Indianapolis and Volgograd have become step-sisters, thanks to Sister-City Cologne

When Cologne, Germany, signed a sister-city agreement with Indianapolis in 1989, it also signed a similar agreement with Volgograd, Russia. The following year, Cologne invited young people from both cities to spend 10 days there, starting a tradition of annual tri-lateral student exchanges that continues this summer as four IUPUI students travel to Volgograd to participate in this year’s exchange.

As part of the exchange program, Volgograd’s deputy mayor, Vasily Galushkin, and Prof. Iveta Shabunina of Volgograd State University spent several days in Indianapolis last July while their youth group was staying at IUPUI’s International House. They met with IUPUI faculty and administrators as well as Indianapolis business and government leaders. The Volgograd delegation reciprocated by inviting an Indianapolis delegation to participate in the 50th anniversary celebration of the end of World War II, scheduled for May 1995.

The delegation that spent May 7-11 in Volgograd included Indianapolis Deputy Mayor Joe Loftus, IUPUI Associate Dean for International Programs Giles R. Hoyt, and Sister Cities representative and Indianapolis businesswoman Nancy Ruckle. Ms. Ruckle is also an associate faculty member in the IUPUI German Department.

“They took this very seriously in Volgograd,” Dean Hoyt said. “Volgograd, then known as Stalingrad, was the turning point for the war on the eastern front. It was really quite an honor to be a part of the whole thing.”

The delegation met with regional, city, and university officials, including Ivan Shabunin, the governor of the Volgograd Oblast (region), and Volgograd Mayor Chekhov. At the meetings, participants discussed joint community projects, some involving IUPUI schools and centers in the areas of ecology, urban development and business training.

In addition, after meeting with representatives of Volgograd State University (VSU), Assoc. Dean Hoyt and Prof. Maxim M. Sagorulko signed a letter of intent to pursue a more formal relationship between IUPUI, IU system campuses and VSU, which would include exchanges of students, researchers and faculty. “They have programs in linguistics and economics, so they are particularly interested in those areas,” Dean Hoyt said. “They are also interested in American studies.”

Dean Hoyt is excited about the prospects of furthering relationships with VSU. IU already has connections with Leningrad in western Russia, and Moscow and Ryazan in central Russia. As the relationship with VSU develops, IU extends its connections to another part of Russia. “That’s as far southeast as you can go in Russia,” Dean Hoyt said. “The unique historical landscape of Volgograd in the Russian steppe, with its Cossack traditions, plus the dynamics of transition, make this an academically exciting area.” Several IUPUI faculty have already expressed interest in exchanges and collaboration with VSU.

For Dean Hoyt, the visit was personally satisfying as well. He took a minor in Russian and speaks Russian fairly well, but he hadn’t been to Volgograd before. “It’s a tremendously interesting area,” he said. “It’s Cossack territory. Turgenev and Chekhov stories took place in that area. Many of the scenes were tableaux right out of Chekhov. It was absolutely fascinating.”

Post-Soviet Baltic States

Haas and Julius Smulkstys of IUPUI, and Inta Carpenter of IUB’s Folklore Institute. Sunday’s main feature was a panel discussion on how to integrate Baltic studies into undergraduate curricula. Workshop participants were also treated to a Saturday evening dinner, film and reception where Ain Haas dazzled guests with his virtuosity on Estonian bagpipes and several types of kannel, a traditional Estonian folk instrument similar to a zither or autoharp.

The 13 participants, primarily from Midwestern colleges but with one coming from as far away as Provo, Utah, included Roger Hamburg of IU-South Bend’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs and Frank W. Thackeray, a professor of history at IU-Southeast.