with fascination to his life story, basking in an aura of the calm that emanated from him, I came to realize, that yes, our generation is not like his... Those were very different times, with different people and different needs... and there is so much we could learn from them. I listened intently. I took a lot of notes which now seem pallid and inadequate in comparison to the very vivid emotions and impressions I experienced as he spoke.

We met for lunch at Sokolowski's Inn of course, because it had to be Polish food, part of a tradition very important to Mr. Marian. The restaurant was bustling, noisy and filled to capacity with what seemed to be half of Cleveland's population on lunch break enjoying delicious Polish cuisine. The food was very good. I grumbled about the noise, but now in our time of pandemic, I look back at the beautiful din of a crowd of happy people enjoying hearty food in the company of others and I wonder wistfully when will I be able to return for a future lunch date.

Marian Bajda is a distinctively warm, sincere, clear headed, energetic, neat and stylishly dressed elderly gentleman, who spent much of his teen years on a quest traversing across Europe to join the Anders' Army. He ultimately achieved that quest and went on to become an officer for this legendary Army.

"When was this?"

Mr. Bajda sighs, "it seems like it was just yesterday."

Living in Elyria for many years, he was not engaged in the affairs and activities of our local Polonia, having busied himself with a "normal life" concentrating on his family, raising children, and working. He became active and visible in Polonia after his son, Andrew Bajda, published the book "Captured in Liberation" which tells the story of Marian and his family, a colorful story of the family and Poland's quest for liberation. In the context of this history, Poland's fight for liberty, lies the story of the Bajda family fighting for an independent Poland, and a better life and a safer future for themselves.

Upon publication, the book drew the attention of the Polish Ambassador to the USA, Peter (Piotr) Wilczek who was fascinated by the story and invited both, father and son to the Polish Embassy in Washington D.C. having decided that he had to introduce them to General Anders's daughter, Anna Maria Anders. So began another adventure in the senior Mr. Bajda's life, the opportunity to revisit well-tread pathways from the past. From Washington D.C. to Warsaw and Monte Cassino, there were ceremonies and meetings to attend, the laying of flowers upon the graves of fallen fellow soldiers, beautiful speeches, so many moving experiences, emotions and memories of people and places, the battles - all vividly flooding back for him as he traveled back in place and time. It's impossible to describe those memories in words. They live in his eyes and emanate from the heart.

Our generation is not likely to understand or appreciate this kind of experience. We have not been ordered to shoot at the enemy, nor have we had to navigate around cannons on the battlefield, or be hunkered down in filthy trenches. Most of us have

not had to say farewell to a dying friend and fellow soldier we held in our arms. We live in a country where hardships can mean a lack of electricity when there's a windstorm. Nowadays, we feel beleaguered by the lack of toilet paper during the pandemic. For these soldiers the winds of war raged around them for years, but the desire to fight for an independent country and personal freedom gave the young soldiers angels' wings which carried them on their mission with heroic courage. As I listened to Mr. Bajda, I could almost see those wings springing up from his uniform.



Young Marian Bajda was only 15 years old when WWII broke out. I asked what he remembered of the war before joining Anders' Army and starting his military training in Italy. Again, his eyes lit up as he began: "Actually it was very exciting. I was always a curious fellow and I quickly saw everything that was happening was quite different from what I had known before war. It seemed like a big adventure" (hmmm, war – an adventure? I thought to myself). He continued, "the journey excited me when we were told we had to evacuate from our village. We had a large wagon, pulled by two horses which we rode in for twelve days and nights. It felt like a mini-vacation for me, he adds with a smile. We were running from the Germans, from Bochnia near Krakow to the border with Russia. My father worked with the local ruling council and all those who were on that council were ordered to go east. My mother had such heart. It took her all afternoon to pack up the wagon with all the necessities we would need for our flight from the village. She was determined we would have everything we needed to survive. I remember how caring she was," he sighs.

(In my mind's eye, I'm seeing a terrified woman, frantically packing her family's worldly possessions, pots and pans, clothing, blankets and anything else she felt was necessary, while trying to appear strong and in charge of her emotions. What am I hearing? This was another world entirely – a time of life and death decisions, of desperate flights from a real enemy, of evacuations, of smiling through the tears and outracing bullets flying overhead.)

Another fascinating aspect of Mr. Marian's history is his British–Polish marriage. He and his wife Iris, each maintained their side in the family and instilled in their children a bicultural background enriched with the traditions they each brought from their cultures. It's important to remember that the Polish army at this time was part of the British army and when Anders' Army was quartered in Great Britain the young corporal Bajda met a lovely Brit named Iris, who along with her cousin, liked to slip out in the evening to go to dances where she was able to mingle with Polish soldiers. Iris and Marian were soon married and the decision was made that they would emigrate to America. She had never considered such a move previously and frankly, at first, Iris was not at all thrilled about the idea of emigrating to the U.S. As their ship entered New York harbor and sailed past the Statue of Liberty, Iris didn't even glance in that direction, recounts her husband, who so many years later, remains amused by the "British character" of his wife. Once they found a home in which to settle, Iris went out into the street, looked about and declared with British dignity and in her British accent "this is America?" It was then Marian knew that it would not be easy for her to adapt to her new life. When she went shopping Iris would return indignant that Americans didn't understand her British accent nor her particular needs. Her frustrations as recounted by her husband reminded me of my own struggles upon arriving in America... (Oh, it was not easy!) Mr. and Mrs. Bajda were married for 68 years and at the end of life, she became sick and Mr. Bajda lovingly cared for her in their home that he built.

I asked what the secret for a successful marriage was:

"You have to work through the differences. Iris was initially afraid to become a Catholic, but having the same faith makes marriage a little easier

for a couple. Whenever a problem arises, you have to spend time on resolving it with discussion. You have to constantly communicate with each other to prevent a gulf from forming between yourselves and you must never hold grudges.”

Sitting at the table with us, his son Andrew adds “Mom had opinions on many things and she often made the decisions. Dad would go along with it because they respected each other.” (At this moment Andrew and I exchange knowing smiles -- there was a time when people lived together in traditional marriages, didn’t blame each other and maintained mutual respect. How did they do it? Yes, we both shake our heads in agreement, things were definitely different at that time.)

Returning to the adventures that ensued once Andrew’s book, “Captured in Liberation” was published in 2016, we learn Andrew spent 6 weeks in Europe visiting 6 countries in 2015 before its publication, doing research and gathering material. The book’s publication not only brought father and son closer, but opened up more opportunities to travel to Europe. They visited Poland and Italy in 2019 and warmly recall Andrew’s trip in 2017 to Bochnia, Mr. Marian’s birthplace. Andrew was a guest speaker at the library, where over 100 people, including many local family members, attended. Visible on a large screen behind Andrew was Marian, Iris, and their daughters, proudly watching via Skype. It was a memorable evening that family and townsfolk still recall fondly.

Mr. Marian is very pleased that he is able to visit the Polish-American Cultural Center in Cleveland, and enthusiastically praises the differences he sees here in comparison with other Polish clubs in the area. He explains that although he enjoys American football, he is not a fan of sitting at a bar drinking beers and discussing sports. “That has never really appealed to me. I prefer stimulating conversation over a glass of wine and I have found that at the Polish Cultural Center. At the other clubs, if you’re not up on what’s happening in American sports, there’s really nothing much else to talk about. The PACC is different and I feel most comfortable there.”

“And Forum? I ask. “Forum has lately come under fire. Any advice for our Forum?”

“Forum is a very interesting publication and I enjoy reading it. I really don’t know why you would need to change anything. Continue to do the excellent work that is being done” he replied.

So, what’s it like to be 96? I wonder aloud – how does he see himself and the world at that amazing age?

“It’s like being 46 or 56, there is no difference. All I would change is getting a new pair of eyes. You must work at keeping a good attitude, avoid stress, shun negativity, refrain from keeping grudges, learn from others and before you know it, you’re in your 80’s!” claims my interviewee with a smile that suggested “listen to what I’m telling you, listen to your elder because I know what I’m talking about.”

This gentleman truly fascinates me. A normal day for him as a 96-year-old is quite intense but highly structured. He arrives at his local gym for a workout at 6:30 a.m. every day. Afterwards he goes to his church. Once back at home, he tidies up the house (he loves to clean!) using an effective routine he established with his wife long ago. He cooks for himself and spends most of his afternoons reading books (which is why he wishes for a pair of new eyes). He reads Pan Tadeusz, usually twice a year, each time from the beginning, enthralled by the poetry. Among precious memories from his childhood home, he mentions the tomes of Mickiewicz’s as well as all of Slowacki’s poetry that they possessed; literature that he cherishes deeply today.

“Do you have any regrets?” I close with this standard interview question.

“Perhaps only that I did not continue my education. There were the obligations of maintaining the household, tending to the family, going to work. If I had pursued more education I could have done so much more in life.”



When people learn that Mr. Marian is an American, there is a moment of silence on his part as he reflects for a few seconds and replies, always the same way: “My heart is like the heart of

Pilsudski and Chopin.

. . . My heart belongs to Poland.”

Translated by Zofia Wisniewski

Dig a Little Deeper This Heritage Month

Without parades, ceremonies, speeches, dedications, and displays, this year's Polish Heritage Month will be different - all more the reason to dig a little deeper into your heritage, and to share discoveries with family and friends.

It could be something as simple as getting to that Polish recipe you have been putting off trying. Or finally reading English translations of classic works by Sienkiewicz, Reymont, or Mickiewicz, or modern works by Szymborska or Tokarczuk. You may want to get a notebook or recorder and visit elderly family members to gather their personal stories and recollections for future genealogical research.



With today's access to visual and audio media, you can easily invest in some new Polish or Polish-American music. No matter your pleasure, you can find everything from medieval chants to modern-day rock. Technology now gives us the opportunity to listen to Polish [and polka] radio shows just by downloading an app on your smart phone or computer. If you are well-versed in the Polish language, you may want to subscribe to TVP Polonia, the international channel of the Telewizja Polska.

Yes, the parades in New York, Philadelphia, Northampton, and other locations will be missed. But don't let stop you from hanging a Polish flag from your porch, sharing a pan of homemade "gołąbki," or finding a Polish author for your next book club assignment.

Written by Mark Kohan, courtesy of the Polish National Journal



Elżbieta Ulanowski

Portret Tadeusza Kościuszki w Muzeum Oberlin, OH

W towarzystwie Ryszarda Zysko odwiedziłam Allen Memorial Muzeum w Oberlin. Celem naszego wyjazdu było poznanie portretu generała Tadeusza Kościuszki, znajdującego się w tej przy uniwersyteckiej galerii. Jest ona jedną z większych tego typu placówek w Stanach. Mieści się w ładnie architektonicznie zaprojektowanym gmachu z 1917 roku. Ma ciekawe zbiory - jest na co popatrzeć i co podziwiać.

Są tam reprezentowani kilkoma obrazami impresjoniści francuscy, jest Marc Chagall, są sale z malarstwem 18-wiecznym i wcześniejszym, oraz sztuka współczesna. Oprócz eksponowania stałych zbiorów Muzeum organizuje wystawy czasowe.

Interesujące nas dzieło pochodzi z roku 1797, namalowane zostało na desce mahoniowej (wymiary: 41,5x45,3 cm) przez Amerykanina Benjamina West (1738-1820). Jest on znanym i zasłużonym artystą Stanów i Anglii. Był pionierem malarstwa historycznego oraz nauczycielem wielu zdolnych i znanych malarzy. Kilka lat przebywał w Rzymie, następnie wyemigrował do Anglii. Tam stał się szybko pupilkiem króla Jerzego III oraz nadwornym portrecistą rodziny. Działał też jako organizator artystycznego życia; był współzałożycielem Królewskiej Akademii Sztuki. Dostał nawet pozycji pierwszego prezesa tej placówki, które to stanowisko piastował ponad 13 lat. Choć Benjamin West nie ukończył żadnej szkoły malarskiej, miał dobrze opanowany rysunek i nadzwyczajny talent w doborze kolorów. Wyrobu farb nauczył się od Indian z Pensylwanii, skąd pochodził.



Obraz Westa pokazuje Kościuszkę w pokoju hotelowym w Londynie (gdzie generał się zatrzymał) i sugeruje jego zły stan zdrowia. Świadczą o tym liczne detale. Półleżąca pozycja emanuje bólem w okolicy pleców. Obwiązana czarną, jedwabną opaską głowa zakrywa bliznę na czole zadaną cięciem szabli. Generał podpira się ręką, co dowodzi ogólnej słabości, a może jest gestem zatroskania o losy ojczyzny? Na obrazie u wezgłowia łóżka stoi oparta kula. Łatwo się domyślić, że chory ma problemy z chodzeniem. Na stoliku obok niego są porozrzucane papiery - to akwarelki, które lubił malować dla wypełnienia czasu. W pobliżu leży też czapka oficerska i szpada oraz liczne książki. W pokoju jest okno z widoczną kopułą londyńskiej katedry św. Pawła.

Ten portret odznacza się dobrą kompozycją i kolorystyką, jest świetnie zachowany, a co najważniejsze, zawiera prawdę historyczną: pokazuje Tadeusza Kościuszkę w konkretnym miejscu i czasie.

Jak to się stało, że nasz bohater narodowy znalazł się w stolicy Anglii, gdzie pozostawał trzy tygodnie? Celem pobytu Kościuszki była zapewne poprawa zdrowia oraz pozbycie się depczących wokół niego agentów carskich. Do Londynu przybył po 2.5-letnim uwięzieniu w Petersburgu, gdzie osadzono go po klęsce pod Maciejowicami. To śmierć Katarzyny II skróciła areszt Kościuszki. Jej następca, car Paweł I dał wolność Naczelnikowi, a wraz z nim dużej grupie jeńców. Car wymógł na nim złożenie przyrzeczenia, że do Polski nigdy nie wróci. Z konieczności Kościuszkę wybrał drogę przez Finlandię i Szwecję do Anglii.

W Europie Zachodniej Kościuszkę traktowano z honorami, jako uosobienia rzymskiego dowódcy i prawdziwego bohatera. Słynne były jego osiągnięcia i otrzymany tytuł generała brygady za wykazanie się zdolnościami fortyfikacyjnymi w wielu regionach Ameryki Północnej w czasie wojny o Zjednoczenie Ameryki. Ceniono też jego żarliwe umiłowanie wolności, nadzwyczajny wysiłek położony dla odzyskania niepodległości Polski. W Londynie Kościuszkę stał się postacią ważną, odwiedzaną przez licznych prominentów, a wśród nich był malujący historyczne obrazy Benjamin West.

Po kilku tygodniowym pobycie w Londynie Kościuszkę wypłynął do Filadelfii w celu załatwienia

spraw majątkowych. Pieniądze zarobione po sprzedaży podarowanej mu ziemi pragnął przeznaczyć na uwolnienie i zapewnienie minimum edukacji czarnoskórym mieszkańcom regionu. Niestety, nie zostało to zrealizowane.

Kościuszkę z Ameryki powrócił do Francji i miał tam okazję rozmawiać z Napoleonem, jednak nie dawał wiary jego obietnicom wyrwania Polski z rąk carskiej Rosji. Ostatecznie generał osiadł w Szwajcarii i tam zmarł w 1817 roku, w wieku 71 lat.

Benjamin West przeżył Kościuszkę o 3 lata. Pozostawiony przez niego dorobek artystyczny w liczbie ponad stu dzieł jego synowie wystawili na licytację. Portret Kościuszki kupiono i przechodził on z rąk do rąk, zanim trafił na długo do angielskiego kolekcjonera. Po upływie ponad 100 lat obraz znalazł nabywcę w Ameryce, a od 1946 roku zdobi galerię sztuki w Oberlin.

Tak w skrócie przedstawia się fragment życiorysu naszego Narodowego Bohatera i jego portrecisty. Los zadziałał nieubłaganie, bo obydwaj odeszli w niewielkim przedziale czasu. Pozostał obraz, jako dowód ich spotkania.



Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College

Przy okazji wizyty w Muzeum Oberlin można zajrzeć do znanej ze smakowitych i dietetycznych dań restauracji Alladyn. Znajduje się ona w odległości około 150 metrów od wejścia do galerii. W ten sposób można mieć dwie uczty: tę dla ducha i tę dla ciała.

Polecam!

Elżbieta Ulanowska

Barbara Betlejewska**Did Polish Cavalry “charge” German Tanks in World War II?****Yes – and they “won!”**

(but the truth was distorted for propaganda purposes)

Compiled by Barbara Betlejewska, West Salem, Ohio

As a girl, I was not infrequently told that Poles were so stupid that they used horses to charge tanks in WWII. And I accepted this without question most of my life. Then one day several years ago, I decided to find out if it was really factual... Read on for the surprising truth!

Historian James Hoare and team members of the All About History team at historyanswers.co.uk have written extensively about this topic and this is what they have to say: “From the winged Hussars who salvaged the glory of Vienna in 1683 to the stateless patriots of Napoleon’s Polish Legions, cavalry remained the core of the Polish Army well into the first quarter of the 20th Century, attracting the cream of society to produce a highly educated and motivated fighting elite. These heirs to the Hussars were just the men needed to try to salvage the fragile Polish Republic in 1939 from the twin evils of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, looming from the east and the west like a belligerent chokehold, over almost-impossible-to-defend flat terrain. The Poles, it is often said, charged straight into the guns of German tanks. This isn’t really true, but in a strange way, it very nearly is. The myth was born on September 1, 1939, in some of the very first engagements of Hitler’s Invasion of Poland.” Two of these are briefly outlined below, Krojanty and Mokra.

Stationed that day at Krojanty, a village near Gdańsk, Colonel Kazimierz Mastalerz was a battle-hardened cavalry officer of WWI. Seeing a larger force of German infantry troops camped in the forest near the Pomeranian village of Krojanty, Mastalerz knew surprise was his only edge—ordering in the 18th Pomeranian Uhlan Cavalry Regiment – supported by a small number of TSK/TK-3 tankettes – to attack, with sabres drawn for psychological advantage, and tear through the unprepared ranks of the invading German infantry. In principle at least, the Charge at Krojanty was a success – the enemy

advance was slowed and the panicked infantry were scattered. However, as Polish hooves churned up discarded canteens and helmets abandoned by fleeing German infantry, a few hidden German light armoured cars emerged from the forest road, raking the Polish cavalry with machine gun fire and forcing a withdrawal. 20 to 25 Poles were killed in the offensive – including Mastalerz, who valiantly charged in to try and rescue a brother officer.”

The Germans then invited “neutral” Italian journalists to tour the battlefield – littered with dead horses and slaughtered Uhlans – and completely lied while floating the idea that the “foolish” Poles had quixotically charged into the treads of impregnable German “tanks,” another half-truth, as the small three-man Leichter Panzerspähwagen – light armoured cars – were relatively unintimidating and far from impregnable.” And now you know what really occurred, which was Polish cavalry charging German infantry, successfully of course!

“This inaccurate myth became a part of German propaganda and was later reinforced by the Soviets in order to illustrate how the Polish peasants had been failed by their decadent aristocratic masters. Ironically, this lie has outlived both the Thousand Year Reich and the USSR, still popping up in documentaries well into the 1970’s. The Polish Army, of course, knew better than to charge tanks with lances and sabres, and from 1937 onward, the standard weapon of the Polish cavalryman was an anti-tank gun, anti-aircraft gun or anti-tank rifle. Lances and sabres were at the commander’s discretion and had a significant psychological impact in causing panic when mounted cavalry were attacking infantry on the ground (why mounted police are still occasionally used today) but the role of the Uhlán, a Tatar word meaning young man, and later “hero” or “rider,” was that of a rapid and mobile reaction force, able to dismount and creep forward to stage ambushes and mount raids from the protected treeline, supported at brigade-level by horse-drawn artillery and light tanks. In particular, horse cavalry was the cornerstone of war with the Soviet Union, which was fought in Poland’s under-developed eastern fringes on dirt tracks, thick forests and marshland, terrain better suited to horses than tanks.

There were some 16 confirmed cavalry “charges” by the Polish Army in 1939 and most of them were successful. The reputation of the German army as a well-

oiled machine had yet to form fully – cooperation between German armoured and infantry units was poor, the Germans were still untested, and Blitzkrieg (a technique borrowed from John Hunt Morgan's Great Raid from Kentucky into Ohio in July, 1863, previously borrowed from others going back to the Mongols under Ghengis Khan) was largely a theory, applied inconsistently and with varying degrees of success. Against this backdrop of initial German chaos and inexperience, Polish cavalry wreaked havoc, as W. Jackiewicz recalled in his papers, now held at the Imperial War Museum: "The Germans dispersed before us, tried to set up their machine guns, loose shots were fired and strangest of all, there was total panic among the Germans. In this first phase, I hardly had any losses." The now-debunked propagandist rewriting of the Charge at Krojanty, a relatively effective Polish delaying tactic, may have forced its way erroneously into military history, but so too has the jaw-dropping heroism of the initial Polish victory at the Battle of Mokra.

At Mokra, a village near Częstochowa, the Polish Wołyńska Cavalry Brigade dismounted and dug in against a formidable onslaught, destroying some 50 (FIFTY!) armoured vehicles or early "tanks" without giving an inch of ground—testament to their high morale, excellent training, and flexible use of anti-tank weapons. They used natural terrain as cover and employed cunning in drawing some of the German vehicles into "tank traps," where the tanks got stuck and were then easy to destroy. Meanwhile a Polish cavalry detachment accompanying the TSK tankettes of the 21st Armoured Division at Mokra found themselves inadvertently hurtling toward German panzers, sabres held high. This – the only time that Polish cavalry, it could be argued, "charged" into German tanks – was entirely an accident. Lost in the clouds of smoke, Captain Jerzy Hollak's horses found themselves in the middle of a German tank column in the confusion. Amazingly, the mounted men punched straight through the startled Germans and seized the high ground, forcing the Panzers to withdraw. Hollak's unlikely victory, of course, was fleeting.

Delaying defeat for 3 days, on September 3, 1939, the cluster of beleaguered Polish hamlets around Mokra finally fell to the Germans. Mokra was ultimately lost, but it remained a potent symbol of the heroism, sacrifice – and most importantly – the surprising effectiveness of Polish cavalry doctrine. General feldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt of Army Group South wrote in his report: "The Polish cavalry attacked heroically; in general the bravery and heroism of the Polish Army merits great respect." In fact, Polish resistance to German aggression, with far less available men and materiel, was far superior to the weak, tepid French resistance effort. Ultimately, one can say that the actions of the Polish cavalry in WWII, used with cunning and discretion, were an effective delaying tactic – punctuated with occasional victories – against considerable odds."

I so wish I had known this as a young child being bullied for my Polish ethnicity by classmates. But better late than never... And now, you, too, know the truth!



Agata Wojno **Od Redaktora**

Cały październik w środowisku polonijnym brzmi dumą z naszego narodowego dziedzictwa. Wszędzie słyszymy i widzimy „National Pierogi Day” i wszyscy zachwalają nasze polskie pierogi. Ba! Na Facebooku nawet jedni drugich przekonują, że jeden kandydat na prezydenta lubi pierogi, a drugi właśnie nie! Czyli wiadomo na którego Polonia ma głosować, czy co? Z kolei zwolennicy tego, co niby nie lubi pierogów twierdzą, że to dlatego, że nie jadł tych naszych w Centrum – najlepszych! I tak sobie gawędzimy z lubością o polskich pierogach...

Vice-Prezydent Centrum w luźnej rozmowie ze mną żartuje, że nawet w Polsce ludzie nie mają takiej „obsesji” na punkcie białego i czerwonego, jak my w Ameryce, trochę tak, jakbyśmy przez te kolory wyrażali swoją tęsknotę, bliskość, sentyment? Pewnie wszystko razem.

Czyli październik miesiącem polskiego dziedzictwa narodowego. Jak rozumiemy nasze dziedzictwo? Jakich kształtów nabiera po latach pobytu z dala od kraju? Z czym kojarzy się Polskość? Jakie obrazy rodzą się nam w duszy, głowie, sercu, kiedy

myślisz „jestem Polakiem?” Czy to już „muzeum teraźniejszości”, że nie jesteśmy ani tu, ani tam? Czy to wciąż coś więcej? Czy to tylko polskie smaki, zapachy kuchni, dzieciństwo i wspomnienia? Tani, pierogowy sentymentalizm? Czy może to wciąż historia, kultura, poezja, literatura, muzyka? Elżbieta Ulanowska tak pięknie w tym numerze opisuje portret Tadeusza Kościuszki, że aż staje się ten bohater narodowy jakby nam bliższy czasowo, zamienia się z odległej prawdy historycznej w osobę, która odpoczywa na łóżku.

Jak ma się historia i zmęczony Kościuszko z obrazu do fantastycznego, spektakularnego zwycięstwa młodej polskiej tenisistki Igi Świątek w turnieju tenisowym French Open? A najlepszy Polski piłkarz – Robert Lewandowski, gwiazda futbolu i najbardziej rozpoznawane, kojarzone z Polską obecnie nazwisko na świecie? Co daje nam poczucie dumy narodowej? Nasza historia, tradycja, czy nasza teraźniejszość?

Każdy odpowiada sobie na te pytania „po swojemu”... Dla każdego Polska ma inny wymiar. Nie ma złych i dobrych odpowiedzi. ŁĄCZY NAS POLSKA!

Ten miesiąc to naprawdę doskonały czas, żeby zadumać się nad naszą kulturą, tradycją, historią, nad Polskością...

A co słyhać na „podwórku” Centrum? Dzisiaj Facebook prawdę ci powie... Mnóstwo aktualnych zdjęć tego, co dzieje się w Centrum. W trudnym czasie pandemii staramy się jakoś utrzymywać naszą aktywność. Nie jest łatwo. Dużo więcej sprzątania, dezynfekowania, nawet „wyklócania się” z przeciwnikami noszenia maseczek o to, że jednak trzeba je nałożyć, jak się wchodzi do Centrum. Takie mamy czasy i dbać musimy o bezpieczeństwo każdego z nas. Bezdiskusyjnie.

Miłe rzeczy dzieją się w Centrum. Polish-American Day in the Garden cieszył się wyjątkowym powodzeniem, jedzenie było wysmienite, a przyniesione przez pewnych gości małe, uroczyste kocięta stały się bohaterami wydarzenia i skradły serca większości przybyłych.

Yoga zdobywa swoich zwolenników i powoli tworzy się grupa uczestników, którzy chętnie zaczynają swój weekend od dawki ćwiczeń w sobotni poranek. Ogród za Centrum okazał się przeuroczym miejscem do ćwiczenia jogi, a pogoda... pogoda tej jesieni to zdaje się jedyna dobra rzecz w 2020 roku, niektórzy tak żartują. I... chyba mają rację – jesień mamy bowiem w Ohio precudną!

Nowa inicjatywa, czyli Klub Książki, to właściwie pewien rodzaj kontynuacji pomysłu klubu dyskusyjnego, tyle tylko, że wcielony w końcu w życie i że dyskutujemy – zawzięcie – nad przeczytaną książką. Klub Książki to właśnie okazja do tego by czytać najróżniejsze pozycje, bo poszerzać swoje horyzonty i poglądy, by z szacunkiem słuchać, co inni mają do powiedzenia na tematy niekoniecznie łatwe, a bywa, że kontrowersyjne. W naszym Klubie Książki nie boimy się mówić otwarcie, nie musimy się sobie przy-podobywać, ani siebie zadowalać, bo nie taki jest cel dyskusji. Celem naszych dyskusji ma być (i jest) wzajemne zrozumienie i poszerzenie swojej wiedzy o spostrzeżenia innych. Na pierwszy ogień wybraliśmy znakomitą książkę: „Kiedyś byliśmy braćmi”, która wywołała świetną dyskusję na temat „żydowski”, jakże kontrowersyjny dla Polaków czasami. Właśnie, owe kontrowersje mogą wynikać z niemożliwości prowadzenia dialogu. A tam, gdzie nie ma dialogu, łatwo o nieobiektywizm w rozumieniu faktów i w interpretowaniu historii nawet. Dyskusja rozwija, uwrażliwia na drugiego człowieka i jego poglądy. Każdy zresztą ma prawo do swoich. Jakie to proste, prawda? Już wybrana została kolejna pozycja do czytania: „Franklin and Washington: The Founding Partnership” autorstwa Edwarda Larsona, amerykańskiego profesora historii, który jest laureatem nagrody Pulitzera. Podobno fascynująca lektura, która nam Polakom pozwoli zrozumieć początki Ameryki i poznać postaci, które odegrały najbardziej znaczącą rolę w tworzeniu tego kraju.

O to chodzi, żeby Centrum tętniło życiem, żeby przychodzili tu ludzie z całej Polonii, bo dla wszystkich starczy miejsca. Żeby Amerykanie z Cleveland o nas usłyszeli i z chęcią Centrum odwiedzali, żeby zachwycali się naszymi pierogami, bigosem, gałąbkami i piwem też! A już na pewno nie chodzi o to, żeby dzielić ludzi na „naszych” i „innych”- wszyscy jesteśmy tak samo ważni, wszyscy boimy się zarazić Covidem, wszyscy lubimy pierogi, słuchamy polskiej muzyki, szanujemy Jana Pawła II, czytamy polskie książki, utożsamiamy się z Polską bardziej lub mniej. Niekoniecznie tak samo głosujemy w wyborach prezydenckich, ale Centrum to nasz wspólny Polski dom na obczyźnie. Nie zapominajmy o tym.

Social and Cultural Events at the Center & Slavic Village

Every Saturday	Yoga at the Center, 10 AM
Every Sunday	Lunches at the Center, 11 AM - 1:30 PM
Wednesday, Nov, 11	Independence Day Reception at the Center
Sunday, Nov. 22	Thanksgiving Lunch 11 AM - 1:30 PM
Sunday, Dec. 13	Wigilia 11 AM
Sunday, Dec. 13	Raffle after Wigilia 1:30 PM

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