

Polish high school students taste Jewish life in Tucson

October 18, 2012

Polish high school teacher Barbara (Basia) Matusiak wears a Star of David around her neck, although she isn't Jewish. Matusiak was part of a non-Jewish Polish group that included 10 teens, two teachers and the principal of High School 15 in Lodz, Poland, who visited Tucson from Oct. 4 to 11.

"I'm wearing a Jewish star because I have many Jewish friends," Matusiak told the AJP at a gathering with Tucson Holocaust survivors Bill Kugelman, Klara Swimmer, Wanda Wolosky and Yulia Genina, at the Tucson Jewish Community Center on Oct. 9. Matusiak is a museum teacher fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which is how the trip came about. She met local museum fellow Lisa Adely, outreach coordinator at the University of Arizona Center for Middle Eastern Studies, at a conference in Warsaw, Poland.

"I thought it would be wonderful to have an exchange in which Polish and American high school students could visit each other's country and engage in a dialogue about ethnic diversity and prejudice in general, and the Holocaust in particular," Adely said.

The rest is history — specifically how "it's very important for us, for Polish history, that for many centuries Jewish people were part of our society," said Matusiak. "After World War II there was a void in our community. We were missing at least 45 percent of our people. Now there are only around 200 Jews in Lodz."

As an educator and a human being, she said, "the crime of the Holocaust teaches us about what hatred can do." When communism ended in Poland in 1989, "we started to talk about the Holocaust, which is now part of our normal curriculum. It's part of our overall study of Polish culture, history and values. We spend around three months on the Holocaust."

Along with the UA Center for Middle Eastern Studies, sponsors of the exchange included the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies and the Tucson Breakfast Lion's Club.

When the opportunity to host the Lodz group arose, Sharon Glassberg, Hebrew High principal and director of the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona's Coalition for Jewish Education, grabbed it. Hebrew High and Catalina Foothills High School students and their families hosted the Polish group, who, in addition to the JCC gathering with Holocaust survivors, visited the Jewish History Museum and attended a Simchat Torah service at Congregation Anshei Israel.

Michal Kochanowski and Maciej Baranowski, both 17, said they were moved by the service. "Now I know more about the Jewish people and culture, their religion too, not just about the Holocaust," said Baranowski. "In school we just read books and saw movies. I don't know any Polish Jews my age."

Before learning about Jewish culture and the Holocaust at school, said Kochanowski, "I had heard about Jews from people who are anti-Semitic."

For Milena Adelt, 18, who will finish high school this year, "it's much different to hear from people who have gone through the [Holocaust]. It's very touching." Adelt had met survivors in Poland who were there for the March of the Living. She also traveled to Israel on an exchange with an Israeli high school, which has taken place annually for the past five years.

"I'm always on Skype talking with my Israeli-Jewish friends," she told the AJP.

Polish students begin to study English in primary school and pick up a third language in middle school, noted Adelt. "I'll continue my study of the Italian language at university. Visiting the United States, I can appreciate learning other languages. Here, I like that music and art are separate

subjects you can choose. That happens after school in Poland.”

Glassberg noted, “It’s been incredibly rewarding for the Tucson teens to get to know the Polish teens simply as teens, with no prejudice or anti-Semitism.”

At the Oct. 9 gathering, Tucson Holocaust survivor Bill Kugelman joked with Polish students in both English and his native Polish. “What’s your Polish name?” asked Kochanowski. When Kugelman replied, “Wowek,” the teen responded, “That’s not a very popular name. But he’s from another time.” They both chuckled good-naturedly.

Meeting the Polish teens is “pleasant in one way and unpleasant in another way,” Kugelman told the AJP. “They’re the cream of the crop of any youth, not just Polish.”

Following the group’s pizza lunch, Wolosky spoke about her childhood in Warsaw during the Holocaust. “We got 184 calories per person per day in the ghetto that could hold 200,000

people but where they put a half-million. We were told there was no bread for ‘dirty Jews.’ We were told to go to a certain area because we were ‘infected with disease.’”

The Polish teens listened intently; some were visibly moved.

“After this I’m more conscious” of what happened to Polish Jews, said Adelt. “I cannot forget about history. I have to talk to other people about the Holocaust, to my kids someday.”

The Tucson teens have been invited to travel to Poland from Dec. 14 to 26, to tour and join in the Polish students’ Christmas celebration.

Tucsonan Bill Kugelman, a Holocaust survivor from Poland, talks with Polish students Michal Kochanowski, Maciej Baranowski and Milena Adelt at the Tucson Jewish Community Center on Oct. 9. (Sharon Glassberg/JFSA)

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-FEMALE--

Woah, Yeah Yeah, Mm Aa Aa Aah, Yeah
(Eli Re Eli, Kya Hai Yeh Paheli
Aisa Vaisa Kuch Kyoon Hota Hai Saheli) - 2
Meri Angdaaiyaan
Meri Angdaaiyaan, Meri Tanhaaiyaan
Meri Angdaaiyaan Kitni Akeli
(Eli Re Eli, Kya Hai Yeh Paheli
Aisa Vaisa Kuch Kyoon Hota Hai Saheli)
Tu Du Rum, Tu Du Rum Tu Du Rum
Tu Du Rum, Tu Du Rum- 2

Chali Hain Ab Ke Baras Na Jaane
Kaisi Yeh Hawaayein
Chaloon Main Laakh Sambhalke
Par Kadam Dagmagaaye
Na Jaane Kyoon Aisi Baatein
Mere Dil Mein Aaye Jaaye
Ke Meri Saari Saheliyaan Mehndi Lagaaye
Main Bhi Aage Kar Doon Apni Hatheli
Eli Re Eli, Kya Hai Yeh Paheli
Aisa Vaisa Kuch Kyoon Hota Hai Saheli

Yeah, Hu Hu, Mm Ho, Ho
Kahan Hoon, Main To Yahan Hoon
Bas Main To Yahin Hoon
Na Jaane Dil Hai Kahin Mera
Aur Main Kahin Hoon
Na Aisi Soni Hoon Main
Na Main Itni Haseen Hoon
Ke Dekhoon Darpan To Lagta Hai
Yeh Main Nahin Hoon
Oye Oye Koi Dekhe Meri Yeh Atheli
Eli Re Eli, Kya Hai Yeh Paheli
Aisa Vaisa Kuch Kyoon Hota Hai Saheli

Yeh Din Hai Chhote Chhote
To Badi Lambi Lambi Raatein
Arre Lo, Saawan Se Pehle
Hone Lagi Barsaatein
Kisi Se Hone Lagi Hai
Sapnon Mein Mulaqaatein
O Jaao, Mujhko Sikhaao Na
Tum Aisi Vaisi Baatein
Tum Dono Ne Milke Jaan Meri Le Li
Eli Re Eli, Kya Hai Yeh Paheli
Aisa Vaisa Kuch Kyoon Hota Hai Saheli
Tu Du Rum, Tu Du Rum Tu Du Rum
Tu Du Rum, Tu Du Rum

--MALE--

O Ve A Va O, Vi Vi Vi Vi Vi - 2
Vi Vi, Vi Vi, La Da Di Da, La Ra La La
O Dekho, Koi Tasveer Nahin
Yeh Ek Paigaam Hai
Kisi Ne Door Se Bhejaa Tum
Sab Ko Salaam Hai
Badi Hi Pyaari Si Soorat
Bada Pyaara Pyaara Naam Hai
Dilon Ko Mel Karaana
Achhe Doston Ka Kaam Hai
Tum Aise Ek Hai Dulhan Ho Naveli

--FEMALE--

(Eli Re Eli, Kya Hai Yeh Paheli
Aisa Vaisa Kuch Kyoon Hota Hai Saheli) - 2
Tu Du Rum, Tu Du Rum Tu Du Rum
Tu Du Rum, Tu Du Rum

*Stoi na stacji lokomotywa,
Ciężka, ogromna i pot z niej spływa -
Thusta oliwa.
Stoi i sapie, dyszy i dmucha,
Żar z rozgrzanego jej brzucha bucha:
Buch - jak gorąco!
Uch - jak gorąco!
Puff - jak gorąco!
Uff - jak gorąco!
Już ledwo sapie, już ledwo zipie,
A jeszcze palacz węgiel w nią sypie.
Wagony do niej podoczepiali
Wielkie i ciężkie, z żelaza, stali,
I pełno ludzi w każdym wagonie,
A w jednym krowy, a w drugim konie,
A w trzecim siedzą same grubasy,
Siedzą i jedzą tłuste kielbasy.
A czwarty wagon pełen bananów,
A w piątym stoi sześć fortepianów,
W szóstym armata, o! jaka wielka!
Pod każdym kołem żelazna belka!
W siódmym dębowe stoły i szafy,
W ósmym słoń, niedźwiedź i dwie żyrafy,
W dziewiątym - same tuczone świnie,
W dziesiątym - kufry, paki i skrzynie,
A tych wagonów jest ze czterdzieści,
Sam nie wiem, co się w nich jeszcze mieści.*

*Lecz choćby przyszło tysiąc atletów
I każdy zjadłby tysiąc kotletów,
I każdy nie wiem jak się natężał,
To nie udźwigną - taki to ciężar!*

*Nagle - gwizd!
Nagle - świst!
Para - buch!*

Koła - w ruch!

*Najpierw
powoli
jak żółw
ociężale
Ruszyła
maszyna
po szynach
ospale.
Szarpnęła wagony i ciągnie z mozołem,
I kręci się, kręci się koło za kołem,
I biegu przyspiesza, i gna coraz prędzej,
I dudni, i stuka, łomoce i pędzi.*

*A dokąd? A dokąd? A dokąd? Na wprost!
Po torze, po torze, po torze, przez most,
Przez góry, przez tunel, przez pola, przez las
I spieszy się, spieszy, by zdążyć na czas,
Do taktu turkoce i puka, i stuka to:
Tak to to, tak to to, tak to to, tak to to,
Gładko tak, lekko tak toczy się w dal,
Jak gdyby to była piłeczka, nie stal,
Nie ciężka maszyna zziajana, zdyszana,
Lecz fraszka, igraszka, zabawka blaszana.*

*A skądże to, jakże to, czemu tak gna?
A co to to, co to to, kto to tak pcha?
Że pędzi, że wali, że bucha, buch-buch?
To para gorąca wprawiła to w ruch,
To para, co z kotła rurami do tłoków,
A tłoki kołami ruszają z dwóch boków
I gnają, i pchają, i pociąg się toczy,
Bo para te tłoki wciąż tłoczy i tłoczy,,
I koła turkocą, i puka, i stuka to:
Tak to to, tak to to, tak to to, tak to to!...*

