

2007 GLOSSA Scholarship Awards

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Bálint Varga (Hungary)

Polak, Węgier dwa bratanki – says the well-known proverb and I deeply believe that it describes the reality. Since I am Hungarian, throughout my life I have felt the deep sympathy between the two nations. Therefore I always paid special attention to the Polish culture and history. As a child novels by Henrik Sienkiewicz and Bolesław Prus belonged to my favourite writers; my first actual meeting with the Polish culture and past was thus provided by them. Later on I read poems by Mickiewicz, novels by Władysław Reymont, and so on. Moreover, movies by Andrzej Wajda always belonged to my best preferred films. Polish is one of the cultures I am most familiar with, and probably the one which I feel the closest to myself.

Since my early college years I have devoted myself to the research of Central Europe, especially of Poland. Thus, I completed several term papers dealing with Polish history and the current issues of Poland (such as papers on early modern Polish patriotism, the 19th century developments of Polish nationalism, Polish-Ukrainian relations in Galicia, Polish contribution to the common foreign and security policy of the EU, etc.) In my Master of Arts thesis in international relations I analyzed the successes and failures of the Visegrad co-operation. My current research done at the Central European University to complete the degree in Central European History deals with Hungarian history, however, I rely on Polish sources (such as travel guides and reports written by Polish travellers) as well.

Despite of my deep investigation of Polish culture and history, a serious problem emerged: the lack of knowing the language. I had to realize that it was not enough to read a lot about Poland in English and in German mainly by non-Poles. If I want really understand what has been going in Poland then I need to know the language as well. Thus I started to learn Polish. As I know some Russian, Polish was not too difficult to me. Now, after one year of learning Polish I am able to read and understand texts (with some limitations, of course).

But achieve a real development in my language skills, it would be much more effective to learn the language in its home. The Glossa school could provide me a perfect opportunity to deepen my knowledge of Polish language, moreover, to give me a real insight to Poland itself.