**SCHOLA HUMANITAS (CZECH REPUBLIC)**

1. **OUR STAY IN TURKEY (29th March – 5th April, 2014)**
2. **COMENIUS INTERVIEWS IN TURKEY**

Our school Schola Humanitas Litvínov participated in two study exchanges belonging to Comenius project Travelogues 2012-2014. The previous year was devoted to the cooperation with Estonian Keskkool in Audru and this year with **Turkish Doğa College in Şanliurfa**. The city Şanliurfa is characteristic of the ancient and oriental features and it is situated in the eastern part of Turkey. It is undergoing modernization process in last decade and we can find here distinctive contrasts between the level of development in modern streets and the poverty of the old ones. We could feel local atmosphere at bazaars and we also visited city walls of Urfa castle as well as Balikligöl (a fish lake of sacred importance) or mosques. We enjoyed trips to Göbeklitepe (a world-famous archaeological site), Harran (an old settlement agglomeration and ruins of the oldest university in the world), Diayarbakir (a city that lies on river Tigris and majority of Kurdish people live there), and a boat cruise on Atatürk Dam near Halfeti municipality. The highlight of the last day was represented by a typical Turkish night in El-Ruha, a renowned hotel in Şanliurfa.

The interviews concerning the topic of international migration took place at Doğa School on Thursday (3rd April). Two guests arrived – **Radwan Bakkar** and **Tülin Koc**. **Radwan** was born in Aleppo – a largest city in Syria (310 kilometres from the capital Damascus) with more than two million inhabitants. Radwan is 32 years old and works as an English teacher. He attended two universities to get his education in English language and literature. He had a chance come to know different cultures, because the two chosen university cities – Aleppo and Damascus – lie in different areas of the country. Northern (Aleppo) and southern (Damascus) parts are quite dissimilar. It was an important experience for Bakkar because he considers himself being proud of his country. And that is why he likes to broaden his horizons. When he passed final exams and got his university diploma, he started to work as an English teacher. He used to be a pedagogue at Syrian private schools. He has no problem teaching young kids and teenagers English grammar and various topics. Nevertheless, as an ambitious man, his dream is to study Ph.D. in linguistics. It is a problem these days for him to fulfil his goal because there is a war in his native country and he has, of course, a lot of different and more important problems. His great love is English literature. He does not read books in translation, but in original. It is his main activity in leisure time. Among his most favourite British writers belong these significant and famous names: William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, John Donne, John Dryden, Alexander Pope and David Herbert Lawrence. His most favourite book was written by Dickens – *A Tale of Two Cities*. It is in his opinion an excellent novel.

Unfortunately, Radwan does not have time for reading this year – he moved to Turkey (Şanliurfa) four months ago because of Syrian civil war and his thoughts are related almost solely to his family. Radwan is married and he has got two children. His wife and two little kids remained in a Syrian village (they stay by their relatives) and Radwan left the country because it was not possible to find a job during the war time. Radwan is a responsible husband and father - he regularly sends money to his family. He is trying to get necessary travel documents for them – due to possible dangers he is very worried to leave them there.

Radwan feels positively about his stay in Turkey. Şanliurfa is not far from Syrian border (about 50 kilometres), but languages are different. Radwan spoke Arabian in Syria and nowadays he is trying to learn Turkish. It is not an easy process for him – grammatical structures are dissimilar and he also needs to keep important Turkish vocabulary in his mind, which is sometimes a problem – Radwan’s mind is occupied with the worries about his family. He is grateful to his brother who lives in Şanliurfa and helped him to find a job here. Radwan is staying together with his friends in a shared flat. He does not see big cultural differences in Syrian and Turkish habits and traditions because they are very near and marked by similar influences. Radwan regrets the war conflict in his native country. It used to be a beautiful county, full of culture, rich history and splendid monuments but nowadays it is being ruined by bombs. He also spoke about religious freedom in Syria. The majority of Syrian society is represented by Muslims, nevertheless, people are generally tolerant to other beliefs.

**Tülin Koc** is a young Turkish woman (28 years old). She was born in Australia in 1986 and has three siblings. She presented us an interesting story of family immigration to a different continent. In spite of the fact that the most of Turkish people immigrated to Germany, Tülin’s grandfather decided to choose another destination. The main reason for immigration represented Turkish national economic problems in 1960’s.

The marriage of her parents was a kind of family wedlock. Father’s brother (Tülin’s oldest uncle) also immigrated to Australia with his parents. Both families were in good and friendly relationship and so two distant relatives got married. It was not love at first sight but as Tülin’s parents were learning more about each other they deepened their mutual feelings. According to Tülin’s words, it is a good example of the fact that this kind of an arranged marriage does not automatically mean an unhappy relationship. It seemed that Tülin would spend all her life in Australia. Nevertheless, her father slowly and gradually came to the decision that it would be better for his family to come back to Turkey.

After moving, Tülin and her siblings had some problems to put up with different educational system. In comparison to almost liberal approach of teachers in Australia, she had to get use to their strict behaviour and rules in Turkey. Even though Tülin remembers an Australian school mostly in a positive way and with a bit of nostalgia, she is able to see objective advantages and disadvantages of both educational traditions. Since Tülin is an English native speaker, it helped her a lot in her professional career. She works as an English teacher.

Tülin and her family are Muslims and so we asked her about possible obstacles when they were living in Australia. Tülin very much appreciates tolerant attitude of Australian people towards Islamic confession. They have no problem to respect different beliefs. Moreover, people can find some mosques in Australia as well. They used to live in Melbourne which is in her memoires a beautiful city with cosmopolitan and vivid atmosphere. She could remember a traditional significant annual event of an international Grand Slam tennis tournament Australian Open, when the streets of Melbourne were overcrowded with sport fans and tourists.

Tülin is now going through a happy period of her life. She is married and has a little three-year-old daughter who she cares about and loves deeply. On the other hand, she realises how difficult and sometimes even tiring is to live with a sense of responsibility for her daughter. However she is her darling and gives Tülin a great meaning of life.

Pavel Horký

**Schola Humanitas**

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