



## Reassessing the Arctic

**Tom DuBois, Professor of Scandinavian Studies**

In a recent interview on National Public Radio, a young pianist mentioned having left her home country to study at a conservatory in Siberia. The studio audience erupted in laughter. “You chose to go to Siberia?!” the host asked in polite dismay. “Yes,” replied the woman, “It is a real place.” The Far North has always suffered under negative characterizations among populations to the south. Ancient authors wrote of the dismal and dimly lit island of Thule, far to the north of civilized Europe. For centuries, Nordic and Russian princes sought to portray their countries as worthy of notice in refined court circles in Central and Southern Europe, while simultaneously using their most northerly tracts as penal colonies or dumping grounds. And the US purchase of Alaska was treated with outrage and derision in the press of the lower forty-eight for generations after it took place. Yet increasingly, the attention of scientists, social scientists, and humanists is turning toward the arctic as a region of tremendous environmental, economic, and cultural interest.

Many reasons can be cited for the increased popular and scholarly interest in the arctic region. Norwegian, Alaskan, and Russian arctic oil industries have proven lucrative and influential parts of national and global economies; planned oil explorations off Greenland and possible expanded oil production in Alaska further heighten this importance. At the same time, global warming (also known, more euphemistically, as “climate change”) and environmental pollutants from places like Central Europe, Russia, and the American Midwest are radically changing life in the arctic for populations and wildlife living there. And in the context of a global movement for indigenous peoples’ rights, the arctic provides some startling examples of legal and political redress: the now longstanding autonomy of Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) under the aegis of Denmark, and the newly instated autonomy of Nunavut in northern Canada.

The Russian Federation is one of a handful of eight nations which together share ownership and rule over the world’s arctic region. Five of the other shareholders are Nordic nations: Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. In North America, the arctic is shared by the USA (Alaska) and Canada. Since the early 1980s, these countries have met and consulted regularly on issues of mutual significance, such as arctic pollution, demilitarization, development, and indigenous peoples’ rights. Interesting international efforts are underway, such as the joint Russian-Canadian project entitled “Institutional Building for Northern Aboriginal Peoples in Russia.” But vast differences exist in outlook and affluence between these countries, and the image of a unified approach to the arctic is largely illusory. Even between states with close and positive relations—such as the USA and Canada—real conflicts exist on issues such as dioxins, preservation

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### Russian Film Festival

This term CREECA is sponsoring a Russian Film Festival, including a film hosted by Williams College Professor Julie Cassidy, who will present a related lecture the next day (March 21) entitled “For Each Enemy, Another Trial: Scripting Confession in the Stalinist Show Trials.” See the CREECA calendar on page 3 for details.

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of dwindling salmon stocks, and aboriginal hunting rights.

As the earth continues to warm, severe environmental threats are arising in the arctic: new plant and animal diseases are gaining ground, changing water temperatures are affecting fish populations that provide major sources of income and livelihood for local populations, and a softening of the region's frozen underground—the permafrost—threatens immeasurable damage to structures, roads, and pipelines in the region. The US National Science Foundation operates an Office of Polar Programs to address some of these pressing and intriguing questions and to try to foster international research cooperation in an often politicized and contested arena.

In the area of social sciences and the humanities, the Arctic Research Consortium of the United States (ARCUS) has emerged as an important force. The organization manages a directory of arctic researchers, offers funding opportunities for research in a variety of arctic-related subject areas, and occasionally mounts conferences and workshops to bring specialists on the arctic together. As a scholar of Sámi (Lapp) culture, I was invited to participate in the organization's Arctic Social Sciences Workshop, held in Seattle, Washington, January 18-20, 2001. While nearly every American schoolchild learns about Inuit (Eskimo) igloos sometime in early elementary school, and sees images of Sámi, Nenets, or Chukchi reindeer herders migrating across tundra tracts, the contemporary situations and issues of arctic indigenous populations today are often marginalized or forgotten altogether.

Yet the ways in which such cultures meet with the myriad political and environmental changes facing them today, and negotiate a present and future for themselves and their children represents an extremely important and interesting area of research. At the workshop, I participated in one of four working groups addressing areas of significance for researchers in arctic social sciences. My group focused on issues of traditional knowledge among arctic peoples. (The other groups examined the impact of human populations in the environmental history of the arctic, issues of self determination and resource management, and linkages between identities and economic transformations.)

Arctic peoples such as Sámi often possess elaborate and effective bodies of knowledge for describing and dealing with their environments, from elements of lexicon (terms for snow or landscape, for instance), or techniques of hunting and herding, to possible medicinal uses of various plants and animals. A crucial area of research ethics lies in the ways in which scholars from the south should use or present this knowledge. Issues of copyright and patent arise regarding medicinal products, as in the case of ethnobotanical knowledge from the tropical rainforests of the Amazon. Increasingly, parallel issues have arisen regarding other kinds of traditional knowledge of interest to southern marketers of

traditional arts, partakers of Northern religious traditions, developers of the growing ecotourism industry, etc. Social scientists often act as conduits between arctic systems of knowledge and such entrepreneurs from the south, and they thus become implicated in complex issues of ownership, preservation, and profits that hold real significance for arctic communities.

On a more abstract level, issues arise regarding how traditional knowledge can or should be integrated with that of scientists working in the south. Is Inuit traditional knowledge valid as science under the rules and norms of Western academics? If so, how? If not, why not? Who gets to decide: scientists in the south or their native counterparts in the north? Can scholars in the south learn anything regarding their approaches to knowledge by comparing scholarly practice here with that which has gone on for centuries in arctic cultures? My own research answers this last question in the affirmative, suggesting that an integrative, holistic, and aesthetic approach to knowledge pervades many arctic cultures, offering a significant antidote to some of the negative aspects of the sometimes fragmenting, isolating science which has developed in the West during the last several centuries. Such a finding has significance for the ways in which federal institutions organize and provide such services as healthcare and education and how local communities view their own bodies of traditional knowledge.

Traditional knowledge, the workshop's discussions made clear, also holds political significance, since respect for the science of an indigenous people can enhance that community's perceived status in the wider world and bolster local calls for self determination and rights. In the Russian Federation, as in Scandinavia and North America, many indigenous communities are struggling to wrestle control over their lands and destinies out of the hands of centralized powers "down south" and to build an infrastructure to allow for local governance.

When local systems of knowledge, and the specialists or elders who watch over them, are accorded greater prestige among the scholars of the prestigious south, this act can translate into profound shifts in the fortunes of groups advocating self-rule. The situation of indigenous communities in the northern Russian Federation can be compared in a variety of ways to situations among Nordic Sámi people and indigenous communities in the USA and Canada. And Arctic studies, with its necessarily interdisciplinary approach to the environmental, economic, political, and cultural factors facing the far north, offers a host of interesting research opportunities for students and scholars who don't mind the cold.

## Spring Calendar

### February

#### International Opportunities Awareness Month

In conjunction with many other UW departments, CREECA is co-sponsoring events in February for students interested in working in an international capacity upon graduation. For more information, visit: <http://www.wisc.edu/ciber/intlopp>

#### Movie

February 6, Tuesday  
7:15 p.m.  
104 Van Hise  
"Anna from 6 to 16"  
Russian Film Festival

#### Movie

February 15, Thursday  
7:15 p.m.  
Room TBA  
"Totalitarian Romance"  
Russian Film Festival

#### Movie

February 21, Wednesday  
7:15 p.m.  
Room TBA  
"The Thief"  
Russian Film Festival

#### Concert

February 22, Thursday  
7:00 p.m.  
Morphy Hall, Humanities Building  
*Zolotoj Plyos*  
Russian Folk Music  
Co-sponsored by the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

#### Movie

February 27, Tuesday  
7:15 p.m.  
Room TBA  
"Brother 1"  
Russian Film Festival

#### Lecture

February 28, Wednesday  
12:00 noon  
336 Ingraham Hall  
"The Evolution of 'Us' and 'Them' in Russian Film from Perestroika to Putin"  
Benjamin Rifkin  
Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures  
UW-Madison

#### Movie

February 28, Wednesday  
7:15 p.m.  
Room TBA  
"Brother 2"  
Russian Film Festival

### March

#### Lecture

March 1, Thursday  
3:30 p.m.  
6191 Helen C. White  
"Remembering Without  
Commemoration: East European Roma and the Romani Holocaust"  
Michael Stewart  
Senior Lecturer of Anthropology  
University College, London  
Sponsored by the University Lectures Committee

#### Lecture

March 9, Friday  
12:00 noon  
336 Ingraham Hall  
"The Place of Place in Democratic Transition"  
Valerie Bunce  
Professor of Government  
Cornell University  
Co-sponsored by the Global Studies Program

#### Movie

Tuesday, March 20  
7:15 p.m.  
Room TBA  
"The Party Card"  
Russian Film Festival  
\*And then come see Julie Cassidy's related lecture the following day:

#### Lecture

Wednesday, March 21  
1:00 p.m.  
Pyle Center  
"For Each Enemy, Another Trial: Scripting Confession in the Stalinist Show Trials"  
Julie Cassidy  
Assistant Professor of Russian  
Williams College  
Co-sponsored by CIBER and the Rundell Fund

#### Lecture

March 26, Monday  
12:00 noon  
206 Ingraham Hall  
"Mass Support for Ethnonationalism in Russia: A Reappraisal"

Donna Bahry  
Professor of Political Science  
Vanderbilt University

#### Lecture

March 26, Monday  
12:00 noon  
Social Sciences 8417  
"The Politics of Gender after Socialism: Public and Private"  
Susan Gal  
Professor and Chair  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Chicago  
Co-sponsored by the Department of Sociology, the Women's Studies Research Center, the Women and Citizenship Research Circle and the International Study Programs of the School of Education

### April

#### Special Event

April 3, Tuesday  
8:00 - 12:00 noon  
Union South  
"A Day in East Europe"  
2nd bi-annual event for Wisconsin high school students

#### Lecture

April 6, Friday  
12:00 noon  
336 Ingraham Hall  
"Rewriting the Red Calendar: Holidays for a New Russia"  
Kelly Smith  
Visiting Professor of Government  
Georgetown University

#### Special Event

April 7, Saturday  
11:00 - 4:00 p.m.  
Madison Children's Museum  
"Ukrainian Easter Egg Decorating Workshop"  
For children in the third grade and up  
Lead by Betty Pisio Christenson  
National Heritage Award Winner

#### Lecture

April 9, Monday  
1:00 p.m.  
TITU, Memorial Union  
"Practicing Russian Law: Reflections of an American Lawyer in Moscow"  
Will Pomeranz  
Lawyer  
Williams, Mullen, Clark and Dobbins  
Washington D.C.  
Co-sponsored by CIBER

## CALL FOR PAPERS

for the 2001 AATSEEL-Wisconsin Conference

We invite abstracts for the following panels:

### 20th-Century Russian Literature and Film

Chair: David B. Polet

### 19th- and Pre-19th-Century Russian Literature

Chair: Antonella Caloro

### Issues in the Learning and Teaching of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Chair: Gretchen Eichenberger

### Special Topics: Slavic Literatures Other than Russian

Chair: Viktoria Ivleva

**The conference will be held on  
Saturday, October 13, 2001 at  
UW-Madison.**

*To submit an abstract:* Those wishing to read papers on any of the above panels should send FOUR copies of a one-page abstract by June 1, 2001 to Professor Halina Filipowicz, Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1220 Linden Dr., Madison, WI 53706 (FAX: 608-265-2814). We regret that we are unable to accommodate the electronic submission of abstracts. Abstracts should be prepared for an anonymous review: only one copy should include the author's name and address. We strongly recommend that those who submit an abstract refer to the guidelines for writing abstracts in the February 2000 *AATSEEL Newsletter* (also posted on the AATSEEL web site). The selection committee, consisting of panel chairs and secretaries and the co-chairs of AATSEEL-Wisconsin, will inform those proposing papers of the selection decision by July 1, 2001.

David Danaher  
Halina Filipowicz  
Co-Chairs, AATSEEL-Wisconsin

## New Acquisitions

The following videos have been added to CREECA's Lending Library collection and are now available to be checked out at the CREECA office or through CREECA Web:

### **The Firemen's Ball**

Directed by Milos Forman. 1967. 73min. Color. Comedy. Czech with English subtitles. This dark but hilarious parable about Stalinist authoritarianism depicts the outrageous descent of a firemen's ball into total chaos. The plot concerns the rituals surrounding a small town's celebration of a retiring fire chief and a beauty pageant as a commentary about the social and political order.

### **The Witness**

Directed by Peter Bacso. 1969. 116min. Color. Drama. Hungarian with English subtitles. Banned for more than nine years in Hungary, this film set in 1949 is a political satire that mixes forms and styles, symbolism and screwball farce. The story concerns a functionary who is imprisoned and eventually manipulated into providing testimony against his best friend -- a government minister on trial for treason.

### **Prisoner of the Mountains**

Directed by Sergei Brodov. 1996. Color. Russian with English subtitles. Drama. Based on Tolstoy's classic tale of hope, courage and humanity this film follows the journey of two Russian prisoners of war held captive in the Caucasus Mountains by a local patriarch who hopes to exchange them for his son's release from a Russian jail. Winner of the 1996 Cannes Critics Prize and nominated for an Oscar, *Prisoner of the Mountains* is a testament to man's humanity and the inhumanity of war.

### **Totalitarian Romance**

Directed by V. Sorokin. 1998. Color. Russian with no subtitles. This story of desperate love depicts the relationship between a young woman of the provinces and a Moscow dissident fleeing from government security agents in small towns and villages. V. Sorokin won a prize for his direction at the Minsk Film Festival in 1998, and M. Mareeva's screen play was honored at the Moscow Film Festival in 1999, while lead actress G. Bokashevskaya won the award for best performance in a female role at the Kinoshock Festival in 1999.

## Ukrainian Easter Egg Painting

In conjunction with the Madison Children's Museum, CREECA is sponsoring a workshop on Ukrainian Easter egg decorating for children in the third grade and up. Led by National Heritage award winner Betty Pisio Christenson, the workshop will take place from 11-4 p.m. on Saturday, April 7, 2001 at the Madison Children's Museum. For information on registration, email Erica Tucker at [creeca3@intl-institute.wisc.edu](mailto:creeca3@intl-institute.wisc.edu) or contact Kia Karlin at the Madison Children's Museum.



## Concert of Russian Folk Music: Zolotoj Plyos!!!

Formed in 1994, *Zolotoj Plyos* consists of three members: Alexander Solovov, Elena Sadina and Serguei Gratchev. All three members of the group are graduates of the Higher Music School of Saratov. During the course of their studies they won prizes in several folk music contests as well as winning first place in the first ever Russian Carillon Competition.

The group's repertoire comprises many songs (some instrumental) from different regions of Russia. They play more than 20 different Russian traditional instruments. *Zolotoj Plyos* has participated in folk festivals, performed on television, and given concerts in Russia, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Germany, Portugal and the USA. The group's most recent concerts in the USA were at Middlebury College, Yale University, the Kennedy Center, and on the US Capital Steps. The members of *Zolotoj Plyos* are currently students at the Jef Denyn Royal Carillon School of Mechelen (Belgium).

**February 22, Thursday**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
**Morphy Hall**  
**Humanities Building**



**Free and open to the public.**

## Habitat for Humanity Goes to Poland

What do 19 strangers, Gliwice, Poland, and a bunch of shovels have in common? The answer was discovered this past July, as local volunteers embarked to Poland for two weeks of house building with *Habitat for Humanity International*. *Habitat for Humanity* is a non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating poverty and homelessness throughout the world.

Team leader **Todd Mortensen**, manager of the UW Office of Admissions, describes the trip to Poland as a "tremendous success!" The volunteers, 7 of whom were from Madison, donated vacation time, monetary resources, and loads of sweaty labor to help lay the concrete foundations for what soon became 6 new homes. The need for new housing can be seen in Poland's large block apartment complexes, many of which are in disrepair and only offer a tiny amount of living space. The 10-12% inflation rate and rising building cost in Poland only worsen the situation.

*Habitat for Humanity* was brought to Gliwice, Poland, ten years ago and has partnered with over 16 families in need, placing them all in new homes. *Habitat* requires the future homeowners to help build their own home, often working alongside international volunteers (such as the recent team from Madison). Once moved in, homeowners pay a reasonable interest-free monthly mortgage made possible through the combination of donated time, money, and *Habitat's* unique program.

**Yujin An**, a sophomore majoring in International Relations, joined the team this summer. "It was a life changing kind of experience. The Polish people were incredibly kind and hospitable to us. Our team worked through much rain and cold temperatures, and in the end, poured the foundations for 6 new homes."

Of course, work is not the only aspect of a trip such as this. The team had the opportunity to visit the cities and countryside, seeing first hand the beauty and history that is part of Poland. Adam Krol, the director of *Habitat* in Gliwice, recently visited Madison and had the opportunity to re-connect with the team members. "It is so good to see the hearts and souls of the people who come to help our country. We are grateful for your help and Poland is steadily improving because of it."

If you are interested in hearing and *seeing* more, team leaders Todd and Miel Mortensen will present a slide show of the team's trip to Poland and a previous one to Romania at the Memorial Union, on Thursday, March 1. The event is sponsored by the Wisconsin Union Directorate and Travel Center. For more information you may reach Todd Mortensen on campus at 262-5561, or [tamortensen@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:tamortensen@facstaff.wisc.edu).

## CREECA Courses

- Anthropology / Jewish 372** - Jews of Central and Eastern Europe (Khazanov)
- Central Asia 303** - Civilization of Central Asia (Schamiloglu)
- Central Asia 550** - Advanced Readings in Turkic Languages (Schamiloglu)
- Central Asia 950** - Seminar in Turkic Philology (Schamiloglu)
- Folklore / Slavic 370** - Romani (Gypsy) Culture in Russia and Eastern Europe (Beissinger)
- Folklore / Scandinavian 443** - Sami Culture, Yesterday and Today (DuBois)
- History / Geography / Political Science / Slavic 253** - Russia: An Interdisciplinary Survey (McDonald)
- History 416** - East European Jews in the United States, 1880's-1930's (Michels)
- History 418** - Russian Empire, 1801-1917 (Duke)
- History / Central Asia 851** - Seminar on Ottoman and Middle East History (Karpal)
- Lit Trans 202 / 204** - Survey of 19th and 20th century Russian Lit in Translation (Reynolds)
- Lit Trans 220** - Chekhov in Translation (Shcheglov)
- Lit Trans 222** - Dostoevsky in Translation (Rosenshield)
- Lit Trans / Jewish 225** - The Jew in Russian Literature in Translation (Rosenshield)
- Lit Trans 235** - Soviet Life and Culture Through Literature and Art (Shevelenko)
- Lit Trans 242** - Polish Culture and Literature (Filipowicz)
- Lit Trans 473** - Polish Literature (in Translation) since 1863 (Filipowicz)
- Slavic 342** - Uvod u sprsku i hrvatsku literaturu (Beissinger)
- Slavic 420** - Chekhov (Shcheglov)
- Slavic 422** - Dostoevsky (Rosenshield)
- Slavic 472** - Historia literatury polskiej po roku 1863 (Filipowicz)
- Slavic 710** - Pushkin (Betha)
- Slavic 770** - Russian Poetry 1837-1890 (Reynolds)
- Slavic 925** - Seminar: Soviet Literature (Shcheglov)

## 15th ANNIVERSARY OF CHERNOBYL

By *Norma Berkowitz*, Chairperson, FOCCUS

**The Place:** Hall of Parliament, Kiev, Ukraine

**The Date:** December 15, 2000

**The Scene:** The hall filled with invited representatives of the international community, national governmental bodies and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Dr. Oksana Garnets, a UN official at the Kiev Chernobyl office, relates this historic moment: "President Kuchma is on the stage of the Ukraine Palace. He communicates with the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant control panel via TV. The Control Panel is seen on three large television screens in the Hall. President Kuchma gives the command to the Director of the Chernobyl plant to shut down reactor number 3. The command is passed to the responsible technician, a switch is thrown, and the last reactor on the Chernobyl nuclear site is permanently deadened and closed down.

"President Kuchma's short speech after the switch is thrown highlights the importance of the event both for Ukraine and for global nuclear safety. He cites the complexity of the problems that closure of Chornobyl will cause for Ukraine in the social, ecological and economic areas and stresses that Ukraine will need international support to deal with these problems. He refers to his 1997 speech to the UN General Assembly and his proposal to create an Ecological Security Council, Ecological Court, and Ecological Bank to deal with the mitigation of consequences of ecological disasters. He emphasizes that the lessons of Chornobyl are enormous not only for Ukraine and that the Exclusion Zone could serve as a research laboratory for the scientific community of the whole world. After the President's speech a concert is delivered."

Just a few months short of the 15th anniversary of the world's worst ecological disaster, the productive life of Chernobyl, the nuclear reactor site the Soviets praised as "forever safe", ceased forever.

Friends of Chernobyl Centers (FOCCUS) plans to commemorate the 15th anniversary of this disaster during April and May. In April "Living in the Aftermath of Chernobyl: A Reader," will be in print and available from FOCCUS for about \$30 plus postage. The reader will consist of faculty papers presented at the International Award-winning 1999 summer session course on Chernobyl held on the UW-Madison campus. This course was organized by CREECA and the Wisconsin Teacher Enhancement Program in cooperation with FOCCUS.

Two additional commemoration activities are planned by FOCCUS. One is to expand public aware-

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## **Chernobyl - continued from page 6**

ness and public education about the aftermath of the disaster by increasing the number of presentations to community groups and schools.

A second planned activity is a series of public readings/discussions by Irene Zabytko, author of the novel *The Sky Unwashed*. Ms. Zabytko looks at the aftermath of the world's worst nuclear disaster by exploring the life of an elderly woman who is evacuated and then returns to her home in the "Dead Zone" to live out her days. Ms. Zabytko says her novel "is about survival and the human spirit rather than a scientific book about Chernobyl." The novel prompts personal visions of what it must be like to live in the aftermath of Chernobyl and raises questions of how one's own self might survive and adapt to such a disaster. FOCCUS will sponsor a reading/discussion by Ms. Zabytko in Madison in May. Other sessions may be offered elsewhere by request.

The American public has been grossly uninformed about the impact of the Chernobyl disaster. As late as last summer, a New York Times article stated that about 30 people died of radiation poisoning as a result of the accident at Chernobyl. It failed to note that over 50,000 square miles of land had been poisoned; that thousands of the fire fighters have died or committed suicide; that the Ukrainian government states that "one in eight Ukrainians have been effected by the Chernobyl disaster and thousands are disabled". Thyroid cancer, especially in children, has increased dramatically and leukemia seems to be increasing. Both children and adults often suffer from immune system disorders that have now been recognized as "Chernobyl AIDS". Nor has the American public become aware that millions of people, many of them young children born since the disaster, still live on contaminated land and eat contaminated food every day."

Two years after the disaster the Soviet government asked for international help to deal with the aftermath. UNESCO was the first international body to respond. One project they initiated was the establishment of a network of nine community centers for psychological rehabilitation, located in Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian communities adversely effected by the disaster. This network has now been expanded to thirteen centers. The role of the centers, however, has expanded to include crucial aspects of social and economic development. In the year 2000, with nine of the thirteen Centers reporting, there were 145,460 visits to the Centers. A total of 135 specialist/professional staff are now employed by the Centers (with one new Center still recruiting staff). The Centers are administered and supervised by the UN Development Program of Ukraine, within a special UN Chernobyl Program Office.

FOCCUS was formed about six years ago as a support network project of the Institute for International

Connections, a tax exempt national organization of social workers, educators, psychologists and psychotherapists. Recognizing the urgency of the mission these Centers faced and the energetic commitment of staff to achieve the mission, FOCCUS goals are to provide consultation, training, and financial support and to link the Centers with other resources. In addition, the goal of FOCCUS is to increase public understanding of the Chernobyl disaster and expand awareness of the challenges facing the Centers and the work being accomplished by them.

FOCCUS has provided over 30 weeks of training for staff (both abroad and in the U.S.); sent professional books and articles of relevant material; given over \$15,000 for creative arts and craft supplies and community activities (such as holiday parties for the children of each Center); helped coordinate a project which brought eight children, a Center director and translator to Madison for six weeks of training and "respite"; developed an award-winning UW-Madison Chernobyl Course; built a large, new multi-purpose room for the Center on the grounds of the Clinic for Radiological Medicine (near Minsk) that serves all children in Belarus who have (or are suspected of having) thyroid cancer; initiated advocacy efforts that helped "untangle" a USAID grant providing \$450,000 for development of three new Centers; purchased office equipment and supplies; and implemented a middle school "cultural exchange" program with a Center in Belarus.

The support offered by FOCCUS is critical if Centers are to continue to function. Centers are funded by the national governments of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. However, these budgets cover only the costs of staff salaries (about \$25/month), heating and electricity, and building maintenance. This totals to about 50% of what each Center needs in order to meet the needs of the community for such things as public information, health education, special group work needs, individual/family rehabilitation counseling, community needs assessments, work with local governments, and community-building events.

FOCCUS groups operate in Madison, Bethesda, Telluride and North Port (Florida). However, any one with interest in Chernobyl is welcome to add their talents and time to FOCCUS activities and may contact Norma Berkowitz for further information. Any proceeds realized from the sale of the Chernobyl Reader will support the work of FOCCUS and the Centers.

Details about these activities are available from Ms. Norma Berkowitz, National Chairperson, FOCCUS, 5818 Anchorage Ave., Madison 53705; email: njberkow@facstaff.wisc.edu

## Voices from Abroad

### Flaunting the Victory?: Western Iconography in the Heartland of the World Island

*By Alex Diener*

*Under the auspices of a SSRC pre-dissertation research fellowship, graduate student Alex Diener (Geography) travelled to Kazakhstan in January 2000 for six months of on-site research. This article contributes to an on-going series of pieces in CREECA News highlighting UW graduate work abroad.*

Within moments of my arrival in Almaty, Kazakhstan, I was keenly aware that I was “not in Kansas (or Wisconsin) anymore.” Deplaning on a frozen tarmac, I struggled to keep my balance as the soles of my Doc Martins provided little traction across the two hundred yard sheet of ice that lay between the plane and the terminal. There were no handrails, no salted paths, and no smiling flight attendants encouraging us to watch our step. Instead Kazakhstani customs officials hurriedly herded my fellow travelers and me into a cramped, dingy terminal, which was substituting for the modern terminal that had been completed and burned within the previous two months.

This was my first time in the former Soviet Union and although struggling with the challenges of field research, I endeavored to take meticulous mental notes of my impressions of situations within and outside of my topical focus (political geography). In this article, I will provide a series of brief narratives relating to the themes of globalization, the end of the Cold War, and the dramatic social, cultural, political and economic changes that have occurred over the last decade in Kazakhstan.

#### **The Meet and Greet**

The time of my arrival in Kazakhstan was roughly 3:00 a.m. and greeting me at the terminal exit was an administrative secretary and the Chair of the Natural Science Division of a local university. The Chair was a Geographer, who in the course of our drive to my lodgings, proceeded to ask me, in Russian, what my research would entail in his country. In my less than stellar Russian, I explained that I would be exploring questions pertaining identity and territory and how Kazakhstan’s emergence as an independent state affected the territorialized identities of not only minorities within the state but the Kazakhs themselves. Nodding his approval he switched to Kazakh and asked the young male secretary why the Chair of Natural Sciences would be asked to meet a social scientist at 3:00am. Apparently, ‘geography’ in Kazakhstan is almost exclusively physical geography (geomorphology, glaciation, trees, rivers, etc.); his

work had nothing to do with mine and he was not thrilled to be wasting his time and freezing his fanny off.

My greeters were, of course, polite and gracious as they deposited me in the less than toasty flat that would be my home for the next several months. They indicated that I would be introduced to the Rector and Vice Rector of the university the following morning (roughly five hours later) and wished me great success in my research. Just for fun, I thanked them and bid them a good evening in Kazakh, which evoked ‘wide eyed’ amazement and a little unease from each member of the greeting party. Apparently, few western scholars speak Kazakh.

The following weeks and months were trying but fascinating. The situation in Chechnya was at a fever pitch, with the Clinton administration publicly weighing in with its opinion on the Russian bombardment of the city of Grozny. I found myself in the position of spokesman for U.S. foreign policy in almost every meeting with Kazakhstani officials, academics, and bartenders. Through these discussions, I became aware that many members of this society felt an acute ‘sense of loss’ in terms of personal prestige following the fall of the Soviet Union. Ethnic Kazakhs and Russians alike communicated their displeasure with the fact that the United States “no longer felt compelled to consult anyone prior to its bombing of Serbia,” nor did they appreciate the tone taken by President Clinton in his admonition of Russia’s policy in Chechnya. The people of Kazakhstan had not forgotten what it was to be citizens of a global superpower and in discussions about Chechnya occasionally forgot that they no longer were.

Despite the tribulations and limitations of life under the ‘Hammer and Sickle’, considerable pride was derived from their former supra-state’s position in the international system. As a geographer, this naturally led me to wonder how these people, who had been isolated behind an “iron curtain” in the “heartland of the world island” for so many years, perceived the rapid changes in the local landscape. My attempts to understand their perspective led me to three themes, which provide the structure for the remainder of this essay. The first is ‘Contamination’, the second ‘Resistance’ and the third is ‘Contribution’. I make no claim to the scientific accuracy of these observations, nor do I stand firmly on methodological grounds in their collection. I present these observations in this informal context simply in the hope of provoking thought.

**Continued on next page**



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### Contamination:

Wandering through a local festival, I witnessed a brilliant manifestation of entrepreneurial spirit. A middle-aged man sat at a small card-table in front of a row of porta-potties. A sign on his table read, in Russian, "entrance - 5 tenge" (tenge being the unit of local currency). My initial response was "good for him - here sits a man, raised in a socialist system, who has adapted to the new socio-economic conditions and has cleverly sought to fill a void in the continuum of supply and demand." This good feeling about western values and entrepreneurialism gaining ground in the heartland of the world island was, however, complicated by my weekly stops in the local Internet cafe, oddly named the 'Stalker'.

As anyone who has done a long stint of fieldwork in the digital-age knows, the e-mail check is a highlight of the week. Nevertheless, each time I sat to peruse emotionally rejuvenating messages from home, I found myself disturbed by the fact that a rather large cohort of local youths (almost completely male) spent literally three to five hours a day blasting away on some computer killing-simulation software. I never left the cafe without a sense of regret that my country is largely responsible for exporting such material and dreading the day when I would hear of a "school shooting" in Almaty. A similar feeling of regret was evoked by the proliferation of pornography on the streets and on Kazakhstani television.

Local friends and colleagues told me that pornography was not a public commodity in the Soviet era and for much of their lives it was, in fact, illegal. Today, no brown paper wrappers conceal the sexually explicit acts portrayed on the covers of the magazines, which are openly displayed in sidewalk kiosks. In addition, it is not uncommon to turn on the Kazakhstani equivalent to ABC, NBC, and CBS and find California-silicon-enhanced blonds performing thinly veiled euro-porn to music with heavy, slap-base lines on roofs overlooking a crystalline blue ocean. Not that I watched these programs — but I was struck by the irony of such scenes in a city that was about as far from an ocean in every direction as one can get on the earth's surface. I am fully aware of the looser regulations on nudity and sexually explicit content in Europe, but the contrast between "no porn at all" and "porn without asking" struck me as a potential moral dilemma for many citizens of the region. Raised on descriptions of the "decadent West," many citizens of Kazakhstan now have it beamed directly into their living rooms and boldly confronting them on the streets.

My final example is a change in the social landscape that has a great potential to be unsettling to large segments of the population. The loss of the social safety-net and the 'boom-town' success of a few lucky,

innovative, or unscrupulous members of the population has brought forth an overt display of social stratification. The Mercedes-driving, Armani-clad local "business men" provide a stark contrast to the days when citizens of Kazakhstan proudly stated, "I wear the same brand of suit as Khrushchev." Citizens may have been aware of the privileges accorded to high party members but such privileges were rarely 'thrown in the faces' of common people.

Herein the inherent tension of transition from communism to capitalism becomes apparent. While not all manifestations of western ideas, technology, and culture in the Kazakhstani landscape are blatantly destructive to local tradition, it is the valence of their perception that will determine their acceptance or resistance among the general population.

### Resistance:

Standing atop a snowy peak behind Kazakhstan's picturesque winter sports complex named Medeo, I commented to a friend how the future of the area would likely include development in the form of ski resorts, hotels, international chain-restraints, and luxury chalets. In response to my pointing out that these changes would likely stem from foreign investment but would bring employment for local workers, he shrugged off the potential economic advantages and stated that "for those who take pride in the natural beauty of the area and the proximity of true wilderness to a major city like Almaty, the changes would be unwelcome." The irony of a native son of Kazakhstan (home of the Virgin Lands disaster, the Aral Sea disaster, Soviet nuclear testing and countless other ecological cataclysms) deriding the potential environmental degradation of a western ski resort was not lost on me but it seemed apparent that what he truly resisted was western capitalism's rapid intrusion on his former cloistered and 'communist space.' After further discussion he acknowledged this fact and offered to show me an example of what he feared.

My friend took me to see a sign in a local nightclub that read - in English - "foreign guests enter free - all others \$10 dollar admission". To my Russian-Kazakhstani friend, this sign exemplified capitalism. He saw a future of privileging the foreign at the expense of the local. He reminded me that Marxism-Leninism was not just a political system but also a life-philosophy and that while less than a staunch communist (largely because he was a teenager when the Soviet Union collapsed), he still felt that a normative vacuum had been left by the collapse of the Soviet Union. For my friend it was apparent that this vacuum had yet to be filled in his new country and that examples of modernization and development in his landscape of everyday experience "did not bode well for Kazakhstan's spiritual future." This comment got me

## **Kazakhstan - Continued from page 9**

thinking about how unquestionably positive symbols of progress could be constructed in the Kazakhstani landscape in an effort to demonstrate to the common citizen that the West really does have something innately good to offer.

### **Contribution:**

My travels within Kazakhstan led to encounters with many people who think nostalgically of the Soviet Union. They would emphatically state that “the no-longer-forbidden works of Solzhenitsyn did not fill their bellies nor could they heat their homes with their newfound freedom.” I came to realize that the burgeoning transition to a market economy and a democratic system of government had yet to provide tangible proof to the common citizen that the future would be better than the past. This being the case, I began to ponder how the landscape could come to reflect the positive aspects of development in at least a quasi-western paradigm. One thought that struck me was the highly visible evidence of “inclusion” within western landscapes. I began thinking specifically of ramps, elevators, and parking spaces for the physically challenged.

A common and disturbing sight in the city of Almaty is that of elderly pensioners and physically challenged people struggling to the grocery store or park, or bazaar to beg (a sight one would have never seen in the Soviet era). No ramps lay beside the stairways of public buildings, elevators often sit dormant in disrepair, and the eradication of subsidies that once made public transport costs affordable leave many stranded in their homes and unable to work. While it is important to note that the United States and the West - in general - are far from overcoming their own challenges of inclusion (homelessness, healthcare, classism, racism etc.), the development of landscapes designed to include the physically challenged should be a genuine point of pride. Perhaps an active contribution of handicapped access (ramps, elevators, wheel chairs, transportation, etc.) would counter the misconception that all we have to offer Kazakhstan are hollow ideals of freedom and socially deleterious manifestations of western culture.

Granted, the states of the region are currently struggling with issues of such magnitude (colossal environmental problems, collapsing infrastructure, massive unemployment, potentially dangerous ethnic cleavages) that the plight of their physically challenged population is not among their top priorities, but the landscape is so full of what can plainly be interpreted as contaminants from the West that I long to see a tangibly positive contribution. Unfortunately, as noted above, even the most benign contributions stemming from western

investment have the potential to be perceived as socio-economic incursions of the winner of the Cold War.

It is not my intention to lament the inflow of western technologies or freedoms to the Republic of Kazakhstan. I only wish to point out that elements of western culture that have emerged in Kazakhstan are not without an edge or at the very least an abrasive surface. By placing oneself in the shoes (shiny leather with Chinese tire-rubber soles - great grip on the icy sidewalks and streets) of those who have not fought a revolution to gain their independence but have had it thrust upon them, one can see how changes in so many aspects of life (political, social, cultural, economic, religious) could be extremely unsettling. In light of the forty year Cold War that left the United States as the world's primary power broker and cultural exporter, it is not surprising that for some members of Kazakhstan's population a sense of bitterness is derived from symbols of the victor flaunting its victory over the vanquished in the landscape of the homeland.

### **SPEND 2 WEEKS IN RUSSIA AND EARN UW-MADISON RESIDENCE CREDIT**

There are still spots open for the Office of International Studies and Program's two-week spring program to Russia (May 25 - June 7, 2001). This fourteen-day educational trip will visit both Moscow and St. Petersburg and focus on Russian history, culture, literature, and politics. An experienced Russian-speaking UW-Madison staff member will lead the group.

Students will earn one credit (Slavic 310) for the work associated with this trip. This Russia module program is an optional component of “Russia: an Interdisciplinary Survey”, an introductory course cross-listed as Geography, History, Political Science, and Slavic 253 and taught by Professor McDonald. This program is open to UW-Madison students only. The fee includes tuition (1 credit), administrative costs, airfare, airport transfers, hotel accommodations, excursions and entrance fees, overnight train between Moscow and St. Petersburg, daily breakfasts, 5 lunches, 9 dinners and Russian visa support/processing. Applications are available in the Resource Room of OISP - 252 Bascom Hall.

For questions and availability, call or e-mail Nelly Mitchell, Assistant Director for Student Services at 2662-1446 or e-mail: [nmmitchell@bascom.wisc.edu](mailto:nmmitchell@bascom.wisc.edu)

## Faculty News

**Tomislav Z. Longinovic** (Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures) will be a Visiting Professor at Harvard University in the Fall 2001 semester. Besides a survey course on South Slavic literatures, he will offer a new cultural studies course entitled "Gender and Nation After Yugoslavia".

**Zigurds L. Zile** (Emeritus Professor of Law) has recently published "Satversmes tiesnesa atseviskas domas Valsts nekustama ipasuma lieta [A Constitutional Court's Judge's Separate Opinion in the Case of the State-owned Apartments]," *Likums un Tiesibas* [Riga] 2 (2000): 21-23. A critique of the reasoning of the Constitutional Court of Latvia in the Case 04-03(99), written in the form of a dissenting opinion; and also "Constitutional Adjudication in Latvia," *Review of Central and East European Law* [Leiden] 25(1999): 311-371. [published in October 2000].

## AAASS

The following CREECA faculty and affiliates presented these papers at the AAASS annual conference last November in Denver:

**Karl F. Bahm**, UW-Superior, "From the Womb of Our Nation: Images of Czech Nationhood in the Construction of Czech Working-Class Identity"

**Nick S. Ceh**, UW-Oshkosh, "Reimagining Croatia through Documentary Films"

**Halina Filipowicz**, UW-Madison, "When Mickiewicz Sleeps with Mnemosyne: Transgressive Performativity in Adam Mickiewicz's 'Forefather's Eve,' Part 4"

**Elizabeth A. Hachten**, UW-Whitewater, "A Mirror to the Professional Conscience: V.V. Virsaev's 'Notes of a Physician' and its Public Perception"

**Francine R. Hirsch**, UW-Madison, "Kolonizatsiia' Soviet-Style: The Rhetoric of Colonization and Colonialism"

**Sally A. Kent**, UW-Stevens Point, "Zagreb"

**Patrick L. Michelson**, UW-Madison, "The Search for Gosudarstvennost': Religious and Philosophical Responses to the Crisis of Autocracy, 1905-1914"

**Anna Tumarkin**, UW-Madison, "Fish in the Glass Sphere: Mikhail Scherbakov's Literary Loneliness"

CREECA is always seeking news from its faculty, students, and alumni. If you have news, please do not hesitate to contact us, 262-3379 or [creeca@intl-institute.wisc.edu](mailto:creeca@intl-institute.wisc.edu)

## Student News

**Karen Peters** (Ethnomusicology) received the 2000 James F. Clarke Memorial Scholarship Award from the Bulgarian Studies Association. This is awarded annually to a graduate student to help defray expenses in connection with the presentation of a paper on a Bulgarian studies topic at a national or international conference. Peters gave her paper at the Society for Ethnomusicology conference, which took place as part of the Toronto 2000: Musical Intersections Conference, November 2-5.

**Ismail Ulutas** defended his dissertation entitled "Gagauz Syntax: An Examination of Relative Clauses" on November 1, 2000. After depositing his dissertation, on November 26 he left Madison for Balikesir, Turkey, where he will be teaching as a faculty member in the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Balikesir University. The new website for this university is [www.balikesir.edu.tr](http://www.balikesir.edu.tr)

## Language Tables

**Russian Table:** The Russian Table meets every Tuesday at 5pm at Cafe Asissi and Thursdays at 5:00 at the Rathskeller, Memorial Union. For more information please contact Adam Goodberg. 264-2889, ([agoodberg@students.wisc.edu](mailto:agoodberg@students.wisc.edu))

**Czech Table:** Czech Table will meet at the Ratskeller in Memorial Union on Wednesdays, 5:45 - 6:45. For more information contact David Danaher. ([dsdanaher@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:dsdanaher@facstaff.wisc.edu))

**Kazak Table:** for information on time and location contact: Talant Mawkanuli. ([Tmawkanuli@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:Tmawkanuli@facstaff.wisc.edu))

**Polish Table:** meets every other Thursday (starting January 25) at the Rathskeller, Memorial Union. Contact Katarzyna Modzelewska for more information. ([kmodzelewska@students.wisc.edu](mailto:kmodzelewska@students.wisc.edu))

**Serbo-Croatian Table:** For information on times and location, contact: Margaret Beissingner: 263-2253, ([mhbeissi@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:mhbeissi@facstaff.wisc.edu))

### FLAS DEADLINE APPROACHING

The deadline for summer and academic year Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowships (FLAS) is Monday, February 12. All applications for CREECA related languages must be submitted to the CREECA office, 210 Ingraham Hall by that date.

Surfer's Corner

Websites on the Arctic

**Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (in English and Russian):**

[www.raipon.org](http://www.raipon.org)

**NSF Program in Arctic Social Sciences:**

[www.nsf.gov/od/opp/arctic/social.htm](http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/arctic/social.htm)

**Arctic Research Consortium of the United States:**

[www.arcus.org](http://www.arcus.org)

**The Saami Parliament of Finland:**

[www.netti.fi/~samedigg/diggien.htm](http://www.netti.fi/~samedigg/diggien.htm)

**The Sámi Parliament of Sweden:**

[www.sametinget.se](http://www.sametinget.se)

**The Sámi Parliament of Norway:**

[www.samediggi.no](http://www.samediggi.no)

**National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs:**

[www.nsf.gov/home/polar/](http://www.nsf.gov/home/polar/)

**Website of the Government of Nunavut (in English and Inuktitut):**

[www.nunavut.com](http://www.nunavut.com)

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