

IV. PRO MEMORIA

OSTROWIEC MEETINGS WITH LEONID GUSEV

Leonid Gusev visited Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski four times. He attended all the international scientific conferences held by the College of Business and Entrepreneurship in 2015-2019. He cooperated with our journal: "Ante Portas - Security Studies" and with the Central-European Institute of Research and Strategic Analysis (CIRSA). Shortly he became an important and valuable element of the town's academic centre.

We met him for the first time on October 15th, 2015. It was the day before our first international academic conference titled "The Ukrainian Crisis and its Significance the International Security". Big conference, a lot of guests, and a lot of stress for us - the organizers. Nonetheless, we found an hour or so to invite the first guests, who arrived earlier and stayed at the Accademia Hotel, for dinner. It was then when we saw first, standing by the coffee table (interesting, how we remember the details). By then we only knew that he represents MGIMO - the well known Russian academic and diplomatic institution. "The men of MGIMO" – a prestige, but also an enigma.

It is worth mentioning, that the first meeting was far more different, then others. It was 2015, right after the Russian actions in the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, which causes many emotions among the representatives of various East-European countries, gathered at the hotel. The atmosphere was tough! At the dinner, one of the Georgian professors negatively and very emotionally presented the Russian policy, against Georgia and Ukraine. The Ukrainian delegation, led by professor Yuri Makar, was tactfully silent. We all waited for the Russian response and Leonid, with calm and culture, shared his expert's opinion on the current situation. General Józef Flis, who knew Russians and Ukrainians, appeased the situation, but Leonid's response proved to us all, that despite of varieties and contradictory opinions, we may all discuss around one table.

After the conference, Leonid stayed in Ostrowiec for few days along with our colleague from Georgia – Khatuna Chapichadze. We invited them both for a student's prom, and, well, in just a few days we met professor Leonid and Leonid – the King of the dance floor! After his first visit we promised, that we met again next year. We all kept our words! Leonid came to Ostrowiec three more times, at the conferences in 2016, 2018 and 2019.

There is a gallery in our college, depicting all the academic events. One may find Leonid among his friends from Poland, Russia, Lithuania and... Georgia. He had respect and sympathy to everyone.

The academic part of each conference is a very important element, but we all know, that the unofficial talks and meetings are most fruitful. We were

pleased to meet Leonid with our Rector and to meet him during the conference dinners and balls. Once, in 2018, we set all the Russian-speaking guests around one table, along with the Dean Grażyna Kałamaga and her husband Zdzisław, a former MP, who had his PhD in Moscow. Well, let us say there was a lot of laugh and joy at the table.

Our meetings, as usual, caused many anecdotes. During our last conference, in 2019, we had to change the guest's accommodation. The previous hotel had been located near the train station. Leonid Gusev along with his friend, Igor Seleznev thought that in small-town like Ostrowiec every hotel is at the centre, so they went on foot, taking all the luggage. Unluckily, the hotel was few kilometres far, uphill... They got there, eventually... In 2019, after the conference, we promised to meet the next year. Today we know, that is was our last meeting.

Great politics ruled this world, nations and countries compete and fight against each other, making conflicts and wars. Luckily, in this crazy world, we all are humans too. Leonid Gusev was a Russian. A citizen of a country, which has a very tense relations with Poland. To us, he was just a good, kind, cordial person, welcomed friend. We all miss him...

Paweł Gotowiecki, Jakub Żak