

NCOs on a historical seminar

Written by AG

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On 31 May 2012, a group of 22 non-commissioned officers (NCOs) from Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE) set off on the NCO historical seminar.

The two-day seminar was conducted on the western edge of Lubuskie Voivodeship and on the Seelower Hills, located just over the Polish-German border. As soon as we reached Seelow, we were welcomed by the leader of Museum which is located on the place where one of the last battles was fought before the Red Army surrounded Berlin in the spring 1945. The battle of the Seelow Heights was three-day long and the position known as the "Gates of Berlin" cost life of 33,000 soldiers from both sides. The defensive line on the Seelow Heights was the last major defensive line outside Berlin. Now, it is really very difficult to imagine that those green fields were the place where one of the bloodiest battles at the end of World War II was fought. But this was not the last surprise of the day.

The next point on the agenda was Kostrzyn. A small town located on the Polish-German border. Throughout the World War II, the town had almost remained untouched until the very last months of the war when almost 95% of the town buildings were smashed down. After the war, the ruined town was placed under Polish administration by the decision taken during the Potsdam Conference. The town became deserted; the remains of destroyed houses were used to rebuild other Polish cities. What was surprising for us? Our tour guide, original Kustriner! He was born there and spent his first years in the old Kostrzyn. By his sentimental story about the

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old Kostrzyn, he brought us from the place which is now called the Polish Pompey, never rebuild, to the town of his childhood: full of friendly people, full of smell of bakeries and taste of candies. He depicted the shapes of non-existing buildings; we only had to close our eyes and use our imagination. At the end of tour, the only thing we could do was a loud applause.

We spent the second day of seminar in the Międzyrzecz Fortification Region. Built from 1934 to 1938, it was the most technologically advanced fortification system of Nazi Germany, the remains of which are one of the largest and most interesting systems of this type in the world today.

We had the opportunity to see only a small piece of the system. But we have all agreed on the fact that the place is really worth visiting and coming back.

Once the seminar was over, we came back to Baltic Barracks in Szczecin full of good impressions and memories.

Text by: SGT Tomasz Ciesielski, POL A