Solzhenitsyn confidant Stig Fredrikson shares memories from Moscow

The spring 2010 semester was full of action, academic, programmatic, and outreach. Our Annual Center Conference, organized by Gabriela Currie (University of Minnesota) and our very own Donna Buchanan (School of Music), had as its theme “Soundscapes of the Spirit: Cosmology and Sound Art from the Black to the Aral Seas.” This event was ambitious in its geographic, cultural, and disciplinary scope, including presentations from anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, linguists, and specialists on religion and literature, who framed the musical and vocal arts of this vast region in a variety of cosmological, historical, and even current-affairs perspectives.

Other highlights included New Directions talks on the image of the historian in tsarist and Soviet Russia (Frances Nethercott, University of St. Andrews), symbolic geography in Russian literature (Anne Lounsbery, New York University), and the transformation in the post-socialist city (Sasha Tsenkova, University of Calgary).

Continued on page 4

Photograph courtesy of The Nobel Foundation
From Left: Stig Fredrikson, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

“I thought this would have to remain a secret as long as I lived.”
The competition, hosted by REEEC, Indiana University’s REEI, and University of Chicago’s CEERES, brought in 29 students from four high schools in Illinois or Indiana.

Held in Chicago, IL, the 2nd Annual Illinois-Indiana Russian Olympiada brought together high school students from the two states to be judged on their Russian language skills.

Each student was quizzed by three judges. The event concluded with the announcement of the winners, who will receive medals from the ACTR, and a concert by the University of Chicago’s Russian Choir.

Letter from the Director, cont’d.

Stig Fredrikson, chief foreign news editor for Swedish TV, flew in from Stockholm to give a CAS/MillerComm lecture. Its subject — his decades-long association with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the late Russian writer, whom he first met in Moscow as a young reporter in the early 1970s. During his visit to our university, which was much extended due to the eruption of that notorious Icelandic volcano, Stig met with students in REEEC, the College of Media, the Slavic Department, and the Department of Germanic and Scandinavian languages. Together with George Gasyna (Slavic), Carol Leff (Political Science), and myself, he took part in an exceptionally well-attended roundtable discussion on the aircrash at Smolensk that had resulted in the death of Poland’s president and dozens of other leading figures in that country.

I would like to conclude this brief letter by mentioning the celebration of Ralph Fisher’s 90th birthday. This took place on April 5 at the Slavic and East European Library where Ralph’s friends, colleagues, and former students celebrated his magnificent achievement in founding our Center and building up Russian and Eurasian Studies at the University of Illinois over a period of almost three decades. So on behalf of a grateful community of scholars, students, and staff on our campus, I would like to say once again, many happy returns, Ralph! Thank you for all you have done for our center and for the university.

Richard Tempest, Director
The Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies along with the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center, and our counterparts at the University of Chicago, hosted our second collaborative workshop entitled Violence, Trauma, and Displacement in the Middle East and Eurasia on January 29-30 with additional co-sponsorship from the Department of History and Center for Global Studies at Illinois. The event brought together scholars from the two Illinois universities, as well as surrounding areas for engaging discussions of violence, trauma and displacement in terms of historical and contemporary situations in the regions. An underlying theme of the workshop was to consider whether trauma and displacement may be examined in terms of human agency used to constitute group identity.

Participating Panelists

Francis Boyle (Illinois, Law), “Prospects for Peace in the Middle East”

Michael Rothberg (Illinois, English), “Holocaust Memory and the Israeli/Palestinian Crisis”

Roberta Mazza (Western Illinois, History), “The Effects of the First World War upon the Identities of Jerusalem”

Ari Barlabat (UCLA, International Relations), “Israel and Eurasia: The Rise of New Powers and Israeli Extra-Regional Foreign Policy”


Harriet Murav (Illinois, Comparative and World Literature), “Bergelson, Benjamin, and Berlin: Justice Deferred”


Michael Polczynski (Chicago, Middle Eastern Studies), “The 19th Century Polish Émigré Involvement in the Circassian Insurrections during the Caucasus Wars”


Basil Salem (Chicago, Middle Eastern Studies) “Forgotten Intellectual: The Multiple Identities of Khalil Ghanim, an Ottoman-Arab in Exile (1846-1903)”

Nell Gabiam (Chicago, Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture), “The Politics of Suffering in Syria’s Palestinian Refugee Camps”

Shayna Silverstein (Chicago, Music) “Relocating Turath: Cultural Heritage Practices and Displaced Persons in Syria”

Mandy Terc (Michigan, Anthropology) “Marriage and Divorce in Contemporary Syria: Trauma or Opportunity?”
Fredrikson had to be extremely careful. Initially, Solzhenitsyn filmed the text of his Nobel speech. Fredrikson cut the negatives, put them in a medicine bottle, and put the bottle in the battery compartment of a transistor radio, which he then put in his luggage and smuggled into Helsinki. Once he had an envelope of photos from Solzhenitsyn, which he taped to his bare back underneath his clothes in case of getting searched at the airport.

Eventually, the danger grew too great. Fredrikson requested use of the Norwegian Embassy’s diplomatic pouch, which he was granted and used from that point on.

Fredrikson says he never feared for his life, although maybe he should have. He says, “Maybe I was too young or too naive to be afraid.” Nevertheless, the two were never caught.

“In 1973, however, the KGB got hold of the Gulag Archipelago manuscript. On January 14, 1974 Fredrikson and Solzhenitsyn had their last secret meeting before Solzhenitsyn was expelled in February 1974.”

In 1973, however, the KGB got hold of the Gulag Archipelago manuscript. On January 14, 1974 Fredrikson and Solzhenitsyn had their last secret meeting before Solzhenitsyn was expelled in February 1974.

In 1990, all the KGB’s material on Solzhenitsyn was burned—105 volumes, about the weight of a truck. The secret police’s code name for Solzhenitsyn had been Spider.

In 1993, Fredrikson and Solzhenitsyn met again for the first time in 10 years in Switzerland, where Fredrikson interviewed his friend for a documentary. Since then, Fredrikson has also written a book titled, Alexander’s Courier: A Journalist’s Life in the Shadow of the Cold War (2004). Fredrikson never expected he would get to share his secret with the world, saying “I thought this would have to remain a secret as long as I lived.”

Memories from Moscow, cont’d.

Global Fest 2010: Cultural Crossroads

Held in Normal, IL, Global Fest was a “Celebration of World Languages & Cultures” for middle school and high school students. Participants learned about and shared their knowledge of the world through introductory lessons in languages of Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East; interactive cultural activities & performances; arts & crafts displays; global knowledge competitions, and exhibits. REEEC hosted a “Discovery Room” where students learned about matryoshka dolls and made their own.
Religious Diversity in Russia

Religion plays vital role in Russia’s historical heritage

By Jesse Murray
Ph.D. Candidate, History

For most people, the phrase “religion in Russia” inevitably invokes a monolithic image of religion, state, and power. The assumption is that during the Soviet period, religion was controlled by the state to the point that it existed only as a subjugated institution, while before and after the USSR, close relationships between the Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian Empire and eventually Russian Federation accomplished the same thing. In any case, most people assume that an individual’s ability to interact with religion on his or her own terms was extremely restricted, either by the threat of punishment for doing so or by a very limited set of acceptable forms of interaction and expression. A corollary of these assumptions is that religious diversity in Russia past and present, whether confessional or experessional, was, and is, extremely limited.

Russia, in fact, was and is a place of tremendous religious diversity. Every one of the five ‘world religions’ (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism) has a foothold in Russia, and all of them except Hinduism have had a strong historical presence there.

Making Russia’s religious diversity into a list of the religions that can be found there is in many ways an oversimplification. Russia’s religious diversity defies easy categorization. Russia has been an empire of one kind or another for 500 years, and the site of extensive intercultural contact and mixing even before that. In the context of all of this exchange and transfer, the boundaries between religions that seem so clear cut when they are in a list became increasingly fuzzy. All across Russia, people of one religion adopted and adapted beliefs and practices that, if one went by a list, would be classified as parts of other religions.

The Russian state has carried on a long struggle to tame this diversity of practice and belief into something that can be easily categorized and used to the state’s interest. The state’s tactics, though, are and were considerably more complex than simple association with and enforcement of institutional Orthodoxy or atheism. The Russian Empire, to a limited extent the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation all recognize or recognized multiple official religions.
Religious Diversity in Russia, cont’d.

In the case of the Russian Empire, this meant that state officials, scholars, and some practitioners of a particular religion jointly crafted a version of the religion that supported the philosophical foundations of the state and, as an institution, could be used to support the state’s power structures.

However, there were always a significant number of formal dissenters, and even more people whose practices did not match with the “official” religion and who simply didn’t care. The Soviet Union pursued a similar tactic by allowing the existence of official institutions for a number of religions, including Orthodoxo, Islam, Buddhism, and even Baptist Protestantism, although they discouraged the mass participation that imperial officials had desired. Although practitioners faced grave consequences, many believers who did not wish to participate in the state structures, simply practiced quietly and in private.

The Russian Federation has attempted to use the concept of religions that play an important role in Russia’s “historical heritage” to keep foreign missionaries out of Russia. Although its efforts were partly successful, they have been obstructed by Russian converts to a number of religions, including Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hari Krishnas, and Baptists, who argue that their religions, despite not being on the state’s lists, are an important part of Russia’s “historical heritage.” In short, religion in Russia is anything but monolithic.

Student News

Gregory Xanthos (REEEC) has been awarded a U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) to study Russian in Ufa, Russia, during the summer of 2010.

This student is among the 575 U.S. undergraduate and graduate students awarded by the U.S. Department of State's CLS Program to study Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Indonesian, Persian, and Russian and Indic (Bangla/Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu) and Turkic (Turkish and Azerbaijani) languages. U.S. students will spend seven to ten weeks in intensive language institutes this summer in fifteen countries where these languages are spoken. Recipients will also support their language acquisition through cultural immersion activities. CLS Program participants are expected to continue their language study beyond the scholarship and apply their critical language skills in their future professional careers.

Current Events Forum

Roundtable on Poland’s Tragedy

In light of the April 10 tragedy in which Poland’s president, Lech Kaczyński, and nearly 100 other Polish officials were killed in a plane crash on the way to the Katyn massacre anniversary commemoration in Russia, “A Polish Tragedy: The Death of President Lech Kaczyński and Its Meaning for Poland and the World,” held April 16, aimed to cover the event from multidisciplinary and cross-regional perspectives.

George Gasyna (Slavic Languages & Literatures) presented a historical remembrance of the initial tragedy at Katyn, the Katyn massacre of 1940. He called the Soviet massacre of 22,000 Polish officers and other intellectuals the “destruction of the best and brightest of Polish society,” and a “crime without a punishment.”

Carol Leff (Political Science) explained how the tragedy will affect contemporary politics in Poland, especially the upcoming presidential election. Two of the three candidates were killed in the crash, leaving Bronislaw Komorowski, former speaker of the house, and now acting president, as the only remaining candidate.

Stig Fredrikson (Foreign News Commentator, Sweden) shared his perception of international opinion on the tragedy. He feels it has brought Poland and Russia closer together.

Richard Tempest (REEEC) remarked on the international significance of the air disaster. “The Katyn tragedy, an event that means so much to Poland, has been made much more known to the world as a whole.”
David Cooper (Slavic) is writing a book titled *Creating the Nation: Identity and Aesthetics in Early Nineteenth-century Russia and Bohemia*. It is scheduled for May 2010 publication by Northern Illinois University Press.


Mohammad Khalil (Religion) is organizing an international symposium entitled “Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others,” hosted by the University of Illinois’ Department of Religion on April 16 and 17, 2010. The purpose of this symposium (and book project) is to explore views on salvation in Islamic thought, particularly as it pertains to “Others,” i.e., non-Muslims.

Mark Steinberg (History) is pleased to announce the publication of a collection of articles that grew out of a conference in St. Petersburg, which was co-sponsored by REEEC: *Kul’tury gorodov Rossiskoi imperii na rubezhe XIX - XX vekev*, edited by Mark Steinberg and Boris Kolonitskii (St. Petersburg, Evropeiskii dom, 2009). He also has an article in the collection: “‘Chernye Maski’; Zrelishcha, obrazy i identichnosti’ na gorodskikh ulitsakh.” Also of interest is another recent publication, “Dvoistvennost’ kritiki—za-metki redaktora zhurnala,” *Antropologicheskii forum* 10 (2009): 150-61.

Ben Whisenhunt received a small grant from College of DuPage to conduct research in Irkutsk, Russia. He will also lead a group of College of DuPage students to St. Petersburg in May 2010 as part of a Field Studies course. William Benton Whisenhunt, Ph.D., Professor of History, College of DuPage.

Robert L. Thompson (Agriculture), Gardner Endowed Chair in Agricultural Policy, will retire in May 2010. This semester he was honored by the College of ACES with its Global Outreach Award and the USDA Economists Group’s Bruce Gardner Award “for an academic who has made outstanding contributions to the economics of USDA policies and programs while serving in some capacity at USDA.” (Assistant Secretary for Economics).

Russell Zanca published *Life in a Muslim Uzbek Village: Cotton Farming after Communism*. Wadsworth/Cengage, 2010. He has also been granted a Fulbright Award as a Senior Specialist and will be working at the University of Zurich in May with Dr. Peter Finke (Social Anthropology) to initiate a new ethnographic project on labor migration from Central Asia. *Associate Professor of Anthropology, Northeastern Illinois University.*

Eugene Avrutin received a Cahman Publication Subvention Grant from the Association for Jewish Studies for his forthcoming book, *Jews and the Imperial State. Photographing the Jewish Nation*, which he co-edited with Harriet Murav, was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in the visual arts category. He gave talks at Brandeis University, University of Vienna, and the Center for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv, Ukraine. Avrutin received grants from the American Philosophical Society and the Hewlett Foundation, as well as an Arnold O. Beckman Research Award in support for his new book project, *Jews and their Neighbors in Tsarist Russia*. His article “Jewish Neighborly Relations and Imperial Russian Legal Culture” appeared in the Journal of Modern Jewish Studies, vol. 9, no. 1 (2010): 1-16.

Catherine Prendergast (English) is currently collaborating on a paper with a 2002-2003 fellow from Slovakia to University of Illinois, Roman Ličko, who is a professor at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic. They have conducted a comparative study of paper use in their universities’ respective English departments, his in Midwestern Slovakia, and hers in the middle United States. They will present this paper jointly in October 2010 at the Thomas R. Watson Conference at the University of Louisville. Prendergast’s 2008 book, *Buying into English*, about English language instruction in Slovakia was also reviewed in The Nation. http://www.thenation.com/doc/20091116/mlanko.

Sherban Lupu was awarded a Fulbright Senior Scholar Grant for the academic year 2009/10. Consequently, he has been in residence in Romania at the G.Dima University in Cluj-Napoca the Fall semester and at the G.Enescu University in Iasi for the Spring semester. In February, he performed folk music of Romania as well as music by G.Enescu at the Berlin Philharmonic Hall in Germany.

Diane Koenker is concluding her second and final year as Director of Graduate Studies in the History Department. She participated in a roundtable panel on David Engerman’s book, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America’s Soviet Experts* (Oxford, 2009), at the November 2009 meeting of AAAS. In February, she presented a talk at the Mad World Symposium at Illinois, “Behind the Curtain: Sex and Style in the Soviet 1960s.” In April, she participated in a colloquium at the University of Michigan on “Rosenberg’s Russia,” in honor of the retirement of Bill Rosenberg. Her paper was, “Proletarian Tourism and the Good Life in the Soviet Union, 1927-1954.”

David Prochaska recently published *Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity*, co-edited with Jordana Mendelson (Penn State University Press, 2010).

Terry D. Clark has been appointed the editor of the *Journal of Baltic Studies. Professor of Political Science, Creighton University.*
Summer Research Laboratory on Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia
June 14 - August 7.

Summer Lab Noontime Scholars Lectures
June 14 - August 7. Held each Tuesday unless otherwise indicated.

Summer Lab Film Series
June 14 - August 7. Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Russian Culture & History Discussion Group

SRS Individual Research Practicum
Duration of the Summer Lab.

Training Workshops for Junior Scholars

Moderator: Edward Schatz,
(Political Science, University of Toronto)

Moderator: Charles King,
(Government, Georgetown University)

Ralph and Ruth Fisher Forum

“The Socialist 1960s: Popular Culture and the Socialist City in Global Perspective,”
June 24-26, 2010. Faculty organizers:
Diane Koenker (Illinois) and Anne Gorsuch (British Columbia).