

Janusz Korczak International Newsletter no 17
April 2006

To all Korczak friends world-wide.
After a long break we send you finally the Korczak Newsletter as promised.

We have news from Russia, France and the Netherlands.

Russia (Kursk)

Greetings from Kursk , Russia

Dear friends!

We hope that everything is fine with you and your families. We believe that you are still full of desire to make our world kinder, happier and better in all possible ways!

In this letter we would like to tell you about what has happened with us a few months ago. That was just a chance encounter but it has changed a lot in our life vision, touched our hearts and induced us to a new project.

That is story of a young man Eugene Efimov, who is only 17 years old, but who is able to make you think about the world around you, about many things that usually remain unnoticed by people. He does all this with the help of his talent of poem writing!

Eugene is not an ordinary young poet, unfortunately he almost can't see the world he is writing and dreaming about, the world that he loves with all his heart, the world he understands so well. When reading his poems we can't but admire this unique person who may feel beauty with his finger-tips! This guy is almost blind but it does not prevent him from sharing with us all the joy of communication with our vulnerable world that seems to be so ordinal and dull for many people today! Eugene Efimov writes about simple and at the same time very important things like friendship, allegiance to the Motherland, and on the whole he writes about each of us!

When we learned about him and about his sad life story, we decided to publish his own book of poems, and in this way to expose his talent to other people. So we did, we did almost all the work ourselves: we typed the poems, and then at the printing house we put all the pages together. As a result we got about 400 books! Some people in our city bought several books and that is how we managed to get a certain amount of money for Eugene Efimov. As you may understand, he needed it badly, because it is so hard for an almost blind person to supply himself with all the necessary things.

We believe that we helped Eugene to earn money almost himself thanks to his talent and his kind heart. We translated one of his poems for you, so you can read and enjoy his poetry too. We hope that this story turned to be interesting for you, and we'll be happy to know what you think about it.

Look around, you will see that behind the closed doors of the neighboring houses there are unique people who need your attention and care!

Anna Savranskaya, Alexandra Grigorjeva, students,
Kursk, Russia

Russian nightingale

Wind it sways the birches out the window
Where from dawn to dusk the nightingale
Is caressing ear mine with birdish songies
Leading me to sleep, to unknown dales

Sweet mine friend of silver wingies
Russia dwells in tune thine, I suppose.
Forests its and meadow filled with flowers
Mires where weeping willows' crest unrose.

Where in the fields under serene welkin
Ryes grow in abundance and in joy,
Where in each (and every) but lives smell of bread
This all is my Russia, all it doth octroy.

A journey to Russia; personal impressions by Theo Cappon

From 1- 19 of April I visited several cities and villages in Russia. Many of these visits were strongly connected with Janusz Korczak. It was an amazing discovery to see how people in all these places believe in the meaning of Korczak for their daily work.

St. Peterburg.

In this beautiful city, founded by Czaar Peter the First (Great) (after visiting Amsterdam) I met our friend and colleague Micha Epstein and stayed three days in his family. Micha brought me to his school (The so called **Epischool**), a small school with an alternative educational approach, based on the ideas of Janusz Korczak. A school free from State influence, where children can follow their own interest and realise an active participation in schoollife. Micha brought me also to the '**Janusz Korczak Info-Center for Tolerance**'. We all know from radio and TV how hate against immigrants and foreign students from Asia and Afrika in the big cities like St-Peterburg and Moscow is growing and ends in terrible violence. The so-called fascists make propaganda for a pure Russian Nation without people who are just different. Teachers from many schools in St- Peterburg don't know how to react or how to raise the matter in their classroom. Alla Gurvich, head of this Center, together with Helena Levina (The Janusz Korczak Coordinator in St. P.) started for this reason a center for tolerance, situated in a big library. They receive everyday teachers who come to orientate themselves in this matter. It is a center with video's, books, didactic materials how to work on this theme with children of different ages. Most of the teachers are 'tutors'. They have another position in school and are more or less the trusted adult for the pupils. Very important are the meetings for teachers and pupils together. There is a room where they can discuss the growing intolerance and the roots of xenofobia.

(For more information: alla-gurvich@mail.ru.)

Moscow.

The second meeting took place in the Moscow International Filmschool (MIFS).

The students and teachers organised for the first time an international meeting around the theme 'Human Being Formation'. They invited participants from Japan, South-Africa, Thailand, Holland, USA, Germany, Sweden etc. The MIFS itself takes the humanistic thoughts of Korczak as an inspiration for its work. Specially the projects for and with children in several countries. (orphanages in Thailand and Russia). The students travel a lot and this encounter opens their eyes for the differences and similarities between cultures. These experiences give them at the same time another view on their own country.

In the children's house in the village of Krapivna, 200 km south of Moscow, near the estate of Leo Tolstoi's Yasjana Polyana (where he wrote his famous books and where he founded his experimental school) the students often work together with the 150 children on theatre, clowning, drawing, singing, play etc. They took Korczak's stories for cartoonfilms or theaterplays together with the children of this children's house. During our visit we, the participants from the mentioned countries, made together with the children paintings about the landscapes of our own country. Finally all results were put on a big wall in the center-hall of the children's house. Our visit to Tolstoi's estate in Yasjana Polyana was amazing, but that is another story.

Back in Moscow, we discussed 5 days, together with the students and teachers, about the different ways of human being formation and we focused on school-education. The participants from Japan, USA, South Africa and Holland stressed the bankruptcy of the traditional educational systems with a passiv pupil and a dominant teacher. They held a plea for active participation and for more initiatives by the pupils. The child is finally the actor of his own learning process. I had the possibility to talk about the ideas of Janusz Korczak and John Dewey. The discussions were very vivid and had a big impact on each of us. We made appointments for futher cooperation. Thanks to Olga Lipman, vice-principal and her students and co-workers, for this wonderful conference

More info: www.mifs.ru

Oriol

The last place to visit was Oriol, a country-town, 400 km South of Moscow. Some of our young Korczak friends living in Oriol, and groupleaders in our Nash Dom summercamps, organised for the first time a Korczak Seminar for their fellow students in the Istitute of Art Studies. Igor Mitin, Jevgenia Kirschoi (Zenia) and Marina Palogina prepared it so well. And I was glad to tell the students (many of them work in their spare time voluntary with children.) about the life and work/ ideas of Janusz Korczak. Igor Mitin told them about the Nash Dom camps for disabled and non –disabled children. As a result of this seminar Igor, Zenia and Marina started the new Janusz Korczak Association in Oriol. It is a promising start and they will inform us about their initiatives. More info: mityushin@rambler.ru

(Theo Cappon, Amsterdam)

France.

In February we received '*Lettre d'information de l'assoation Française Janusz Korczak' 2006-1*

We take some topics from the Letter.

On the occasion of the 16th anniversary of the International Convention of the Rights of Children (November 2005) we organized, together with the Polish Institute in Paris a 4-days manifestation around Children and Korczak. Children organised a Press-conference about new activities and initiatives like : a new book, TV-series, an animation film). Also children from different schools and youth centres were invited. There was also an evening debate with the founder of the Youth Libraries in France, Mrs Geneviève Patte. There were children's meetings at the end of November. Each time after such meetings and debates, the children made drawings or texts to express their points of view about the rights of children. The starting points were the experiences of King Matt, the famous book for children, written by Janusz Korczak.

A new Janusz Korczak statue in Warsaw.

In 2006, Korczak's life and work will be marked by a new statue, inaugurated by the municipality of Warsaw. The statue is dedicated in remembrance of a great pedagogue. It will be put in the centre of Warsaw, near the Palace of Culture . We are waiting for news from the International Janusz Korczak Society in Poland.

King Matt revisited.

Spring 2006 a new edition of King Matt will be published. This book will be better accesible for young readers.

The International Janusz Korczak Association.

We want to express our thanks and appreciation for all the work of Mr Jerzy Kuberski, president of the International Janusz Korczak Association since 1979. He is not offering himself for re-election (reason of health). That means a new election for a new president (perhaps summer 2006?). We hope that our friends in Warsaw in a democratic way will draw all Korczak Associations world-wide into the procedure of the election. For we need a new vitality and a dynamic movement.

(See also the article of Gerard Kahn 'Does Korczak has a future'? in the Int. Janusz Korczak Newsletter no 16, December 2005)

The Netherlands.

Saterday the 22 nd of April the Dutch Janusz Korczak Association had her yearly meeting for members and other interested people.

Themata for the day were:

* *'How can we know each child individually'?* Psycho-therapist Charlotte Visch explained her approach (based on Korczak's relations with children)

* *'The consequences of succes'* . Prof. Hugo Heijmans, chef de clinique of the Children's hospital of the Medical Centre of the University of Amsterdam explained us what it means for society when children, thanks to new advanced medical treatments and medicins, stay alive and become adults , in most cases with chronic problems or special supports.

* *'As a child'* . Arie de Bruin, member of board of the Dutch Korczak Ass. took the participants back to their youth. Feel what it means to be little again.

In the next International Janusz Korczak Newsletter more news from France and Switzerland.

We wait also news from all of you. PLEASE SEND US NEWS FROM YOUR KORCZAK ASS. or NEWS FROM YOUR COUNTRY CONCERNING EDUCATION, UPBRINGING OR CHILDRENS RIGHTS.

Send your contribution to: info@korczak.nl

Thanks and greetings from ed. board of the Int. Janusz Korczak Newsletter

Amsterdam, 24 April 2006