



NEVER AGAIN 2024

The Polish ESN project titled “Never Again” is unquestionably one of the most intense and meaningful seminars among the network. The rich series of programmes that take place in various locations let one get an insight into the Polish way of life, Polish way of thinking as well as the historical events that explain the nation’s point of view.



We started in Warsaw.

The history session of the Bednarska school, the Maharajah and a quick summary of the past 1000 years of Poland was followed by the Museum of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising.

We consider that this museum was a great way to set the mood of the whole week as it was extremely visual and auditive as well as informative. One of our favourite parts was the testimonies of the survivors of the uprising. Their descriptions, voices, faces represented well the feeling of the euphoria of the start of the uprising.

Soon after, we've found ourselves in the National Library. This site is a symbol of how the nazis attempted to transform Poland into an "intellectual desert" as Hans Frank said. All sources of information, such as archives and books were burnt, education became basically illegal, while intellectual people were brutally executed. Nazi Germany tried to enslave the Polish, yet they didn't succeed thanks to the amazing unity of the nation that let them continue their life in underground facilities and resist the oppression of the Axis. On the Jewish day we managed to get to know Janusz Korczak and the basics of his work and sacrifices for the children of the Warsaw Ghetto. His ideas about children and how they should be treated were revolutionary and inspire people to this very day, for instance the mentality of Bednarska.

We've found the exhibition "What we were unable to shout out to the world" in the Jewish Historical Institute really fascinating, as we haven't heard about the Oneg Shabbat archives ever before, however it was an important and relatively big underground civil operation that played a crucial role in uncovering the horrors of the Ghetto.

Phoenix from the ashes - the reconstruction of Warsaw is also a great symbol of the Polish culture and mentality. The rebuilding of Warsaw included a lot of voluntary workers, who would work for free, after a long day of work, just to restore - while including the necessary modifications - their hometown. Truly undeniable proof of the persistence and the unity of the nation. Gdańsk may have been a huge surprise for all participants. We imagined it as a small town with a modest, pretty, little centre and some small industries around it. We obviously haven't heard of the city before, thus we were completely amazed when the train arrived and the group went through the magnificent old town. We have to admit it, we were smiling the whole time like little kids. If it is up to us, we are definitely returning to Gdańsk one day.

Visiting Westerplatte was also a unique experience. We've already known that the Second World War started in Poland, but we weren't expecting to travel to the place where the very first shells were fired. That is the scene of the first last stand that the Poles have made to defend their dignity.

The last and perhaps the best museum of our stay was the WW2 Museum of Gdańsk. The two and a half hours that we were given passed by extremely quickly as we didn't have the opportunity to ever lose focus during our tour. Thanks to the audioguides and the rich variety of movies, texts, pictures and artefacts we could sail across the terrible details and events of the war in our own pace, letting us process everything we experienced perfectly. The museum is definitely another place we want to revisit Gdańsk for.

Of course, history is the main point of the project, but after all the programmes it was great to spend some time on the shores of the Baltic Sea. Swimming, sunbathing, seal watching - we'd never seen those coming, but we were extremely glad to take part in such activities.

At the end of such a great project we might almost forget about some of the key persons of our stay - the hosts. We really can't show our appreciation enough for the efforts that our hosts and their families did to make sure we have an outstanding time in Poland. Thanks again!

Nevertheless, coordination is crucial. And Barto, you didn't only coordinate the group, but you have taught us so much about numerous topics in less than one week of time. You are the one who turned our visit into a real experience, by planning and matching everything to make things work as a Swiss watch. Nonetheless, teaching history raw is usually what makes people dislike it. You didn't only present us objective history, but also explained the subjective views and assisted us in drawing our conclusion making it possible for each and every one of us to be inspired by the heroes of this horrible war and act in case we see history preparing to repeat itself. Thank you for your efforts, for the knowledge you shared with us, for the friendly chats and for the time you spend to let the young generations experience such a seminar. We are looking forward to seeing you soon!

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