

NOBLE PROJECT
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By Natalya Ivina

Deaf students of the world, unite!

Unfortunately, Russia still doesn't provide proper conditions for invalids or the handicapped to feel at ease. For such people, higher education is the most effective means of achieving a secure place in society. This is proved by Bauman Moscow State Technical University (BMSTU), which has been educating deaf students since 1934. In the early 1990s, BMSTU established the Center on Deafness, where over two hundred students now are studying. The Center has accumulated considerable experience: methodologies, materials and auxiliary technical facilities, which meet the most current standards for training the deaf. This week, BMSTU signed a memorandum of understanding to participate in PEN-International, a project dedicated to promoting the development of educational opportunities for the deaf.

In 1991, Bauman University established close contacts with the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (USA), the world's first and largest technical college for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, one of eight colleges of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in the state of New York. Igor Fedorov, Rector of BMSTU, said that the university welcomed the joining PEN-International, whose goal is creation and development of a network of universities to realize professional training programs for the deaf.

At a special ceremony, held on March 25, 2002, Bauman University signed a memorandum thus joining PEN-International. The Nippon Foundation, whose executive director, Reizo Utagawa, participated in the signing ceremony, finances PEN-International. The delegation from NTID was headed by Robert Davila, NTID Director and Vice-President of RIT, who for many years has held high administrative posts and has done a great deal to promote education of the deaf.

Dr. James De Caro, Director of PEN-International, and Maria Shustorovich, Professor of Mathematics at NTID and the project coordinator for Russia, spoke on behalf of all universities participating in the project. They expressed their satisfaction with the fact that the leading technical university of Russia is becoming a full-fledged member of PEN-International.

The Center on Deafness created at BMSTU, DeCaro said, is a model institution. Dr. Alexander Stanevsky, PEN Director for

BMSTU, heads the Center. In many countries of the world, young people, for the only reason that they are unable to hear, are often deprived of access to educational, social and economic benefits, which society must provide to them. Now, signing this agreement, PEN-International and Bauman University pledge themselves to cooperate in changing that existing situation.

Mr. Utagawa, who for 17 years worked in one of the major Japanese newspapers and for the last 7 years has been associated with the Nippon Foundation, a major Japanese charity organization, said: I think the Center organized at Bauman University is excellent.

Dr. Alexander Stanevsky noted: The hard of hearing are forced to choose their position in life: whether to enter this world with a hand stretched out for begging or with a hand stretched out for partnership. The people present at this signing ceremony and the people whom they represent come with a hand stretched out in partnership. The best path for us to take together is education. In its essence, this project is not only social and humane: it also has significance for the republic. Aid problems can be solved by means of benefits, pensions... But genuine aid is the creation of conditions so that these people are able to work together with us. Today we are united on the basis of these noble ideas - technological, technical and humanitarian, so as to move forward together, to become partners. This project is destined to succeed.

The ceremony was attended by Mr. Victor Saprykin, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Mettem Ltd., who has instituted 10 stipends (equal to the presidential ones) for deaf students of Bauman University.

Robert Davila stressed that for 11 years NTID and BMSTU have been cooperating on various projects. Now, thanks to the support from The Nippon Foundation, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and the Bauman University are ready to undertake a program that will improve existing possibilities for the deaf to receive high-quality education. Mr. Davila also said that it was a great honor for him to sign the memorandum of understanding on behalf of the Rochester Institute of Technology.

The memorandum was signed in a festive atmosphere, and the ceremony ended with the playing of Bauman University's anthem.

Caption to the photo: BMSTU President Igor Fedorov and Professor Maria Shustorovich