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CIVIC EDUCATION PROJECT

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION



7th Balkan Debate Forum—Montenegro, March 4–9, 2002

Ketevan Vashakidze Discusses Development of Academic Network Initiative

The mission of the Academic Network Initiative (ANI) is to support the development of sustainable scholarly linkages through the acquisition, development and exchange of knowledge, methods and resources.



Ketevan Vashakidze is senior program manager of the Academic Network Initiative and SCOUT Program

■ Why, how and when was ANI started?

Although CEP’s faculty development programs have helped retain young scholars in academia and provided important opportunities for their professional growth, they could not always provide a focused academic exchange in a particular discipline or area of interest. Academics in the post-communist world have consistently commented on the breakdown of scholarly linkages and the absence of a healthy intellectual community in the region. In academic year 2001–2002, CEP launched ANI in response to scholars’ isolation and limited opportunities to share research and ideas.

As the first step to the ANI development, CEP launched nine discipline group pages on its website. The web-based virtual environment serves as a tool for communication and exchange of information and resources among Fellows and alumni to help identify and discuss possible collaboration or cooperation with colleagues in the CEP region and beyond.

In addition to the discipline web pages, CEP provides targeted assistance to the networks that contribute to the development of long-term academic linkages. There are several international academic networks that receive CEP’s organizational or financial support: Southeast European History Network, Albion, Academic Network on Socio-Cultural and Historical Anthropology, International Paleography Network, Critical Sociology Network, Environmental Network on Sustainable Rural Development and Academic Network in International Relations.

■ How are networks formed?

CEP Fellows and alumni are invited to submit network project proposals that agree with the aims of ANI. Fellows and alumni then submit collaborative drafts, which are assessed by the ANI team for

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quality, relevance, effectiveness, potential impact and sustainability. If the proposal has potential, but is not ready for ANI support, we recommend that country or sub-regional programs consider supporting the project. ANI also assists networks to expand beyond the sub-regional level.

■ **How does ANI help Local Faculty Fellows (LFFs) and Visiting Faculty Fellows (VFFs) collaborate?**

Both Local and Visiting Faculty Fellows are involved in the initiation, development and advancement of the networks. Networks help Fellows interact more actively and understand challenges faced both by local and western scholars. ANI offers networking opportunities to LFFs and VFFs, local departments and universities and departments and universities in the West that employ returned VFFs.

■ **How is ANI funded?**

CEP provides networks with seed money to begin activities. Financial support to ANI network projects comes from CEP ANI funds from the CEP core budget, CEP sub-regional programs of Russia, Caucasus and Central Europe, as well as grants from Koerber Foundation, Germany; Open Society Georgia Foundation; Central European University, Hungary and British Council, Hungary. Networks have also been supported by in-kind contributions from universities and institutions involved as partners such as the Laszlo Teleki Foundation Hungarian Institute of International Affairs; Tbilisi State University, Georgia; Laboratory of Cultural Anthropology, Moldova; Opole University, Poland; Academy of Science, Comenius University, Czech Republic and Belarusian State University.

CEP also provides networks with information on additional funding opportunities. Although we understand that fundraising can be challenging for nascent networks, we encourage them to be independent as they become more advanced.

■ **What types of activities have emerged from ANI?**

Many network projects and activities have already been implemented or planned by members such as: academic skills development workshops, on-line journals, teacher training seminars, working research groups, interactive classroom projects, thematic workshops and conferences, network websites, guest-lectures, syllabi collections, thematic mini-libraries, summer schools, publications of conference proceedings, joint-research projects, readers and teaching aids and dictionaries of terms.

■ **How has your experience as an LFF influenced your role in administering ANI?**

My experience as a lecturer in Georgia helps me understand the needs and requests from academics in the region. It was not long ago that I was “in the field,” so I can identify with many of their challenges.

■ **What makes a project successful?**

A network is most often successful when there is a Fellow who acts as the “engine” of the network, in addition to a group of active



Albania–Montenegro–Kosovo–Serbia Orientation, September 2001, Montenegro

members from various locations who support core activities and initiate or manage projects in their respective countries.

■ **What types of challenges do networks face?**

The main challenge at this stage is motivation of network members and partner institutions to establish or re-establish scholarly communication. Academic networking should lead to the elimination of cultural or political challenges of a discipline. For instance, participants from Southeastern Europe are questioning dominant ideas and myths of national identity. Fundraising is another challenge. It might not always be possible to secure financial support for all network-planned activities, which means network participants might need to tailor some of their projects to funding agencies’ requirements.

■ **How do you see the future of ANI and CEP’s role in it?**

At this stage, CEP’s role is to initiate or stimulate the development of academic networks that scholars in the region find most useful and important. As linkages develop, CEP will likely act as a resource center for academic networks, as well as continue its role in providing expertise and organizational support.

In terms of function, I very much hope that by facilitating professional collaboration, academic dialogue, transfer of skills and dissemination of information and resources, the ANI networks will improve the quality of academic work and help make social sciences a more attractive and inspiring vocation. Through academic linkages across universities and countries, networks will assist in strengthening the quality of scholarship and its potential contribution to the communities, increase the role of faculty in university policy and administration and provide critical links with scholars in provincial and minority areas.

In terms of organizational standing, I believe that the ANI networks will take on lives of their own. They can become the basis for independent professional academic associations or organizations. Initially emerging under CEP ANI, networks can grow towards greater levels of independence and potentially develop as autonomous NGOs or professional associations.

Network Initiative



Initiated by CONSTANTIN IORDACHI and SILVANA RACHIERU and supported financially by Koerber Foundation, the Southeast European History Network (SEEHN) aims to increase cross-cultural academic exchange among junior historians and initiate debate about history as a discipline of teaching and research in universities throughout South-eastern Europe. SEEHN organizes discussions to scrutinize dominant ideas and myths about definitions of national identity, debate cultural definitions of the region, improve teaching methodologies and interpretation of texts and facilitate academic cooperation and dialogue among young historians.

In November 2001, SEEHN hosted its first event, an international colloquium in Bucharest. Met with success, SEEHN organized a roundtable in June 2003, entitled, "New Approaches to Comparative History of Southeastern Europe: Methodology and Sources," attended by 22 participants from Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Greece. Made up of

The Southeast European History Network Successful in Its Second Year

Constantin Iordachi, Local Faculty Fellow—Cluj, Romania

a core group of junior scholars from the region, SEEHN receives guidance from senior advisors such as HALIL BERKTAY from Sabanci University in Turkey, WENDY BRACEWELL from the University of London and BOGDAN MURGESCU and MIRELA MURGESCU from the University of Bucharest.

SEEHN's second international workshop, "Beyond National: Rethinking the History of the Balkans in a Trans-National Perspective," will take place in Sofia in June 2003. Participation is open to members of SEEHN and junior and senior scholars from Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia.

SEEHN welcomes social scientists from both within the region and outside who have an interest in Southeastern Europe. To join, please visit <http://www.cep.org.hu/projects/seehn/index.html> or send an email to seehn2001@yahoo.com

Launching the Critical Sociology Network

Based on interviews with Tinatin and Tamar Zurabishvili, CEP Local Faculty Fellows, Telavi, Georgia and Ayman Salmen, CEP Visiting Faculty Fellowship alumnus

The Critical Sociology Network (CSN) was launched in June 2002 by a group of CEP Fellows and alumni led by Ayman Salem, CEP VFF alumnus at Tbilisi State University, with support from CEP-ANI, CEP Caucasus and the Open Society Georgia Foundation. Created in response to both the deep skepticism about the effects and ethics of sociology common in Western postmodern circles and the positivist and dogmatic nature of much sociological work in formerly communist countries, CSN provides a forum for sociologists who seek to describe phenomena in a way that avoids either extreme relativist or positivist views. CSN's vast network consists of junior and senior lecturers, postgraduate students, professors and independent scholars from Britain, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Russia, Slovakia and the United States, as well as members from other disciplines such as media, gender, cultural studies, philosophy, economics, political theory and history.

For sociology to become more effective, the discipline must not simply describe society, but also play a role in guiding it. CSN projects such as the conference, "Critical Sociology: Critical Perspectives on Society and Sociology" and the forthcoming book *Critical Sociology* (Peter Lang Publishing: Bern 2003) analyze the

discipline of sociology from different points of view. *A Question of Method: Teaching in the Social Sciences at Post-Soviet Universities* (CEP: Tbilisi 2002) attempts to illustrate the elements of an approach to higher education that values teachers and students equally. Contributors to this book plan to put these theories to practice with a series of workshops that focus on effective teaching techniques. Content for university curricula will be introduced during CSN's conference, "Transformations and Interventions."

Tina Zurabishvili, an LFF from Telavi State University and CSN member, believes that joint research is the most important and realistic direction for CSN's future. Having attended the International Critical Sociology Conference in Tbilisi, Tina had the opportunity to present a research paper, receive professional feedback and participate in discussions with many prominent people in the field. Ayman Salem states that, "CSN, like CEP, provides the chance to re-evaluate one's function as a sociologist within a broad context, perhaps because it brings guest lecturers with all their habits and expectations to unfamiliar cultural environments."

For more information on the Critical Sociology Network or to become a member, please visit CSN's website at

<http://www.cep.org.hu/projects/csn/>

Critical Sociology Network



*Mikael Zolyan,
CEP Local Faculty Fellow – Armenia,
with students at the 2002 3-D Forum*

Teaching Development Program: Regional Cooperation Develops Professional Support for Junior Academics

Milena Katsarska, CEP Local Faculty Fellow—Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Between February 28 and March 2, 2003, the CEP Teaching Development Program (TDP) for Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova hosted its final workshop of the year at the Invisible College in Bucharest. The event marks a stage in ongoing and collaborative efforts in the region dedicated to improving teaching styles and methods, as well as the conception of courses and classes in higher education. Building upon the identified need for methodological improvement, the TDP has worked to develop a vision for the future of academia in a democratic society. Liliana Popescu – CEP Country Director Romania; Tsvetelina Popova – CEP Country Director Bulgaria; Dave Carter – CEP Senior Program Manager and Cristian Branea and Milena Katsarska – Local Faculty Fellows from Romania and Bulgaria respectively, have invested their efforts and experience into the inception of the program and its functioning thus far.

The Program has led three workshops focused on training in interactive teaching and learning strategies to promote critical thinking. Experienced facilitators from our partner NGO—the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project (RWCT) and moderators from the Local Faculty Fellowship program in Romania and Bulgaria conducted the workshop. They possess a valuable insider’s perspective on the pedagogical situation of junior academics from the region.

These workshops provided the TDP Fellows with a functional portfolio of methodological techniques and models for teaching and course design.

In aiming to internalize the ideals of continuing professional development, the face-to-face events were supplemented by schemes that allowed subject-specific focus and peer support in small e-discussion groups. Addressing regional needs, the program provided mechanisms for the acquisition and distribution of teaching and learning resources and founded a methodology library. The essential achievements of the completed stages range from overcoming the previous lack of dialogue concerning teaching and learning in the region to the development of confident young professionals who, in turn, will be able to disseminate their experience.

The key merits of the program, as seen by participants, reflect its multidimensional scope. Diana Dumitru, a TDP Fellow from Moldova, values the broadening of her previous experience with interactive teaching methodologies and the more diverse inventory of classroom techniques and strategies. In Diana’s words,

“TDP workshops have enhanced my effectiveness as a teacher and my confidence not only in the classroom, but in my capacity as a course designer as well.”

The immediate impressions of Alexandar Shivarov, a TDP Fellow from Bulgaria, emphasize the importance of TDP as the context in which junior academics are able to engage in meaningful professional discussions with their peers across the region, “in which good examples of teaching practices are exchanged, educational standards are compared, common problems are identified and possible solutions are jointly sought.” An additional aspect highlighted in the participants’ discussion of the program is fostering junior academics as reflective teachers who are able to identify the weak and strong sides of their own pedagogic practice and, more importantly, offer a set of strategies for improvement. Program participants have continually pointed out the value they find in peer support from more experienced CEP facilitators, moderators of the discipline-based electronic discussion group and the expertise of four professional trainers of the RWCT Project from the region.

In its wider CEP context, as Theodora Vacarescu, a TDP Fellow from Romania, pointed out, the Teaching Development Program has created a fertile context for in-country and cross-border scholarly cooperation and networking in specific subjects. As the program continues, it will incorporate other aspects of relevance to the professional development of participants, such as academic project writing and management, scholarly research and publishing. Though only sixteen junior academics have benefited from the 2002–2003 program, Alexandar Shivarov noted, “even though TDP Fellows are still small in number, they have an impact both through their immediate involvement with students and through sharing their experience with faculty members from a whole range of departments at their home institutions,” thus making a difference on a significant territory both in geographical and in professional terms. We expect that TDP will continue to invest in strengthening the careers of individual participants, thus contributing on a larger scale to the ongoing development of the professional academic context in Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova.

After completing my second year with CEP, one of the things that strikes me most is the difference between educational systems and approaches to teaching and learning in Southeastern Europe. My perspective is that of a young scholar from a Serbian university with an intention to explain the Serbian higher educational system to others.

In Serbia, only professors and assistant professors are permitted to deliver lectures and assess students. One is eligible to become an assistant professor after finishing and defending a PhD thesis, with approval from a committee of professors. As teaching assistants, young scholars working in Serbian universities are permitted to organize workshops, seminars and other kinds of exercises for their students, but may not assess students' knowledge.

However, according to the new university act, adopted in 2002, there is now space for young scholars to insert changes to this rigid system of education. This act has not markedly changed the organization of the system, but it has provided some freedom to introduce minor innovations. Assistant professors now evaluate students' performance in workshops and seminars, which can be included as a part of the student's final mark, though the full professor still retains the final authority. In addition, this act provides for the introduction of certain elements of the credit system, which is

incomprehensible to the majority of professors. Young scholars work diligently to introduce interactive methods of teaching and learning; however, most have not been properly trained in these methods, with the exception of those who were lucky enough to have studied abroad. Technical equipment is crucial for many new teaching

A Glimpse into the Educational System in Serbia

*Tanja Miscevic, PhD, CEP Local Faculty Fellow—
Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro*

methods, but because it is expensive, faculties are unable to purchase the desired technology.

The general view is that the current Serbian educational system is very rigid, and will reform quite gradually. Educational authorities in Serbia are in the process of preparing the new act to harmonize the existing system with the Bologna Declaration. Though Serbia is only in the early stages of introducing innovation, harsh public debate on the substance and methods of these changes has already begun. This is another reminder of the resistance of the Serbian educational system and its defenders to innovations.

Teaching & Learning

Students of Civic Education Project to Travel to Washington D.C. to Participate in International Law Competition

Robyn McNish, CEP Visiting Faculty Fellow—Yerevan, Armenia

This year I had the pleasure of coaching a very talented group of five students from Yerevan State University Law Faculty who won the National Phillip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court competition in Armenia, qualifying the team for the international rounds. The students will travel to Washington, D.C. at the end of March to compete against national moot court teams from over 80 countries.

This year's case was entitled, "The Case Concerning the Women and Children of the Civil War." Cases involve timely issues related to war crimes, human trafficking for purposes of sexual slavery, universal jurisdiction and the Council of Europe's Criminal Law Convention on Corruption. To complete the competition successfully, students must write a Memorial (Appellate Brief) on behalf of their state for submission

to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and then make oral arguments before a panel of mock ICJ justices.

Most Armenian students competing in this event had never written a professional legal document of this caliber, which must conform to international legal writing standards. Since I recently introduced a course on "Legal Writing and Analysis" at Yerevan State University, the American Bar Association Central and Eastern European Law Initiative (ABA-CEELI) approached me to teach a seminar on "How to Write a Memorial to the ICJ" to all Armenian teams competing in the national competition last December. After submission of Memorials, students began training for oral arguments.

The national competition took place at Hotel Armenia on February 22–23. In all, nine teams from around Armenia competed. My team placed first, in addition to earning three certificates for "Best Team," "Best Memorial" and "Best Orator," won by ARTHUR MARGARYAN in the first round of the competition.



Insights from the Field

A few weeks ago, I received a very gloomy e-mail from one of my best students raising concerns about our last class. The student was disheartened because he felt that his classmates were not making the effort to understand differing points of view, and that ultimately there was no point in raising questions for discussion when a student's voice was either disregarded or openly mocked. The author dismally concluded that he would never again participate in class discussion.

Having finished reading his message, I was as much surprised as troubled by its content. I was pleasantly surprised by the unusual openness of the letter, yet troubled both by his discouragement and, more personally, by my failure to address how we as students and scholars should converse, listen and exchange opinions with one another, which is ultimately the objective of classroom discussion. On one hand, I had let my student down; on the other, this circumstance had tested my teaching skills, improved them and more generally, but not less importantly, brought to bear the issue of what exactly a philosophy of higher education means.

Classroom Discussion: Act of Convincing or Act of Explanation and Understanding?

The following day, I spoke about the objectives of classroom discussion. The message I tried to convey was simple. First, as students of social sciences, we should always strive to present our views using all available means of communication. Silence, in this particular case, is not golden at all. Second, we should present our points of view in a clear and coherent manner so that those who do listen will understand how we think about specific issues. Finally, and probably most crucially, classroom discussion should *not* be aimed at convincing others to share particular views, since not only is this quite often impossible, but it is also not necessarily desirable.

Academic discussions, similar to scholarly publications, should not aim at persuasion, but rather explanation and understanding. Students often become frustrated when others do not accept their arguments. They then proceed to blame each other for failing to listen or being closed to others' views. Once we shift the objectives of classroom discussion from the issue of acceptance or rejection of one's arguments to the issue of understanding others' arguments, we may more easily avoid frustration. Convincing someone else of one's particular point of view only leads to the end of disagreement, hence, discussion. Such a situation is more than

needed in politics, but not in social science. Social science research is about endless, but not meaningless, presentations of new hypotheses and evidence to explain issues or events, even those (or particularly those) which seem to have already been explained. Similarly, discussions in class should aim less at persuading others and more at providing stronger evidence to produce more plausible explanations and a clearer understanding of specific issues. Once this is acknowledged and implemented, discussions become less emotional and more academic.

toring) and educating (tutoring) skills complement each other and become essential components of "professorship."

A pedagogical dimension to teaching demands a certain amount of training in psychology, which should focus on gaining students' trust while still maintaining a professional distance. An academic with whom students identify has a better chance at resolving student conflicts, in addition to achieving success in shaping the intellectual "bones" of young people. An educating dimension to teaching requires that aca-

Reflections on Teaching

Maciej Bartkowski, CEP Visiting Faculty Fellow—Odessa, Ukraine



Philosophy of What We Are Doing

This whole episode ended exactly where it had started – with an exchange of e-mails between the student and me in which, in this case, the acts of explaining and convincing served their purpose. The student agreed to remain engaged in class discussion. However, during our e-mail conversations, I became more and more aware of one thing: that teaching is not a word that properly describes the work in which I am involved. University teachers working in the Eurasian region encounter students often as young as sixteen, seventeen and eighteen, whose social and political consciences are still being formed. In this context, a philosophy of higher education is less about pure teaching or researching (although many would disagree) and more about mentoring and educating, where both pedagogical (men-

demics acquire in-depth knowledge concerning social science theorizing and research, as well as the ability to transfer this knowledge. Overloaded with empirical data and factual knowledge, students are often poorly equipped to analyze, draw causal inferences and construct generalizable hypotheses. Academics thus have the responsibility to provide students with the analytical and theoretical tools to comprehend and explain processes and events in today's world. In addition to introducing key social science research terms connected with various ontological, epistemological and methodological issues, academics should be obliged to become more knowledgeable about these subjects. Thus, special training programs on social science research and theorizing should become available for teachers in the Eurasian region.

The Stone Fortress

Donnacha O Beachain

CEP Visiting Faculty Fellow—Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The first thing one notices about Tashkent – “the stone fortress” – is its size; it is a huge sprawling city with suburbs that even the city’s modern and aesthetically pleasing metro cannot reach. While Tashkent’s size may be intimidating, it is compensated by the friendliness of the Uzbek people who reside there. On my first day, I was greeted by our Program Coordinator, Dildora Abidjanova and the then Program Assistant, Irina An. They immediately made me feel at home and had even taken the trouble of buying groceries, including a box of Irish breakfast tea. They certainly knew how to win me over!

Uzbekistan labours under an authoritarian political system in which the image and words of the president are ubiquitous. The dozen or so ghost-written works of the president are compulsory reading for most students, regardless of discipline and universities are adorned with prominent quotations from him which are placed rather incongruously beside those of Adam Smith, Mark Twain and Albert Einstein. In an environment where the president has spoken authoritatively on every subject from religion to economics to science, what more is there to say, one might ask, and, more importantly for CEP, what does the humble Uzbek student have to say?

Surprisingly, quite a lot. There is a genuine curiosity among students about the outside world, combined with a realistic assessment of Uzbekistan’s place in the international order. It is recognised that the interest of Uzbek students in the international community is not reciprocated, certainly not proportionally. Education is seen as a potential source of liberation, enlightenment and as a window to the world. My classes are conducted at the National University of Uzbekistan (NUU). Compared to the other major universities, the University of World Economy and Diplomacy and the recent addition of Westminster University, the NUU is under-resourced. For this reason, it is wise that CEP has concentrated its efforts here. There is an impressive CEP library, open daily and staffed by students, stocked with an ever-increasing supply of modern books from a variety of disciplines within the social sciences. I am also in the enviable position of having an office at the university, replete with computer, printer and photocopier.

Much of my time during the last semester has been spent with what might be considered small things (writing recommendations, helping students write proposals and papers, assisting with CVs and applications), but they are, in fact, the meat and bone of what CEP is about. One night, as we stayed until 9 or 10 in my office going through applications for the IREX-administered Freedom Support Act Undergraduate Program, one of the students present asked me why I was still there. I replied that it was important that the applications were completed well, as it would be such a great opportunity to be educated in the United States. She thanked me and replied, “Nobody ever cared before whether we succeeded or failed.” They are, of course, the kind of words that educators long to hear and that linger with them long after the student has remembered what he or she said. Feeling that one is making a difference in the lives of individual students is, I believe, a large part of what motivates CEP Fellows, and the CEP organisation generally.

This second semester has still to be completed and is going to be much busier as a number of outreach projects come to fruition. Among them is the Central Asia and Mongolia Debate Forum, which



I have devoted much of this semester to help prepare. This event has generated much interest among students who will be debating a wide range of issues including the US military role in Central Asia, globalisation, prostitution and authoritarianism.

The Ferghana region, long reputed to be a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism (a nebulous concept at the best of times), has been a focal point for CEP activities involving Fellows from Uzbekistan and neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. The Ferghana Valley is a place apart in many respects, a region that transcends borders. The imaginary boundaries of national identity do not correspond with the state borders imposed during Soviet rule by the arbitrary movement of the imperial pen. State boundaries are a modern concept and cannot with ease be applied to the ethnic mosaic of the region. Violent clashes between Meshketian Turks and Uzbeks in 1989 and between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks a year later in Osh vividly demonstrated inter-ethnic and intra-national rifts, and exposed fault lines that had been covered over only by Soviet propaganda.

During this academic year, co-operation between Fellows in Ferghana (one LFF in Andijan in Uzbekistan and four VFFs across the border in Osh) and those in Tashkent and Samarkand has been institutionalised by a series of seminars and workshops. The rationale behind the seminars (which concentrated on the theme of transition) was the desire to achieve a number of objectives, not least to utilise the CEP network to bring new perspectives on pressing issues to the Ferghana, and other parts of the region. These seminars are complemented by a series of workshops devoted to enabling students to develop a number of critical skills that are indispensable in a rapidly changing academic environment (cv writing, oral presentation skills, interview skills, academic reading and writing). In addition, we are planning a major student conference, which will take place in May in Andijan. The conference, involving 35 students from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, will provide students with the opportunity and resources to examine the current state of political, economic and social factors in Ferghana. Students will also assess the problems that face the region and the potential risks for conflict, whether inspired by religion, ethnicity or social factors. However, identifying the problems is the easy part. More challenging is finding solutions and offering a perspective on the future that promises an escape from the legacy of the past and the burdens of the present.

My work within CEP in Tashkent has been challenging and rewarding. The legacy of the Soviet past has created myriad problems within the Uzbek educational system. The Berlin Wall may have fallen fourteen years ago, but the barriers preventing access to independent education still have to be dismantled. Low pay, corruption, lack of resources and access to up-to-date information are obstacles to progress, but CEP is, little by little, chipping away at these, which is why the work of a CEP Fellow is never done.

An Outsider's Perspective on the Armenian Elections

Richard Krauze, CEP Visiting Faculty Fellow—Yerevan, Armenia

When Armenians woke up on February 20, 2003 after casting their votes the day before in the fourth presidential election since independence, they still didn't know who had won. By early afternoon, some state-run television stations were reporting that incumbent President Robert Kocharian had secured a first-round victory. However, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) did not release the official results until later – the outcome, Kocharian had fallen a few thousand votes short of securing the 50 percent needed to win in the first-round.

Some speculate that the CEC had held off announcing the official results until hearing what the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) would report regarding the fairness of the elections. The OSCE's preliminary report stated that "the counting process was flawed and the long-term election process fell short of international standards," such as heavy use of public resources to support the incumbent, pre-election intimidation and manipulation, to name a few. Hence, it may have been this report that ultimately swayed the CEC to announce that Kocharian was just under 50 percent.

On March 5, 2003, Armenians will head to the polls to vote in the runoff election. The choice is between President Robert Kocharian and opposition candidate Stepan Demirchian. Demirchian is the son of a popular communist leader who was assassinated on October 27, 1999. Much of what I hear about Demirchian is that he lacks experience, he's not really a good public speaker and he doesn't have a true agenda - essentially he's running on his father's legacy. However, he is liked by a certain segment of the population who longs for the return of Soviet days, either because they are disillusioned with the current level of corruption or because they are among over 50% of the population that lives below the poverty level. President Kocharian, on the other hand, is using the hallmark of an old communist leader and dictator, abusing state resources, arresting opposition supporters and blocking roads into Yerevan during opposition rallies. Supporters of Kocharian dumped almost 20 tons of rocks into a square and confiscated sound equipment where Demirchian was scheduled to speak. Kocharian derives much of his financial support from a small number of people who have made millions of dollars from corrupt business transactions and siphoning off grant and loan money from international organizations. His supporters continue to benefit under his presidency.

What I have seen, heard and read since then has provided for a very interesting situation. I have heard stories from election monitors of stuffed ballot boxes and count manipulation. So what is the real count? Unfortunately, I don't think anyone will ever know. A number of the candidates have been accused of ballot box stuffing and vote buying. How much does a vote cost? Word on the street puts a vote at about 5,000 dram or the equivalent of \$8.70, not much to people in Western

terms, but a significant amount for Armenians, considering the poverty rates here. How much of a role did intimidation play? It's difficult to say exactly, but when bosses and military commanders are applying heavy pressure, voting without feeling intimidated must be difficult. Teachers and workers have reported being forced to attend presidential rallies, threatened with losing their jobs. What about the media? Most observers agree that the incumbent candidate has received the most coverage, all of which was very favorable, whereas opposition candidates received less and it was generally negative. This is not surprising, as forces close to Kocharian control the media industry, and for trivial reasons independent stations were shut down long before the elections had begun.

The day the official results were announced, a large opposition crowd took to the streets to proclaim that the elections were unfair and had deprived people of their say. People continue to meet regularly, attracting crowds of up to 70,000 by some accounts. Last week, while intending to photograph the riot police, water cannon tanks and barbed wire fence in front of the parliament, I ran into the opposition who had marched there to speak to the president. As a result, I was stuck between the riot police on one side and barbed wire fence with the opposition on the other. As the situation was tense, I was at first fearful that something would break out; fortunately, I found an escape route. The rally ended with lots of yelling and demands, but without incident – except for a female protestor who threw her bra over the barbed wire fence. Nevertheless, I'm afraid that if there is any doubt of the fairness of the runoff election, there is serious potential for conflict. In 1996, when the opposition cast doubts on the election process, then President Levon Ter-Petrosian sent troops to control the opposition, including tanks to the capital. The potential for recurrence is serious.

*Riot police with water tanks in Yerevan, Armenia
during state-run elections
—photo taken by VFF Richard Krauze*



In the beautiful and spotless Moscow subway, old women sit at the tops and bottoms of nearly every escalator. They are metro employees keeping an eye on the flow of people in a subway that moves more people every day than the New York and London subways combined. If a young boy tosses a gum wrapper or a group of teenagers runs down the platform, these babushkas simply have to shoot a look of disapproval to get the offender to stop. In the streets of Russian cities, babushkas sell the goods they made in their homes or grew at their “dacha” (country house), and while their official work is that of seller, their unofficial job is to maintain order on the street. Drunken men and insolent teenagers beware! The babushka will put them in their place.

When I moved into my apartment in Omsk, my landlady went over the usual stuff that landladies cover, and, almost as an aside, she added that my phone was shared with another apartment. Once I got settled, I set up an account that allowed me to access the web from my home computer.

The Babushka Factor

Michael Powelson
CEP, Visiting Faculty Fellow—Omsk, Russia

to ignore her, that she was old and crazy and harmless.

Wrong advice. Two days later my phone went silent. All night and the whole next day the phone was dead. Naively I thought the line was down, but on the third day there was a knock on my door. It was babushka, dressed as before, but with a look of triumph on her face, shaking her fist in the air, her eyes piercing mine as if to say, “see what happens when you mess with me?” I still wasn’t sure what she was saying (I hadn’t become fluent in Russian in three days), so I once again called my landlady. She confirmed that babushka had indeed taken her phone off the hook in order to teach me a lesson.



Illustration
 by Shawn Hunt

the idea that the phone line should be tied up for hours at a time, certainly not by a foreigner with a laptop computer!

So we do silent battle. She is now nice to me in the hallway, brightly saying “dosvidanya” and crossing herself whenever I walk past. And I too am outwardly pleasant. But behind my smile is the angry suspicion that she intentionally kept her phone off the hook for two hours the previous night. In turn, babushka cannot fully hide her anger over the fact that I was on the web for four hours last night, even if it wasn’t during “peak” babushka hours.

Russia is filled with babushkas. They are in their 60s and 70s and 80s, and they remember the war and how Russia struggled and recovered. They remember the cheap prices and the human closeness of the Soviet system, both of which seem to have left Russia. They never minded the lack of consumer goods, like computers and extra soft tampons and protein hair shampoo for dry or oily hair, because they never used these products. These are the women who built the tanks that beat the Germans, and these are the women who grew the food in their little garden plots after the war to avoid starvation. These are the women who washed clothes by hand until well into adulthood, and who still can their own tomatoes and sew their own clothes. They demonstrate in Moscow and they vote for the communists in the elections. Since the health care system has collapsed, their men have all died. But babushkas live! And they are there to remind Russia what it once was, and to ask Russia where it is going.

As I write this I wait for babushka to hang up her phone. Babushka, please hang up! Please, babushka? I’m sorry. You are stronger than I am, just let me use the web? Babushka?...

Beyond Teaching

For over a week, I happily surfed the web; but then one morning a knock came on my door. A babushka stormed in, with knotted fingers and wrapped in robe and scarf and thick socks that could not hide her knotted toes. She screamed at me in Russian, a language I do not understand. Since every tenth word was “telefon,” however, I concluded that her anger was linked to my phone use. I called a Russian friend to interpret, and she confirmed that it was about me tying up the phone line while on the internet. My friend added that she thought the babushka was a little nuts and that I should ignore her. I told my landlady about the babushka, and she, too, told me

I felt helpless. I asked my landlady, what should I do? Three days earlier she had encouraged me to stand up to babushka, but now she looked defeated. “Can’t you stay off the line until she goes to bed?” she asked weakly. She threw me a bone by promising me a separate line as soon as possible. I called my friend who confirmed that Russian babushkas have a lot of power and are not to be messed with. She too had no suggestions other than staying off the line.

Babushka had won! My allies had deserted me, and I too felt resigned to the fact that I would have to abide by the wishes of babushka. She might be old, she might be crazy, but she has a will the size of Russia itself, and she will not be messed with!

I don’t blame babushka for wanting her line free. On the other hand, I need the web to do my work. The solution, of course, is to get a separate phone line. But it’s not that easy in Russia, where the population has discovered that services can be just as bad under capitalism as they were under socialism. So three weeks after this incident Babushka and I still share the line. I have backed off from using the line at “peak” babushka hours (7–9am and 7–9pm), but I don’t think that babushka will ever accept



A New Direction for CEP Central Europe

CEP's Central Europe Program currently operates in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia. Given the recent developments in these countries – with accession to the European Union anticipated in 2004 and their governments' increased efforts to create the European Higher Education Area as a result of the Bologna process - CEP has reassessed its programs and developed a more targeted approach for Central Europe.

In line with CEP's general mission, but taking into account the new regional context and the potential CEP has developed in Central Europe over the last ten years, the main goals for this region are to help develop the most promising social science scholars, build local and regional discipline- or issue-based networks, connect academics to the community in a meaningful way and build and maintain bridges between Central Europe and countries further east, through the transfer of skills and knowledge.

With these goals in mind, the main areas of focus for CEP in Central Europe will be professional development programs in the context of the Bologna process, academic networking, increasing opportunities in higher education for minorities and projects connecting academics with the larger community. Beginning with 2003–2004, CEP will no longer offer individual support through the Local Faculty Fellowship Program. CEP's focus in Central Europe will not be on "retaining" scholars in academia, but rather on empowering and creating a pool of resource persons who can later assist CEP in transferring skills and knowledge to other regions.

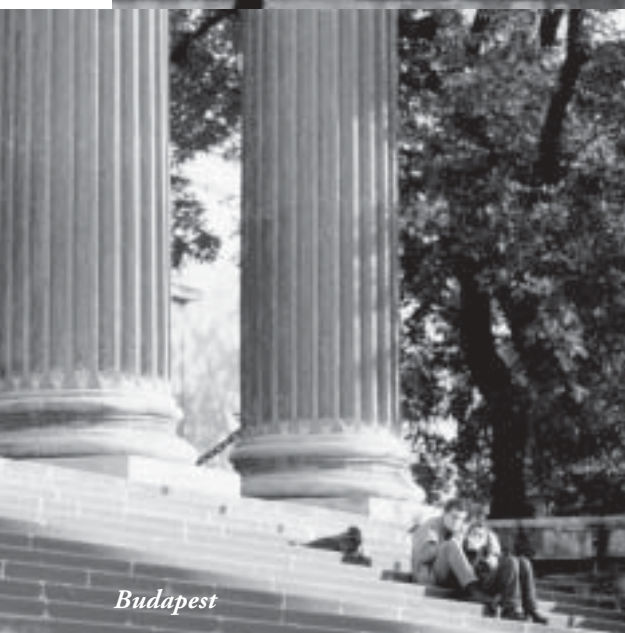
Prague



Krakow



What's New?



Budapest



*Romanian Retreat
in Oradea, April, 2002*



*Irakli Katsitadze
CEP Part-time Teaching Fellow
at State Medical University
in Tbilisi*

A Success Story

IRAKLI KATSITADZE, graduate of New York University, joined CEP as a Part-time Teaching (PTT) Fellow in 2001. In addition to working full-time as a policy advisor to the Minister of Health of Georgia, Katsitadze also teaches Introduction to Health Policy and Management at State Medical University in Tbilisi (TSMU). The course was developed in 1999 with the assistance of the OSI-TSMU partnership program and CEP. Until recently, the only public health education courses offered in Georgia were ones designed 20–30 years ago that focused on the Soviet health care system.

Though the course I introduced in 2001 was initially designed for English-speaking students of TSMU, the interest was so strong that non-English speaking students demanded I translate the class into Georgian. While it took a full summer to translate the

course materials, it paid off: I now have up to 30 students in each class and an innovative course that contains relevant information necessary for a future generation of health care professionals and managers.

Irakli's greatest achievement during his CEP affiliation so far has been admission to an OSI-funded international policy fellowship program. Selected from among more than 800 applicants from 25 countries, Irakli has been awarded the opportunity to conduct a one yearlong research project in the field of fairness in health financing.

Although I will miss my year with CEP, I intend to continue lecturing at TSMU. My students will benefit from the project as well, as I plan to involve them in all stages of the research process. They'll have the valuable opportunity of applying the theoretical knowledge they received in the classroom to practice.

What Alumni Have To Say About CEP

In addition to her current position as academic coordinator for CEP Romania, **ROMANITA IORDACHE**, CEP LFF alumna, is serving as an expert to the PROUNDIS PPF task force for the European Union program in institutional building in the field of anti-discrimination. Having received a law degree, Iordache has continued her career in Romania and has made substantial contributions to the *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* and the Invisible College. In 2002, Iordache was awarded the Stephen Grand Award for outstanding performance.

For me, as probably for most CEP Fellows, it was much more difficult to adjust to living in Romania again than it was to studying abroad. This is where I had the big advantage of being accepted by the Romanian CEP team who helped me overcome the cultural clash in my own country and to integrate into a community of people striving for excellence.

Romanita

My CEP Fellowship in Albania was a challenge offered to me at the beginning of my academic career, and I am very glad that I accepted it. Through this fellowship, I improved my strength living under hard conditions, learned from the people of Albania and the CEP staff and also became one of those "balkanophiles" who always complains whenever they are there, but can never be detached from it.

Bulent

Receiving his PhD in history from Humboldt University in Berlin, **BULENT BILMEZ** currently teaches at Yeditepe University in Istanbul, where he hosted the very successful CEP 3D (Debate from Dubrovnik to Dushanbe) international student debate forum held in November-December 2001. Bilmez conducted his postdoctoral research on Albania using networks he had built during his time as a CEP Visiting Faculty Fellow in Albania.

IVELIN SARDAMOV holds a PhD in government and international studies from the University of Notre Dame. Sardamov is currently on the CEP Bulgaria Advisory Board and teaches at the American University in Bulgaria.

Coming from Notre Dame, a university with a strong community spirit, I was very lucky to join the CEP academic family. Its unique blend of local and visiting lecturers provided the friendliest social environment for which any Western-trained scholar coming back home could wish. As a political scientist with an interest in Balkan issues, I am also grateful for the opportunity to meet other faculty and students from the region. For my family and me, CEP is not just an organization that provides support and enhances careers; it remains a network of friends to which we are happy to belong.

Ivelin

Students at 2002 3-D Forum





N·E·W·S·L·E·T·T·E·R

CIVIC EDUCATION PROJECT

Teach in Central/Eastern Europe or Eurasia in 2003–04

Be a Part of the Reform and Development of Higher Education through CEP Programs

The Visiting Faculty Fellowship (VFF) Program offers the opportunity for academics from outside the post-communist region holding an advanced degree in a social science, law, or journalism to teach and mentor for a year in a university in Southeastern Europe, the NIS or Mongolia. From graduate students to retired professors, Fellows offer a wide range of experience and diversity to students and faculty. What they have in common is academic excellence, commitment to education, a sense of adventure and a deep respect for the values of liberal democracy.

The Local Faculty Fellowship (LFF) Program provides financial support and an opportunity for professional development and networking to academics from the region who have received an advanced degree at a Western-accredited university and wish to return to their home countries to teach. CEP provides assistance to academics by helping them obtain teaching materials, providing opportunities to learn about teaching methodologies and creating academic networks for collaboration and professional development.

The Support for Community Outreach and University Teaching (SCOUT) Program provides follow-on support to alumni of the Edmund S. Muskie/Freedom Support Act Graduate Fellowship Program. Full- and part-time Fellowships and Special Projects grants are available for alumni who qualify in the Baltics and Newly Independent States (NIS). Programs offer financial, methodological, institutional and informational support to Muskie/FSA alumni who are interested in teaching in institutions of higher education.

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