



NewsNet

News of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

Through a Glass Darkly: Academic Reflections on the 20th Anniversary of the Soviet Collapse

Peter Rutland, Wesleyan University

The 20th anniversary of the dissolution of the Soviet Union was marked by a flurry of academic gatherings in December 2011. But the event did not generate the level of public interest and enthusiasm that greeted the 20th anniversary of the collapse of communism in East Europe in 1989. The jubilee of the fall of the Berlin Wall was greeted two years ago not only by extensive media coverage but also by the publication of several academic books that reflected on its causes and consequences. In contrast, to my knowledge, there were no books released to coincide with the anniversary of the Soviet collapse.

The reason for the relative paucity of interest is obvious. 1989 evoked a historical narrative of liberation and progress, where Good triumphed over Evil. 1991 was a messier affair, where narratives of decay and collapse competed with tales of national liberation and social rebirth. The manner of the Soviet break-up – a failed hardline coup, that triggered the fragmentation of the federal state – did not fit the East European pattern of a mostly non-violent popular uprising. And subsequent developments in the former soviet states were much less attractive. While the East Europeans (with the exception of the former Yugoslavia) were headed for NATO and the European Union, the post-soviet states experienced economic collapse, social disruption, political

strife, and open warfare (specifically in the Caucasus, Moldova and Tajikistan.)

This article addresses reactions in the Western academic community, not inside the countries in question. Within Russia, of course, these events are not seen as anything to celebrate. Vladimir Putin famously described the Soviet collapse as “the greatest political catastrophe of the 20th century.” And even liberals who welcomed the Soviet demise now complain that what followed was not much better – the rebirth of a corrupt and authoritarian regime with strong roots in Soviet times. The latest Pew Center poll found that by 57 to 32 per cent, Russians believe that having a “strong leader” is more important than a democratic government. And 61 per cent of Russians believe the transformation has had a negative impact on prosperity.¹

This article is based on my impressions of five conferences held to commemorate the Soviet collapse in late 2011. They include one that I organized at Wesleyan University; three that I attended in Berlin, Seoul, and Cambridge (England); and one at George Washington University, whose proceedings I read.

The Wesleyan conference, entitled “What Was the Soviet Union? Looking Back at the Brezhnev Years,” convened on October 19-20.² The idea was not to rehash

Inside This Issue • March 2012 • v. 52, n. 2

Through a Glass Darkly	1	2011 ASEEEES Donors	5
2012 ASEEEES Prizes	6	2012 Book Prize Nomination Instructions	7
2012 Additional Prizes	10	2012 Membership Form	12
From the US with Lust	14	AUCA: The Little Engine that Could:?	17
2012 Convention Preregistration Form	18	Publications	20
2012 ASEEEES Graduate Student Prizes	22	Personages	23
News from ASEEEES Affiliates	25	2012 ASEEEES Calendar of Important Dates	26
Institutional Member News	28	Davis Student Travel Grant Information	30
Calendar	32		

the proximate causes of the Soviet collapse, but to pose the question: what was it that collapsed in 1991? The Soviet Union under Brezhnev has received relatively little scholarly attention in the West. The period is too distant to be worthy of study by political scientists, and yet recent enough that it is only now attracting the attention of historians.

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev cleverly branded the Brezhnev period as the era of 'stagnation' (*zastoi*) to draw a contrast to what he portrayed as his own dynamic and visionary leadership. The 'stagnation' label struck a chord in the West, which had become used to seeing a parade of geriatric leaders atop Lenin's tomb. But the 15 papers presented at the Wesleyan conference revealed a USSR that was dynamic and even innovative, with deep and widening regional and social differentiation. One common theme was that the way the system worked in practice diverged from the official account of how society functioned. The scholars at the workshop drew on a wealth of new sources – from interviews with surviving participants to recently released archival materials. Stephen Kotkin gave the keynote address, in which he argued for the centrality of the military-industry complex in understanding the economic dynamics of the Soviet system. Linda Cooke (Brown) reexamined the social contract, while Martin Dimitrov (Tulane) analyzed Politburo responses to citizen complaints. Nikolai Mitrokhin (Bremen) reported on the 90 interviews he has conducted with former Central Committee officials. He found these officials to be well-educated and quite innovative, not the bland ciphers that one might expect. Sergeui Oushakine (Princeton) and Joachim Zweynert (Hamburg) gained new insights from an examination of Soviet ideological debates over commodity production and the economic mechanism respectively. Knowing that the system would collapse, one now looks back at familiar old materials with new eyes.

No-one is suggesting that the Brezhnev years were a halcyon period of growth and stability, where Soviet citizens happily marched into a radiant future. But nor was it a giant Gulag staffed by browbeaten clones. Contrary to the rhetoric of 'stagnation', the Soviet Union was not a country frozen in time. It was a society in flux, driven by processes of both decay and renewal.

The death of the Soviet Union meant the birth of 15 new states (19, if one counts the "statelets" of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Karabakh and Transdnistria). For most of the regions' residents, the struggle to survive in the 1990s in the face of massive socio-economic dislocation overwhelmed any enthusiasm they may have experienced at the prospect of forging a new national identity. Even for nationalist intellectuals, their excitement at the rebirth of their nation was quickly tempered by the need to deal with practical

challenges and to strike pragmatic bargains with self-interested incumbent elites, inherited from the Soviet era, who still wielded tremendous political and economic power.

These contradictions were on full display at the conference "Independent Ukraine: Twenty Years On," which took place at the University of Cambridge on December 8-9.³ It is indeed remarkable that a nation of 46 million people – the largest in Europe by territory – appeared as a sovereign entity without any of the strife and violence that is normally associated with the birth of a new nation. The 2004 Orange Revolution renewed hopes that independent Ukraine would be a liberal state, but the revolution's leaders fell into bitter feuding over the division of power and the spoils that went with it. This process culminated in the February 2010 election of Viktor Yanukovich as president and the subsequent jailing of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko in October 2011. In Russia, the state jailed troublesome oligarchs, but in Ukraine, the oligarchs jail the politicians.

It was thus understandable that a sense of disappointment pervaded the presentations of scholars Olexiy Haran and Mykola Riabchuk, who regretted the way that political competition has deepened the east-wide divide. David Marples documented how the political feuding has consumed debates over historical memory. Former activist Oleksandr Donnii explained how someone who grew up in an ethnically mixed family and not speaking Ukrainian turned into one of the leaders of the movement that brought about Ukrainian independence in 1991. Olga Onuch stressed the continuities in Ukrainian social mobilization that made possible the Orange Revolution, going back to the dissidents of the 1960s. Onuch's recently completed Oxford PhD compares social movements in Ukraine and Argentina, and is indicative of a new and promising trend in looking at post-soviet cases in a global comparative context. Danielle Lussier's doctorate (University of California, Berkeley) comparing Russia and Indonesia, or Laryssa Chomiak (University of Maryland) juxtaposing Ukraine and Tunisia, are other examples of this trend.

Over 100 European scholars convened in Berlin on December 1-3 to examine "Change, Continuity and New Challenges: 20 Years After the Soviet Union."⁴ Half the sessions were in German, and half in English. (The meeting actually took place in the former East Berlin, which added some poignancy to the proceedings.) What was interesting about the Berlin conference was its breadth, both in terms of countries covered and disciplines engaged – a sign that area studies is better preserved in Europe than in the US. There were papers not just on Russia and East Europe but also on Mongolia, China, Vietnam, Mozambique and Cuba – places where communist elites learned their lessons from the

Soviet collapse and have mostly managed to stay in power. It was striking how many commonalities emerged as scholars described the political and economic processes unfolding in these otherwise disparate countries. It is important to be reminded of these commonalities, since so much academic work has of necessity been devoted to tracking the specific conditions in each country, whose histories have each followed their own complex and unique path since 1991. Post-soviet studies has tended to fall into distinct clusters – Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Baltics – each with their own professional associations, conferences and journals.

A substantial bloc of the Berlin papers dealt with the economic transformation. The cultural dimension was also addressed, including a showing of the documentary film “The Other Chelsea,” about Rinat Akhmetov’s takeover of the Donetsk soccer team. There was a presentation by the producers of a new Franco-German TV documentary series, “Farewell Comrades,” which has an impressive interactive website: <http://www.farewellcomrades.com/en/> While there is some interesting dynamism in the post-socialist artistic and literary world, this no longer directly impacts the political sphere as it did during the communist period. Hence it is now largely ignored by social scientists.

As in the Ukraine conference, the overall tone in Berlin was one of social critique rather than triumphalism. The cure may not be worse than the disease, but the post-communist path to liberal democracy and open market economies has been much rockier than anyone would have anticipated. Still, post-soviet citizens are anything but apathetic: they are active survivors with a high level of “chaos competence,” as Karl Schloegel (Viadrina) put it in his address “After the Grand Narration.”

The Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, Korea convened a conference entitled “20 Years and Onward, Post-Soviet Russian Politics,” on December 15-16.⁵ One central theme was an attempt to come up with a general characterization of the current Russian political system. Richard Sakwa (Kent) laid out his model of a “dual state:” while recognizing the authoritarian bias of the “deep state,” Sakwa still holds out the prospect of a liberal breakout. Nikolai Petrov was more pessimistic, Andrei Melville cautiously optimistic. Notwithstanding these question marks over the domestic regime, a cadre of top Russian specialists (Nikita Lomagin, Alexander Nikitin and former interior minister Anatoly Kulikov) argued that Russia is back as a serious player in the global order. The dramatic surge of protests that had begun in Moscow the previous week underlined the tremendous uncertainty facing anyone trying to project Russia’s political future. And the fact that North Korea’s Kim

Jong Il died the day the conference ended was a reminder that the Cold War is not yet over in this part of the world.

A conference convened at George Washington University on December 7-8 under the rubric “Two Decades of Soviet Independence: What Have We Learned?”⁶ The 21 short papers presented at the conference are forthcoming in the journal *Demokratizatsiya*. Many of the papers address the broad question of what we have learned, some even going into the interesting question of how our understanding has evolved or been proven wrong. Others outline fresh analytical approaches to take advantage of the new agenda and new opportunities for research in the post-soviet world. Such topics include electoral behavior, debates over historical memory, and the dynamics of identity in border zones (in many cases the borders being newly drawn or at least newly enforced).

The general picture that emerges is rather grim. In most cases, corrupt elites are firmly entrenched. As Oleksandr Fisun put it, instead of elite pacts ushering in constitutional democracy, we see elite cartels dividing up the spoils. Ordinary citizens have few chances to influence decision making and have become disillusioned with the practice of democracy in their country. The media have become vehicles for elite rule and social demobilization (as Marta Dyczok explained at the Ukraine conference). Ethnic identity has also been manipulated by rulers to bolster their power. Belarus, Georgia and Armenia are striking examples, while Russia remains an ambiguous case. As Andrew Barnes pointed out, in most countries reform is now entering its second or third cycle. Like a drowning man, it might not surface after the third abortive attempt.

The main countervailing force to this elite domination would seem to be the increasing integration of these countries into the world economy, and the accompanying spread of global cultural influences, discussed in a paper by Doug Blum (Providence College). To some extent these trends give citizens a chance to escape from the stifling influence of their rulers. On the foreign policy front, none of these countries seem to have yet found their niche in the international order, with Russia being a prominent case in point. Even the success-story Baltics were hit very hard by the 2008 crisis. Unrealistic expectations about regional integration have been repeatedly dashed.

If there is one central theme that runs through all these conferences it is the dialectic between formal and informal institutions. The initial Western response to the collapse of communism was to encourage the growth and, in many cases, the transplantation of Western institutions – constitutions, electoral systems, judicial systems, free media, independent central banks, joint stock companies,

stock markets, etc. However, it quickly became apparent that power was being exercised by informal networks of elites, some dating back to the socialist period and some newly forged in the chaos of transition. This phenomenon ranges from the rise of clan politics – of a new type – in Central Asia to the consolidation of incredibly wealthy oligarchs in Russia and Ukraine. Formal institutions still matter, of course, but Nikolai Petrov notes that they remain out of synch with these underlying power networks.

Developing the research tools to identify and examine these informal networks is something of a challenge. In this respect, sociology and anthropology have ‘beaten’ economics and political science. This is somewhat ironic, since in the field of Sovietology the disciplines of sociology and anthropology were more weakly developed than were economics and political science – since sociologists and anthropologists were hampered by their inability to do field work. (This was not true for Eastern Europe.) We are also seeing a revival of interest in the role of religion in these societies, something that was generally downplayed or even ignored in the Soviet and early transition periods (with the exception of Poland).

The post-soviet experience provides important support for the argument that economists and political scientists need to critically examine their assumptions about where institutions come from and how they work. This is a point long emphasized by public choice theory, as exemplified by the work of Douglass North, but this still did

not prevent mainstream social science from misreading the scope for a rapid and successful transition in the post-soviet space.

(Endnotes)

- 1 “Confidence in Democracy and Capitalism Wanes in Former Soviet Union,” Pew Research Center, 5 December 2011. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/12/05/confidence-in-democracy-and-capitalism-wanes-in-former-soviet-union/>
- 2 <http://prutland.web.wesleyan.edu/Documents/Workshop%20program.pdf> The conference was co-organized with my colleague Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock (Wesleyan, History).
- 3 <http://timescape.mml.cam.ac.uk/ref35/independent%20ukraine%20workshop.html> The organizers were Marta Dyczok (University of Western Ontario), David Marples (Alberta) and Rory Finnin (Cambridge Ukrainian Studies Program).
- 4 http://www.kompost.uni-muenchen.de/events/ende_su/program_en_111124.pdf. The meeting was sponsored jointly by the German Association for East European Studies, the European University Viadrina and the ‘Kompost’ post-communist research group.
- 5 <http://www.h-net.org/announce/show.cgi?ID=190181>
- 6 http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/PONARS_Dec.pdf. The conference was sponsored by Ponars (the Program on New Approaches to Regional Security in Eurasia), the Woodrow Wilson Center, and GWU’s Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies.



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The deadline for nominations for the Distinguished Contributions Award is May 1.

ASEEES COMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION RESOURCES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD was established in 2010 to recognize ASEEES member librarians, archivists or curators whose contributions to the field of Slavic, East European and Eurasian studies librarianship have been especially noteworthy or influential. The effect of these contributions may be the result of continuous or distinguished service to the profession, but may also be the result of extraordinarily active, innovative or collaborative work that deserves national recognition. <http://intranet.library.arizona.edu/users/brewerm/bd/award.html>

Eligibility: Any ASEEES member who holds, or has recently held an appointment as a librarian, archivist or curator at a public, academic or national library, archive or museum.

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- Consistently superior ASEEES committee or subcommittee work and /or advocacy
- Exemplary leadership on ASEEES committees, subcommittees or in other initiatives
- Conceiving of and implementing innovative or creative ideas that benefit the profession
- Quietly but enduringly and effectively promoting and strengthening the profession

Nomination Guidelines:

Nominations for this award should come from peers in the field. All nominations should be accompanied by a completed Distinguished Service Nomination Form (found at link above). Completed forms should be sent (emailed or in print) to the CLIR Chair.

The Distinguished Service Award Selection Subcommittee may also solicit nominations (or the seconding of, or support for received nominations) from groups or individuals in the field. If nominations are not forthcoming, and a member of the Selection Subcommittee feels a nomination for a particular individual is particularly warranted, they may make the nomination themselves, but should consider recusing themselves from voting.

This is an occasional award that is made only if the Distinguished Service Selection subcommittee finds that there is clear need for the award. Nominations may come at any time during the year, but will be solicited annually by the CLIR Chair in April. Outside nominations received after June 1 will not be considered until the following year.

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- Janice Pilch, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, janice.pilch@rutgers.edu



2012 ASEES Book Prize Nominating Instructions

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- The copyright date inside the book must be 2011 (except where otherwise indicated)
- The book must be a monograph, preferably by a single author, or by no more than two authors
- Authors may be of any nationality as long as the work is originally published in English in the United States
- Textbooks, collections, translations, bibliographies, and reference works are ineligible
- Additional eligibility requirements unique to each prize competition are listed below

NOMINATING INSTRUCTIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL PRIZE COMPETITIONS

Send one copy of the eligible monograph to each Committee member AND to the ASEES main office. Nominations must be received no later than May 7, 2012.

Submissions should be clearly marked with the name of the prize. If you would like to receive acknowledgment that your nomination was received please enclose with the copy mailed to the ASEES office a note with your e-mail address, a self-addressed stamped envelope or a postcard.

WAYNE S. VUCINICH BOOK PRIZE sponsored by ASEES and the Stanford University Center for Russian and East European Studies, is awarded annually for the most important contribution to Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies in any discipline of the humanities or social sciences published in English in the US in 2011.

2012 Wayne S. Vucinich Book Prize Committee

- Stephanie Sandler, Harvard University, 76 Snell St., Amherst, MA 01002
- Keith Darden, Yale University, Department of Political Science, P.O. Box 208301, Rosenkranz Hall, 115 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06520-8301
- Zsuzsa Gille, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; 326 Lincoln Hall, MC 454, 602 St. Wright St., Urbana, IL 61801
- Peter Holquist, University of Pennsylvania; 3 Snowden Road, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Rules of eligibility specific to this prize

- Works may deal with any area of Eastern Europe, Russia, or Eurasia
- The competition is open to works of scholarship in any discipline of the social sciences or humanities (including literature, the arts, film, etc.). Policy analy-

ses, however scholarly, cannot be considered.

<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/vucinichprize.html>

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- Works may deal with any area of Russia, Eastern Europe, or Eurasia.
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<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/uscprize.html>

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2012 Reginald Zelnik Book Prize in History Committee

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Albany, CA 94706
- Lisa Kirschenbaum, West Chester U, 717 Clymer St, Philadelphia, PA 19147
- Robert Weinberg, Swarthmore College, Dept of History, 218 Trotter Hall, 500 College Avenue, Swarthmore, PA 19081-1397

Rules of eligibility specific to this prize

- Works may deal with any area of Russia, Eastern Europe, or Eurasia
- The competition is open to works of scholarship in history

<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/zelnikprize.html>

THE DAVIS CENTER BOOK PRIZE IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES, established in 2008, and sponsored by the Kathryn W. and Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University, is awarded annually for an outstanding monograph published on Russia, Eurasia, or Eastern Europe in anthropology, political science, sociology, or geography in 2011.

2012 Davis Center Book Prize Committee

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- Jennifer Dickinson, 509 Williams Hall, Dept of Anthropology, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405
- Regina Smyth, Department of Political Science, Indiana U, 210 Woodburn Hall, 1100 E 7th St, Bloomington, IN 47405

Rules of eligibility specific to this prize:

- Works may deal with any area of Russia, Eurasia, or Eastern Europe
- The competition is open to works of scholarship in anthropology, political science, sociology, or geography, and also to social science works that cross strict disciplinary boundaries

<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/davisprize.html>

THE MARSHALL SHULMAN BOOK PRIZE, sponsored by the Harriman Institute of Columbia University, is awarded annually for an outstanding monograph dealing with the international relations, foreign policy, or foreign-policy decisionmaking of any of the states of the former Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. The prize is dedicated to the encouragement of high quality studies of the international behavior of the countries of the former Communist Bloc.

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- David Holloway, Stanford University, Department of Political Science, Encina Hall West, Room 100, 616 Serra Street, Stanford CA 94305
- James Richter, Dept. of Politics, 4 Andrews Road, Bates College, Lewiston, ME 04240

Rules of eligibility specific to this prize:

- Works must be about international behavior of the countries of the former Communist Bloc

<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/shulmanprize.html>

THE ED A. HEWETT BOOK PRIZE, sponsored by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), is awarded annually for an outstanding publication on the political economy of the centrally planned economies of the former Soviet Union and East Central Europe

and their transitional successors. Ed A. Hewett was a distinguished scholar, a fine colleague, and an internationally respected member of the field. The Hewett Prize was established in 1994 in his honor to recognize and encourage the high standard of scholarship that he so admirably advanced in the area of his interests.

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- Kathryn Anderson, Vanderbilt University, Dept of Economics, Box 351819, Station B, Nashville, TN 37235-1819
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<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/hewettprize.html>

THE BARBARA JELAVICH BOOK PRIZE, sponsored by Charles Jelavich, is awarded annually for a distinguished monograph published on any aspect of Southeast European or Habsburg studies since 1600, or 19th- and 20th century Ottoman or Russian diplomatic history. Barbara Jelavich was a distinguished and internationally respected scholar whose numerous publications included *Modern Austria*, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, and the two-volume *History of the Balkans*. The Jelavich Prize was established in 1995 in her memory to recognize and to encourage the high standards she set in her many areas of scholarly interest and to promote continued study of those areas.

2012 Barbara Jelavich Book Prize Committee

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- Tara Zahra, University of Chicago, Social Sciences Building, Mailbox 85, 1126 E. 59th Street, Chicago, IL 60637

Rules of eligibility specific to this prize:

- Authors must be scholars who are citizens or permanent residents of North America
- The competition is open to works on any aspect of Southeast European or Habsburg studies since 1600, or 19th- and 20th-century Ottoman or Russian diplomatic history

<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/jelavichprize.html>

THE KULCZYCKI BOOK PRIZE IN POLISH STUDIES (formerly the Orbis Prize), sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Jerzy Kulczycki, former owners of the Orbis Books Ltd. of London, England, is awarded annually for the best book in any discipline, on any aspect of Polish affairs.

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- Neal Pease, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 4118 N Maryland Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53211-2058

Rules of eligibility specific to this prize:

- Only works originally published in English, outside of Poland, are eligible
- Preference will be given to works by first-time authors
- The competition is open to works in any discipline, dealing with any aspect of Polish affairs
- Previous winners of the Kulczycki/Orbis Prize are ineligible

<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/aaassorbisprize.html>

THE W. BRUCE LINCOLN BOOK PRIZE, sponsored by Mary Lincoln, is awarded biennially (in even numbered years) for an author's first published monograph or scholarly synthesis that is of exceptional merit and lasting significance for the understanding of Russia's past. The prize was established in 2004 in memory of W. Bruce Lincoln, a Russian historian and a widely-read author.

2012 W. Bruce Lincoln Book Prize Committee

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- Jane Burbank, New York U, 120 West 15th St., Apt. 6G, New York NY 10011
- Michael Khodarkovsky, Loyola U, Dept of History, 1032 W. Sheridan Rd, Rm 507, Chicago, IL 60660-1537

Rules of eligibility specific to this prize:

- The book must be an author's first published monograph or work of synthesis
- It must bear a copyright date of either 2010 or 2011
- It must be published in English, in North America.
- The geographic area of study is broadly defined as the territories of the former imperial Russian state and the Soviet Union. The book may deal with any period of history
- Books that have received other prizes are eligible

<http://aseees.org/prizes/lincolnprize.html>

NEW FROM SLAVICA PUBLISHERS

Elaine Rusinko, ed. "God Is a Rusyn": Anthology of Contemporary Carpatho-Rusyn Literature. Translated by Elaine Rusinko, with Bogdan Horbal and Slavomir Olejar, 322 p., 2011 (ISBN 978-0-89357-381-2), \$29.95.

Situated at a crossroads of states, cultures, and languages, Rusyn literature has survived a history of linguistic disorder, political oppression, and cultural denigration. Today a renewed Rusyn literature, written in newly codified linguistic variants, plays a decisive role in shaping the identity of the stateless Carpatho-Rusyn people. This anthology is the first comprehensive compilation of Carpatho-Rusyn literature in English.

Nikolaos A. Chrissidis et al., eds. Religion and Identity in Russia and the Soviet Union: A Festschrift for Paul Bushkovitch, 276 p., 2011 (ISBN 978-0-89357-379-9), \$31.95.

In this collection of essays focusing on the themes of religion and identity, Paul Bushkovitch's students celebrate his manifold contributions to the study of Russian history.

Priscilla Hunt and Svitlana Kobets, eds. Holy Foolishness in Russia: New Perspectives, 413 p., 2011 (ISBN 978-0-89357-383-6), \$34.95.

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- Cristina Vatulescu, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature, Russian & Slavic Studies Department of Comparative Literature, New York University, 19 University Place, 3rd Fl., New York, NY 10003
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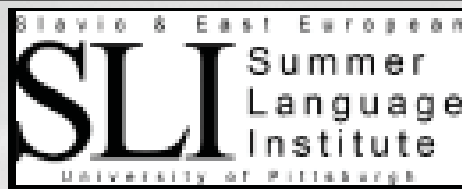
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From the US with Lust: Russia as an Object of Sex (Studies)

Alexei Lalo, Arizona State University Melikian Center

Editor's note: Professor Lalo references Eliot Borenstein's lead article in the March 2011 issue of NewsNet found here:

Since the end of the Cold War, one of the new ubiquitous themes of East Slavic / Russian studies in the United States appears to be sexualities and eroticism: the ways Russians have sex, how they imagine it, verbalize it, trivialize it; how they fear it or, for example, how the theme of sex is related to the "great humanistic tradition" of Gogol and Tolstoevsky.

There is obviously nothing wrong with this fascination, fostered by a growing interest in Russian women as would-be mail-order brides among the general American male population. The question I am going to ask in this opinion essay is whether some of these studies could be approached in a somewhat different fashion. I will argue that the text I am going to polemicize here reveals the following three problems/imperfections in the sub-field of Russian sex studies: (1) *Eurocentrism* that often results in haughty, condescending, patronizing attitudes to local, indigenous scholars in the region and a conspicuous inability to meaningfully interact and exchange scholarly ideas with them (indeed, Slavic studies in the US and, for example, Russian "philology" inside Russia are far from being the communicating vessels they should be, but are rather, two discreet epistemological formations with minimal contact and mutual interest); (2) *Exoticization* of an East European culture that sometimes manifests itself in claims that, for example, pornography in Russia is not plain porn like in Germany or the US but, to quote Eliot Borenstein's recent book *Overkill*, "porn with ideas," some mysterious element of the Russian soul; (3) *Excessive eroticization / sexualization* of East Slavic cultures, including Russian: I mean primarily the trite conversation about the presumed infinite sex appeal, domesticity and docility of East Slavic women (along with the not very charming brutality, proclivity for violence and exuberant manliness of East Slavic men). For pretty much everything in an East Slavic culture a quasi-sexual metaphor is usually found: for example, Russia is often seen as being metaphysically "sandwiched" between East and West or being a sexually nervous adolescent who is ostensibly only about to enter a tricky period of puberty / Westernization.

Eliot Borenstein's address published in *NewsNet* (March 2011), "Perverting Slavic Studies: A Love Story," illustrates these three tendencies/approaches to the study of

sexualities in Russian culture and society in the West.

First of all, this text can be characterized as Eurocentric and as having an "anthropological" slant: although the address concerns sexualities in Russia, not a single Russian thinker or theorist of sexualities is mentioned throughout, but only several authors of fiction such as Sorokin, Pelevin and Dmitrii Bykov. At the same time, Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault are referred to repeatedly. I have no problem with using Foucault's ideas (and do it myself in my work) but why, for instance, are there no points of reference to theorists of sexuality within the Russian tradition, from Vasilii Rozanov, who founded Russia's philosophy of sex at the turn of the century, to a host of contemporary critics and scholars who have worked on the subject, for example, the late Professor Igor Kon? This is along the lines of discussing North American value system(s) and quoting Schopenhauer without ever mentioning Ralph Waldo Emerson. Borenstein refers to the increasing scholarly interest in Russian sexuality and provides a list of names that

would surely set off alarm bells among certain circles in contemporary Russia: Laura Engelstein, Laurie Bernstein, Frances Bernstein, Eliot Borenstein, and Evgenii Bershteyn – a veritable Elders of Zion of Russian sex (p.6).

It is unclear why the author enumerates all these colleagues of his (unless it is supposed to be a punch line to some internal joke) and why the professed anti-Semitism in Russia is even relevant to his argument. Borenstein claims that Russian scholars rely on "biology" and the "natural" in their analysis of sex, yet he does not provide the name of a single Russian scholar who is guilty of this horrible reliance on biology. Neither does he provide any citation from a Russian-language text that he has in mind. It is not immediately clear how the topic of anti-Semitism is related to sexualities in Russia.

In addition, Borenstein takes out of context the notorious 1986 statement "U nas seksa net," made during a Pozner – Donahue "space bridge" talk show by a Leningrad woman named Lyudmila Ivanova. She also actually added that while we have no sex in the USSR, there is love, apparently referring to the fact that the term "sex" for many Soviet people was synonymous with pornography and depravity and associated with pernicious influence of Western capitalism. It is quite remarkable that in the lengthy paragraph in which Borenstein discusses this statement, quoting also

Ivanova's more recent statement on the same subject, he refers to her derogatorily as the "no-sex lady" and then several times using the third-person pronoun "she," without giving her name, let alone occupation, age, etc. In the same paragraph, however, Borenstein has enough space to quote his colleague Helena Goscilo about whom he speaks glowingly, but whose argument about Russian "heightened emotional vocabulary and impoverished sex lexicon" appears to be irrelevant to Ivanova's statement in the first place. It is not because Ivanova's vocabulary was poor that she said what she did but because of the ideological connotations and associations of the term "sex" that she must have shared living inside the dominant Soviet paradigm. But Ivanova, in Borenstein's system of coordinates, is just a "native informant" whose name is unimportant and whose argument can be twisted conveniently to emphasize the adolescent Russian culture's perennial lagging behind the profoundly articulate and highly developed ("adult") US civilization.

Of the multiple instances of the exoticization of Russian culture in this address I will briefly comment on just one: the Russian verbalization of sex, Borenstein argues, "almost immediately falls into overdetermined metaphors of power. Or, more specifically, violence... Sex, once put into words, becomes violence." Ellipses produce violence, he goes on to say, and Russian sex is all about "hierarchy and implied violence." Any frank sexual discussion in Russia "functions as virtual euphemism for power" (pp 2-3).

Why would any literary representation of sex in Russia be bordering on or leading to violence? The specific examples Borenstein gives are mostly some of Sorokin's grotesque images from his novels *Blue Lard* and *The Day of the Oprichnik* that bear about the same relation to eroticism and human sexuality as the slang word for penis or vagina written on a fence or some sexual witticisms on a men's bathroom wall. Sorokin never intended to write erotic prose; his work is essentially anti-erotic; thus it is logically incorrect to use it as an argument for some unique link between verbalized sexuality and violence that is supposed to exist in this exotic Russia.

Although Borenstein allows that "for America, Russia is exotic but not *too* exotic," he makes it look and sound exactly this: extremely, even overly exotic. His address is an exercise in othering a culture that has been communicating and exchanging ideas with the West for several centuries. It is not surprising that the outcome is often just a collection of internal jokes and dubious puns:

An American desire for an eroticized Russia can be found throughout the history of American cinema. From Greta Garbo's cold and sexy *Ninotchka* to a parade of Bond girls (who give us the other terrible

cliché of our topic, "From Russia with Love"), Russia is repeatedly embodied as a woman who is sexy, alluring, but somewhat closed off – her face shows limited, controlled affect, but she is not "inscrutable." Indeed, she is potentially *quite* scrutable (p. 5).

Finally, just a couple of words on the third concern: unnecessary sexualization and eroticization. For this author, "it is difficult to avoid seeing the Western critical relation to Russian sexuality as itself erotic. The insularity of Soviet society was provocative, since there is nothing more erotic than that which is obscured from view." I will leave to sexologists and sex therapists the task of qualifying the paraphilia Borenstein describes here: some strange form of underwear fetishism perhaps, but let's consider his further argumentation that becomes even more personal (as feminists teach and Borenstein reminds us, the "personal is political" nowadays):

Trying to figure out the dynamics of a process in which you yourself are so professionally invested is never a simple proposition--claims of scholarly neutrality look a bit laughable. And, in the interest of full disclosure, I'll admit what several of you already know, which is that I used to be married to a woman from the Russian Federation...(p. 6).

What might this mean? Personal idiosyncratic experience, one person's "libidinal disappointment" (to use Borenstein's language) is presented to us as part of a scholarly claim for the truth, as an argument. Do we believe the author that his having been married to Russian woman does NOT in any way inform his view? Why does he make mention of his ex-wife in the first place then?

Incidentally, there is little or nothing in Borenstein's programmatic speech about the sexuality of US men who crave these appealing but ultimately libidinally disappointing East European women... The West (and Slavic studies specialists as part of it) is implicated here as a monolithic adult lusting after the East European adolescent. In this unequal sexual relationship, only one partner is always a hegemon and therefore is always right.

It is clearly NOT my objective to find fault with the many wonderful scholars and students of Eastern Europe and Eurasia in the US working on sexualities in Russian culture – certainly not with Prof. Borenstein, a good writer and a fine scholar. My concern is this: does this address really help graduate students and younger scholars in North America approach issues of sex, eroticism and gender in Russia or does it invite them to create a confusing idea of a thoroughly exoticized, infinitely remote, "adolescent" culture, to which sexual charms a Western Slavist should be careful not to succumb?

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AUCA: The Little Engine that Could?

by Andrew Wachtel, AUCA President

Editor's note: ASEES introduces the first in a series of profiles of institutions and individual scholars. Should you wish to contribute to this series, please contact newsnet@pitt.edu or oushakin@Princeton.EDU

Given the overall higher education scene in Central Asia, it is sometimes difficult to believe that the American University of Central Asia, offering an American-style liberal arts curriculum and devoted to producing graduates who can think critically, act ethically and work efficiently could possibly exist. Even more surprising, although the university has drawn significant support from the US government (through USAID) and the Open Society Foundation, it was founded by a Kyrgyz woman. The tradition of capitalizing on local talent continues to this day: most of the faculty and staff are from the region, although many have had the benefit of academic training in Western Europe or the United States. The Kyrgyz government, by far the least oppressive in Central Asia, has generally taken a benign view of the institution, though it has not actively supported the university.

During the first fifteen years of its existence, AUCA contented itself with its teaching mission, and has had great success preparing graduates for the job market. Our efforts have sometimes led to accusations of creating opportunities for brain drain instead of leading to praise for being an asset. In the past two years, AUCA has attempted to build its own research capacity by both having faculty and students act as research collectors for projects originating outside the region and by creating projects driven by local concerns, under the auspices of either the newly-founded Central Asian Studies Institute or the Tian Shan Policy Institute. Whether this small and underfunded university will be able to create a post-colonialist research space is an open question. There are three factors that stand in the way of success: 1) many locally-based faculty are still too inexperienced to lead significant collaborative research projects—AUCA has many talented young faculty members, but the majority of them are too heavily focused on completing their PhD research and getting their teaching organized (in a university that is and should remain focused on strong undergraduate teaching) to lead large-scale social science projects; 2) while it is possible to find support for individual research projects, it is

exceptionally difficult to find support for the overall research infrastructure at AUCA: very few international foundations will fund anything in Central Asia, and those that do expect the university to provide the core funding for staff and other research infrastructure. While major US institutions can afford to spend twenty five cents of their own money for every dollar they receive in research funding, AUCA cannot do so; 3) Library resources in the region as a whole, and at AUCA in particular, are woefully inadequate—this problem is rapidly being alleviated by the digitization of materials, but it still remains an impediment to research.

Nevertheless, I remain hopeful that AUCA can remain true to its core mission of providing rigorous and creative undergraduate education for future regional leaders. At the same time, the university hopes to create a vital base for western-based scholars pursuing research in and on Central Asia while leading home-grown collaborative research projects that will allow the perspective of Central-Asian based scholars to take its rightful and necessary place in discussions of this extremely understudied and increasingly important region.

Andrew Wachtel, President, AUCA



Central Asian Studies Institute Director Shairbek Juraev



Peggy Noonan speaking at CFR event held at AUCA



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Publications

Heather Coleman, editor of *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes*, reports that the journal has published a special issue, v. 53, no. 2-3-4 (2011), “Twenty Years On: Slavic Studies Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union.” The issue includes research articles, as well as review essays by leading specialists who explore the state of the fields of Russian history, Ukrainian history, Russian literature, Ukrainian literature, Slavic linguistics, post-Soviet politics, cinema, folklore, anthropology, and studies of the collapse of the USSR. <http://www.ualberta.ca/~csp>.

Michael Wachtel, professor of Slavic languages and literature at Princeton University, is the author of *A Commentary to Pushkin's Lyric Poetry, 1826–1836* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2012). Alexander Pushkin's lyric poetry—much of it known to Russians by heart—is the cornerstone of the Russian literary tradition, yet until now there has been no detailed commentary of it in any language.

This book, designed for those who can read Russian comfortably but not natively, provides the historical, biographical, and cultural context needed to appreciate the work of Russia's greatest poet. Each entry begins with a concise summary highlighting the key information about the poem's origin, subtexts, and poetic form (meter, stanzaic structure, and rhyme scheme). In line-by-line fashion, Wachtel then elucidates aspects most likely to challenge non-native readers: archaic language, colloquialisms, and unusual diction or syntax. Where relevant, he addresses political, religious, and folkloric issues.

Pushkin's verse has attracted generations of brilliant interpreters. The purpose of this commentary is not to offer a new interpretation, but to give sufficient linguistic and cultural contextualization to make informed interpretation possible.

The Communist Experience in the Twentieth Century: A Global History through Sources, by Glennys Young, was published in 2011 by Oxford University Press.

Matthew P. Romaniello is assistant professor of history at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. He authored *The Elusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552–1671*, (University of Wisconsin Press, 2012). In 1552, Muscovite Russia conquered the city of Kazan on the Volga River. It was the first Orthodox Christian victory against Islam since the fall of Constantinople, a turning point that, over the next four years, would complete Moscow's control over the river. This conquest provided a direct trade route with the Middle East and would transform Muscovy into a global power. As Romaniello shows, however, learning to manage the conquered lands and peoples would take decades.

Russia did not succeed in empire-building because of its strength, leadership, or even the weakness of its neighbors, Romaniello contends; it succeeded by managing its failures. Faced with the difficulty of assimilating culturally and religiously alien peoples across thousands of miles, the Russian state was forced to compromise in ways that, for a time, permitted local elites of diverse backgrounds to share in governance and to preserve a measure of autonomy. Conscious manipulation of political and religious language proved more vital than sheer military might. For

early modern Russia, empire was still elusive—an aspiration to political, economic, and military control challenged by continuing resistance, mismanagement, and tenuous influence over vast expanses of territory.

Douglas Smith's (Affiliate Lecturer, Jackson School of International Studies) new book, *Former People: The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy*, will be published in the autumn with Farrar, Straus and Giroux. His last book, *The Pearl*, appeared in Russian translation in 2011.

Michael Biggins has had his English translation of Slovene author Drago Jančar's 1978 novel *The Galley Slave* (published by Litterae Slovenicae in Ljubljana) as the featured work for the 2011 Vilenica European writers' conference. In the U.S. it was published in late 2011 by Dalkey Archive Press. His translation from Slovene of Tomaž Šalamun's recent collection of poems, *The Blue Tower*, is scheduled for publication this October by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. At present he's working on two new book-length translations from Slovene and laying the groundwork for a biography of Slovene novelist Vladimir Bartol.

Oxana Shevel wrote *Migration, Refugee Policy, and State Building in Postcommunist Europe* (Cambridge University Press 2011).

In December, Loren Graham made a book tour in Russia featuring his (together with Jean-Michel Kantor) recent book *Naming Infinity*. The book, published in Russian as *Imena beskonечnosti*, was named one of the ten best books published in Russia in 2011 at the Moscow Non-Fiction Book Fair.

Out of Russia: Fictions of a New Translingual Diaspora, by Adrian Wanner, is the first scholarly work to focus on a group of writers who, over the past decade, have formed a distinct phenomenon: immigrants with cultural and linguistic roots in Russia who have chosen to write in the language of their adopted countries. The best known among these are Andreï Makine, who writes in French, Wladimir Kaminer, who writes in German, and Gary Shteyngart, who writes in English. Wanner also addresses the work of emerging immigrant writers active in North America, Germany, and Israel. He argues that it is, in part, by writing in a language other than their native Russian that these writers have made something of a commodity of their “Russianness.” That many of them also happen to be Jewish adds still another layer to the questions of identity raised by their work. In situating these writers within broader contexts, Wanner explores such topics as migration, cultural hybrids, and the construction and perception of ethnicity. (Northwestern University Press, 2011).

The Politics of Religion in Soviet-Occupied Germany: The Case of Berlin-Brandenburg 1945-1949, by Sean Brennan, was published by Rowman & Littlefield in 2011.

Yale University Press published David Brandenberger's new *Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination and Terror Under Stalin, 1927-1941*, in December 2011. During the

interwar years, party propagandists were repeatedly frustrated in their efforts to promote a coherent sense of “Soviet” identity and this monograph investigates their failure to mobilize society along communist lines by probing the secrets of the party’s indoctrinational system. An exposé of systemic dysfunction within Stalin’s ideological establishment, *Propaganda State in Crisis* ultimately rewrites the history of Soviet mass mobilization between 1927 and 1941.

Beth Holmgren, Professor of Slavic and Eurasian Studies and Theater Studies at Duke University, recently published *Starring Madame Modjeska: On Tour in Poland and America*, a cultural biography of the major Polish/American actress, Helena Modrzejewska (Indiana University Press, 2012).


Ann Komaromi, Victoria Fellow and Assistant Professor at University of Toronto Bader Theater recently launched the database “Soviet Samizdat Periodicals.” <http://samizdat.library.utoronto.ca>. Soviet Samizdat Periodicals is a database of information about editions of classic Soviet samizdat, 1956-1986. The Database includes approximately 300 titles, representing all known types of samizdat periodical editions from this late Soviet era, including human rights bulletins, poetry anthologies, rock zines, religious and national editions. The Database is fully searchable. Researchers will find detailed bibliographic and archival information. The site also includes information about samizdat and dissidence for the general public.

Sebastien Peyrouse wrote *Turkmenistan: Strategies of Power, Dilemmas of Development Armonk* (M. E. Sharpe, 2012). Turkmenistan, certainly the least-known country of post-Soviet Central Asia, is thought to have the world’s fourth-largest reserves of natural gas as well as substantial oil resources. Despite these resources riches, Turkmenistan has remained isolated even in independence. The Communist-era leader Saparmurat Niyazov, who retained power after the collapse of the USSR, took the title of Turkmenbashi and President for Life (his ended quite unexpectedly in December 2006). The succession brought a few hopeful signs, but the country under President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov has not delineated a clear path of development since Niyazov’s death. Drawing on diverse sources as well as fieldwork, this book examines the historical legacy and the political, social, economic and geopolitical dimensions of contemporary Turkmenistan and considers the prospects for its emergence as a political and economic actor in the twenty-first-century world.

The English translation of Gregor Thum’s first book on the post-war history of Wrocław recently came out: *Uprooted. How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

Urban Spaces after Socialism: Ethnographies of Public Places in Eurasian Cities, edited by Tsypylma Darieva, Wolfgang Kaschuba and Melanie Krebs, was recently released. (University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History
Volume 13, no. 1 (Winter 2012)




Forum: The Soviet Order at Home and Abroad, 1939–61
AMIR WEINER AND AIGI RAHI-TAMM
Getting to Know You
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JEFFREY S. HARDY
“The Camp Is Not a Resort”

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“The Differences Were Only in the Details”
BENJAMIN TROMLY
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Commentary by BENJAMIN NATHANS
Classics in Retrospect
ADDIS MASON
Isaiah Berlin’s *Russian Thinkers* and the Argument for Inclusion
Review Essays by DONALD OSTROWSKI and
by MIKHAIL LOUKIANOV AND MIKHAIL SUSLOV

Kritika is dedicated to critical inquiry into the history of Russia and Eurasia. The quarterly journal features research articles as well as analytical review essays and extensive book reviews, especially of works in languages other than English. Vols. 1–12 (2000–2011) and subscriptions for vol. 13 available from Slavica: \$95 institutions; \$40 individuals; \$30 students and gifts to Russia and Eastern Europe. ASEES discounts available: contact our business manager at slavica@indiana.edu.

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2012 ASEEES Graduate Student Prizes

Tucker/Cohen Prize: Deadline: April 15, 2012

<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/tuckercohenprize.html>

The Robert C. Tucker/Stephen F. Cohen prize, sponsored by the JKW Foundation, is awarded annually (if there is a distinguished submission) for an outstanding English-language doctoral dissertation defended at an American or Canadian university in the tradition of historical political science and political history of Russia or the Soviet Union as practiced by Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen. The dissertation must be completed and defended during the calendar year prior to the award. The prize is awarded at the ASEEES Annual Convention in November.

Robert C. Tucker/Stephen F. Cohen Dissertation Prize Committee

Daniel Orlovsky: Clements Department of History, PO Box 750176, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX 75275

Ziva Galili: Rutgers University; galili@sas.rutgers.edu

Tom Remington: Department of Political Science, 327 Tarbutton Hall, 1555 Dickey Drive, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322

Rules of eligibility for the ASEEES Robert C. Tucker/Stephen F. Cohen Dissertation Prize are as follows:

- The dissertation must be defended at a university in the United States or Canada by a US citizen, Canadian citizen or permanent resident of the United States.
- The dissertation's primary subject and analytical purpose must be in the realm of the history of domestic politics, as broadly understood in academic or public life, though it may also include social, cultural, economic, international or other dimensions.
- The dissertation must focus primarily on Russia (though the topic may also involve other former Soviet republics) during one or more periods between January 1918 and the present.

A nomination will consist of a detailed letter from the dissertation's main faculty supervisor explaining the ways in which the work is outstanding in both its empirical and interpretive contributions, along with an abstract of 700-1000 words, written by the candidate, specifying the sources and general findings of the research. A faculty supervisor may nominate no more than one dissertation a year. By April 15, 2012 faculty supervisors should send each committee member listed above their letter and the 700-1000-word abstract. (Candidates may also initiate the nomination, but it must come from their advisers.) The committee will read this material and then request copies of the dissertations that best meet the criteria set out above.

Graduate Student Essay Prize: Deadline: June 1, 2012

<http://www.aseees.org/prizes/studentprize.html>

The Graduate Student Essay Prize is awarded for an outstanding essay by a graduate student in Slavic, East European, & Eurasian Studies.

Committee on the Student Prize

David Lloyd Hoffmann, Ohio State University; hoffmann.218@osu.edu

Manduhai Buyandelger, MIT, manduhai@mit.edu

Elizabeth Skomp, Sewanee, University of the South, eskomp@sewanee.edu

Rules of eligibility for Graduate Student Essay Prize:

- ASEEES Regional Affiliates and Institutional Members are invited to hold their own competitions for best essay among their graduate students, and submit the winning paper to the ASEEES Graduate Student Prize Committee.
- Essays can be any of several formats:
 - Expanded versions of conference papers
 - Graduate level seminar papers
 - Master's Thesis Chapters
 - Dissertation Chapters
- Submitters must clearly indicate the format of the essay submitted.
- Essays should have a minimum word count of 7,500 and a maximum word count of 14,000 (25 to 50 pages approximately) inclusive of footnotes and bibliography.
- Essays should be submitted to ASEEES by the Chairs of the Regional Affiliates or the primary or secondary representatives of the Institutional Members. Graduate students whose institution is not an institutional member of the ASEEES or is not holding a competition this year, are advised to check the rules for their regional competition.
- Essays should be sent in electronic format, simultaneously to the Communications Coordinator (newsnet@pitt.edu) and to all members of the prize committee.



Personages

Jose Alaniz, currently on sabbatical, is in Prague, researching and gathering materials for a book project on comics in the Czech lands. On November 8, 2011, he delivered the lecture "History in Czech Comics: Lucie Lomová's Divoši" at the Institute for Czech Literature in Prague.

Marianna Tax Choldin is the recipient of the 2011 Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award given by the faculty of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Choldin is being honored for her extensive contributions to intellectual freedom over the span of her professional career.

A reception to honor Choldin took place during the midwinter meeting of the American Library Association in Dallas, Texas, on January 21, 2012. ABC-CLIO, a publisher of reference, contemporary thought, and professional development resources, provides an honorarium for the recipient and co-sponsors the reception.

The Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award is given annually to acknowledge individuals or groups who have furthered the cause of intellectual freedom, particularly as it affects libraries and information centers and the dissemination of ideas. Granted to those who have resisted censorship or efforts to abridge the freedom of individuals to read or view materials of their choice, the award may be in recognition of a particular action or long-term interest in, and dedication to, the cause of intellectual freedom. The award was established in 1969 by the GSLIS faculty to honor Robert Downs, a champion of intellectual freedom, on his twenty-fifth anniversary as director of the school. Additional information about the award and past recipients can be found at <http://www.lis.illinois.edu/about-gslis/awards/downs-award>.

Michael C. Hickey (Dept. of History, Bloomsburg University) has won the Outstanding Reference Source Award for 2012 from the American Library Association (Reference and User Services Association) for his book, *Competing Voices from the Russian Revolution: Fighting Words* (Greenwood, 2011). The book was also selected as a Choice Outstanding Academic Title for 2011.

Halyna Hryn has been awarded the American Association for Ukrainian Studies 2010-2011 Prize for Best Translation from Ukrainian into English for her translation of Oksana Zabuzhko's novel *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex* (AmazonCrossings, 2011), originally published in Ukrainian in 1996 as *Polovi doslidzhennia z ukrains'koho seksu*

Steve Kerr was recently named as a member of the Expert Council for the Russian "Skolkovo School" project. Skolkovo is intended to become "Russia's Silicon Valley" -- a high-tech complex west of Moscow that will serve as an innovation and development hub. Development of the Skolkovo School (with support from the Russian Ministry of Education and Microsoft) will provide a model for new directions in the Russian education system over the coming twenty years.

Charles King's book *Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams* (W. W. Norton, 2011) was the winner of a 2011 National Jewish Book Award, in the category of writing based on archival material.

Pauline Jones Luong, formerly Associate Professor of Political Science at Brown University, is now Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan.

Wittenberg University's Russian and Central Eurasian Studies Program is delighted to announce that **Jody M. LaPorte** (Ph.D. Candidate, Berkeley) has been appointed as an Assistant Professor of Political Science, beginning in the Fall, 2012. She will replace **George E. (Gerry) Hudson** (Ph.D., Indiana University), who has taught Soviet and Russian politics and foreign policy at Wittenberg for 40 years and who founded its Russian and Eurasian Studies Program 25 years ago.

Liladhar R. Pendse, librarian for Slavic and Eastern European and Eurasian studies at Princeton University, has been selected to receive the 2012 Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Western European Studies Section (WESS) De Gruyter European Librarianship Study Grant. Sponsored by the Walter de Gruyter Foundation for Scholarship and Research, the grant provides \$3,000 to support a trip to Europe. The primary criterion for awarding the grant is the significance and utility of the proposed project as a contribution to the study of the acquisition, organization or use of library resources from or relating to Europe.

Pendse will receive the award check during the WESS General Membership Meeting at the 2012 ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim.

"A comprehensive bibliography and subject analysis of Indo-Portuguese periodicals held by the National Library of Portugal and other libraries in Lisbon will open up an as of yet untapped trove of resources on the Portuguese colonies of India," said award committee chair Brian Vetruba of Washington University in St. Louis. "Pendse's finished project will be an asset not only to West European and South Asian Studies scholars but also those examining questions of national identity and intercultural exchanges."

Pendse's research will result in a peer reviewed research paper and further the development of an online searchable version of the bibliography of Indo-Portuguese periodicals.

Governor of Hawaii proclaimed January 13, 2012 as "**Patricia Polansky Day**" in the state, honoring her long service to the state and to the University of Hawaii, as well as for her contributions to our profession and to Russian-American relations.

David Shneer, professor of history and director of Jewish Studies at University of Colorado, was just named the finalist for the National Jewish Book Award for his new book *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust* (Rutgers Univ Press)

Gregor Thum accepted a tenure-track position at the University of Pittsburgh, starting in January 2012.

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Affiliate Member News

THE ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SLAVIC STUDIES ANNOUNCES ELECTION RESULTS AND NEW RESOURCE:

The winners of the election for officers and board members:

- Secretary (2012-2013): Heather Coleman, University of Alberta
- Treasurer (2012-2013): Sarah Phillips, Indiana University
- Board Members (2012-2013): Sharon Kowalsky, Texas A&M University-Commerce; Cynthia Simmons, Boston College

New co-editors of Women-East-West, the AWSS Newsletter: Sally Boniece, Frostburg State University, and Lisa A. Krischenbaum, West Chester University

Now Available from AWSS: the *2011 Edition of the Current Bibliography of Publications in Slavic and East European Women's and Gender Studies*, compiled by June Pachuta Farris, Bibliographer for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies, University of Chicago. A pdf is available at www.awsshome.org.

ICCEES INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER

Please take a look at the recently released newsletter, published by the International Council for Central and East European Studies at the ICCEES International Information Centre, Münster, Germany. <http://www.iccees.org/newsletter.html>

Of critical importance is the change of date for the ICCEES IX World Congress. It will now be held August 3–8, 2015! According to ICCEES tradition, the Organizing Committee announced plans for the next World Congress to be held in the last week of July, 2015. However, Kanda University of International Studies, which will be the main congress venue, has asked us to schedule the congress one week later to provide maximally favorable conditions for this academic event. After discussing the issue with the ICCEES executive committee and Slavist associations in Japan, the Organizing Committee decided to change the date of the congress. The ICCEES congress is now scheduled for August 3 – 8, 2015. Save the date and mark your calendars!

2012 MIDWEST SLAVIC CONFERENCE CELEBRATES ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY

The Midwest Slavic Association is proud to host the 60th anniversary of the Midwest Slavic Conference March 30th through April 1st, 2012. Bowling Green State University held the first Midwest Slavic Conference in 1952, and throughout much of its history, the conference travelled to colleges and universities around the Midwest, including Indiana University, Michigan State University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and University of Wisconsin. Since 2003 the Midwest Slavic Conference has found a permanent home at the Ohio State University thanks to the generous support from the Center for Slavic and East European Studies and the Department of Slavic and East European

Languages and Literatures. In the last ten years the conference grew from thirteen panels in 2002 to over thirty panels in 2012. Such incredible growth is due to the tireless efforts of George Kalbous (Ohio State University), Halina Stephan (Ohio State University), Tim Pogacar (Bowling Green State University), Jennifer Spock (Eastern Kentucky University), and others. Bob Taft, the former Ohio governor, recognized the successes and achievements of the Midwest Slavic Conference with a letter on the opening day of the 2001 event. A copy of his letter can be found <http://slaviccenter.osu.edu/pdf/Taft%20Letter.pdf>.

The 60th anniversary conference will begin on Friday, March 30th at the John Glenn School of Public Affairs with a keynote address by Lilya Kaganovsky (University of Illinois) followed by an opening reception. Saturday, March 31st and Sunday, April 1st will be two full days of panels. This year's panels are composed of approximately forty two faculty members, seventy five graduate students, and twenty four undergraduates from twenty nine colleges and universities, including four international institutions. The conference is pleased to continue its tradition of providing a welcoming and comfortable environment for students in Slavic, Central and East European, and Central Asian studies. In addition to the conference, the Slavic Center will host its annual Midwest Slavic K-12 teacher workshop on Saturday entitled "Islam Outside the Middle East." Finally on Saturday the Second Annual Ohio Undergraduate Olympiada of Spoken Russian will be held for all students enrolled in Russian language classes at any Ohio college or university.

For more information on the 2012 Midwest Slavic Conference or any of the events taking place March 30th through April 1st, please contact Jordan Peters at midwestslavic@gmail.com.

NEW SOYUZ WEBSITE

Soyuz is broadly conceived as a group of anthropologists and other scholars working in postsocialist studies. It is formally constituted as the Post-Communist Cultural Studies Interest Group of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and is also recognized as an official unit of ASEEEES. Soyuz gathers at AAA and ASEEEES meetings in North America and here on the web to distribute information on our projects.

Many many thanks to Jessica Lockrem and Jennifer Dickinson for all of their hard work in launching the new website. This will be the website's new permanent home, which should facilitate changes in webmasters. <http://www.aanet.org/sections/soyuz> Please visit the site, look at the features and provide feedback via the forum section. Currently there are two discussions underway related to changing the organization's name and to examining future directions for the organization.



2012 ASEES Important Dates

- MARCH Late: First notification to panel organizers on panel acceptance. Organizers must notify all panelists.
- APRIL 15th: Deadline - All news and ads for May issue of NewsNet
 Deadline - Davis Graduate Student Travel Grant applications
 Deadline - Nominations for the Board Graduate Student Representative
 Deadline - Submissions for the Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Prize
- MAY 1st: Deadline - Nomination for the Distinguished Contributions in Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies
 7th: Deadline - Nomination for all other ASEES Book/Essay Prizes
 15th: Notification for the Davis Student Travel Grant goes out
- JUNE 1st: Deadline - Submissions for the ASEES Graduate Essay Prize
 Early: Preliminary Convention program available on the ASEES website
- JULY 1st: Final Deadline - Convention audio-visual equipment requests (After this date, you are responsible for arranging your own equipment rental and paying for it yourself.)
 5th: Deadline - All news and ads for August issue of NewsNet
- AUG 5th: Deadline - Convention Program ads
 19th: End of early pre-registration for the Convention (fees higher after this date)
- SEPT 1st: Deadline - All news and ads for October issue of NewsNet
 4th: Final Deadline for all Convention Program changes
 21st: Deadline by which Convention participants must register in order to appear in Program Index of Participants
- OCT 10th: End of Convention Pre-registration (After this date, you may register at the Convention for a higher fee)
 Late: October Call for proposals for the 2013 Convention available online
- NOV 2nd: Deadline for changes to be included in the Convention Program supplement
 15-18th: 44th Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA
- DEC 1st: Deadline - All news and ads for January issue of NewsNet
 17th: Deadline for 2013 Convention paper proposal submissions
 31st: End of your 2012 membership

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- **SUMMER RUSSIAN LANGUAGE TEACHERS PROGRAM*** - LARGE SCHOLARSHIPS available for university and secondary school teachers of Russian to study abroad in Moscow for six weeks. Graduate students are encouraged to apply. *Application Deadline: March 1st, 2012 (* pending funding from the U.S. Department of Education)*

Immersion Programs for Undergraduate & Graduate Students

- **ADVANCED RUSSIAN LANGUAGE & AREA STUDIES PROGRAM** - Live and study in Moscow, St. Petersburg, or Vladimir for a comprehensive immersion experience in Russian language and culture.
- **EURASIAN REGIONAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM** - Experience Eurasia with language immersion programs in Armenian, Azeri, Chechen, Georgian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Persian (Dari, Farsi, Tajiki), Romanian, Turkmen, Ukrainian, and Uzbek.
- **BALKAN LANGUAGE INITIATIVE** - Explore Balkan languages and cultures with programs in Albanian, Bosnian, Macedonian, and Serbian.

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Scholarships are available for most American Councils programs. Funding sources include U.S. Department of State (Title VIII) and U.S. Department of Education (Fulbright-Hays).

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Institutional Member News

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES JACQUES ROSSI FUND

Georgetown University is honored to announce the creation of the **Jacques Rossi Memorial Gulag Research Fund**, which starting in 2012-2013 will support conferences, speakers, and grants to students pursuing research projects related to the history of the Gulag in the Soviet Union.

The Fund is named in honor of Jacques Rossi, a Polish-French writer who was arrested in the USSR in 1937 and later wrote about his experiences in the Gulag. Georgetown University provided refuge and hospitality to Jacques Rossi between 1979 and 1985, allowing him to complete the testimony of his years of incarceration in his *Gulag Handbook: An Encyclopedia Dictionary of Soviet Penitentiary Institutions and Terms Related to the Forced Labor Camps*, published in English, Russian and French.

The Fund will be launched in April 2013 with an international conference at Georgetown, "The Soviet Gulag: New Research and New Interpretations," co-sponsored by the Georgetown-based journal, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*. Starting in 2013, up to \$20,000 per academic year will be available to fund student research on any topic relating to the history of the Gulag.

The Jacques Rossi Fund is made possible by a generous gift from Elisabeth Salina Amorini. Ms. Salina Amorini received her law degree from the Geneva University in 1976. From 1987 until 1998 she was Chairman of SGS Société Générale de Surveillance S.A., a public company founded by her Russian-born grandfather, Jacques Salmanowitz. Since its inception the firm has held extensive business interests in Eastern Europe. During World War II, Jacques Salmanowitz was actively involved in helping victims of Nazi persecution.

For more information, contact Prof. Michael David-Fox (md672@georgetown.edu).

THE KENNAN INSTITUTE AT THE WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS

Grant Opportunities:

Please note, all grant opportunities listed below are contingent on continued funding. Please check KI's website for the most updated information when applying: www.wilsoncenter.org/kennan.

KENNAN INSTITUTE SHORT-TERM GRANTS: Up to one month's duration

The Kennan Institute offers Short-Term Grants to scholars whose research in the social sciences or humanities focuses on the former Soviet Union (excluding the Baltic States), and who demonstrate a particular need to utilize the library, archival, and other specialized resources of the Washington, D.C. area. Policy-relevant research is preferred. Academic participants must either possess a doctoral degree or be doctoral candidates who have nearly completed their dissertations. For non-academics, an equivalent degree of professional achievement is expected.

Short-Term Grants provide a stipend of \$3,200 for 31 days. While the Kennan Institute cannot provide office space for Short-Term scholars, we do provide a carrel with a computer and internet access. Travel and accommodation expenses are not directly covered by this grant. There is no official application form for Short-Term Grants. The applicant is requested to submit a concise description (700-800 words) of his or her research project, curriculum vitae, a statement on preferred dates of residence in Washington, D.C., and two letters of recommendation specifically in support of the research to be conducted at the Kennan Institute. Please note, the recommendation letters must be signed. Applicants should also state their citizenship status in their materials. Applications may be submitted via e-mail, fax or post. If sending a hard copy, the application must be in clear, dark type, printed on one side only, without staples.

Grant recipients are required to be in residence in Washington, D.C. for the duration of their grant. Four rounds of competitive selection for Short-Term Grants are held each year. The next closing date is **December 1, 2012**. Applicants are notified of the competition results roughly seven weeks after the closing date. Only U.S. citizens are currently eligible for Short-Term Grants. **NOTE: Short-Term Grants for non-US citizens are suspended until further notice. Please check the KI website for updated information on the Short-Term Grant Program for non-US citizens.**

The Short-Term Grant Program is supported by the Program for Research and Training on Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the former Soviet Union (Title VIII) of the U.S. Department of State and the Kennan Institute endowment.

KENNAN INSTITUTE TITLE VIII-SUPPORTED RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS: 3-9 months duration

AWARDS ARE LIMITED TO SCHOLARS WHO ARE U.S. CITIZENS UPON COMMENCEMENT OF THEIR SCHOLARSHIP

Title VIII Research Scholarships lasting three to nine months are available to academic participants in the early stages of their career (before tenure) or scholars whose careers have been interrupted or delayed. For non-academics, an equivalent degree of professional achievement is expected. Eligibility is limited to the postdoctoral level for academic participants, although doctoral candidates in the process of completing a dissertation may apply (the dissertation must be successfully defended before taking residence at the Kennan Institute). Applicants must be U.S. citizens. Research proposals examining the countries of Central Eurasia are eligible. Those proposals related to regional Russia, Ukraine, Central Asia, Belarus, the Caucasus, and contemporary issues are particularly welcome. The Title VIII Research Scholar grant offers a stipend of \$3,300 per month, research facilities, computer support, and some research assistance. **Grant recipients are required to be in residence at the Institute in Washington, D.C. for the duration of their grant.** One round of competitive Title VIII Research Scholar selection is held per year. **The deadline for receipt of applications and supporting materials is December 1, 2012.** Application materials must be submitted by mail; materials sent by electronic mail or facsimile will not be considered. Decisions on appointment will be made in mid-February; grantees are able to commence their

appointments as early as July.

Applications can be downloaded from the Kennan Institute's web site (<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/kennan>).

The Research Scholar Program is supported by the Program for Research and Training on Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union (Title VIII) of the US Department of State.

KENNAN INSTITUTE SUMMER RESEARCH GRANTS: 2 months duration

AWARDS ARE LIMITED TO SCHOLARS WHO ARE U.S. CITIZENS UPON COMMENCEMENT OF THEIR SCHOLARSHIP

Scholars who conduct research in the social sciences or humanities focusing on the former Soviet Union (excluding the Baltic States), and who demonstrate a particular need to utilize the library, archival, and other specialized resources of the Washington, D.C. area should consider applying for the summer research grants. The summer grants must be used between May-September 2012, and grant applicants are required to hold an MA degree or higher. The Summer Research Scholarships will provide a stipend of \$6,400 for 62 days, research facilities, computer support, and some research assistance. Travel and accommodation expenses are not directly covered by this grant.

Applicants are required to submit a concise description (700-800 words) of his or her research project, curriculum vitae, a statement on preferred dates of residence in Washington, D.C., and two letters of recommendation specifically in support of the research to be conducted at the Institute. All of these materials may be submitted via e-mail except for the letters of recommendation. The letters should be sent, with signature, either by fax or post. Applicants should also note their citizenship status in their materials. Applications should be submitted in clear dark type, printed on one side only, without staples. Closing date is

December 1, 2012.

For more information, please contact Lauren Crabtree at Email: Lauren.Crabtree@wilsoncenter.org; Phone: (202) 691-4274; Fax: (202) 691-4247; or, please see our website at www.wilsoncenter.org/kennan. Please send all application materials to: Lauren Crabtree, Kennan Institute, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004-3027.

SRAS ANNOUNCES SEVERAL NEW PROGRAMS

Policy and Conflict in the Post-Soviet Space: Sept 3-Dec 14 (Deadline: May 15). This program seeks to critically analyze the post-Soviet era. Students will visit Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Russia and will discuss the conflicts in these states, both past and present, with local students, teachers, and experts. The competing foreign interests at work in these states will also be explored. Students will also intensively study Russian, an important language of diplomacy across the post-Soviet space. <http://www.sras.org/conflict>

Eurasian Culinary Adventure: July 15 - Aug 12, 2012 (Deadline: May 1). This program is designed to open all the senses to the rich cultures of the Slavs and the peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Students will study Russian, a lingua franca of these peoples, in intensive classroom sessions and at an included home stay. You'll also dive into the history and cultural significance of local cuisines before learning to make the foods yourself: Ukrainian borsch, Uzbek plov, Georgian khachapuri, and more. Based in Kiev, Ukraine, this course includes travel to the Crimean Peninsula (famous for its wines) and to Georgia in the Caucasus. <http://www.sras.org/eat>

Additional programs can be found here: <http://www.sras.org/programs>. Funding opportunities are available: <http://www.sras.org/funding>

UCLA

The Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures

UCLA Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, Romanian, and Russian Language Courses
Offered by the Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures, Center for
World Languages, and Summer Sessions, UCLA

SUMMER 2012 SCHEDULE:

Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian 103 (333317110): Intensive Elementary
Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian (12 units) - 6 weeks: 6/25-8/3; MTWRF 9-2:10
pm Humanities A68

Romanian 103 (340318130): Intensive Elementary Romanian/Moldovan
(12 units) - 6 weeks: 6/25-8/3; MTWRF 9-2:10 pm Dodd 154 (Section 1) /
Rolfe 3134 (Section 2)

Russian 10 (341065110): Intensive Elementary Russian (12 units) - 8
weeks: 6/25-8/17; MTWRF 10-1:50 pm Humanities A60

Russian 20 (341114110): Intensive Intermediate Russian (12 units) - 8
weeks: 6/25-8/17; MTWRF 10-1:50 pm Humanities A40

Russian Classes for High School Students- For more information, and to
register, visit <http://www.hslanguages.ucla.edu>

For more information, visit www.slavic.ucla.edu

**Association for Slavic, East European,
and Eurasian Studies**

(ASEEES)

203C Bellefield Hall, 315 S. Bellefield Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA
15260-6424

tel.: 412-648-9911 • fax: 412-648-9815 • e-mail: aseees@pitt.edu
• www.aseees.org

Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), established in 1948, is a nonprofit, nonpolitical, scholarly society and is the leading private organization dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about Russia, Central Eurasia, and Eastern and Central Europe.

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Submission of materials

Announcements submitted to all regular columns are published free of charge. NewsNet frequently publishes unsolicited material. All submissions should be e-mailed to: newsnet@pitt.edu

Deadlines for submissions (ads, articles, announcements)

January issue—1 December;

March issue—1 February;

May issue—15 April;

August issue—5 July;

October issue—1 September

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

ACTRA/ACCELS Balkan Language Initiative	11
ACTRA/ACCELS Opportunities for Research and Language Study	26
ASU Critical Languages Institute	11
East View	23
Harvard U Summer Institute	29
Indiana U Summer Language Workshop	25
Kansas U Summer Language Program	30
Natasha Kozmenko Booksellers	19
Kritika	27
Slavica Publishers	27
U of Pittsburgh Summer Language Institute	12

ADVERTISING

Appropriate ads are accepted for NewsNet on a space-available basis. ASEEES reserves the right to decline advertisements which fail to meet the scholarly, non-political standards of the organization.

Please check out <http://www.aseees.org/advertising/newsnetads.html> for our advertising specs and rates.

ASEEES CALL FOR ARTICLES

Please consider submitting articles to be published in future NewsNets.

NewsNet articles are a forum for brief essays on contemporary issues or matters of broad professional interest to our members. They can include summary discussions of new research (for example, reports on well-attended and much-talked about sessions at the annual convention). Please keep in mind that NewsNet is not a venue for extensive research essays. Most cover articles run between 2,500 and 3,000 words in length.

We encourage members, including graduate students, who are interested in proposing a NewsNet article to contact the Communications Coordinator, Mary Arnstein (newsnet@pitt.edu) or the Communications advisory committee's chairperson, Serguei A. Oushakine, Princeton University (oushakin@Princeton.EDU).



Calendar

2012

March 23-24. 2012 Annual SOYUZ Symposium: "Affections/Afflictions/Afterlives"

March 29-April 1. The special 50th anniversary meeting of the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies. For further information, contact Harold Goldberg (hgoldber@sewane.edu), Olavi Arens (Olavi.Arens@armstrong.edu), or John Steinberg (sohisjs@georgiasouthern.edu). For information on the program (proposals due January 10, 2012), please contact Sharon_Kowalsky@tamuc.edu

March 30-April 1. The Midwest Slavic Association will host the 60th anniversary of the Midwest Slavic Conference. <http://slaviccenter.osu.edu/mwsc.html>

April 6. Migration and Society Conference hosted by Higher School of Economics, Moscow. Contact Andrei V. Korobkov, Ph.D. at korobkov@mtsu.edu with questions.

April 19-21. 17th Annual ASN World Convention: The Wages of Nationhood: Conflicts, Compromises, and Costs. International Affairs Building, Columbia University, NY. Sponsored by the Harriman Institute. <http://www.nationalities.org/convention/convention.asp>

April 26-28. 23rd Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS):

The Global Baltics: The Next Twenty Years, Chicago, Illinois. The biennial Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies conference welcomes papers, panels, and roundtable presentations in fields related to the Baltic region, its countries, and populations within those countries, including minorities. Contributions are encouraged from disciplines Baltic studies. Interdisciplinary and comparative work is welcome. <http://depts.washington.edu/aabs/>

June 10-13. International Symposium on Language and Communication: Research trends and challenges (ISLC). The symposium is to be held in the Atatürk Congress Center, Ege University, İzmir, Turkey. www.inlcs.org/2012

August 25-27. The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Slavic Linguistics Society at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS The conference website is here: <http://www2.ku.edu/~slavic/conference/>

October 12-13. The annual conference of the Wisconsin chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) will be held at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, WI. For more information, please contact Sarah Kapp (skapp@wisc.edu).

November 15-18. The 44th Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), New Orleans, LA, New Orleans Marriott