



Leadership Training comes to Kiev by Al and Carolyn Akimoff



Fall has come to our Island here in the midst of Kiev. We live right on the left bank of the Dnieper River. We look across the river and see the beautiful complex of churches that make up the Monastery of Caves, their gold onion domes glisten in the sky. It was just below these churches, that 1000 years ago Prince Vladimir had his nation baptized making his people accept Christianity as their religion.

Here we are a thousand years later, praying and strategizing how we can redeem the fallen cultures that have been so brutalized during these past centuries. There are about 170 of us here at our Eastern Europe Leadership Training School that Carolyn and I are leading. We have come from over 21 different nations, most of them here in E. Europe and Central Asia.

It would be wonderful if somehow we could capture some of our worship times for you. The Central Asians with their colorful flair and wide smiles and very Asian Eastern music would get you in a cheerful mood. Then the Altai, who come from remote Siberia would get you to sit up as they produce some of the strangest sounds you think a human could make with their little harps played between their teeth and their singing which comes from somewhere between their throat and their stomach. Then things really heat up with the Russians yelping and dancing and then mellow out with the minor notes and melancholy sounds coming from the souls of the Ukrainians. That doesn't last long though as the Bulgarian Gypsies begin to revive things again with their happy tunes and so it goes on with the other nations that are here, including the Estonians, Latvians the Nenets from the Arctic and the students from Kamchatka in the Far East.



This has truly been an adventure to remember, it's like a train ride that you grab the rail and hang on for dear life. We arrived a week prior to the school to find that the building we were hoping to use for the School was unavailable. We had a week to negotiate for the use of a meeting hall and 30 apartments for housing.

It would take pages to describe all the miracles that have happened. To make a long story short, we rented the daytime use of a nightclub, which is part of a theater complex owned by the city. Two days after our school started, we found ourselves locked out with the local police SWAT team entering the



building to take it over. We found ourselves in the middle of a battle between the city administration and the nightclub owners. This is part of normal life here as corruption has flourished after the fall of communism.



As it turns out, this is not our battle at all. We are still waiting for the outcome but have come to realize that in this we have found our real school. The theme of our school is servant leadership - how does God usually teach us? By putting us in the opposite environment (trials =patience). So, we have been living a learning situation every day as we have watched what these people have lived through during these past centuries. Authoritative, power hungry leaders like Jesus described when He said, don't do as the Gentiles do, but be servants as I have served you. So, we are learning.

Meanwhile, our lectures have continued in some most creative ways, but we have not missed a lecture yet and in the midst of it we have hosted the European Leadership Team Conference and a University of the Nations graduation ceremony. We are so proud of our students and staff, they have done so well and the school is a tremendous blessing to all of us.

How are we coping in the midst of all of this? Well, pretty well actually! We love it here in the Ukraine. Kiev as a city has just come alive. When we traveled here before and just after the fall of communism, it was a drab place with hardly a restaurant or cafe where you would be allowed in.

Today it is clean, colorful and alive! With countless cafes and new shops springing up everywhere, but the little Babushkas are still out sitting on apple boxes selling vegetables and sunflower seeds which still reminds us of the old days.

We live in an apartment house called a Khrushovka after Khrushchev the Communist leader who built them by the thousands during the 60s and 70s. It is simple with a tiny kitchen, one bedroom and living room, which we share with our daughter Alisa. Our apartment is decorated in an early Socialist motif but comfortable. We do lots of walking every day, as we live on one end of our Island and have our meeting hall in the middle and our office on the other end. All our people live in apartments in between.

Our teachers have been great: the Cunninghams were here the first week, Darrow Miller, Tom Bloomer, Earl Pitts and our European leaders followed. Jim Stier helped the young leaders to define their life vision and Dr. Malmstadt and David Hamilton helped to put that into a workable project which the students are now working night and day to accomplish. We still have Landa Cope and Jeff Fountain coming to challenge our school to reach out in new ways to a new generation and then Frank Naea to commission them as they go out. I wish I had time to share on the teaching and the effect on the lives of the students. They are coming alive as old concepts are being washed away and new possibilities are being presented to them. Eastern Europe and World watch out! The Russians are coming!

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