

THE IPDES CONFERENCE IN VILAFRANCA

This view of the Vilafranca Conference is based on one person's point of view. It is in no way to be taken as either an official account or even a well balanced picture. With this in mind Bret hopes you will

OCTOBER 21ST - OCTOBER 28TH 2001

enjoy it as a momento. On Saturday afternoon Bret set off for Barcelona, Spain. It was his first trip abroad since the terrorist attack and he was a bit apprehensive. He was going to an educational Conference in Vilafranca, a town 40 minutes away from Barcelona.

Bret took a taxi to Vilafranca and arrived there in time to meet old friends and colleagues who were about to go back into Barcelona. Bret said "oh why not" and went in with them. They all went to the Picasso Museum first. It was undergoing an expansion and restoration. By the time the group had finished lunch Bret was very tired and wished he had not come into town. He spent the afternoon stretched out on some grass down by the port. At 5:30 they all loaded back into the bus to return to Vilafranca. Bret had not slept for 24 hours. That evening there was a get acquainted session before a lovely dinner.

Well the next morning the conference got down to work. There were over 45 people from over 8 nations including Spain, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Greece, Russia and Austria. The Conference was set up in the following way. It was a simulation exercise. The participants were separated into four teams representing four projects; Germany, Greece, Sweden and Catalan. Their job was to draw up a proposal for a New Project. Another group of participants were separated into four interest groups with whom the teams were to touch base and seek their advice on their projects. The interest groups were; The Economic Interests, Parents and Students, the Educational Ministries and the Press. They began meeting that morning.

A Church in downtown Barcelona

That afternoon the participants adjourned to the Town Hall where they were received by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. The Deputy Mayor was an old friend of Bret's, Jordi. They hugged each other. After that meeting there was a press conference for the local media.

The next morning Bret had the honor and pleasure to deliver the first keynote address on the status of reform in New York City. It must be admitted that he may have strayed a bit from the topic. The conference continued with all the groups working very hard at their assigned roles. After the days events they all went back to see more of the center of town and ate dinner in a lovely restaurant called Cal Ton.

Now a little aside about the food. The Hotel served a wonderful smorgasbord breakfast. The choices included a variety of juices; croissants, rolls, breads; scrambled and hard boiled eggs; cold cuts including Spanish prosciutto; fruits and cereal. Bret usually had orange juice, scrambled eggs, a slice of prosciutto, a croissant and hot tea. Lunches and dinners often started with a Catalan salad (lettuce, cold cuts, white asparagus, Spanish olives and slices of fish. They served a dish of a special local mushroom cooked in oil and brown rice. Fish and chicken were more often served then meat. Deserts were mainly flans and oysters. Bret was sure that after the first few days he had gained many pounds. Naturally the wine flowed freely during these meals.

On Wednesday morning Alexander Tubelsky with help from Nata Krylova gave the second Keynote Address. After lunch came the Final Session where the Teams presented their Proposals to a Panel of Judges from the different Interest Groups. At the Conference was a young graduate from City A. School, Melissa Sanfiorenzo who had decided to come to Vilafranca to work on a photographic project.

Anton Zverev, the young reporter from the New Izvestia.



A patio in the Picasso Museum. Below is nineteenth century room from an adjoining home which is now part of the Museum.



The Church of Vilafranca.

Alexander Tubelsky, the founder and Principal of the School for Self Determination in Moscow. One of the participants.

