

“Let’s forget about stereotypes!” Students of Wrocław are impressed by the “Silesian meetings” in Heisterbacherrott. The meeting with witnesses of history is for the majority of them the most important point of the week-long seminar.

Text: Caren Langer

Königswinter. The laughter of the girls watching their friends’ successful pantomime suddenly silences. Pictures of the expelled, the awareness that what just played out in Breslau (Wrocław) had really happened, bringing great suffering on many people. The presentation of the subject “flight and expulsion” was part of the seminar “Silesian meetings” in the Haus Schleisen (House of Silesia) in Heisterbacherrott.

35 students from the Philological School of Higher Education in Wrocław were guests here for a week. As part of a broad political educational program, young Poles worked, among other things, to prepare topics such as: “Father country and homeland”, “Poles in the eyes of Germans and Germans in the eyes of Poles” and “Eastern expansion of the EU”. The group “Escape and expulsion” presented its subject in a particularly clear way. By means of pantomime, they showed how violence forced its way into the peaceful lives of families. Earlier in the discussions with historical witnesses from Silesia, the students heard how the expelled had survived. During the discussion “the year of 1934 meets the year of 1984”, Silesians from the generation of expelled described to the young students the events from their perspective.

The president, Petra Messbacher explains that for the organizer of the “Meetings”, Haus Schlesien, it is important that Poles not be blamed for the expulsions. What we are trying to do is to convey to the participants of the seminar historical facts and relations. During the seminar we look to the past in order to illustrate how Hitler’s politics came to be before and after WWII and to the time of the expulsions. In the second part, we cast light on the current relations between Germany and Poland and then we move on to a discussion on how these relations should develop in the future. “There exist many stereotypes between Germans and Poles. We should forget about all of them!”, thinks Iwona. Everyone is of the opinion that there are no more great differences between young people in Germany and Poland. The problem is that these young people don’t know much about each other. That is why the students wish to meet more German youth during their visit in Königswinter. This contact was limited only to the short visit in Sankt-Adelheid-Gymnasium in Bonn, where the guests observed a German lesson. “As neighbours we must try to establish good relations and forgive ourselves for what happened in the past”, this is the conclusion which Marta drew and it is one that reflects the thoughts of the rest of the group. After the first part of the pantomime there came at last the second: “victims” and “perpetrator” approach one another, forgive one another and rebuild the ruined home.

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