High cardiovascular mortality in Ukraine
An ISTH-MLTD Educational Course on Thrombosis in Kiev (April 4-5, 2013)

Recent epidemiological data of WHO confirm that, in the European Region, the highest peaks of total and cardiovascular mortality are reported for Eastern Europe, and particularly for Countries former members of the Soviet Union as Moldova, Byelorussia, Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Just to give a few figures, in Ukraine the mortality rate (per 100,000 citizens) amounts to more than 1300 cases versus a median of less than 800 in the European Union, not to mention Spain, Italy and France with figures around 600. Since also in Eastern Europe cardiovascular deaths account for 44-48% of total mortality, a more intensive commitment for cardiovascular prevention and management is urgently needed. Main causes of this state of public health likely are unhealthy lifestyle and diet, abuse of smoking and alcohol, air pollution, and diffuse socio-economic deprivation, despite the achievement of a novel freedom, still partly misused.

With this situation in mind, together with Raffaele De Caterina, Professor of Cardiology and member of ISTH, we contacted already in 2011 Alexander Parkhomenko, a distinguished Professor of Cardiology in Kiev, forwarding him the project for a Course on Thrombosis and Antithrombotic Therapy. Later, we obtained of the endorsement of the Thrombosis Group of the European Society of Cardiology, a step that was greatly helpful in ensuring the participation of Cardiologists as Tutors. Thus, this year on April 4-5, a group of European experts composed, besides myself and De Caterina, by Sten Kristensen, Bob Storey, Lina Badimon, Gregy Gerotriafas and Sabine Eichinger moved to Kiev to meet there with Alexander Parkhomenko and his 140 recruited participants, most of them young cardiologists and internists. We had four working sessions: Antithrombotic drugs in acute coronary syndromes; Primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular events; Prophylaxis and treatment of venous thromboembolisms; Prophylaxis of cardiogenic embolism and stroke. There was an equal number of Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian speakers and chairmen for each session. Participation and discussion from the audience was intense and fruitful and we could perceive the excellent level of medical and biological knowledge of the attendees, but also a diffuse awareness of isolation, especially due to language and alphabetic barriers. This feeling was masked in part by a strong national pride and by the memory of an outstanding medical tradition. Besides transferring updated medical knowledge, we tried to create bridges towards Europe by fostering personal contacts with the centers of excellence represented.

Only after one and half day of intensive course, we were able visit Kiev, the great capital (more than 3 million people) of a large Country (46 million). The golden-plated or cobalt blue domes were shining under a springtime sun, just retrieved after many days of snow and frost.

Sergio Coccheri
Kiev 2013: a partial view of the audience at the beginning of a session

Kiev 2013: sightseeing around the shining domes