

Bästa svenska upplevelsen som jag har!

Report of Oksana Grigoryeva, scholarship holder of the Sverker Åström Foundation for the Furtherance of the Swedish-Russian Relations.

As a scholarship holder of Sverker Åström Foundation for the Furtherance of the Swedish-Russian Relations I had a unique opportunity to visit Sweden twice – in 2007 for a month and in 2009 for two months. That was quite important for me, because I had an opportunity to compare the development of Stockholm and its community. Frankly speaking, Stockholm has changed a while. It became more international and multicultural city.

During my stay at Sweden I both had a possibility to see Sweden (about 7 small and big cities) and to take interviews with very interesting persons (more than 15 interviews). The first had a huge impact on my perception on Sweden as itself, and the second was an enormous contribution to my PhD paper.

During my internship I made a research at the Stockholm School of Economics, the Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics. Besides that I got acquainted with the talented persons as Torbjörn Becker, Director of the SITE, but also Chloe Le Coq, Ph.D., Assistant Professor and Giancarlo Spagnolo, Ph.D., Professor. Our long conversations with them were not only dedicated to my research but also to the topic of teaching as itself. It helps me on the field of my professional work. I am a senior lecturer at the St. Petersburg State University, The School of International Relations. At that time I also worked for Leningrad region chamber of commerce and industry in the department of external economic relations. So my internship was both valuable and beneficial for my work.



Torbjörn Becker, me and Giancarlo Spagnolo



View of SSE symbol from my working place

After my internship I had a possibility to publish my article in “Energy and Security in the Baltic Sea Region: Research Papers in International Relations” that was finally issued in Stockholm University 2011. I also had a complete vision of Sweden on energy security aspects in the Baltic Sea Region (a part of my Ph.D. paper). I also should mention that I used the SSE library, which I find amazing! So rare books, which you could not reach in Russia.

Among the interviews that I took the most valuable were the interview was with Michael Sohlman, Executive Director of the Nobel Foundation, Anders Lundwall, vice VD Stockholm Handelskammare, Niclas Damsgaard, PhD, Principal, Econ Pöyry AB, Makhinur Hasanova, chairwoman of Swedish Uighur committee.

The interview with Michael Sohlman was the most interesting for me. First, I admire the level of openness of political and economical elite of Sweden. Second, the conversation was vivid and concerns many topics both of Sweden and Russia.

The most personal and most dramatic interview was of course with Makhinur Hasanova. She told me about life of immigrants in Sweden and also showed me Rinkeby, a district in Stockholm with a high concentration of immigrants. The main outcome of the interview was that the social policy of Sweden was so perfect, that immigrants tried hard to integrate in the community.



Michael Sohlman, Executive Director of the Nobel Foundation

Thanks to Disa Håstad, Swedish famous journalist and the President of Foundation, who organized my visit and all necessities, I was so to say “fully integrated” in the political and cultural life of Sweden at that time. The first thing that I have done when I came to Sweden was the participation in the election process. In July 2009 there was the elections to the EU Parliament. That was quite fascinating to count the bulletins and to observe the whole process.



A sign towards the elections



Me and Disa at the elections to the EU Parliament

And again, thanks to Disa Håstad I had a possibility to attend to two events – visit of Prime-minister of Zimbabwe and lecture of Minister of foreign affairs of Finland Alexander Stubb. Both of politicians had analytical speeches and expressed their view on the future cooperation between their countries and Sweden. I also had a possibility to take a look on the building of the Parliament of Sweden and on the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI/SIIA).

Above all I should mention my visit to Sverker Åström. I was lucky to meet him twice – in 2007 and in 2009. The both conversations that we had were delighted and fascinated. I admire this outstanding and very talented person.



Sverker Åström, Disa Håstad and I



Olga Mironova, Disa Håstad, Alexej Strelnikov, Oksana Grigorieva, Kaja Khudina

The personal outcome of the trip was of course new friends. Among then I would like to mention Cecilia Mobach, research assistant at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI/SIIA). She is an interesting person and I hope that our friendship lasts for a long time.

I would like also to mention my two visits in 2009 to islands of Sweden – Gotland and Öland. On Gotland I attended to Almedalsveckan (political week), a special occasion when 10 000 representatives of political, economical elite of Sweden come to city Visby (Gotland) to discuss the current problems of Sweden. That was definitely the best place to take interview and to find out what was “on air”. I went to more than 10 seminars and speak with famous journalist Martin Ådahl. I even had a possibility to come to the political “beer-party” with singing songs together and drinking beer. I met Mats Hellström, the former governor of Stockholm there.



Me and Mats Hellström, the former governor of Stockholm



Martin Ådahl at Almedalsveckan

I also met a beautiful couple - Jacob and Cecilia Lind. They were so kind for me and organized my visit to Gotland. I also managed to meet Jacob's parents – Ingela and Magnus Lind. Ingela is an art critic and Magnus is a doctor (otho-rhino-laryngologist).



Jacob and Cecilia Lind's family



Ingela and Magnus Lind

On Gotland I visited Holmhællar (Swedish 'Koktebel') – a very lovely place where most of the famous representatives of Swedish political and cultural elite have their summerhouses. There I had a possibility to speak with such an extraordinary persons as Carl Johan Åberg, the elderly ex-minister, editor in chief and economist and his wonderful wife Gunilla, also Swedish Ambassador Lars-Göran Engfeldt and his wife Christina, Gunilla Palmstierna, artist and widow of the late Peter Weiss, Rebecka Tarschys, famous journalist of design and architecture, Disa Håstad's colleague.



Gunilla Palmstierna



Carl Johan Åberg and his wife Gunilla

My cultural life was also very intensive too. I managed to see a Shakespeare play in Roma Theater in the ruins of the old monastery and a Medieval knights tournament (during Medieval Week on Gotland). That was a very spectacular performance!



Medieval Week on Gotland



Knights tournament on Gotland

In 2009, in Borgholm (Öland) I participated at the celebration of the Victoriadagen – the Swedish Princess Victoria 32 birthday. Everyone called her “Gratis Princess” and I think it is a fantastic celebration and the day when the Swedish nation express their love and respect to the Royal family.



Victoriadagen



View of Öland

With the advice of Bengt Samuelsson, the translator, I had a chance to visit a famous VIDA museum in Öland. The owners, Barbro och Börge Kamras, of the museum showed me the pieces of arts that were enormously beautiful and full of expression. Among them I remember Bertil Vallien's ships made of glass.



Barbro och Börge Kamras



Bertil Vallien's piece of art

When I lived in Stockholm I also managed to take part in such events as Midsommar (Midsommarfirande) in Skansen, Volvo Ocean Race and to visit Drottningholm Palace, a lovely palace of the Royal family, and the exotic Chinese Pavilion. I also managed to go to Uppsala and I should say that I almost felt in love with the Uppsala cathedral (Uppsala Domkyrkan) - the tallest church building of XIII century in Gothic appearance.



View of Stockholm



View of Uppsala

In conclusion, I would like to say sincere words of thanks to the President of the Foundation Disa Håstad for support. Thanks to her care my internship in Sweden was both effective and pleasant. I felt myself at home. She even took me at her dacha at Solsidan! Her attitude towards me was very warm. She is always making me comfortable and welcome. And I am grateful for that!



Disa Håstad at Solsidan



Solsidan

I highly appreciate possibility to take part in Sverker Åström Foundation for the Furtherance of Swedish-Russian Relations fellowship program. In Sweden I established both professional and personal contacts, got new knowledge, new impressions and new friends. I hope for continuation of collaboration with Swedish specialists, strengthening relations and mutual understanding.