

**REPORT FROM A VISIT AT PEOPLES UKRANIAN ACADEMY (PUA),
KHARKIV, AND TWO OTHER UNIVERSITIES 7 OCT - 14 OCT.**

by Sven-Olof Collin & Timur Uman

We have visit one of Europe's largest university towns, Kharkiv (Kharkov in Russian), located in the east of Ukraine. There are 1.4 million inhabitants in the city, more than 20 universities and more than 100.000 students (some say 200.000 students).

We are trying to establish relationships with Ukrainian universities since we believe we should do it in order to be part of a European development and to strengthen HH through recruiting good students and to offer our students European experience. Having this idea in mind we hope to transform our interest into the interest as well as eventual policy of HH.

The outcome of our visit is that we have one exchange contract with one university, and two letters of understanding with two other universities.

The trip was financed by Palme-Linné foundation, which supports exchange between Swedish universities and foreign universities fulfilling certain requirements.

The main purpose of the trip was to plan for exchange of students and teachers with PUA (The Peoples Academy of Ukraine). PUA is a private educational institution, containing education at the level of kindergarten, compulsory school, gymnasium, university level including undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies.

The university is very special in the sense that it contains a school for pupils from the age of 6. One effect is that there are very wild runners in the corridors which keep you alert when moving in the university. The noise they make is not only tolerated but also appreciated. It gives a special flavor to the university and is part of the energy of the university. So, we have gained friends among the students at the academy ranging from 6-year old pupils to 24 year old students!

When visiting universities like this, we are as much representatives of our university as we are representatives of Sweden. There is a lot of interest about Sweden, especially among students and young folks. Sweden has a good reputation. And we hope, of course, that we did not destroy it, but on the contrary, gave more facts to the reputation.

The students and the teachers are very open at PUA. The teachers accepted our presence at their lectures. The students are quite similar to Swedish students, open, prepared to ask questions and to debate. The distance between the teacher and the student is very low at PUA, quite resembling the Swedish culture in this respect. The only difference is that they have a better discipline. They are well trained in mathematics and in English, which makes them perfect for our school.

The teachers have on average more problems with English language, which makes it difficult to interact and to have a flowing exchange of teachers from PUA to HH. But included in the present program is an exchange with teachers that can teach in English.

The teachers have rather similar conditions to us when it concerns their terms such as hours of teaching and research time. One difference is that they share room with each other, sometimes as many as 8 teachers in the same room. Only few computers were in these rooms, and almost no shelves. They are not allowed to eat or drink coffee at their rooms since it indicates a less serious attachment to their work.

They start their lectures by standing up and the teacher asks the students to sit, as we did for 40 years ago. It is rather nice, since it indicate respect, not necessarily towards the teacher, but towards the learning situation.

At the university, we had meetings with the vice rector of teaching and the Pro-Rector. We were present when the Rector signed the contract. We participated in two English classes. They have rather intense teaching method, with a lot of interaction. We participated in an English class of 6-years old pupils. Uman gave a lecture for their Euro-club, which is an association of students interested in EU and Europe. The lecture was about the Swedish economic development and the Swedish model. Collin presented HH at a meeting for interested students (about 50 students). We were presented the Russian centre, which were a high class multi-media room at the library, financed by an Russian organization. We wish Sweden could do the same.

At spare time we visited two other universities, National Technical University (Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute) and Kharkiv National University of Economics.

The National Technical University has one special program in international business that is in English. Collin held a lecture about comparative corporate governance. And got applauds afterwards, and one student said that he were fantastic! (Now you understand why it is so nice to visit these universities. You are valued for your performance...). We attended a class where the students presented industry analysis of different equipment industries. It was quite the same as with our students, maybe a little bit better overall. We had meetings with the head of the accounting department, the dean of the faculty, and finally, with the Pro-Rector and the vice rector that were responsible for international relations. This is maybe the university that to the largest extent resembles our self.

The lecture of comparative corporate governance was given at the Kharkiv National University of Economics. With applauds, but not with the spontaneous evaluation. This university is considered to be among the top universities in economics and business administration. We had a meeting with the Rector and the Pro-Rector, and representatives of the accounting department. We also met the copy of Åsa, a very lively and charming female professor of innovation.

During leisure time we visited the Opera house of Kharkiv twice. First time we saw Nabucco by Verdi. Quite good performance by the ensemble, and very impressive. But

not in price, since we paid only 20 Grivnas, which is about 18 SKr. Thus, a very strong state investment in this specific cultural expression. We say Chechnian dancers another evening. Very intense dancing, with fascinating female performance in colorful dresses. They moved in a specific way that created the impression of them gliding on the floor. That was a manifestation of beauty! The last dance was their sword dance where men fought so intense that sparkles lighted the stage.

In the weekend we were generously brought on a trip to a monastery, one of the 3 holiest places for Russian Orthodox faith. When on the road we saw the endless fields of Ukraine (Skåne is the Ukraine of Sweden). They are enormous in size, contain no stones, and are very fertile. The black soil of Ukraine is very beautiful! Sven-Olof brought some soil with him home, which created some problem in the security check since it has the look of powder. The monastery we visited belongs to the Orthodox Church, so we saw many icons and got an overwhelming good experience. For a Protestant and a Jew, such experience creates, to say the least, emotions. The day after, we then went to one of Europe's largest synagogue, located in the centre of Kharkiv. This synagogue belongs to a liberal community, so no need to put on a kipa. In one corner of the room, a young man had a computer and was writing something. In another corner of the room, a group of elderly men were sitting and watching a film where a Rabbi discussed something.

Kharkiv is a lively and nice town, but with all the problems that characterizes Ukraine today. Ukraine is a new country, less than 20 years old, still in the process of finding an identity. For example, their history is still in the making. Were the Vikings good or bad? Was it good or bad that Charles the XII and his Cossacks lost the fight at Poltava? These are heated issues that can be recommend to avoid having a clear opinion about when talking to Ukrainians. The country is mainly divided into a western, European oriented part, and an eastern part, oriented towards Russia. For example, the dominating language in eastern Ukraine is Russian. But then there appear to be a generational separation as well, where elderly people tend to be more pro-Russian and younger people would like to listen to European music and to go to Western Europe. Which of course is good for us and our political interest, to have their young good students in our lecture rooms, improving the quality of our education, and to promote western values of democracy and social market economy.

We hope that HH will support an East-European and Ukrainian policy and that everyone at HH in the future will know where Kharkiv is located.

PUA have published some photos from our stay, which you can find on http://www.nua.kharkov.ua/news_ya/131009/delegation.html.

On Sven-Olofs private home page (<http://www.svencollin.se/praxis.htm>), you find two clips from You-Tube, which are clips from the former visit, when two local TV-channels reported about our trip.

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