**Ja a Polska**

Przywiązana polskimi węzłami,

Odpłynęłam od lądu, gdzie “moi” zostali.

Może wspomnicie o mnie czasami,

Gdy jestem daleko...gdy jestem w oddali...

Well, my Polish experience started when I was rather small, about 3 years old so I don’t quite remember what it was like to be in a foreign country. I went to school in Poland from 1st to 5th grades and I was feeling there like a native actually. I remember I couldn’t talk my native language, Armenian - I could hardly pronounce some words in it; thus, it is clear how “good” I could be at writing in Armenian while being in Poland, right? I was able to write my name only in Armenian: Նաիրա (Naira). I was showing it to my classmates and they were gazing at it for some time after which they’d say: “Ah tak! Ładne wzorki!” At that time I knew the Polish language only, so for me too Armenian letters seemed more like an ornament than a written form of a language.

Nowadays things changed – I know perfect Armenian and I am proud of it. But…my Polish… Oh, my Polish! Pity on me!

After returning to my homeland I started to learn Armenian. Later I started to study Russian, English, Italian, Portuguese, and…and I ruined my knowledge of the Polish language. I was not using it any more as I knew no Poles in my city. By not speaking Polish or speaking it rather seldom and by learning new languages, step by step my Polish has been deteriorating. Now I understand everything in Polish and can talk too, however, remembering my fluent Polish proficiency I feel rather ashamed that I don’t speak Polish as well as I was used to.

 Let’s return to my childhood. (This won’t be perceived as a report to a psychologist, will it?) When being in Poland I was living together with a Polish family. All family members considered me as a part of the family, especially the housewife whom I consider my second mother up today (and it will be so forever). They cared for me a lot and I will never forget time spent with them – family dinners, bike tours outside the city, late night stories, even evening strolls with the childish “Raz, dwa, trzy, cztery, maszerują oficery…”. I haven’t met my Polish family for 15 years and only last year I had a chance to see them again. After a break of 15 years I returned again to Poland.

My first visit to Poland after a long break was quite short. It was a training week organized in Kraków. The second trip was longer and more interesting (as it didn’t refer to work) related to World Youth Days. I was participating as a member of the Polish Community in Armenia, “Polonia”.

Let’s go back for several years.

2 years ago I was told by my friends that they heard about free polish language courses organized in Armenia (knowing about my passion toward Poland, my friends always keep me updated on any kind of news on everything related to Poland). I checked information and got to know about “Polonia”. Thus, I started to participate in Polish language classes. Actively cooperating with the Embassy of Poland in Armenia, “Polonia” always organizes a number of different events concerning Polish culture, history and language. Each semester a young Polish volunteer comes to “Polonia” and shares his/her experience to the participants giving language or cultural/historical classes.

As this time World Youth Days were organized in Poland, it was decided that a group from “Polonia” will also participate in that big event and luckily I was one of the participants. Having a very good and enthusiastic coordinator, we all spent great two weeks in Ciechanów, Sierpc, Płock, Wieliczka, Kraków, Warsaw and Łódź. Besides, I could find time to visit my lovable second family in Grodzisk Mazowiecki.

During our stay in Poland I managed to get enchanted by the sunset over the Wisła river, to feel the Jewish spirit in the District Kazimierz and discover the treasures of Wawel Castle in Kraków, to stroll through Old Town and sense the steadfast devotion of the symbolic mermaid in Warsaw, to get attracted by the open-air museum in Sierpc where the line of the perception of the present and past becomes so blurred, to go down and deep to explore the wonders hidden in the Wieliczka Salt Mine, to feel how it is to be arrested in the Castle of the Mazovian Dukes in Ciechanów, to relieve stress at Manufaktura complex in Łódź, and so on so forth.

Time spent in Poland was beautifully unforgettable. However, it is worth mentioning that first of all what makes my memory recall Poland as a dear country for me, is people living there. People who created all I had a chance to see and people who guided me, supported me and loved me, now and then.

Thank you, Poland, for being what you are now and always tending to become better!

Naira Atanesjan 01.02.2017