

Polska i Ja

Siemanko! My name is Felipe Díaz, I am from Colombia and my story with Poland started five years ago. I was doing a work & travel program in USA. I worked in the World largest McDonalds' kitchen, grilling meat and putting it between two pieces of bread. One day a group of angels walked inside the McDonalds kitchen. I asked to one colleague who they were and where they come from. He answered: "These girls are the new McDonalds staff and they came from Poland". At that moment, I asked to myself, what did I know about Poland?. Merely, I just knew two things about Poland: John Paul II and the incredible goalkeeper that its national soccer team had¹. The third that I had just learned, Poland should be heaven cause angels come from there.

Day after day, during kitchen breaks or during the evenings. I started to socialize with those angels and with polish guys. I got familiar with polish culture sharing a Żubrówka shot and talking about cities, up to that moment unknown to me such as: Gdańsk, Kraków and Gdynia. I was impressed to learn that boys and girls with the same parents may have different family names, and that you can say somebody's name in so many different ways depending on your mood². Polish guys teach me how to make honor to those angels with statements like : *wyglądasz jak anioł który pada z nieba*³ or *masz piękne oczy* and also teach me other words that despite they do not deserve to be written in this essay, in some situations deserve to be used.

After three months, my work & travel program finished, as well as my kitchen duties, but not my story with Poland. I had really enjoyed, the time I spent with my polish friends and the things they taught me that I wanted to discover more about Poland. Thus, as soon as I came back to Colombia, I started a task harder than learning polish: look for somebody to teach you polish in Colombia. Fortunately, I found out polish courses at the polish embassy. Unfortunately, after 10 lessons the course was closed due to the low attendance of participants.

Two years after, in 2008, I had the opportunity to come to France for studies. At the university, I met Marek, a good Pole that sleeps and dreams of Poland when he is not talking about it. We shared a studio, this allowed me to improve my polish skills and also to learn more about polish history, music, kitchen and traditions. Our studio was crowded of small pieces of paper sticked in every physical object with the name in polish and its equivalent in spanish. Marek taught me how to read and to pronounce the difficult combination of consonants presented in polish language, non-existent on my mother tongue.

¹ Watch : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9P8sY8-8IbE>

² Two years after I discovered that it did not depend on somebody's mood but on one of the seven cases this name is used and it does not happen just with names but with any noun, pronoun, adjective, or number.

³ At that moment I wrote it as: "veglondash iak aniou ture pada es nieba"

The first polish film I watched was *Rejs*, according to Marek a comedy of the communism system. *Rejs* was not at all a parody for me but a lesson of history, for two reasons: first communism was a reality far from me. The second, as Marek could not find the subtitles, he had to pause the film after every pronounced statement in order to translate it, then when a conversation or a joke was done, he explained it, but for this he went into historical details. In that way, a 60 minutes film lasted 4 hours. Films have been a good mean to discover the polish culture. I have also watched *rezerwat, co mi zrobisz, jak mnie złapiesz, wszystko co kocham, ciało, testosteron* and *wino truskawkowe*. My favorite polish movies are *chłopaki nie płaczą* and *seksmisja*. I also enjoy watching the sketches of kabaret Limo, they make me laugh a lot. From time to time, I listen to *Marek Grechuta, Kult, Akurat, Happysad* or *Kowalski*.

Each time I am in Poland is a new adventure, is a new taste in my mouth. My first trip to Poland was with Marek and with some friends from university. We organized "The Polotrip", a 10 days trip to discover Poland during summer. We visited Warszawa, Małbork, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot, Kraków and Wrocław. We ate typical super polish food at *bar mleczny*. My second visit was for Christmas at Marek's. The polish proverb "*gość w domu, bóg w domu*" became reality and I felt at home, being far away from home. Christmas dinner was awesome, twelve dishes with delicious food on the table, an empty dish for somebody that never came and *kolędy* as background music. As I helped Marek's mom in kitchen duties, now I really know what *obierać* and *pokroić* mean. Since then, I have been one more time by myself to visit friends and to put in practice my polish skills among native speakers, I think, one of the best ways to learn a language.

Nowadays, I live in Paris and I keep contact with polish culture. I participate to meetings at AEP⁴ (Association of Polish Students), I attend polish lessons twice per month at the *Communauté Franco-polonaise*⁵ and I make the most of any opportunity to speak polish with either erasmus students or tourists.

Polska for me is not only a country with pretty girls but also a country with traditions and with a very difficult but fascinating language, that I would like to speak, better than I do now. Although, *Polska nie jest Ojczyzna moja, jest dla mnie jak zdrowie!*

⁴French acronym. More : <http://aep.europolonia.org/cms/>

⁵ <http://www.communaute-franco-polonaise.org/>

