

## Workcamp UKR-ALT-6, Rykhly-Chernigiv Region, 14.-28.

### 07. 2002

Camp-project: In the village Rykhly (Northern Ukraine 140 km east of Chernigiv) there's a monastery from 17th century, which was left in the 1920th and destroyed by the following 80 years. Up from 1999 every summer volunteer-groups restore the monastery-area. In 2002 volunteers assisted in the building of the church, uncovering an brick-plastered way, cleaning ruins and the park.

#### 1. Before the camp started:

I applied for this camp on 21th may. Very soon I got the confirmation from the German SCI-Office and after some days more informations including the invitation, which I needed to apply for my visa to the Ukraine. The material was fine containing a description about the camp and some advices for preparation of the trip.

The only problem was the information about application-time. Following the info-sheet of the Ukrainian embassy, the the applying-processs would take 20 days, therefore about three weeks. In fact the embassy counts only the working-days, so in fact one has to apply about four weeks in advance. In my case it fit tightly, I applied one month before departure and received the visa two days before I was supposed to leave Germany. So please think about correcting the info-sheet in this point!

I travelled by train and arrived on saturday evening, July 13th, in Kiew, where the volunteers from abroad met in the office of Alternative-V (situated in a beautiful part of the town). There we met our camp-leader, Roman from Kiew, 22 y. and student of economy. After having some dinner in a Restaurant we went by night-train to Krolovec in the north of the country, where we were expected at 2.30 h to take the last 50 km by an chartered ambulance-car. When we arrived at the accomodation at about 4 a.m., the local volunteers were still awake, so we got some bread and tea before going to sleep.

#### 2. During the camp:

The group was consisting of 7 foreign and about 18 local volunteers from 16 to 32 years (my being the oldestone). On the international side were volunteers from french speaking Swizzerland, France (2), Austria, Czech Republik, Finland and Germany, the Ukrainians were almost all from Korop, the small town organising and founding the camp-project.. Due to the fact that the camp in 2002 was taking place the 4th time, a couple

of them have already been in Rykhly once or even three times during the years ago.

The accomodation in the primary-school was simple, but o.k.. We slept in three class-rooms an matrizes, washing facilities and sun-heated showers were open-air situated. A wife from Korop stayed with us to prepare the meals (and to supervise the daily cleanig of the building). The meals were consisting often from groats, potatos, pasta in sweet milk (for breakfast), few meet, tasty bread, tomatos and every day the delicious Borsch, a soup prepared of cabbage. Around the school-house there is a huge area with apple-trees and some cows, horses, turkeys belonging to the village-inhabitants. For leisure-time there are grounds for playing football and volleyball, for swiming we went about 1 km to a small lake. So it was in general fine, except from the big stereo I sometimes felt really disturbed by.

We worked from Monday to Friday in the morning, about 4 hours a day. The work took place at different locations and was organised by Oleg, an about 30 years old man from Korop. He planed the work splitting up the volunteers every morning. We did some archeological work uncovering an old brick-plastered way, besides this we cleaned some ruines of the monastery from trees and rubble and repairing entrances of caves belonging to the monastery. At the most interesting object, the chapel reerrected by professional workers, there was unfortunately not much work to do for us. I assisted there a couple of times with some other male volunteers (with more or less effects). Apart from the monastery we were asked to „clean`` the lake. They wanted to improve the possibilities to swim in and to lay on the lake-shore. Well, in western countries we wouldn't do it in that way sawing of trees, cutting of reed and burning down the wood in the forest (ashes dropping down onto the lake) and sometimes I became unpatient setting up to talk to Oleg (who didn't speak Englisch) about that. But apart from this (in my point of view) he did a good job, and he was respected by the local volunteers. So I accepted that people in countries of modest economic situation and sparse population might have a diffent relationship to the nature.

Besides the work there weren't much camp-activities. Local people in our leisure-time didn't do anything special except from swimming in the lake. Most of them didn't even know the area around the village and weren't really interested in. In the same way there was almost no kontakt to the village-people, what I considered as a big pity. So leisure-time was mainly lazy time, in the evening we had some partys or a camp-fire. Although some of the international volunteers would have liked more activities, we didn't manage to organize much - apart of some excursions around the village.

But the weekend-excursion in the middle of the camp was great. We (7 internationals and - with respect to the obligation to pay for lift and accomodation - only 3 locals) went by a rented car to Chernihiv, a historically interesting town of about 300000 inhabitants. Like in the camp the accomodation was organised and fine, the rest one had to set up on his own. But we have seen some interesting places, churches, the Desna river etc. and I enjoyed it.

### 3. After the camp:

The camp ended up on saturday with a „Subotnik“, getting up early one part of the group was supposed to work at the lake (but the sand which was expected wasn't delivered). The other part of the group started cleaning the school and loading everthing on a big „Ural“-lorry: beds, matrizes, pots, food, even the refrigerator. Only now I remarked how much work it had been to prepare the building before the beginning of the camp for the volunteers.

After the camp the whole group spent two great days in Korop, somehow a second excursion and in the same time the very kind invitation of the local people. We were split up to different local volunteers, who invited in their houses. There in Korop we were more individual, a fact simplifiyng to get in closer contact to the people. I was invited to the parents-house of Marina, who is studying English. The family was very hospitable and prepared e.g. very tasty dishes. Twice we went with some other volunteers for a swim in the Desna-river, saturday night the whole group met for a kind of fare-well party in a concert-hall, on sunday morning we enjoyed - again individually - the impressional fair (Jarmarok). So on monday morning everybody was sad about saying good-bye to each other. But it wasn't the last station of the camp. Six international and three local volunteers living in Kiew went together to the ukrainian capital. There the camp-leader Roman and Sashka offered us some guide-tours through Kiew. Of course plans of the group-members were different, some left in the same night or the next morning, but for three of us Roman organized a cheap accomodation and we spent during the next two days much time together. So we finally said good-bye on Wednesday after watching a football-game (Dynamo Kiew against Jerewan). I left Kiew by nighth-train to Lviv.

### Some final remarks:

It was the first time I've been in the former Russian area. There are remarkable mental differences to countries like Poland (which I know quite well). Only after reading some

material about cultural differences I started understanding the strong role of group-leaders during the time I spent with the camp-group. Being with them I was sometimes asthounded about the passive behaviour of local volunteers and annoyed about my small possibilities to take any influence. It was really difficult to find a way between being part of the group and pursueing my own interesses. In Kiew I discussed this matter with one of the french volunteers and he obviously had the same problems with local understanding of leader-functions. The roles at work, the way of ordering lunch in a restaurant in Chernihiv, the accomodation and some sigthseeing in Kiew was all organised by some leading person. In some situations people would have liked to do some more things on their own. It is hard to explain, in Germany things would run in a different way. But taking part at a camp in the Ukraine people from abroad - we - have to acknowledge in some extension the regional rules.