Discovering America

Students from the University of Kishinev experience the United States Lafayette-style

by James Doughty '90 and Ina Sementchuk

During the month of April, 13 students and two professors from the State University of Kishinev in the Soviet Republic of Moldavia visited Lafayette for 12 days. During their stay, they toured local attractions and experienced a brief taste of life on College Hill.

The group visited the Mack Printing Company in Easton, the Paxinos Elementary School, and Easton Hospital, where they were given guided tours. Day trips took them to the Hershey Chocolate Factory and to the Pennsylvania Dutch country, to a dinner with the members of a Lancaster church group who had met the students in Kishinev a year earlier, and to Philadelphia. The Citizens' Exchange Council, which organized the visit, hosted the Soviets for two days in New York City, where they saw the Statue of Liberty, a Broadway musical, and other attractions. One of the students said that returning to Lafayette from New York was like "coming home."

During a visit to the Binney and Smith crayon factory in Easton, the group was received by Congressman Don Ritter. Ritter, who speaks Russian, spoke with the students while local television cameras filmed the meeting.

On campus, the Soviet students were the stars in a "brown bag lunch," a question and answer session which was open to the whole campus community. There also were numerous receptions and meetings with faculty members and students, along with visits to classes and academic departments.

After a thrilling—and exhausting—week and a half, the group left for Washington and then for home. Gifts and hugs were exchanged with their hosts, many of whom had met their Soviet counterparts when the Lafayette contingent first visited Kishinev last November.

One of the Kishinev students, Ina Sementchuk, shared her impressions before leaving. An English major, Ina spoke with other members of her group to produce a report on what they had seen, heard, and experienced. Here is her story.

James Doughty '90, a double major in French and international affairs from Croton-on-Hudson, New York, recently completed his tenure as editor of The Lafayette. He was a member of the second Lafayette delegation to Kishinev, which travelled to the Soviet Union in May.
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The Kishinev students answered questions and gave their impressions of the United States at a "brown bag" luncheon. The Lafayette students were grateful to the Kishinev students for the time they spent with them.