

An old-timer Fahrt nach Deutschland

Those were the days! An EuDDC show near Dresden. We left Poland at 4 a.m. Empty road, my receding hair smeared with gel to keep them in place. Beata and the dog fast asleep in the back seat, and next to me Mirka who doesn't prattle. This is what I call a perfect journey.

We pass Wrocław and then onto a highway so I step on the gas and off we go at last. We reached Dresden sooner than planned. There we turned into a street which I had in my show application form and ... we drove till we reached the end of it. Then all of a sudden 'Eureka!' The hotel isn't in Dresden but in a town called Weinbuealah. I typed it in my GPS and an hour later we were there. Exquisite! The hotel surrounded by trees, Małgosia Sowińska is waving to us from a balcony, our parking spot almost right at the doorstep. The only thing that is missing is someone to serve beer and eisbein.

At the hotel they speak English, many guests brought their dogs with them. Outstanding! The room on the other hand only so-so, not too big yet big enough to spread our Dupka's bed. And now comes the time to look around for some alcohol. There is a bar where they serve beer and a variety of other beverages because the hotel has its own tennis courts and a minigolf course so surely guests must get thirsty after a bit of exercise. Since taking our luggage to our room on the first floor by elevator was tiring I recharged my batteries with two beers enriched with some *nalewka*. It seemed that the evening had no more surprizes to offer and bam! A party at Małgosia's. With *porterowka* as centerpiece alog with *kabanosy* and pickles. Classic! Brings "Placówka" to mind. Smoking is allowed only outside the hotel building. Oh well, Europe. Mirka and I went for a smoke. Suddenly a guy approaches us and starts talking to us in German. I said 'Ich weiss', like Hucuł in "CK Dezerterzy", just to make an impression that I understood what he said, which of course I didn't. At last it became clear to us that our interlocutor was a vice president of the Swiss Great Dane Club. We had a pleasant chit chat, like old friends, about our prospects in the upcoming show and why there were plastic chains dangling from a balcony. So it seemed to me at least since my German is not of the best sort. Were it otherwise, I would have recited "Lorelei". Regrettably, I can only remember the first four lines so I called it quits. We rejoined the party room to finish *porterowka*. And of course we couldn't have done without some dirty jokes or backbiting everyone who wasn't in the room at the time.

The following day we left for the show at 7.30 a.m. In order not to get lost on the way there we had asked Wanda to lead the way. So she stepped on the gas and disappeared. Luckily, we managed to find our way and the parking lot. Still it turned out it wasn't the one we, the dog owners were expected to use. No, we were supposed to enjoy a substantially long walk (1 km) before we reached our destination. I made it there somehow even though I am no walker. The spot where the show was set was lovely! The grass in the castle gardens was beautiful and abundant so all I had to do was install my chair and umbrella I had got from Igor and enjoy myself. In the background I had a pond with carps jumping above the surface, in front of me- a dog show, a Coke in my hand. All I could have asked for was a cigar.

The food was far from great. Abominable coffee and a sausage bun (with the bun distinctly thinner than the sausage). Typical for open air shows which usually are more dog-friendly than those held indoors but the quality of service during such events is significantly worse. Free market follows its own rules – no profit, why bother. A restroom on wheels attracted a lot of attention as well. Something based on our Polish Drzymala's cart. With this hardly poetic comparison I hereby close my rather harsh critique of the show hosts' organisational skills.

Our bitch Dupka didn't do well in the show. We had been expecting that however since she would start slouching and there was nothing we could do about it. I hope that everyone remembered evening in Weinbuealah- both the dinner and the party- a usual thing during EuDDC shows.

Our wish was to form a large Polish group at the show but the idea didn't work as we had hoped due to lack of proper communication. So we ended up sitting at a long table with a lot of empty chairs around it. Germans pestered me to no end about those chairs and I kept telling them all night that

we were waiting for our friends to arrive. Needless to say, I was sure they'd take me for a jerk and xenophobe.

After a few words of welcome from the show hosts (many thanks for repetitions in English and French- helped us keep track of what was going on) the official part began. A history of the German Great Dane Club followed accompanied by a slideshow of dogs' pictures. Our group procured a supply of alcohol ahead of time so whenever we saw a pic of a dog born in Germany but owned by a Pole there was either an applause or a simple 'Aaaaaaa', sometimes mingled with 'Hoorraah' or 'You should've left that ear cropped'. I'm not sure but we somebody might have even shouted 'To Kowno!' There was a general joy but for the people sitting at the neighbouring tables- our enthusiasm was met with a few surprised and scandalised glances from that direction. Atmosphere somewhat close to that from "Podwieczorek przy mikrofonie", a Polish satirical radio programme. After the show a less formal part followed – the food. Unfortunately, just like in Switzerland in 2007, the size of the buffet was inadequate for the number of guests present so this huge crowd immediately formed into a long queue. It lessened a bit after 45 mins. I admit, the food was quite good however the crowd itself was enough to prevent you from paying another visit at the buffet so we ate in moderation.

Later on, to our surprize, there was yet another, least formal part of the evening a performance of a local cabaret. I know, we don't speak the language so how can we laugh at jokes we don't understand, right? Well, at such a performance, so it would seem to me at least, people are expected to burst out laughing, even if only from time to time but still. And no such thing occurred. Of course we could see several locals clapping but hesitantly, apparently wondering whether the joke was over or not. What's more, I was surprised that none of the characters (dwarf, Little Red Riding Hood, grandpa etc.) talked with their own voice but were doing their best to imitate that of a little girl or an old man instead. Like they do in second rate children's movies. Perhaps that's what they do in German cabaret or perhaps the cabaret in question was just lame. After all, the German part of the audience didn't cry with laughter either. At the very end, completely out of the blue – chippendales dancers, with their naked butts showing through sophisticated cuts in their pants managed to rouse the female portion of the audience for a short while. I don't think that the butts' owners were particularly handsome but the said butts created a sensation. If you got the gist of the performance then be so kind as to e-mail me at wystawa@goladupa.com. Obviously afterwards people started coming up with numerous ideas as to what could excel the naked buttocks at EuDDC in Poland next year. To bring the show to a nice closure a disco had been planned. A two-person band, rather skilled with guitar and singing, served us reheated Modern Talking standards and the like. That was the last straw so we called it a day and hit the sack.

The next day welcomed us with chill in the morning but the weather was overall nice and it started to get warmer as the time passed. Just like the previous day, Igor lent us his umbrella and I admit I still feel bad about not helping him take it back to his car. I'm soothing my regret with sips of a drink as I'm writing this.

I resolved I'd spend the day in an active way taking photos. After all, we had bought a monstrously big retractable camera lens (or whatever it is called) so I was ready to try my best and look like a pro. An interesting thing – when you have a photolens you immediately feel more important and, with no remorse, you shove yourself on the ring and, moreover, other people seeing such a 'canon' in your hands make way and clear off from your 'firing line' helping you keep the masquerade going. I photographed random things trying to look important and make an impression that I knew what I was doing. But if I showed you the outcome, you wouldn't be able to determine if the pics were taken with my fancy schmancy camera or Zorka 5. I have recently come across an article by Jeremy Clarkson who turned out to be quicker than myself in noticing that even if you own a camera which enables you to take 3 mln pictures a day it's impossibl to carefully go through that shit one by one so, no matter what, 90 per cent of it ends up in a trash bin. But the owner's vanity is satisfied.

This time the competition in the ring was a little bit bigger so our Dupka received lower marks and because she kept slouching like a question mark despite all Paulinka's efforts. Luckily Irimi won

everything that day so our country's honour was safe. I heard many Germans commenting on the mark among themselves and they all agreed with the decision praising her strength, neck and so on. I'm not an expert but I also am of the opinion that Irimi is unrivalled – she stands poised and haughty just like Dzierżyński on his plinth. Irimi competed with Alberto Malagutti's bitch so the Poles chanted 'Alberto, Alberto!' when he and his dog ran in the ring (but we still expected Irimi to win anyway). He didn't seem happy about it, at least his face didn't reveal anything of that sort (I have pics to prove I'm right).

Bis and some other miscellaneous awards were the last part of the show. Handlers Ola and Paulinka both won (at least I guess I had it right this time) in 'Best Kennel' category. The girls were sporting short black dresses that day and so the announcer was sure it would bring the President of the German Great Dane Club great pleasure to present the awards himself.

The trophies for the 1st place winners looked impressive. Some of them real works of glass art. Other awards- just like ours, only bigger.

And so this beautiful (seriously) show came to an end. And, as usual, ends make us sad because this is it, you have to wait another year till next one, especially since the end of the show coincided with the end of summer. This time, however, we're happy due to the fact that the next one is going to take place in Poland. And to remind everyone about it Małgosia Sowińska presented a poster of the next EuDDC. I also hope that the next year's show will be more cheerful because I can't say I had too much fun during this one. It was stiff (except for Małgosia's party), way too elegant for an old bum like me.

The guests left right away but we stayed for an extra day. In the morning at breakfast we met with Dainora from Lithuania who also decided to remain an extra day.

On our way back I couldn't refuse myself a little shopping spree. This time I was aiming at a German beer which I consider the best in the whole universe, namely Paderborner (in the 80's sold in West Berlin in characteristic bottles with short necks). Unfortunately it wasn't my lucky day although we searched for it in several supermarkets. Apparently we were too far from the town of Paderborn. However, since it wasn't too far from Radeberg I ended up getting that brand. By the way, if any of you has any knowledge concerning Paderborner beer, I kindly ask you to pass the information over either directly to me or to the Great Dane Club in Łódź or Warsaw. You can of course pass the beer, too, but that to me and me only.