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ScholarForum

The Journal of the Open Society Institute's Network Scholarship Programs

Generational Insights

Regional Focus: SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Personal accounts of studying abroad

Essays and creative works by NSP grantees and alumni

Contents

Welcome to the 10th issue of *Scholar Forum*!

We have chosen the theme of generational insights to be our cover topic for this issue. As generations who grew up during the tensions of the Cold War give way to younger faces, perspectives on everything from the role of government to familial relations are changing. Increased rural to urban migration and changing economic conditions are leaving some elderly persons without traditional support resources. Hanna Blyumina (Muskie/FSA Fellowship Program, 2003) examines this phenomenon in Ukraine while Nurjamal Omurkanova (DAAD, 2004) explores differing perspectives of politics across generational divides in Kyrgyzstan. Ema Paulovich (UK Chevening Scholar, 2004) writes on shifting gender roles across generations, using politics as her focus.

From the many excellent submissions we received it is clear that in an ever-changing world, generational insights and worldviews continue to evolve. At times this will produce poignant moments of humanity, like when Sofia An (Social Work Program, 2000) jettisons the old, sarcastic "Happy Birthday," during her nephew's party in Kazakhstan. Yet at other moments, as Alexandru Balas (Undergraduate Exchange Program, 2002) shows us in his "ride" through Bucharest, transitional periods leave some to suffer that most heart wrenching of human emotions, hopelessness.

For our regional topic, we have chosen Southeast Europe, or the Balkans, a term which itself comes under scrutiny in a piece by Maja Petric (Undergraduate Exchange Program, 2001). From the romantic streets of Montenegro to historic Sofia, the articles in this section capture the region through poetry and recipes; reflective essays and historical pieces.

Finally, we have included several Personal Accounts, including a stream of consciousness reflection on life in the United States by Corina Ardelean (Undergraduate Exchange Program, 2003) as well as Maher Hanna's (PROL, 2006) longing for "A Palestinian Summer," a look back at the 2006 NSP Summer School in Istanbul.

We hope you will enjoy this edition of Scholar Forum, and we hope you will contribute to our next issue. Please see the guidelines in the back. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Generational Insights

photo: Jibek ISKAKOVA

Living Through Transition

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"May you live in interesting times," an ancient Chinese proverb and curse states. Since 1990, millions of people in the republics of the former Soviet Union have lived through a period of transition. Unimaginable things have been happening in this region for decades. People's lives were divided into two parts: BC (before collapse) and AD (amazing days).

What is it like living during a time of transition? How does it affect people of different ages? How do different generations experience transition? Do they feel like they have to struggle to survive, or do they enjoy having new opportunities?

Living through transition means you never really plan anything. The feeling of security and predictability of the world is lost. Living through transition means you plan things but you know that your plans are not written in stone but in sand. Living through transition means you might have a degree in engineering yet work as a security guard in a casino. Living through transition means you feel that anything is possible—like getting a scholarship to study at Columbia University.

Here in Kazakhstan, we have three generations of people experiencing transition: my friends, my parents, and my nephews and nieces.

My parents experienced their childhood years with poverty, cold, and starvation during World War II and Stalin's regime. They kept the Soviet system up and running their entire lives. My mom's words: "I like this time! I like having choices; there are many more opportunities now. What did we have during Soviet times but small fixed salaries, empty shelves in the stores, and paying for basic goods under the table? Some people would have access to all the goods, and others would feel powerless and deprived. I wish I were younger; I would have done many wonderful things."

> "What did we have during Soviet times but small fixed salaries, empty shelves in the stores, and paying for basic goods under the table?"

My generation was born during the peak of socialism in the sixties. They attended numerous Communist Party meetings in elementary and middle school, spent high school and the early

university years in the shadow of the war in Afghanistan, listened to Gorbachev's endless speeches during their university years, witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union at the start of their professional career, and survived the dark years of crisis (literally dark: no lights in the streets), unemployment, and despair when hope for a better life almost disappeared.

While chatting with my friends over dinner, I told them about the International Labor Organization's study of people's life satisfaction and happiness. It showed that people's satisfaction with life is not associated with their income level, but rather with the feeling of security, confidence, social protection, and equality. "This is exactly what we had in the past!" my friends exclaimed. They feel like they've lost their world.

At my nephew's birthday party, I sang a song from an old Russian cartoon, which had been traditionally sung at all birthday parties during the Soviet days. It went, "Unfortunately, birthdays happen only once a year." I enjoyed myself but heard only silence. I looked at the children's faces. They were not singing because they didn't know this song! I suddenly realized that these are children who have grown up after the Soviet Union, who do not know much about Lenin, revolutions, pioneer organizations, KOMSOMOL, the Communist Party, oppression, hypocrisy, and many other things that were part of my life. Then I started singing, "Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you," and the children happily joined me in a chorus. ■

"Living through transition means you plan things but you know that your plans are not written in stone but in sand"

A Ride Through Bucharest

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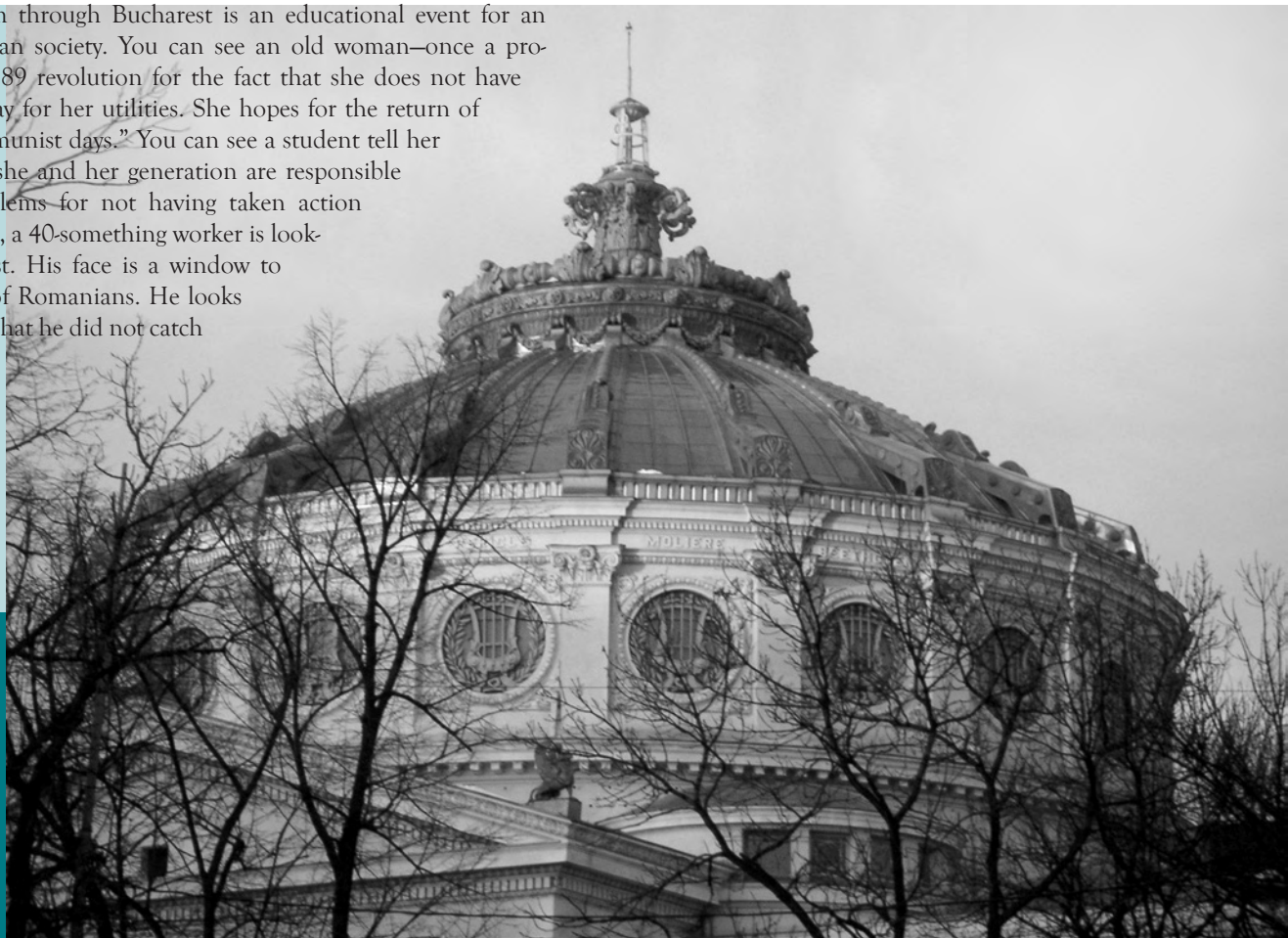
Taking the tram through Bucharest is an educational event for an observer of Romanian society. You can see an old woman—once a professor—blame the 1989 revolution for the fact that she does not have enough money to pay for her utilities. She hopes for the return of the "good old Communist days." You can see a student tell her to shut up because she and her generation are responsible for Romania's problems for not having taken action earlier. Next to them, a 40-something worker is looking outside, eyes lost. His face is a window to the daily problems of Romanians. He looks resigned to the idea that he did not catch



The Romanian Athenaeum in Bucharest

photo: Anne CAMPBELL

the wave of the post-communist success and now is left in limbo between the communist past and today's society.

The fall of communism had different impacts on three major generations: the elderly, the middle-aged, and the young. These generational identities were formed around post-communist issues after 1989. The oldest generation was unable to make the cognitive change from the values of the communist regime. They see that their life work was not enough to cover their expenses for utilities and their frustration grows when they see the younger generation's success. Some of the middle generation tried to understand the political and social changes after 1989. Some were successful; some were not.

The younger generation does not understand when older people talk about the "good old days," and their conceptualization of success is built on the idea of "scams" or going abroad to work. Based on their different values, the generations have conflicts over politics: the older people tend to vote with the former Communists, while the young people take to the streets to show their loyalty to liberal ideals.

Changing work habits are a major cause of conflict. If the parents were hardworking and always away from home trying to be breadwinners, their children grew up alone and were educated by TV culture. They tend to disregard their parents' work and enjoy life on their parents' expense accounts. Their symbols of success are people who achieved instant fame. If their parents were not hardworking and not among the successful, the children blamed their parents for their poor status and tried to make a living by going abroad to work (often in Italy, Canada, and Germany). Young parents who went abroad to work basically left their children as orphans or to be raised by one parent, cutting relations with their own parents. In these cases, children grow up without their young parents and old people age without their adult children's help. This can only create more conflicts in the future.■

photo:
Jibek ISKAKOVA

Theory Is Good, but Praxis Is Better

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Each minute is meaningful in a person's life. Who we are depends on what we are doing during these minutes, hours, days, and years. From this perspective, 15 years is a long time. But 15 years are too few to consider some crucial changes in generational identities. There are still enough people with the old stereotypes of thinking, and they are still influential with younger generations. They continue to transfer some identity characteristics to us. The old way of living and thinking and the old way of bringing up children cannot be changed immediately as some elements of the old system will continue to exist. To minimize such influence and to hasten this process is very important—not only through what people are doing inside the country, but also how much and how efficient the contribution is from the outside. A new culture is not formed in a matter of several years. However, there are already changes afoot.

Even older people, the representatives of the former system, can understand and accept the values and freedoms of democracy, but this does not mean they are exercising and enjoying them fully. Events in Kyrgyzstan, beginning on March 24th, 2005, showed that people have recognized what the benefits of democracy can be and have tried to implement them. Unfortunately, these experiences have also

proved that there are still many young people who do not have clear notions about what democracy really is. After the demonstrations, they smashed and looted big shops and boutiques alike in the middle of the night. This can also be considered as a lack of meaningful communication between the older people who organized this revolt and the younger people, who were its main actors, and to some degree the instruments, in securing victory over the former government. In the process, there was little work done to explain to these young people, who were making history, the values and goals that were supposed to govern their actions.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, beginning in elementary schools, children have been taught democratic ideas. Right away there were programs on television, the number of which has significantly decreased during the last few years, that were meant to inform people about the liberties and freedoms that democracy guarantees. Dozens of NGOs operate in Kyrgyzstan today. The problem is that this is not the case everywhere in Kyrgyzstan. People in remote regions are much less informed, and there is little work done there to address this. At the same time, what you know is not always enough to act in accordance with your ideals. You have to grasp these and be ready to implement them in real life. This is a real challenge for everyone.

"There are still many people who talk about building democracy while in reality they are doing just the opposite"

"A new culture is not formed in a matter of several years"

During the last few years the situation has been getting worse; corruption and injustice have been increasing in the country. People brought up in the totalitarian Soviet regime, with their mentality of silent obedience, do not easily decide to protest. In spite of this, the last few years were a turning point in the consciences of most people. They realized that nobody but themselves could provide for their well-being and that they should choose leaders who would bring them closer to their goals.

On the one hand, one could say that there is no gap between generations; they understand each other well enough, and there is a dialogue between them. The gap that does exist is more of a characteristic of relationships within families. Companies that prefer to hire younger employees who are more flexible and more easily taught are an example of one generation perceiving another's strengths. At this level, dialogue is possible, too. On the other hand, in politics there are still many people with the old mentality who talk about building democracy, while in reality they are doing just the opposite. Young people at this level are just fulfilling the commands of their older chiefs, and there is little space for meaningful cooperation.

These days Kyrgyzstan has more and more young and capable professionals who show, in their work, how much more effective they can be. In living up to their promise, they can gain the approval of the older generations, and this will contribute to smoother and more fruitful cooperation among them.■

Family Transition and the Problems of Elders' Loneliness in Ukraine

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The evolution of familial relations and the social transformation of the family as an institution reflects the general demographic and economic changes in modern Ukrainian society, which in turn directly affects the security of its elderly members. Although the family still constitutes the main support system for older people, traditional family support mechanisms are being eroded due to a reduction in average family size, rural to urban migration of young adults, and declining levels of co-residence (multiple generations of a fam-

photo: Hanna BLYUMINA

ily living together). Meanwhile, the state health care and social security systems do not meet the needs of the elderly. The traditional function of an extended or multigenerational family—wherein its elder members are given due respect and relationships between generations were based on mutual help and understanding—is almost lost. The relationships between the older and younger members of a family are very complicated for economic, psychological, and moral reasons. The widespread poverty that pervades Ukrainian society encourages the perception of the elderly, with their escalating need for health and support services, as burdensome. Low pensions and a lack of access to any income-generating activities make old people a financial burden for families, as they no longer contribute to its budget. The only tangible form of support expected from elderly parents for their children is child-care, shopping, and meal preparation.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that dependency on family members increases with age, due largely to health problems. The concept of family gains special significance as an elderly person adapts to his/her new status. Many, whose social orientation turns toward immediate family members, find a meaningful existence in being helpful within the family.

"The majority of Ukrainians over 70 who live alone either live in poverty or are in need of medical, social, or psychological care"

"Widespread poverty encourages the perception of the elderly, with their escalating need for health and support services, as burdensome"

Close social bonds combined with just enough independence would be an ideal lifestyle for them. Nevertheless, the number of elderly people living alone keeps increasing in Ukraine, and this process is accompanied neither by the necessary family support nor proper care from the state.

Among the 11.4 million people above working age in Ukraine (for women, age 55; for men, age 60), three million are nonworking people who live alone. They belong to the most insecure and impoverished category of citizens. In rural areas, elderly people without close relatives make up one-third of all pensioners, whereas in Ukraine as a whole, they make up one-fifth. Moreover, sociologists predict an increase in the rate of elderly Ukrainians without children and a corresponding rise in the number of elderly unable to work and live alone.

Researchers consider loneliness a risk factor for many diseases, including cardiovascular disease. Older people living alone need twice as much medical care as those who live with their families. According to the Ukrainian Institute of Gerontology, research results show that of Ukrainians over 70 who live alone, the majority either live in poverty or are in need of medical, social, or psychological care. Of this group, 30 percent need constant medical and/or psychological care. Around 43 percent need help with such tasks as storing vegetables and fuel for the winter, home maintenance, and winterproofing. And 25-28 percent need temporary help, for instance during the period following a hospital stay.

In Ukraine's social security system, care for elderly citizens is performed by local service centers meant for the disabled as well as for those who simply live alone and cannot work to support themselves. Such help reduces the state budget load by decreasing the use of shelters. Some well-known organizations of this kind are Hesed AVOT, which provides elderly Jewish people with home care; the Red Cross, the international organization that makes house calls and does preventative care; and the Home Care program, which provides care, consultations, and companionship for disabled people.

It is obvious that while making an invaluable contribution to the general situation, the local service centers are neither physically nor financially able to solve the whole issue of care for the elderly in Ukraine. A fundamental solution to this issue will require state involvement and a financial commitment adequate to the task.■

Two Generations of Female Politicians in Belarus

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Belarus is an example of a newly independent state that chose a political system with a strong leader having both executive and legislative powers. The appearance of such an authoritarian leader and the lack of democracy was probably caused by the general confusion after gaining independence in the early 1990s. The people of Belarus were absolutely unprepared to decide their own fate. However, only the growth of a sense of responsibility can help Belarus to become a truly independent and democratic nation. I will focus on the conflict between the old and the new—post-Soviet officials who are in power now and the new democrats who are in the opposition. The way female politicians are represented on the Belarusian political stage is a vivid example, and illustrative of this conflict.

"The passive behavior of women in the main legislative body of Belarus only causes distrust in them as political figures"

"Only the growth of a sense of responsibility can help Belarus to become a truly independent and democratic nation"

The two generations of female politicians in Belarus differ in their approach to politics. Women who have recently taken positions as MPs with the president's consent—we could name them the "old generation"—regard themselves as "hired workers" of the state. Practically, these women are the "workstock" of executive power, who simply secure a quorum while passing laws.

By contrast, the "new generation"—female politicians from the opposition—who have not gained seats in parliament because of all kinds of impediments, actively display their position. They see an MP as a professional who strives to improve legislation to better address the needs of society. As they do not have access to the parliamentary tribune, these women take an active part in the work of NGOs and try to influence public opinion at a different level.

Another important difference between female politicians of the "old" and "new" generations lies in their interpretation of the political hierarchy in society. The "old" generation has inherited a belief that voters are at the bottom of the societal ranking. The higher the position of a politician, the more power he or she has over other people. This authority, however, is not used wisely and professionally. In most cases it only serves to satisfy personal ambitions.

The "new" generation is also eager to grant officials more authority but, in their belief, it must only be used for the implementation of public opinion into legislation. These politicians are guided by the Constitution, which does not put them higher than other citizens, but places them on the same level in the societal ranking as the rest of the electorate.

The fact that today the governmental structures are mostly occupied by female politicians of the "old" generation results in a political arena which is devoid of political discussion and critical opinions. The passive behavior of women in the main legislative body of Belarus only causes distrust in them as political figures. At the same time, female politicians of the "new" generation are working in the direction of constructing a faithful relationship with the electorate. Eventually, as soon as society is ready to take responsibility for its decisions, these female politicians will be more likely to change the situation in Belarus towards a democratic state.■

A Lost Generation Is Found in Ukraine

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We are a unique generation. Our generation was brought up in the USSR, and then let fifteen years of change pass through our souls and hearts. We have experienced two bloodless revolutions, the end of the Soviet regime and of the feudal state of Leonid Kuchma, and experienced the crisis in our consciousness as we sought our freedom. My brother Pavel was 12 years old when the great "evil empire" fell into pieces. He was one among millions of fragments roughly glued together to become 52 million under the yellow and blue flag, and who were called Ukrainians. He did not believe in this flag, in this Ukraine. Our motherland disappeared from the map. Our parents and grandparents lost their motherland as well, and it was much more difficult for them to find a new one. But my brother and I were kids and we still had a ray of hope of finding a new motherland.

"Our parents and grandparents lost their motherland as well, and it was much more difficult for them to find a new one"

Grandfather and grandchild
photo: Jibek ISKAKOVA

While the citizens of other countries felt a connection to their country, my brother, as well as many other teenagers, found himself outside his country and society. He could not say that he was Soviet, but he also could not yet say he was European or Ukrainian. Only after 14 long years, during the "orange revolution," could he truly call himself a citizen of Ukraine.

"During the 'orange revolution' Ukraine was in a state of euphoria: people finally felt themselves to be Ukrainians"

By that time Pavel had tried on many different cultural, religious, and social clothes. He had been a revolutionary, a rebel, and a poet. In the end he became a journalist and musician and it seemed to him that he found himself, but he lacked something very important. He lacked his motherland.

The former leaders of the USSR were more successful in adapting to a new life. For 14 years these hypocrites deceived others by trying on new masks and dancing on the stage of Ukrainian politics. Nuclear material, scrap metal, and weapons were being sold to terrorists. Those in power were making a fortune while most people in the country lost their hearts and distanced themselves from Ukraine. Some of them emigrated; others withdrew into them-

The Word

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Who does not know the wise words from the Bible—the power of the Word is great.

"I can speak two languages!" my grandmother would say with admiration.

"I can speak only two languages!" said my mother with pity. And our motivated generation can say: "We can speak only three languages, but we should and we will learn more!"

So one can see the difference between pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet generations; the differences between openness to new experiences.

An old Armenian proverb states: "You are as many persons as the languages you know." Now the "curtain" is open and the world has chosen the way of open society, and in open society there are no boundaries and limits, meaning that people's minds are also open to the world, and this requires that one have good communication skills. During Soviet times the level of education was high. The population was educated but isolated. We could see and get acquainted with what was outside of that big country only by means of books, albums, or other indirect sources of information. It was theory, not reality, and sometimes indirect means are distorted. Now, when the boundaries are open, we have the chance to see everything that was once available only indirectly and virtually, we can apply our theory to practice. This is one of the generational differences in Armenia, and I suppose all ex-Soviet countries.

Of course, Soviet and post-Soviet generational differences exist and they are mainly connected with a perception of real-

selves. Perhaps one thousandth of the country kept fighting for a happy future. These were people who could imagine a way to make their dreams come true. This team of civilized and democratic people began to inspire others with a belief in themselves and in freedom for Ukraine from the vassal system of the powerful.

During the "orange revolution" Ukraine was in a state of unconcealed euphoria. On the wave of a transformation of consciousness, people finally felt themselves to be Ukrainians. As a strong opposition journalist and public figure since 1998, my brother had contributed to the fight for democracy in Ukraine. He did not even notice the moment when he began calling himself Ukrainian and became concerned with the events in his country. "Now everything will be okay!" However, one should be objective—we need to work hard to succeed.

It looks like the sphere of education will be the battlefield for the final Europeanization and democratization of Ukraine because the growth of democratic values in the hearts of Ukrainian youth is vital. The victory of the democratic process on December 26, 2004, was not the final defeat of the old feudal regime. It was simply the beginning.■

photos [above and opposite]: Jibek ISKAKOVA

ity. But the power of the Word is great. It integrates people all over the world, it opens doors and at the same time closes them, opens hearts, and makes them bitter. An experience abroad, the chance that was given to us by the DAAD-OSI program in Germany, teaches exchange students from Armenia and other ex-Soviet countries to see foreign countries from the inside, and our countries from the outside. This is an important rule of life—reflection—when one can see oneself, one's society from the outside, it gives one a sense of control. We should take this chance: "Stop being dreamers! Start being doers!" As I see it, this is the solution for "Post-Soviet Syndrome."

The transition years were not easy. But as we know, each difficulty has its positive sides and we can find numerous examples from life that difficulties, obstacles, and suffering make a human being more adaptive to the environment, make him stronger, and make him a fighter. We should be grateful to destiny for giving us such chances.■

"Now the world has chosen the way of open society, and in open society people's minds are also open to the world"

Regional Focus: Southeast Europe

Whose Politics? How I Became Croatian

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To look back upon the recent years in Yugoslavia is to look into my childhood. I was a kid like every other, playing football and reading Italian comics. That is not to mention the silly endeavors my friends and I would pursue in search of cheap playing cards and the uniforms of our favorite football players. This is what I recall when thinking about Yugoslavia. Politics were simply something I did not know anything about, and naturally did not care about. I was an ordinary kid doing the stuff every other kid did, which was simply living my childhood. But politics somehow got in the way, and suddenly I was not a kid anymore. I became a Croatian kid. Suddenly I was not buying my favorite comics in Serbo-Croatian but in Croatian. It was not appropriate that my favorite football players were Serbian, nor was it okay to be friends with kids who were Serbian, as they became Serbian as suddenly and not of their own free will, just as I had become Croatian. Politics entered my life abruptly and violently long before I was able to make sense of it. So I dismissed my Serbian football heroes and my Serbian friends. While not knowing exactly why, I knew it was something that had to be done.

"Politics got in the way, and suddenly I was not a kid anymore. I became a Croatian kid"

And then the war happened. Again, nobody asked me about it, I was just swept away into the grown-ups' world (and what a world it was!). Suddenly not only did I have to abandon all that was Serbian, but I had to hate it as well. And going along with it, I became an ardent nine-year old Croatian, doing what everybody did. I would make insulting jokes about Serbs when my Serbian schoolmates

were present; I would play nationalistic songs on my balcony to show them I was in no mood for compromise (and anyone who is familiar with such songs is aware that they meant business); and I would wholeheartedly indulge in wartime anti-they euphoria. Of course, I was not quite sure who "they" were, except that I knew they were evil and they were Serbian. I did not ask questions because it seemed everybody else knew very well and it is not like anybody could give me a good answer. Basically, we were at war because we had to defend ourselves from Evil itself.

Now, when I look back to the time before we became Serbian and Croatian, I see only football, comic books, and friends. There was no special meaning that I attached to my life. I lived from one day to the next, with no serious identity turmoil. If you were to go 17 years back in time to Zagreb to look for me, you would probably find me playing with other kids whose national background I did not know anything about. Nor did I care. It was a very unfortunate thing that our first serious identity crisis was a national one. I became Croatian before I became anything else. The emerging national euphoria overwhelmed me, not allowing me to do anything about it, and nor did I feel as if I was supposed to question it. It seemed to be a natural process. All of a sudden I was no less Croatian than I was a human being. But why did it have to be that way and why did politics invite itself into my childhood so violently? These are the questions I asked after many years of illusion. More questions have arisen, such as: why did I have to become Croatian and whose politics turned me into one, anyhow? There is no one answer to these questions. All I can say is that it is everybody's politics, and there is not much we can do about it, except, maybe, ask kids what they have to say before we start messing with their lives.■

"I dismissed my Serbian football heroes and my Serbian friends. While not knowing exactly why, I knew it had to be done"

"It was unfortunate that our first serious identity crisis was a national one. I became Croatian before I became anything else"

The Very Terror of Europe

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The region I come from is Southeast Europe, but it is widely known as the Balkans and perceived as "the very terror of Europe". I was never aware of that perception while living there but I became so after I moved to the United States. Suddenly, I was considered Balkan. It made me think about what that means. I did not know. I started researching what Balkan stands for, what it is, where it is, who says what it is, what they say it is, and why it has a negative connotation.

Through my research I learned that the term Balkan comes from Western European travelers and experts who visited the region from the mid-16th through the late 20th centuries. Many of them regarded the region as part of Asia, and sought accordingly to inform their contemporaries of its 'exotic', 'outlandish', and 'primi-

"Many regarded the Balkans as part of Asia, and sought to inform their contemporaries of its 'outlandish' and 'primitive' ways"

tive' ways. Their stories of a doomed place, of violence, and crazed people ended up telling more about the West than about the lands and peoples they reported on. Still, those impressions were passed down through the ages and they remain today in the eyes of many Westerners.

But what do they mean when they say "those multi-religious places where everybody kills each other?" Which places? They call it the Balkans, but where is that place? I looked it up on maps and in different encyclopedias. Most of them mention the Balkan Peninsula yet all of them have different definitions of where it begins and where it ends. There is no clear geographical definition of what the Balkans is and what the borders of the Balkan Peninsula are. Without these, the Balkans cannot exist as a geographical term.

In fact, while the Balkans does not exist, it does exist as a non-factual perception, a presumption, and a prejudice. Some people from the Balkans even believe in it, but I do not. I believe that perceptions, presumptions, and prejudices about others should be replaced by information, experience, and knowledge. I believe that the population of countries that have the political and economic power to influence less powerful countries should replace nonfacts with facts. This might build tolerance.■

"They call it the Balkans, but where is that place?"

Sofia Central

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In 1883, Pushkin wrote a poem entitled, "The Bronze Horseman," dedicated to the emperor's statue in the center of St. Petersburg. Sofia also has its own statue of a Russian emperor, its own vibrant center, and its loving admirers. Our bronze Tsar, though, is not Peter the Great, but Alexander II. He too sits on top of a horse but this one, unlike its Russian counterpart, has all four legs resting on the ground and its tail calmly hanging in the air. Possibly, because the emperor at the very top is not Bulgarian, the statue is commonly known simply as "The Horse." After all, the animal does not seem to have any nationality and could even quite easily pass for an East Bulgarian breed. Be that as it may, the monument provides a conveniently elevated vantage point for events happening on its perimeter. And, having stood there since the early 20th century, the horse and its rider have seen quite a bit.

"The horse and its rider have seen quite a bit"

Right across from them, for example, they saw the sumptuous

Government building, Sofia, Bulgaria
photo: Ivelina POPOVA

Alexander Nevski Cathedral being gradually completed. Our bronze horseman, Alexander II, was particularly pleased since the church happened to be dedicated to the soldiers who fought and died under his rule during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. About a hundred meters down the yellow paved boulevard, our horse saw out of his left eye the golden onion domes of a Russian church. They appeared just a few years after the horse parked himself at his location. Then, practically right in front of the animal's muzzle, the Parliament building took its place.

All this was happening while Bulgaria had tsars of its own. But then things changed and the king was no longer. It is quite possible that in the first half of the last century the statue in Sofia was referred to by its rider's name, but then, as if to reflect the changing times, he became just a nameless absent fixture added to "The Horse."

In the more recent past, a Grand Hotel Sofia appeared behind the horse's tail, while to its side Balkan Airlines opened its offices. And if you take the narrow street originating just behind our statue, you quickly reach the Pushkin Russian Language School. The poet would have been proud to hear the young Bulgarian students recite his verses in almost faultless Russian.

As is normal for the history of any city, much new construction took place all across town, including, close to the horse, but obstructed from its view by other buildings was the Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov.

Then things started changing once again. In late 1989, our two spectators saw Parliament besieged by crowds of rambunctious protesters. The head of state had been deposed by his own party, and the new leader stepped outside to see what the hullabaloo was all about. Despite the noise from the crowd, our horse perked his ears and managed to overhear the worried leader whisper to a henchman that the tanks should be brought in. Luckily, a documentary cinematographer was close at hand and he managed to record the orders, preventing them from being carried out. Seven years later, Parliament was again surrounded by people rallying against the wild rates of inflation. Incidentally, during the same tumultuous winter months, an American foundation selected five Bulgarian students for a year of study in the United States. When they diligently returned home a year later, former U.S. president Bill Clinton and his daughter, Chelsea, were about to visit Sofia. Our horse saw how, across from him, a podium was constructed for the president, the whole area was sifted for explosives, and snipers popped up on the domes of the cathedral in the square. As it happened, one of these same five students introduced President Clinton to the crowd, and before he started his speech, he thanked her very kindly and kissed her on the cheek. This inevitably started unpleasant jokes about her being the Bulgarian Monica Lewinsky.

Much more happened during the same decade. The Russian school became a Bulgarian one and the whole scene around it changed. A very trendy Masons' Jeans store opened across from it. The same narrow street became one of the destination points for the young 1990s subculture. For awhile, one signature bar on the street was called the "Herbal Pharmacy." Balkan Airlines went bankrupt and closed it offices, Hotel Sofia was remodeled into a fashionable Radisson, and the Mausoleum was suddenly and surreptitiously demolished one summer. Our horse and its nameless murdered Tsar took note of all this with bronze imperturbability. The rider noticed that of late a long gone Bulgarian monarch had returned to the capital and had assumed civilian leadership in Parliament. But, having grown wise over the years, the horseman seemed positive that this ex-monarch would not last for long with the general Sofia tendency to treat royalty as insignificant appendages.■

"One of these students introduced President Clinton to the crowd, and he thanked her very kindly and kissed her on the cheek"

"Our horse and its nameless murdered Tsar took note of all this with bronze imperturbability"

Mamaliga

Corina ARDELEAN, Romania
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Program, 2003
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The author stands in front of her tasty dish
photo: Corina ARDELEAN

I have decided to give you this traditional Romanian recipe for Mamaliga, as it is one that I tried with tremendous success in the United States. with international students at the University of Georgia.

I made mamaliga for an International Traditions Meeting on our very diverse campus and I am proud to say this was the first of the different foreign dishes to be eaten. It was probably the first time anyone there had tasted Romanian food.

If you wish to try this easy and delicious recipe for Mamaliga, you will need:

- Corn meal
- Different kinds of shredded cheese (salty cheese, sour cheese, feta cheese, Swiss cheese, or any kind you like)
- Sour cream
- Fried sausage (for those of you who really want the traditional dish and are not vegetarian)

Boil water in a pot with a pinch of salt. The minute it starts boiling, start pouring the corn meal gradually into the water, stirring constantly. Keep boiling until it becomes the consistency of a thick paste. Pour some of the paste into a heat-resistant bowl, then add some of the fried pieces of sausages (if you dare), or just the shredded cheese. Sprinkle above the yellow, steaming Mamaliga. Keep layering, alternating the corn meal with the cheese and/or sausage until all of the paste is used. Top it off with one more layer of cheese and plenty of sour cream. Just think of the melted cheese between the layers, stretching from the plate to your mouth! Yummy! It is really very easy to make Mamaliga, and it is truly delicious and traditionally Romanian. Enjoy!■

Montenegro—Five Glimpses

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Montenegro. Eighteenth century travelers would write that a single day there is more romantic than the entire lifetime of an ordinary European. In the 19th century, Pushkin adored the Montenegrins; they were not frightened by Napoleon's armies. For most of the 20th century, people tried to decide if they were Serbs or Montenegrins. They came to the new Millennium with the same question in mind. Twenty first century travelers could be greeted by a flock of goats in the streets of its capital. A year ago one could arrange a meeting on the corner of Karl Marx and Lenin Streets. Now Boulevard of Lenin has been renamed Boulevard of St Peter of Cetinje.

Montenegro. Perhaps one of the poorest parts of the former Yugoslavia. Like all poor countries, it also has its riches. But while money can come and go, there is something that all Montenegrins share—an enormous sense of honor. In the past it led to lengthy bloody revenges and head hunting. While international donors are trying to teach results-oriented and objective approaches toward politics, Montenegrins treat a political party as they would their basketball team. No matter who wins, we will always back the one we used to back.

Montenegro. While some countries are negotiating the possibility of introducing the Euro, undergoing check-ups, and auditing procedures all necessary in joining the European Union, Montenegro has already joined the club. In fact it had the Deutschmark as its official currency before the Euro. In part it was a means against the hyper inflation of the Yugoslav dinar and also as a symbolic break with Serbia.

Montenegro. This means Crna Gora, the Black Mountain. White limestone, in parts covered with green vegetation. It is never really black. People would say that it looks black when it is green. They would also say that red wine is black. Which is it?

Montenegro. A country of coffee readers. No matter where one would go, upside-down cups of coffee, ready for extraction of the future, would follow. I once had a cup of Turkish coffee in a small mountain village. The waitress said she did not know anything about coffee reading. It took only 10 minutes of chatting to discover that she knew quite a bit. Drinking coffee, savoring cakes, the occasional warming up with homemade rakija, and smoking are all inseparable elements of everyday communication.■

A Poppy Seed Roll in Osijek

Marijana MATORIĆ, Croatia
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Osijek, a Croatian city dating to the 1st century, founded on the banks of the Drave River, once home to an 8 km wooden bridge known at its time as the "Eighth Wonder of the World," is now trying to regain its prominence as the important agricultural and trading center it was before the war in the 1990s. Though there is much to see in Osijek, the food of the region (Slavonija and Baranja) is great.

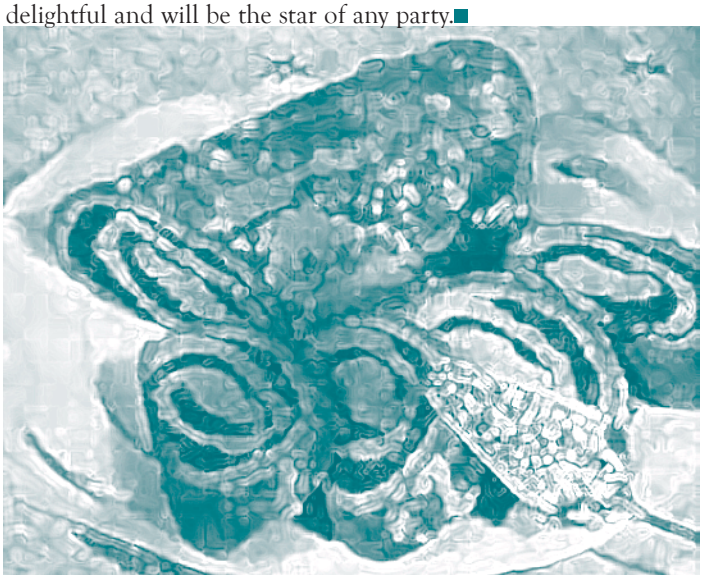
Here is a recipe for the well known and liked "Savijača" with poppy seed or walnuts:

POPPY SEED ROLL
Dough:
250 grams (8 4/5 ounces) of flour
3/4 deciliters (1/3 cup) of water
1/2 deciliters (1/5-1/4 cup) of oil
pinch of salt
Filling:
300 grams (10 3/5 ounces) ground poppy seeds (or walnuts)
3 deciliters (1 1/4 cups) of milk, heated
75 grams (2 2/3 ounces) of sugar
1 egg
50 grams (1 3/4 ounces) of butter

Some people add raisins, apples, honey, or lemon zest to the filling. I prefer it plain.

To make the dough, put all of the ingredients into a bowl and mix well. Place the mixture into a hot bowl and let it sit for a while. To make the filling, pour the hot milk over the poppy seeds (or walnuts), and let it sit for a minute. Add the rest of the ingredients and stir.

Roll the dough to about one centimeter in height (you can use an empty beer bottle to do this) and spoon the filling onto the dough. Leave a space of approximately two centimeters around the edge. Roll the dough into a log and brush melted butter over it. Bake for 50 minutes at 180° Celsius. Some people make this cake with sourdough, which is made with yeast. Any version is equally delightful and will be the star of any party.■



The Wild Beauty

Ranka SARENAC, Montenegro
UK Chevening Scholarship, 1998
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Montenegro,
wild, untouched nature,
untouched soul, restless sea, changing seasons,
changing time. Beautiful as sunset
on a hot summer day,
evergreen trees in their eternal shadow.
Beautiful, the smile on children's faces
running happily into their future.
Montenegro,
embracing, intoxicating
Montenegrins,
spontaneous, witty,
proud and loud,
imbibing in everything—eating, drinking,
courting women.
Montenegro,
This wild beauty,
Sometimes too wild,
Never too beautiful,
Never too experienced.■

Web Resources: Southeast Europe

B92:
http://www.b92.net/eng/

Croatian News Agency—Hina News Line:
http://www.hina.hr/nws-bin/ehot.cgi

Global Voices Online for Eastern & Central Europe:
http://www.globalvoicesonline.org/-/world/eastern-central-europe/

Institute for War and Peace Reporting:
www.iwpr.net

Radio Free Europe:
http://www.rferl.org/

Southeast European Times:
http://www.setimes.com/

Yale Online Resources for Slavic & Eastern Europe:
http://www.library.yale.edu/slavic/

Personal Accounts

Grantees' stories of living and studying abroad

A field trip to the beach during the UK Programs Mid Year Conference
photo: Antonia CHILIKOVA

"Scrie o piesă"— Write a Play!

Ştefan PECA, Romania
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When I left New York University (NYU) on May 13, 2004, I would have never imagined that my experience there (and at the Young Playwrights Inc. in New York where I did my community service) would help me build the first playwriting program for high school students in Romania. For this project, I decided to start small. It had to initially be limited to only high school students in Bucharest. For the title of the program, I chose, "Scrie o piesă," which in Romanian means, Write a Play!

The project had six steps:

1) Presenting the project and announcing a playwriting contest for high school students.
2) Receiving the plays and evaluating each of them.
3) Selecting the five winning plays and sending the evaluations to the authors.
4) Holding a playwriting workshop with the winners.
5) Staging the plays.
6) Conducting project evaluation and development.

Two friends at my university back home (Elena Ioniţă and Monica Gavrilă) offered to help me start the "Scrie o

piesă" program by organizing the PR and managing the deadlines. I talked to my director friends and all of the theatre people I knew and presented the program both at the MONDAY Theatre at Green Hours, a small independent theatre in the centre of Bucharest and at the National University of Film and Theatre (UNATC), and hoped for the best. Through my friends, I managed to get the attention of Biblos Advertising, a small advertising company. The outcome was quite amazing: the MONDAY theatre offered to host the playwriting workshops and stage the winning plays. UNATC offered to help with printing posters and providing extra evaluators. Biblos Advertising offered the www.scrieopiesa.ro website and designed the promotional materials.

We presented the project in high schools throughout Bucharest and launched the website. By the end of January, we had received more than 70 plays. The selection committee chose six winners which included Apocalypse by Alex Caragea, "Ultima piele a şarpelui" (The Last Skin of the Serpent) by Sergiu Ciurescu, and "Lucruri care nu se spun" (Things you don't talk about) by Nicoleta Bianca Mateescu. We also awarded 3 honorable mentions.

Four playwriting workshops were held at the MONDAY Theatre in March 2005 with the contest winners. We hope that at least one of these plays will be produced by a larger venue in Bucharest.■

Art Studies

Svitlana BUKO, Ukraine
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Upon completing my degree in St. Petersburg, I returned to Ukraine and introduced new art-teaching techniques at a local college. My first major success and turning point was an experimental project, the Foundations of Education Center with the Communications Department at the University in Sevastopol, where I taught. The Education Center served as a reform laboratory for experimental liberal arts teaching in Crimea. As a lecturer at the university and a coordinator with the Education Center, I designed and carried out a year-long sociological experiment which was based on the project, "Youth Socialization and Creativity Development within Art Projects."

The project's main goal was to support students' interest in cultural life in Crimea and to involve them in contemporary art projects. I was able to promote an environment where courses and projects took art students out of the classroom and put them into the galleries, museums, studios, and the cultural sites of Crimea. I strongly believe that public communication and public information projects (exhibitions, performances, gallery talks, and so on) are all about direct, face-to-face experiences with works of art. As a result of this experiment, students formed a professional creative bureau, "Klemson," with cultural organizations and planned eight city-wide socio-cultural projects for the community. They changed the educational environment in the institution and conveyed a new sense of value for contemporary art to the local community.

With the help of my Russian experience, I was able to support cross-cultural, intraregional student mobility, inviting academics and young researchers from Russia to summer school. Scholars from St. Petersburg were able to visit a local Ukrainian community to learn more about educational challenges and to strengthen the Ukraine-Russia academic network.

Currently, I am contributing to the development of independent media in Ukraine by working with regional outlets and setting up partnerships with U.S.-based outlets. As coordinator of the program I meet a lot of scholars and practitioners who come to the Ukraine in order to share their knowledge and learn more about the country's policies and the social well-being of its citizens. I am continuing my education at the Ukraine Academy of Science where my main academic goal is to try to bring a true understanding of art to the common people; thereby enhancing individual appreciation and understanding of an essential part of our civilization. ■

"Public communication and public information projects (exhibitions, performances, gallery talks, and so on) are all about direct, face-to-face experiences with works of art"

"Wie geht's?"

Yekaterina NEKLYUDOVA, Kazakhstan
DAAD-OSI, 2004
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It is well known that conducting small talk is considered polite in almost all cultures. It is a sign of friendliness. But the continuity and the content of small talk across languages is very different.

My first foreign language is English, and the conventional greeting in English-speaking countries is "Hello! How are you?" After asking this question, nobody expects to hear how you really are. The question has lost its original connotation and has turned into a part of the greeting formula.

When I arrived in Germany I continued to apply the same greeting pattern, only in German. When I met someone in the street I would say, "Hallo! Wie geht's?" and with a friendly smile I would float by, proud of myself for being so involved and polite. But later, a couple of times, I noticed out of a corner of my eye that people would stop in complete confusion when they heard "Wie geht's?" and saw me pass without stopping to listen to the answer. I talked to my German friends and they explained to me that, in Germany, "Wie geht's?" is a question that demands an answer and asking it shows the speaker's readiness to continue the dialogue.

So, now my skill in guiding small talk has expanded to that of a typical German student's:

- Wie geht's?
- Gut, und selbst?
- Gut, und selbst?

Returning Home

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The day had arrived and I was leaving my dream city of St. Louis. I had my first shock in the Istanbul airport and I expected to be totally devastated when the plane landed in the newly renamed Heydar Aliev International Airport in Baku. To my surprise, when the plane landed, the only thing I cared about was getting through the gates to see my family. I was so thrilled; I would see them in only a minute!

The first few days it felt very odd, like I was on a business trip and would return to the United States shortly. I was very lucky to get involved in a social work-related conference led by American counterparts the very next morning. To my pleasure, the whole of the next week was filled with exciting events and new people. Many kept noticing my strange accent when I spoke, the ease with which I exchanged handshakes with both men and women, and all those little things I never noticed about myself before. It is nice to feel like a "star" every once in a while, I thought.

"To my surprise, when the plane landed, the only thing I cared about was getting through the gates to see my family"

However, the long awaited misery was soon upon me. I knew it would come and I tried to prepare as best as I could; but the best one can do in such cases is to let his/her gloominess heal in its own natural way. I knew I should give it time. It is really important not to stay in isolation for long. My family gave me all of the support they could though I certainly did not want to show them my discomfort.

How nice it was to meet with my former colleagues and the OSI social work fellows back home! It was crucial to meet people who shared and understood my feelings. Soon I was on the mailing list of the local Alumni Association and began volunteering for the American Embassy. I became active, busy, and productive at work.

It has now been over seven months since I returned home. I can now think about those two years in the United States and not feel a twitch in my heart. I can watch all the ridiculous videos I made and look at the photos without a feeling of loss. My return back home was much easier than I could have ever imagined.

UK Programs Mid Year Conference
photo: Sharmin Jahan TANIA

Junior, Three Times in a Row

Diana ZAVZEATII, Moldova
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As soon as I returned to Moldova from my year abroad in the United States, I came across some information about a conference, Balkan Parliament, organized by the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG). It interested me and I thought that I could use a break from university, meet people from different countries, visit some of my friends, who, by chance were studying at AUBG, and be part of an interactive simulation on a contemporary Balkan issue.

The simulation took place in October of 2003 and lasted for one week. During this week I had a great time! The simulation was engaging and the presentations of different important personalities from Bulgaria and beyond were very instructive. The people I met were great, but the most impressive thing to me was the university itself. I felt so comfortable there, as though this was the place I wanted to be all along. The fact that it is an American University, with an American system of education in a place relatively close to my country was so appealing to me that as soon as I came back to Moldova I forwarded my transfer application and I got accepted. On the one hand, this was a crazy thing to do because I was about to graduate from my home university. On the other hand, I knew that the education I would receive at AUBG would be of much more help to me than the one I would receive in Moldova.

Thus, beginning in September of 2004, I became a junior at AUBG. And, even if I am a junior for the third time in my life (first in the United States, then back in Moldova, and now at AUBG) I am enjoying it very much. The professors are great, the students are very diverse, since they come from different countries; the town, Blagoevgrad, is so nice and welcoming, and the view from my dorm is just fabulous. Imagine waking up every day and seeing snow-covered mountains from your window shining under the radiant morning sun.

> "Even if I am a junior for the third time in my life, I am enjoying it very much"

Currently, besides being a student at the American University, I am one of the organizers of the event, which introduced me to Bulgaria and AUBG, the Balkan Parliament. It is a great pleasure and honor to be part of it, since I would truly be happy if more and more people would be interested in this wonderful and unique region, which is the Balkans.

If you are interested in the Balkan Parliament simulation, please visit the Balkan Parliament website: www.bp.aubg.bg. Anyone is welcome to participate!■

Celebrations at an Orphanage

Aneliya Kuzmanova, Bulgaria
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Undergraduate Exchange Program 2004
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During my stay at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, for the first time in my life, I actually realized what community service was like. A friend of mine, also an international student, mentioned that she was working in the on-campus daycare center, so I thought it would be a good idea for me to do my volunteering there. After a couple of days of volunteering I came up with the idea of doing a similar thing for my home country project once I returned to Bulgaria.

With my colleague Radko, a fellow Undergraduate Exchange Program (UEP) participant at the same university, we planned and then put into practice a modest project, in which we managed several celebrations at an orphanage in Bulgaria. Both of us invested our time and energy into finding various sponsors for its implementation. In particular, we collected books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, clothes, food, candies, toys, and money which we brought directly to the children at the orphanage to celebrate Christmas Eve 2005 and March 1, 2006, a traditional Bulgarian holiday.

photos: Ameliya KUZMANOVA

These events were more than rewarding and even a kind of spiritual catharsis for all of us who were not living in such an institution. Before this experience, we had thought of ourselves as, putting it this way, living in poor conditions.

We still haven't put a time limit on our project since our help is needed there and because we have a general commitment from our volunteers to participate in future celebrations. And then the most important reason—our simple care for the children, with whose destiny we now feel particularly connected.■

UEP Commencement Conference 2006

Zinaida ADAM, Republic of Moldova
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The Commencement Conference in Budapest in the summer of 2006 brought UEP Fellows together to discuss, compare, and evaluate our Home Country Projects (HCPs). Some of the projects were similar; others tackled similar problems that affect all of our countries. This made it easy for us to understand the importance and the impact of HCPs on our societies. It was indeed encouraging to see that we have succeeded in our endeavors. I like to believe that we did make a difference in our communities by implementing the HCPs and proved ourselves to have a strong spirit of civic engagement.■

UEP Home Country Project in Bulgaria
photo: Miroslava NANEVA (UEP, 2004-2005)

UK Programs Mid Year Conference
photo: Aksana ISMAILBEKOVA

Taste of America

Corina ARDELEAN, Romania
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Oh,... the frightening sensation of being lost on the first orientation day,
the wonderfully relaxing walks along the alleys of the UGA campus,
the amazing colors of spring flowers,
the rich diversity of students from all around the world,
the way people smiled kindly at you, for no reason at all,
the delicious frozen yoghurt with caramel topping in Snelling Dining Hall,
the roaring crowds of people gathering to cheer the UGA Bulldawgs,
the early chilly mornings strolling to work,
the snow day when school was closed because of two centimeters of snow,
the amazingly well-equipped Student Learning Center,
the look on hotel customers' faces when they heard I was from Romania,
the excitement that lay ahead before meeting the UEP's in New York,
all of the icebreakers and fun games in every possible meeting on any topic,
going trick-or-treating in Peachtree City and pretending to be a kid again,
the ever surprising "Wasuuuup???",
eating pizza and drinking Coke at 3 am in the dorm halls,
the rewarding days spent in the sunshine or cold, helping to build houses with Habitat for Humanity,
the kindness and openness of teachers begging for more questions,
all the activities and student organizations and things constantly taking place around campus,
the shiver I felt when clicking, "Place order," when I bought my laptop online,
proudly telling anyone interested that I would undoubtedly return home after the year ended,
learning Spanish in English and practicing it with my Mexican friends,
building cardboard houses to experience one night of a homeless person's life,
losing track of time writing countless pages home...■

NSP Summer School 2006

[above] Summer school 2006 in Istanbul
photo: Onur EKER and Dilek ALTAN

[left] Summer school program assistants Reyhan and Ozlem
photo: Alex IRWIN

A Palestinian Summer

Maher HANNA
PROL, 2006
American University, Washington College of Law
maherhanna75@yahoo.com

Every time I hear people talking about the NSP Summer School I participated in last summer in Istanbul, I wonder what they mean. Are they talking about the great experience I had in Istanbul or about another program that I missed? I think that our, or at least my, great experience in Istanbul had nothing to do with summer nor with school.

"I think that my great experience in Istanbul had nothing to do with summer nor with school"

Summer in Palestine is the period of time between June 21 and September 21. And since we were in Istanbul between July 15 and August 15, well, it must have been summer, wasn't it? Maybe, but only in the concept of time, while in other concepts, it couldn't be more wrong. The summer that I am familiar with, means hot days and very nice nights. In the day time, you dress in short clothes but still you can go outdoors, you can focus, concentrate, study, sleep, and even take a walk whenever you feel that you want to. In Istanbul, it was not hot, not at all; it was burning; burning in the day time and burning at night. It was so hot that you almost couldn't do anything, you couldn't go outdoors, you couldn't stay indoors (there was no A/C), you couldn't focus on anything, couldn't study, couldn't sleep, and couldn't even consider taking a walk! You had to take maybe four or five showers a day and still feel like you needed one more. Even at night, when we did get out and had so much fun, it still was too hot to ignore. Even the well known Turkish Shesha—also known as the water pipe, which we usually felt like smoking, was not even warm compared to the heat in Istanbul. As Amed, another Palestinian participant told me once: "Here in Turkey, it is hot enough that

you can smoke Shesha without coals." My great roommate, Batyr, from Turkmenistan told me once that for him it was not too hot since he has much worse weather in his country. Well, after that comment, I stopped considering a visit to his country. When I left Istanbul and came to Washington, I found that summer can have a third meaning: rain. It is not cold but it rains in the summer. Today, when I hear summer, I think of the summer in Palestine, not burning and not raining but a concept that I didn't know existed before: A Palestinian Summer.

Moreover, our experience was not what I've known as school. When you think of school you think of teachers and students. My instructors in Istanbul were not just teachers; they were our friends who gave us great introductions to American legal writing and the American legal system in a very nice and friendly, and I have to say new way. Our writing instructor, John Nichols, was a real friend. We enjoyed being with him and learning from his excellent advice. Today, after two weeks at an American University I realize what an extremely great help Professor Susan Montaquilla, our American Legal System class instructor was. She was much more than a teacher. For all Palestinian Rule of Law participants she has a very special place in our memories and hearts. Our teachers, who introduced themselves as instructors, used to go out with us after class and we had a great time. In light of all the above, I didn't feel like it was a school but rather a great time with very friendly and kind people who helped us a lot.

In the end, I also don't want to miss recalling our great Saturdays in Istanbul—especially when we went hiking. It was a great experience and it was the first time we actually felt cold, or rather freezing, water. I really enjoyed being in Istanbul—but I definitely don't know what summer school they are talking about.■

[above] Weekend hiking at summer school
photo: Maher HANNA

[right] NSP Summer school
photo: Onur EKER and Dilek ALTAN

HESP: International Higher Education Support Program

The International Higher Education Support Program (HESP) promotes the advancement of higher education within the humanities and social sciences, throughout the region of Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe, the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union, and Mongolia.

HESP Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching

The Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching (ReSET) aims to develop and nurture teaching at the undergraduate university level. The program establishes a framework for the long-term collaborative development of scholarly teaching for qualified and dedicated regional and international faculty and creates opportunities for substantial contribution to the process of educational change in the region. ReSET projects involve groups of junior faculty participants from the region and international teams of resource faculty.

ReSET invites proposals for multiyear projects from region-based academic institutions, associations or individuals with demonstrated potential for and commitment to promoting teaching excellence and lending on-going support to individual faculty and departments in the region.

For more details about the program and eligibility requirements, and to download applications, please visit the website at: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/reset or contact:

HESP Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching
Open Society Institute, Október 6. u. 12., Budapest 1051, Hungary
Tel: (36-1) 235-6152 Fax: (36-1) 411-4401
Email: oshtokvych@osi.hu or mjo@osi.hu
Tel: 1-203-781-0263 Fax: 1-203-781-0265

Academic Fellowship Program

The Academic Fellowship Program (AFP) contributes to higher education reform in Southeastern Europe, the former Soviet Union (excluding the Baltic States), and Mongolia and helps build inclusive academic networks locally, regionally, and globally. Recognizing that universities play a fundamental role in strengthening civil society, AFP has two main objectives:

- to assist reform-minded university departments in their efforts to achieve world-class academic stature and become models of innovation and reform; and
- to promote the return, retention, and professional development of promising local scholars.

To achieve these goals, fellowships are available for young scholars in the departments targeted by the program and for highly qualified international academics interested in teaching and/or consulting at those departments.

Detailed information including eligibility requirements, deadlines, and application forms are available from the OSI website: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/afp, or by sending inquiries to the following:

Academic Fellowship Program
International Higher Education Support Program
Open Society Institute
Október 6. u. 12., Budapest 1051, Hungary
Tel: 36-1-235-6160 Fax: 36-1-411-4401 Email: afp@osi.hu

HESP Mobility Programs: Student Mobility

The program supports visits to/from a HESP Network Institution by students enrolled at higher education institutions in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe; the former Soviet Union; and Mongolia. For a list of qualifying institutions and complete program guidelines, please see:

http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/mobility/grants/student

Southeast European Student Initiatives

The Southeast European Student Initiatives (SESI) program supports cross-border student initiatives from the following Southeast European university student communities: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia.

SESI aims to empower students to address systemic changes in higher education. SESI supports the involvement of students in democratization of the educational process and in building transnational student alliances in South Eastern Europe. For more details and a list of student networks, please see:

http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/sesi

The Central Asia Research and Training Initiative

The Central Asia Research and Training Initiative (CARTI) is a regional HESP program that promotes the development of indigenous capacities for original scholarly and academic work and internationalization of scholarship in the region of Central Asia including, but not limited to, the post-Soviet states of Central Asia and Mongolia. In working to enhance independent research of university-based academics, CARTI is committed to innovation in, and enrichment of, university teaching in the humanities and social sciences, and emphasizes the role of research in the development of academics as scholars in the classroom.

CARTI provides advanced training and networking opportunities, and supports innovative scholarly work of motivated young academics in their home academic environment. Each CARTI fellow works in collaborative partnership with a CARTI International Scholar. International scholars are advanced academics, prominent in the fields of scholarship of concern to the fellows' projects, representing universities outside the program's target region. International Scholars provide guidance and collaborate in conceiving of the fellows' research agenda and program. They also collaborate with fellows in the implementation of the projects, primarily by offering feedback and critique, but also through joint research activities, discussion of sources, methods, progress and findings of the research, and securing access to the relevant resources and facilities at their home institutions.

For a complete program description please see:

http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/carti

Contribute to the next Scholar Forum!

Cover Topic: Economic Development Regional Focus: The Middle East

The next issue of *Scholar Forum* will be published in Spring 2007, and we're seeking submissions from all OSI NSP scholars and alumni. Essays, personal accounts, research papers, photographs, short stories, poems, cartoons, recipes, and drawings are all welcome.

Cover Topic: Economic Development

There is no easy answer for how to promote the sustainable development of the global economy. Models from the Washington Consensus to the Beijing Consensus have their proponents and detractors, as do international organizations such as the WTO and IMF. As eradicating extreme poverty has become a central goal of the UN and other multilateral institutions, illustrated by the UN Millennium Development Goals, the debate over local, national, regional, and global economic development policy is heating up. Here at *Scholar Forum*, we are interested in what you have to say on the topic. Share with us your ideas on the subject and describe examples of economic development projects from your personal and professional experience.

If requested, submissions can be published anonymously.

Here are some questions or topics to consider but feel free to stray from these suggestions, so long as you keep your article centered on the subject of economic development.

- Describe the role of an "Open Society" in promoting economic development.
- Describe an economic development program in your country. Evaluate its benefits and shortcomings.
- Are multinational corporations (MNCs) the most financially viable way to foster sustainable economic development, or do you think small local businesses with the aid of microfinance programs can be effective as well? What role do multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and UN play in promoting economic development? Use examples from your country.
- What is the role of the judicial system in providing a legal framework conducive to economic development?
- What is the relationship between economic development and human rights?
- What role can social entrepreneurship play in promoting economic development? Use case studies to defend your argument.
- What factors (social, cultural, economic, etc) do you believe influence social and economic disparities? How can these be overcome? Be specific. Use examples from your country.
- Is "Brain Drain" having an adverse effect on the economic development of your region, and if so, what can be done to discourage this trend? (Max. 750 words.)

Regional Focus: The Middle East

We encourage grantees and alumni from the Middle East, as well as those familiar with the region, to submit stories, poems, photographs, drawings, cartoons, or recipes that represent this fascinating part of the world. (Max. 400 words)

Personal Accounts: Essays and creative works

Please submit short personal accounts of your experiences living and studying in a different country. Photographs, poems, drawings, recipes, and cartoons are also welcome. (Max. 300 words)

Alumni

Send us information about your current activities for the Alumni section. Also, please send information about upcoming alumni reunions or updates on previous gatherings.

Website suggestions

Please send us websites that you frequently visit to gather information about economic development or the Middle East.

We are also interested in your own websites or blogs, whether they are personal or professional.

Send submissions by email to scholarforum@sorosny.org. Include your full name, fellowship program and year, host university, home country, and gender with each submission. Please refer all questions to scholarforum@sorosny.org.

Submissions are due in New York by March 15, 2007.

OSI NSP ALUMNI GRANT PROGRAM

The Network Scholarship Programs is pleased to offer the Alumni Grant Program. This program offers grants to NSP alumni to further expand the knowledge gained during their fellowship and to make a positive contribution in their home country. All grant proposals must be related to OSI's mission of supporting programs in the areas of educational, social, and legal reform, and of encouraging alternative approaches to complex and often controversial issues. Preference will be given to collaborative projects between alumni, across countries, and with host universities and to projects that promote the development of a specific discipline in the region.

Types of grants may include organizing training programs, conferences or seminars in the applicant's field, forming an alumni association, founding a professional association, creating initiatives that support the NGO and/or non-profit sectors, creating initiatives that further social justice causes, support for creating classroom materials, and other projects related to OSI's mission.

Detailed information including eligibility requirements, deadlines, and application forms are available from the OSI website at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship/focus_areas/alumni, or by sending inquiries to the following:

Open Society Foundation
Scholarship Programs
Alumni Grant Program
Céline Keshishian
Cambridge House
5th Floor
100 Cambridge Grove
London, W6 OLE
Email: ckeshishian@osf-eu.org

The competition for this grant is offered once a year, beginning in January of each year. The application is made available on our website in April, and the deadline for the 2008 grant will be May 30, 2007.

Scholarships and Fellowships with NSP

The Network Scholarship Programs offers the following scholarships and fellowships. Programs are offered only in certain countries; please visit the NSP website for details and for application information. www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship

Alumni Grants Program:
This program offers grants to NSP alumni to further expand the knowledge gained during their fellowship and to make a positive contribution in their home country.

CNOUS-OSI Program:
This program partners with the French government and offers up to 15 scholarships for students in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to pursue Master's degrees in the fields of social sciences and humanities at institutions in France.

DAAD-OSI Program:
A joint scholarship program in Germany for Central Asian, Caucasian, Ukrainian, Moldovan and Belarusian graduate students and junior faculty pursuing advanced study in the social sciences and humanities.

Faculty Development Fellowship Program:
A non-degree program that offers up to 15 awards for faculty teaching social sciences and humanities in Central Asia and the Caucuses to spend one semester at a U.S. university and one semester teaching at their home universities, each year for up to three years.

Georgian Scholarship Program for Education Professionals:
This program seeks to build local capacity in the profession of education and to support ongoing educational reform in Georgia by offering up to six awards per year for study in the United States leading to a Master's degree in education.

Global Supplementary Grant Program:
This program offers supplementary grants to students from selected countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union to pursue Doctoral studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences at accredited universities in the European Union, Asia, Australia, and North America.

OSI/Chevening Scholarships:
UK Scholarship programs include one-year Master's level awards, generally in the social sciences and humanities, for students and scholars to study at various institutions in the United Kingdom. Students are from selected countries in Eastern Europe, Southeastern Europe, the Middle East, the Newly Independent States, and South Asia.

Palestinian Faculty Development Program:
This program seeks to increase capacity within the higher education sector in the West Bank/Gaza by supporting PhD and Short-Term Visit fellowships for faculty members from Palestinian universities at U.S. host institutions.

Palestinian Rule of Law Program:
This program supports LLM degree studies for up to 10 Palestinian lawyers or law graduates annually at U.S. law schools and the Central European University.

Scholar Rescue Fund:
This program supports scholars who are at risk in their home country by providing them fellowships at "safe" universities and colleges throughout the world. Scholars from any country may qualify. (For information please go to: www.iie.org/srf)

Social Work Fellowship Program:
This program provides graduate and short term faculty fellowships in social work to implement reform, create policy, and foster the development of social work in the Caucuses and Central Asia.

Supplementary Grant Program—Burma:
Partial scholarships awarded to Burmese students worldwide who are currently unable to pursue their studies in Burma.

Undergraduate Exchange Program:
The Undergraduate Exchange Program is a non-degree program for university students in Southeast Europe and Mongolia to attend university in the United States.

ScholarForum
Open Society Institute
Network Scholarship Programs
400 West 59th Street
New York, NY 10019 USA