Ivan Ilyich is dead, but you’re not
Champaign-Urbana Big Read, March 30 – April 27, 2008

By Faith Wilson Stein

This arresting but ultimately inspiring statement, visible on campus bulletin boards, city billboards and online discussion forums throughout April 2008, promotes the Champaign-Urbana Big Read, part of a National Endowment for the Arts nationwide reading program providing grants to communities across the country to “restore reading to the center of American culture.”

Who is Ivan Ilyich and why is he dead? The short answer is that he is the protagonist of Lev Nikolaievich (Leo) Tolstoy’s brief but searing novella, The Death of Ivan Ilyich, a middle-aged judge who has a slight fall and, from this minor mishap, slowly descends into a painful and ultimately fatal illness. The long answer is not as simple, though the book (especially compared with Tolstoy’s other works) is a remarkably short read of under 100 pages. The narrator tells us that “Ivan Ilyich’s life had been most simple and commonplace—and most horrifying.” It is from this seeming contradiction that Tolstoy describes a character and his entire life in all of its mundaneness and the dishonesty inherent therein.

Left to Right: Harriet Murav, Richard Tempest, Lynda Park, Vladimir Tolstoy, Elena Ryubova, Ralph Fisher, Galina Alekseeva, Ruth Fisher

Left to Right: Vladimir Tolstoy at the Big Read Kick-off on March 30

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Letter from the Director

This has been a busy semester at REEEC, but then they all are! Our “Directions” series of lectures featured three well-attended talks. In January Robert Amsterdam, the London-based lawyer who acts for Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former owner of the YUKOS oil company now incarcerated in a Siberian labor camp, discussed the YUKOS case and its implications for legal and political developments in Russia; and soon thereafter David Satter, a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute who is currently resident on our campus as a REEEC-Journalism visiting professor, spoke on the history of the Soviet gulag. In February William Brustein, Associate Provost for International Affairs and professor of history, sociology and political science, addressed the topic of anti-Semitism in Bulgaria and Romania before the Holocaust. And on a wonderfully musical note, we hosted Mariana Sadovska, an internationally renowned performer of Ukrainian folk songs, who gave a recital at Smith Hall on January 30, drawing a standing-room only crowd despite the lateness of the hour and the Arctic blizzard blowing outside.

The REEEC faculty assembly was held on March 12, attracting the largest turnout in years. A major topic of discussion was the future of the Slavic & East European Library and the Slavic Reference Service as the University Library undertakes a far-reaching program of restructuring and retrenchment. REEEC and colleagues in Slavic and History were also active through on-line petitions and a targeted letter campaign.

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Ivan Ilyich
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The local Big Read formally began at a Kick-Off Celebration on March 30, which included a presentation by Vladimir Tolstoy, the Russian author’s great-great-grandson, who came from Russia for the occasion. Chancellor Richard Hermann addressed an audience of roughly 250 members of the community, speaking about the importance of the humanities and the impact that literature has had on him personally. The mayors of Champaign and Urbana, Gerald Schweighart and Laurel Lunt Prussing, then issued a joint proclamation designating March 28 – April six as International Education Week. They also proclaimed March 30 “Russian Culture Day.”

Professor Harriet Murav, Chair of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, then introduced Vladimir Tolstoy, great-great-grandson of author Leo Tolstoy and Director of the Museum-Estate of Leo Tolstoy Yasnaya Polyana in Russia; Galina Alekseeva, Head of the Research Division of Yasnaya Polyana; and REEEC Director Richard Tempest, who translated for Mr. Tolstoy. The highlight of the evening was a reading by Vladimir Tolstoy from chapter 6 of the novella, in which Ivan Ilyich realizes that he is in fact dying. His moving recitation in Russian resonated with many in the audience who had no knowledge of the Russian language—a response that Mr. Tolstoy acknowledged and for which he expressed his gratitude. Mr. Tolstoy then took questions from the audience, at one point acknowledging that The Death of Ivan Ilyich would not have been his first choice of books by his great-great-grandfather, recommending instead Leo Tolstoy’s Childhood or The Cossack! But he reiterated that the author’s timeless message of universal love and sympathy was deeply evident in Ivan Ilyich and hoped that the community would see the novella as just their first introduction to the whole library of Tolstoy’s works.

Other activities scheduled in April include a keynote lecture by Michael Denner, assistant professor of Russian Studies at Stetson University (April 3 at the Champaign Public Library); a dramatic performance of the novel by Champaign Central High School (April 4); the “Death and the Meaning of Life” film festival (April 9 at the Virginia Theater); and a party and talk for members of area book clubs on April 18 at the Urbana Free Library. Additional highlights include talks, panels, and performances on the UI campus and throughout the community: WILL-AM radio and book-club discussions; and a Krannert Art Museum tour. All of these events are free and open to the public. The book has been incorporated into the curriculum in some area schools and at the U. of I., where Professor Harriet Murav is teaching an eight-week undergraduate course on the novel. It is also serving as a springboard for a medical panel discussion on death and dying involving area physicians and students in the College of Medicine’s Medical Scholars Program and will be the subject of discussions among prisoners at the Champaign County Jail, organized and led by speech communications professor Stephen Hartnett. A complete list of events and activities, as well as resources for readers and book groups to learn more about Tolstoy, Russia, and the culture of dying, is available at www.reec.uiuc.edu/bigread.

The backbone of the Big Read is, of course, the community members who are reading the book. The misfortune of isolation in the midst of a seemingly well-connected society is a major theme in the novel and one that resonates today: Ivan Ilyich has his card games at the club, and yet fails to achieve a deep, personal connection with any of the “friends” sitting around him; we communicate continuously on internet chat rooms, instant messaging, online communities, cell phones, email, etc. ad infinitum, and yet feelings of social anxiety and disconnect are no less afflicting. Roughly a dozen reading groups throughout the Champaign-Urbana community—on campus, in local bookstores and libraries, and in private homes—will be meeting throughout the month to discuss the book. While book clubs are not a new phenomenon here in town, many members of the community are joining groups, reading a Russian author, or meeting their neighbors for the very first time. Those interested in joining a book club or forming their own group with friends or colleagues can find information about doing so on the Big Read website. Note in particular the online resources compiled by the U. of I. Slavic Reference Service (http://www.reec.uiuc.edu/bigread/resources/) and the blogs and webcasts at http://www.reec.uiuc.edu/bigread/tolstoy/. Ivan Ilyich is even on Facebook!

The range of events open to the public has been designed to appeal to the diverse interests of the Champaign-Urbana community, both on-campus and off, but in so doing to address the breadth and depth of questions raised by the novella itself. The issues of liter-
ary translation, palliative care, our culture of dying (and the lack of open, mature, and honest dialogue about it), the emotional and psychological disconnect inherent in modern life, and the spiritual dilemmas we encounter when confronted with our own mortality—these are just some of the concerns that the text addresses and which the Big Read is enabling us to consider as a community.

The Champaign-Urbana Big Read is sponsored by the University of Illinois Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures; Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center; School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics; and College of Medicine; together with the Champaign Public Library, the Urbana Free Library, area high schools, the Illini Union Bookstore, Borders, Pages for All Ages, Dalkey Archive Press, the Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette, WILL-AM, and other partners.

Happy reading!

Faith Wilson Stein is a graduate student in Comparative and World Literatures and a Graduate Assistant for the Big Read.

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**2008 Current Affairs Forum: Russia at the Crossroads**

**Thursday, March 27**

**Panel 1**

**Russia and the West: Perspectives on Foreign Policy**

Carol Leff, Associate Professor of Political Science, Illinois, Russia–EU Relations

David Satter, Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute; REEEC-Journalism Visiting Faculty, Illinois, Russia–US Relations

Pavel Podvig, Research Associate, CISAC, Stanford University, The State of Russian Nuclear Forces and Treaties

Chair: Colin Flint, Director of ACDIS and Associate Professor of Geography, Illinois

**Panel 2**

**Russia Looking In: Perspectives on Domestic Issues**

Joel Ostrow, Associate Professor of Political Science, Benedictine University, Likely Future Developments of the New Russian Dictatorship

Peter Maggs, Carney Chair in Law, Illinois, Business Climate and Legal Reforms in Russia

Richard Tempest, Director of REEEC and Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Illinois, Putin and Son: Images of Putin and Medvedev in the Domestic Sphere

Chair: Diane Koenker, Professor of History, Illinois

**Closing Address: Putinism and Its Discontents**

Leon Aron, Director of Russian Studies, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC.

Co-sponsored by the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security (ACDIS) and the Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies Student Organization.

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**Director**

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in soliciting support for the European University in St. Petersburg, which was closed down in February for alleged violations of the fire safety code. I am happy to report that on March 21 a judge in that city authorized the reopening of this non-governmental institution, which has long-standing ties with the University of Illinois. However, nothing in Russia is as clear or as final as it seems, and so we shall continue to monitor the situation at the EUSP and to speak up on its behalf.

I now turn to the Center’s programming for the rest of the spring and the summer. Two important events took place soon before this issue of the Center News went to press. On March 27 we hosted the 2008 Current Affairs Forum, “Russia at the Crossroads,” where specialists from the University of Illinois and colleagues from other U.S. institutions analyzed Russian domestic and foreign policy in the wake of Dmitrii Medvedev’s not unexpected elevation to the presidency. The keynote speaker was Leon Aron, one of the world’s leading Yeltsinologists, whose topic was “Putinism and Its Discontents.” The NEA-funded “Big Read” focusing on Leo Tolstoy’s novel The Death of Ivan Ilyich began on March 30 with an inaugural celebration at the Alice Campbell Alumni Center. See Faith Wilson Stein’s article on the many events and activities taking place community-wide on p. 1.

This year’s Ralph and Ruth Fisher Forum is scheduled for June 19-21. The theme for this scholarly gathering, organized by Mark Steinberg (History) and Valeria Sobol (Slavic), is “Interpreting Emotion in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Eurasia.” As usual, the forum coincides with the Summer Research Lab, which opens on June 9.

The REEEC M.A. program continues to prosper. This year we admitted eleven applicants for AY 2008-09, some of whom have already accepted. In addition, we have given out eleven AY and five summer FLAS awards to incoming and continuing students.

Finally, it is with great regret that I announce that Lynda Park, the REEEC Associate Director, is leaving the Center after nine years of exemplary service. During her tenure she has ably assisted four directors. If the University of Illinois had a Distinguished Service Medal, Lynda would deserve to be awarded not one but half a dozen! But since it is not within my power to bestow such an honor, let me just say that all of us at the Center would like to thank Lynda from the bottom of our hearts and wish her lots of success in her new job as Associate Director of the European Union Center.

With best wishes,

Richard Tempest
Late last November, I had the opportunity to take a most-expenses-paid trip to the western Ukrainian city of L'viv. In return for room, board, and a train ticket, I spoke briefly before several groups of students about the advantages of the Fulbright program, which is also funding my nine months of dissertation research in Ukraine. I spent my free time exploring L'viv's old city center, a UNESCO World Heritage Site boasting cobblestone streets, stunning buildings, and centuries-old churches. As a regional cultural center previously subject to Polish-Lithuanian and later Austro-Hungarian rule, the historic center of L'viv (or Lvow, Lemberg, L'vov) evoked an old-world charm not found in Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital and my temporary home. Yet it was in L'viv that I fully confronted the implications of the national narrative promoted by the policymakers in Kyiv for the first time.

I spent my final afternoon in L'viv engaged in a rather unusual self-guided tour that resembled my idea of a criminal stakeout. I walked up and down several streets in the Old Town, methodically examining the front doorways of every single building and selecting some to photograph. In the process, I received several quizzical looks from local residents and one very suspicious glare from a man working on his car. I doubt any of them would have believed my real reason for visiting their neighborhood: to search for signs of L'viv's Jewish past.

Although Jews comprised about one-third of L'viv's population before World War II, few signs remain of their centuries-long presence in the city. A few memorials and plaques pay tribute to Holocaust victims. One synagogue is still in operation (after a long hiatus during the Soviet period) and currently undergoing renovation. The ruins of another synagogue, the Golden Rose, still rest in the old Jewish quarter, but are protected from further desecration by a fence and are visible only by prior appointment. Other traces of this neighborhood's former inhabitants also are marked by absences. Several doorposts still bear empty depressions where mezuzahs—pieces of parchment with the “Shema Yisrael” prayer, usually placed in cases attached to doorposts to fulfill the Biblical commandment—had been affixed. If you look closely enough, you can see where similar depressions were patched in. The majority of the doorposts in the area, however, have undergone extensive patching, painting, and remodeling and no longer show even these small signs of the city's Jewish past.

As the sun began to set that afternoon, I walked to the small park in the middle of Prospekt Svobody (Freedom Avenue) to investigate a gathering I had noticed earlier. Lines of candles covered the open plaza in front of the monument to Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko and the abstract “Wave of National Revival,” both flanked by the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag. Crowds of people stood on the plaza's edge and observed the scene in relative silence. I soon learned that the vigil marked the beginning of a year-long commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Holodomor, the great famine of 1932-1933 caused by the Soviet regime’s severe policies of grain requisition and the confining of starving peasants to their villages.

The Holodomor is quickly becoming an integral part of the new national narrative promoted by Ukrainian politicians and President Viktor Yushchenko in particular. The government passed a law in December 2006 identifying the Holodomor as an act of genocide against Ukrainians and has since lobbied aggressively for other nations to do the same. Yushchenko also has pushed for a law criminalizing denial of this genocide. A government-created entity, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, is charged primarily with detailing and memorializing the Holodomor, as well as acts of political (i.e. Soviet) repression and the “national-liberation struggle” that flared in western Ukraine into the early 1950s. A national monument to the famine's victims is still optimistically scheduled to be erected in Kyiv by the end of 2008.

The famine of 1932-1933 was unquestionably a man-made tragedy that devastated the Ukrainian countryside (as well as other regions of the Soviet Union) and resulted in millions of deaths. It also was a taboo topic until the collapse of the USSR, with the result that many Ukrainians first learned of its scope in the last twenty-odd years and some still refuse to recognize its true causes. For these reasons alone—regardless of whether the Holodomor meets the accepted United Nations definition of genocide—the famine deserves serious study and public discussion, especially while some who experienced it are still alive.

Unfortunately, this national focus on the Holodomor inhibits broad discussion of other long-neglected episodes in Ukrainian history such as the Holocaust, also a taboo topic during the Soviet period. Instead, the Holodomor is frequently portrayed as a rival to the Holocaust's status as the world's most recognizable genocide.

The Politics of Memory in Ukraine

by Elana Jakel

Even a quarter-century after the fall of the Soviet Union, political forces in Ukraine are orchestrating a massive effort to impose a particular version of Ukraine's national history. The Holodomor, which killed about 7 million Ukrainians and was not even mentioned by the Soviet regime, is being trumpeted as the world's most recognizable genocide. The famine of 1932-1933 caused by the Soviet regime's severe policies of grain requisition and the confining of starving peasants to their villages.

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Ukrainian publications routinely refer to the famine as the “Ukrainian Holocaust” and the use of higher-end estimates of the Holodomor’s death toll—particularly the figure of ten million promoted by the government—leads to a sometimes explicit comparison with the Holocaust’s six million Jewish victims. Such “competitions” do little to honor the dead or promote understanding of these tragic events in Ukrainian history. More extreme circles, of course, question the Holocaust’s historicity while blaming Jews, as agents of the Soviet regime, for the Holodomor.

This is not to suggest that the Ukrainian government and individual Ukrainians have made no progress toward confronting the Holocaust and the sensitive issue of Ukrainian collaboration, or that the Holodomor should receive less attention than it currently does. The increasing centrality of the Holodomor to a Ukrainian ethno-national identity, however, threatens to obscure the past experiences of other ethnic and national groups in the country. As a result, the history of these groups and the material remains of their cultures are in danger of disappearing. The proof of this seemed to rest in my camera—with a few images of doorposts and a sign bearing the words “Staroevreis’ka Vulitsa” (“Old Jewish Street”) representing the long Jewish presence in the city—as I stood in L’viv that evening and watched hundreds commemorate the victims of a famine that had not even affected that particular region, then a part of Poland.

Elana Jakel is a Ph.D. Candidate in History completing a research year in Kyiv on a Fulbright Fellowship. Her dissertation will explore the daily interactions between Jews and non-Jews in Ukraine in the immediate post-World War II period.
World attention was drawn to the Balkans this February when Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia, leading to anti-Western rioting and political upheaval. Two members of the U. of I. community agreed to comment on the situation for Center News. Eda Derhemi, research scholar at the Institute of Communications Research, recently returned from seven months of fieldwork in Albania and Kosovo and shared with us her own experiences and perspective. Professor Zorica Nedović-Budić of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning wrote from Belgrade, where she is completing a research year and sabbatical under sponsorship of IREX and Fulbright. The differing views of these two scholars only hint at the complexity of the situation and the turmoil it has caused.

**“Kosovo is Serbia”**

by Zorica Nedović-Budić

With all they have gone through in the 1990s, mass demonstrations are nothing unusual for most people in Serbia. Since I missed those events due to my study and work in the United States, the “Kosovo is Serbia” gathering on February 21, 2008, was my first encounter with this democratic and vocal tradition. I thought it would be one of the regular walkouts that Belgrade witnesses on various occasions, such as the return of successful athletes from international competitions. I was surprised to learn that this was an event of a larger scale—for the whole of Serbia, with transportation provided from across the country. The gathering was massive; reports on the number of participants vary from 200,000 to over half a million. Regardless of the exact count given, the atmosphere was always the same: a solemn congregation of people, proud and sad about their history and unjust fate. The crowd was charged with high but quiet emotions. The program, consisting of a few brief speeches and traditional songs and poems, matched and reinforced the mood. It displayed the Serbian talent, culture and intellect. Despite calls for a more politically neutral message during the preparation of this event, the fact that the Radical Party was the only one to send its top representative, Tomislav Nikolić, gave a biased stamp to the otherwise important expression of Serbs’ national feelings. (Participation of Vojislav Koštunica was also problematic, but in my view justified—or at least inevitable—given his post as the country’s Prime Minister.) Following the program, the participants walked to the St. Sava Temple where a moleban (prayer) was held. I did not attend the gathering in person, but could hear it and see some of the crowds from my apartment less than a mile from the Serbian parliament building. It was a special and heartfelt event, indeed.

To spoil this sincere manifestation of disagreement with the violation of territorial integrity and the historic landmark, a small group of individuals (between 200 and 500) attacked the U.S. and several other embassies, as well as inflicting random material damage and looting local businesses. Unfortunately, this destructive behavior attracted most of the attention of the international media and, once again, Serbia and its people were portrayed as their most extreme elements. Many people I talked to in Belgrade were shocked and saddened by this shameful turn. Speculations on the organization and organizers of these activities cover the whole spectrum—from planned to spontaneous and from domestic to foreign-backed.

The “Kosovo is Serbia” gathering, along with the other related developments, was the culmination of a long history of loss that Serbia suffered on this territory, which it considers its cradle, the place where the Serbian Kingdom and statehood were established almost ten centuries ago and the center of its Christian Orthodox religion. Monasteries in Kosovo date back as far as the twelfth century. Mixed ethnic groups have always inhabited this region, but the change in population balance that resulted in Serbs becoming a small minority was particularly dynamic during the second half of the twentieth century. It was under Tito (a Croatian who headed Yugoslavia for the twentieth century. Mixed ethnic groups have always inhabited this region, but the change in population balance that resulted in Serbs becoming a small minority was particularly dynamic during the second half of the twentieth century. It was under Tito (a Croatian who headed Yugoslavia for over thirty years) after WWII that Serbs were systematically expelled from Kosovo. This was realized through several processes: violence inflicted by local Albanians (I had an uncle who left Peć in the 1970s with his family after years of death threats toward his son and wife), purchase of Serbian real estate with finances from Albanian emigrants in the West, and illegal immigration and settlement from northern Albania. All this was condoned (or “overlooked”) by the communist political elite in its effort to reduce Serbia’s traditional leadership role in this region and in Yugoslavia as a whole. To their credit, the communists did secure the right of Albanians to exercise minority privileges to the fullest extent. (Interestingly, the Albanians did not find this a sufficient guarantee of their ethnic freedom and sought independence in 1981, just as Serbs today are dissatisfied with verbal guarantees offered by the self-proclaimed government of Kosovo and its supporters.) The change in the proportion of Serb to Albanians was also fueled by a high birth rate among the Albanians. The intensive population growth and young population combined with other factors to hinder the region’s economic advancement despite extensive regional development policies and funds directed toward Kosovo. These funds were allocated by the six former Yugoslav republics, primarily by Serbia, but also by Slovenia, which had the highest level of economic development. By the early 1990s, this became one of the main factors for the early secession of Slovenia, which felt that its contributions to the southeastern regions of former Yugoslavia presented an unfair burden to its economy. At the same time, per capita indicators of economic and social development in Kosovo failed to show significant improvement.

It is unfortunate that it has been impossible for the Serbian and Albanian people who inhabit Kosovo to realize their rights and ethnic feelings simultaneously and next to each other. (At the individual level I trust there are many fine examples of multiethnic neighborhood and family relationships.) It has become an “either-or” situation, and due to Milošević’s atrocious legacy of the 1990s and extensive lobbying by Albanians in the U.S., the Albanians have gained the favor of the world’s leading powers. As a consequence, after the NATO bombing in 1999, about 150,000-200,000 Serbs expelled from Kosovo had nowhere to return (unlike the Albanians, whose reset-

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Celebrating Freedom
by Eda Derhemi

In April 2007 I received an IREX grant for postdoctoral research on media in Albania and Kosovo, planned to begin in January 2008. Yet because of strong international support, it seemed that United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari’s plan for the supervised independence of Kosovo, guaranteeing significant rights for the six minority groups (9% of Kosovo), would soon be followed by a proclamation of independence. I knew I wanted to be in Kosovo on that day. In the eight years since NATO forces had ousted the Serbian army and militia from Kosovo, I had visited Kosovo only once in 2002: it was miserable then, but so full of hopes for a better future. In early 1999, when Tirana, the small capital of Albania, hosted 600,000 Kosovar Albanian refugees (as did many ex-Yugoslav regions), I was in the U.S. My sister called to tell me that she had twenty-one Kosovar Albanians at her home sleeping on the floor. It was winter and they needed shelter until they could be placed in refugee centers. She said she had never seen people—especially the elderly, women, and children—in such a desperate state. Because of my desire to see Kosovo free and independent, and because it would give me more interesting data, I requested permission from IREX to move my research forward to June 2007. I was not going to miss the moment of Kosovo’s independence.

While I received the necessary permission from IREX, I missed it nonetheless. The Russian veto of Kosovo’s independence in the UN Security Council, meant to demonstrate Russia’s return to power in the global arena, slowed down the process and provided the Serbian nationalist forces grounds for manipulating Serbs into resisting. In December 2007 I returned to Illinois to teach...happy about my experience in the Balkans, about having made several contributions to Albanian and Kosovar newspapers, and sad that what I was expecting had not taken place.

Finally, on February 17, 2008, 109 members of Kosovo’s parliament unanimously proclaimed the independence of Kosovo from Serbia. Eleven deputies—those representing the Serbian minority in Kosovo—boycotted. In so doing, Kosovo’s Albanian majority concluded a dream of nearly a century. Since the 1999 NATO bombing ousted Serbian forces from a quasi-destroyed Kosovo, over one million Kosovar Albanians (half of its population) forced out by Milošević’s forces have returned to Kosovo and consider themselves free. Kosovo’s new government under Prime Minister Hashim Thaci promises to protect the rights of Kosovar minorities, with Kosovo Serbs represented in the parliament and the new cabinet. Kosovo’s independence will be supervised by the European Union Rule of Law-Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), a deployment of European Union (EU) police and civilian resources projected as continuing international civil presence in Kosovo. Russia and Serbia, however, consider EULEX illegal. NATO’s Kosovo Force is also present to secure order and the peaceful transfer of powers.

Kosovo’s independence was joyfully celebrated by Albanians around the world. Red Albanian flags, American flags and EU flags filled every square in Kosovo. As I said, I missed this beautiful celebration of freedom, when for the first time in a century of Serbian rule, thousands of impoverished Kosovar Albanians finally felt a sense of dignity, and sang and danced out their joy all night long. Here in Champaign, being seven hours behind them, I was in continuous telephone contact with friends from Tirana, France, and Germany and a few Serbian journalists enthusiastic about Kosovo’s independence, crazily celebrating in Pristina’s squares. The fact that it was -10º Celsius (14º Fahrenheit) did not bother anybody. The festivities continued until morning, and the next day, and the next.

On the other hand, there were violent Serbian demonstrations against Kosovo’s independence in Belgrade (including violence against the embassies of states that support the Republic of Kosovo), and in Mitrovica, a Northern Kosovar city divided between Albanians and Serbs. I had visited Mitrovica in November. Although it was a beautiful fall day, I remember it as one of my saddest visits to a new city. The beautiful Ibar River, with lovely people on both sides, created, witnessed and reinforced the division of the city into two hostile parts: the South is now exclusively inhabited by Albanians and the North is exclusively Serb. One need not be a genius to see that this is artificially created by forces above the wills and awareness of citizens on both sides. I met a group of high school girls, one of whom said her home was in the North. But she did not dare to return, so her family had rented an apartment in the South. I am sure there are Serbian families in the Northern part in the same situation. After the street riots of mid-March in Northern Mitrovica, the United Nations administrators and some members of the Serbian parliament (joined on March 29 by the Serbian ex-minister of defense) accused nationalistic forces in Belgrade headed by ex-prime minister Košunic of being instigators and direct organizers of the revolt.

To Kosovar Albanians and a Serbian minority (primarily intellectuals), the independence of Kosovo represents the completion of Yugoslavia’s disintegration, which began with the secession of Slovenia in 1991. It is an immediate consequence of decades of terror under Serbian interior minister Aleksandar Ranković, and later Milošević’s politics of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo from the 1980s to 1999. As Serbia did not accept any of these new independent states, there were wars in all of the regions of ex-Yugoslavia. With Kosovo it is even harder, as many Serbs see Kosovars as inferior and subhuman, and view Kosovo as the site of an historic battle in 1389 and the heartland of their Orthodox faith. Serbian monk Saint Sava built many Orthodox monasteries there in the thirteenth century. I have visited a few and I love them.

While Belgrade (with a dissolved government until new elections take place on May 11) is pressuring international governments and organizations not to recognize Kosovo independence, it has been recognized by thirty-six states, including the U.S. and major European countries. In today’s Kosovo, historic nationalistic ideologies are being reasserted at multiple levels, while world powers continue their own struggle for control. Hopefully the emancipatory political forces in the Republic of Kosovo and Republic of Serbia will have the strength and intelligence not to become pawns of other powers, to look forward and not back, to build bridges between them and give the old Balkans a chance for new peace and prosperity.
The atrocities toward Serbs, destruction of their monuments, and drug and arms trafficking that flourish in Kosovo have been neglected. There is a widespread belief that the international UN force in charge of Kosovo failed to protect the rights and security of the remaining Serbs and their property.

Also involved are geo-strategic and political interests of major international powers that have little to do with either Albanians or Serbs. While Russia, still recovering from socio-economic and political turmoil after the fall of communism, was not in a position to contest NATO’s bombing in 1999, it has now become the main force opposing Kosovo’s independence. Just as it serves the internal purposes of the other side, Kosovo is a timely case to affirm Russia’s re-established status as a world power. Similarly, other countries disapproving of Kosovo’s independence have their own reasons, with due respect to those with genuine understanding and sympathy for the complexity of the situation. The major victims of those high level power games are the people of Kosovo of all ethnic origins. There are other by-products as well. For example, Kosovo is probably the most polluted area in terms of depleted uranium that resulted from the NATO bombing and has already faced increased incidences of cancer (along with the rest of Serbia).

The Serbian population outside of Kosovo is quite divided on this issue. While everyone is appalled by the disregard of international law and United Nations authority, some believe that solving the Kosovo problem (or reclaiming Kosovo) is the highest priority, while others are ready to forgo this impoverished region (albeit rich in natural resources) despite its historic and emotional value. The latter believe that Serbia should move ahead toward its own economic recovery and prosperity as a future member of the European Union without the baggage of Kosovo. The current situation is fluid, unfolding before our eyes. As the historic pendulum swings, I hope there will be peace and prosperity for all.
Mohammad Babadoost joined the Department of Crop Sciences at Illinois in June 1999 from Montana State University. He received his Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from North Carolina State University in 1983 and an M.S. from Washington State University in 1979. Throughout his career, Dr. Babadoost has published more than 300 books, chapters, bulletins, peer-reviewed papers, and extension and newsletter articles on etiology, epidemiology, and management of plant diseases. In addition to teaching a Plant Disease Diagnosis course, he does a significant amount of work for the University of Illinois Extension. Dr. Babadoost is a member of the International Policy Committee of the College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) and an ACES Global Engagement Fellow. He has also served as a member of the ACES International Extension Committee.

In October 2007, Dr. Babadoost returned from a two-week trip to Azerbaijan, where he visited the Azerbaijan State Agricultural Academy in Ganja, the Nakhchivan State University in Nakhchivan, and the Azerbaijan Ministry of Education in Baku. He is working on establishing programs in teaching, research and extension in agriculture between the University of Illinois and similar institutions in Azerbaijan. Himself born in Tabriz in Iranian Azerbaijan, Dr. Babadoost has supported Azerbaijan through the Library Assistance Program of the American Phytopathological Society, a program he has chaired since 2003. He has sent more than 650 publications to libraries at the Azerbaijan Agricultural Academy and Nakhchivan State University. He firmly believes that the state of affairs in a country is closely related to food security, which has historically been connected with plant diseases. Therefore, promoting scholarship in countries of the Caucasus has the potential not only to influence the overall educational level, but also to create social and political stability in the region. To this end, Professor Babadoost encourages student exchanges between Azerbaijan and the United States with the hope that by focusing on practical preparation, future experts will take advantage of Azerbaijan’s rich agricultural land and diverse climates to enable transition from a petroleum-based economy to a sustainable economy with a strong agricultural component.

Visiting Scholars, Spring 2008

David Satter is a former Moscow correspondent of the Financial Times and one of the most respected journalists reporting on Russia and the former Soviet Union. The University of Illinois is fortunate to have him serve for Spring 2008 as a Visiting Faculty member in REEEC and Journalism, during which time he is teaching an upper-level course on Contemporary Russian Politics and the Media. He has published two books on Russia that have been translated into Russian, Estonian, Latvian, Portuguese, and Vietnamese: Age of Delirium: The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union (Yale University Press, 2001) and Darkness at Dawn: The Rise of the Russian Criminal State (Yale University Press, 2003). Age of Delirium is currently being made into a documentary film by Russian director Andrei Nekrasov as a joint U.S.-German-Ukrainian production. A third book, The Future of an Illusion (Yale University Press), will be released in September 2008.

Laurențiu Rădvăn is Assistant Professor at the University of Alexandru Ioan Cuza in Iași, Romania, researching medieval urban history with a special focus on Southeastern Europe. He was awarded the A.D. Xenopol Award of the Romanian Academy of Sciences for his Ph.D. thesis “Orășele din Țara Românească până la sfârșitul secolului al XVI-lea” (“Towns in Wallachia until the End of the Sixteenth Century”), which was published by the University of Al. Ioan Cuza Press in 2004. He has also published three edited volumes and over twenty articles. Since 2006 he has served as a contributor to the International Medieval Bibliography (IMB) edited by the Institute for Medieval Studies at the University of Leeds in Great Britain. He is currently a Fulbright Fellow at the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center conducting comparative research on medieval towns in East-Central Europe from the thirteenth century to the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Mohammad Khalil

REEEC is pleased to welcome Mohammad Hassan Khalil, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, who joined the U. of I. faculty in Fall 2007. A specialist in Islamic thought—including Western analyses of Islamic theology; conversion out of Islam; the hadith authenticity debates; the intersection of Islamic historiography, exegesis, and law; and the significance of the veil—Dr. Khalil came to Illinois from the University of Michigan, where he received his Ph.D. in 2007. He has published in The Muslim World, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, and the Journal of Islamic Philosophy, and is currently working on his first monograph, Islam and the Fate of Non-Muslims: A Reassessment of Muslim Soteriological Discourse. In both Michigan and Illinois he has been active in community outreach as well, already speaking at Sinai Temple and Centennial High School in Champaign.

In Fall ’07 and Spring ’08, Prof. Khalil taught an undergraduate “Introduction to Islam” course and in Spring ’08, he also taught “Qur’an: Structure and Exegesis.” He will be offering “Introduction to Islam” in Summer I of 2008 as well. He is currently collaborating with Jon Hoover (Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon) on a book on the duration of Hell and Islamic universalism. While Islamic thought is significant throughout the regions of Eastern Europe and Eurasia, of special relevance to those in REEEES fields is his article on conversion out of Islam (The Muslim World, January 2007), which considers the phenomenon worldwide, and “To Veil or not to Veil: An Analysis of the Muslim Veil in the Modern World with Emphasis on Egypt, Turkey, and Iran,” in The Veil in all its States, ed. Michel Valentin and Fazia Aitel (Montana, 2008). Look for Dr. Khalil’s name on next year’s schedule of Noontime Scholars lectures.
**Faculty/Associates News**

**Eugene Avrutin** is spending Spring 2008 as a fellow at the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., where he is finishing his book manuscript, “A Legible People: Identification Politics, the Imperial Russian State, and the Jews.” He also presented a seminar at the Kennan Institute. Together with Harriet Murav, he received a book contract from Brandeis University Press for Photographing the Jewish Nation, a book of photographs from S.R. An-sky’s first ethnographic expedition in 1912.

**Dmitry Bobyshev** read his work in a session of Russian poetry reading at the AATSEEL conference in Chicago, December 2007.

**Francis Butler** presented “The Martyrdoms of Magnus of Orkney, Olaf of Norway, and Gleb of Rus’: How Close are the Connections?” at the AAASS convention in New Orleans, November 2007.


**Rick Esbenshade** presented “Hungarian Jewish Intellectuals: Citizens of the State of Hungarian Culture?” at the AAASS convention in New Orleans.

**Michael Finke** presented “Agit-Flights of Viktor Shklovskii and Boris Pil’niak” at the AAASS convention in New Orleans.

A generous gift from **Maurice Friedberg** of some 550 volumes from his personal collection has been added recently to the U. of I. holdings by the staff of the Slavic and East European Library. Nearly half of the books are in Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian, including many translations of American literature into Russian. Although the main subject is Slavic literature, the collection also includes a number of books on Jewish culture.

**George Gasyna** published “The Poetics of the Borderlands: Ryszard Kapuscinski’s Poland” in the Spring 2008 volume of The Polish Review. His book, Polish, Hybrid, and Otherwise: Spaces of Language/Spaces of Exile in Joseph Conrad and Witos Gombrowicz is in preparation. In Fall 2007, Gasyna gave talks at the University of Toronto (on Conrad), North Carolina State University (on Kapuscinski), and at the Chicago AATSEEL conference (on teaching Polish literature and culture).

**Zsuzsa Gille** presented “What is the ‘Post’ in Postsocialist? Implications of Postsocialist Studies for Postsocialist Studies” at the AAASS convention in New Orleans.

**Frank Gladney** presented “Polish Consonant Clusters Simplified” at the AATSEEL conference in Chicago.

**Adriana Helbig** presented “Music, Migration, and the Emergence of Radicalized Class Relations in Post-Orange Revolution Ukraine” at the AAASS convention in New Orleans.

**Steven Hill** presented “From Lwowska to Frau Lorre to Lowsky” at the AATSEEL conference in December 2007.


**Lilya Kaganovsky** presented on the films of Dziga Vertov at the AAASS conference in November and the MLA conference in Chicago in December 2007. Her book, How the Soviet Man was Unmade, is forthcoming from University of Pittsburgh Press in June 2008.

**Diane Koener** presented “The Right to Rest: How They Spent their Summer Vacations” in a panel on Soviet leisure at the AAASS convention. She also participated in a roundtable on revisionism in Soviet history at the March 2008 Midwest Russian History Workshop at the University of Chicago.

**Sherban Lupu** received an honorary degree (Doctor Honoris Causa) from the University Al. I. Cuza in Iași, the oldest university in Romania, in December 2007. Lupu was recognized for his worldwide performance and research activities. While in Iași, Lupu presented a lecture on George Enescu’s Violin music, performed the Alban Berg violin concerto with the Iași Philharmonic Orchestra, and gave master classes for students of the university.


**Zorica Nedovic-Budic** is spending a research year in Belgrade, Serbia, under sponsorship of INEX and Fulbright. She presented at the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) XXI Conference (Naples, July 2007), the IAUS scientific meeting Sustainable Spatial Development of Cities (Belgrade, January 2008), and the Second Symposium of the International Academic Forum on Planning, Law, and Property Rights (Warsaw, February 2008).


**Janice Pilch** presented “Copyright in Slavic and East European Texts and Images in Traditional Systems of Publishing” at the AAASS convention in New Orleans.

**Catherine Prendergast** was one of six Illinois faculty to be named University Scholars in March, an award fostering outstanding faculty at the University by recognizing excellence in scholarship and teaching. She presented “Buying into English: The Language of Capitalism in a Postcommunist State” at GlobEng: International Conference on Global English in Verona, Italy, in February.


While on leave from teaching in Spring 2008, **Mark Steinberg** is continuing to edit Slavic Review (see the Borat forum!), working on his book, St. Petersburg Fin de Siècle: Landscapes of the Darkening Modern, 1905-1917, giving a talk on melancholy at the University of Southern California, and presenting a paper in Moscow at a conference on emotions in Russian cultural history.


In January 2008, **Robert L. Thompson** was reappointed by the U.S. Trade Representative and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to their Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee for Trade for a new four-year term.
Sever Tipei has been selected to take part in the Fulbright Senior Specialist Program. He will travel to Bucharest, Romania in May-June 2008 to present lectures, seminars, and workshops at the National University of Music. The Archeus Ensemble has commissioned a work from him to premiere at the 18th International Week of New Music Festival in Bucharest in May.

**Regional Faculty Associates**

Marina Balina (Illinois Wesleyan) participated in a roundtable discussion on “Happiness Soviet/Post-Soviet Style” at the AATSEEL conference in Chicago, December 2007.


William Benton Whisenhunt (College of DuPage) edited (with Steven A. Ustalo) a volume of twenty essays covering four centuries of Russian and Soviet history, Russian and Soviet History: From the Time of Troubles to the Collapse of the Soviet Union (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

**Send Us Your News!**

We would love to hear from REEES-related alumni. Please send us your news along with the degree(s) earned and year and your current affiliation to the email or street address below.

**Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center News**

Editor: Sharyl Corrado
Editorial Assistant: Larisa Pulshenghe
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Volodymyr Chumachenko (Slavic) presented “Pikuliada and Our Time - ‘Pulp’ Literature as Aesthetic and Ideological Choice of the Last Soviet Generation” at the AATSEEL conference in December.

Stefania Costache (history) presented “Sovereignities in the Making: The Interaction between Ottoman Imperial and Phanariot Local Authorities in 18th-Century Danubian Principalities” at the AAASS convention in November.

Randall Dills (history) presented “And the Mountain Came to Us: Space, Memory, and the Petersburg Flood of 1824” at the 2008 Annual Conference of the American Society of Environmental History in Boise, Idaho, March 2008.

Florin Fesnic (political science) is an AFP Fellow of the Open Society Institute in the Department of Political Science at the University of Bucharest. He recently published a number of contributions to the Encyclopedia of Campaigns, Elections, and Electoral Behavior, ed. Kenneth F. Warren (Sage, 2008).

Erica Fraser (history) presented “Space Heroes: Celebrity Culture and Masculinities among Early Soviet Cosmonauts” at the AAASS convention in New Orleans.

Diana Georgescu (history) presented “Playing ‘Socialist’: Ideological Scripts and Remembered Experiences of Childhood in 1980s Romania” at the AAASS convention.

Kristen Hamm (REEES) is an International Engagement, Communications and Protocol Intern for Spring 2008.


Tatiana Kuzmic (Slavic and comp. lit.) presented “August Senoa, the Hapsburg Monarchy, and the Southern Slav Question” at the AATSEEL conference in December.

Gregory Kveberg (history) presented “Rock is More Alive than the Living: Discussions of Rock Music Identity and Culture in Brezhnev’s Soviet Union” at the AAASS convention in New Orleans.


Oana Popescu-Sandu (comp lit) presented “Was it or Not? – Memory and Tragic Comedy in the Romanian Transition” at the AATSEEL conference in Chicago.

Dmitry Tartakovsky (history) presented “Perception vs. Reality: Bessarabian Jews in Greater Romania under Surveillance as Soviet sympathizers” at the AAASS convention in New Orleans.

2007 Yaro Skalnik Prize for Best Essay in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies

Undergraduate Winner: Heather MacLeod (REES), “The Political Role of the Internet in the Russian Federation”

Graduate Winner: Annaliese Jacobs Bateman (history), “Orthodox Ethnography: The Early Nineteenth Century Ethnographic Project of Fr. Ioann Veniaminov in the Aleutian Islands”

**Alumni News**

Eugenia Amditis (B.A., French, Russian, political science, 1993) presented “The ‘Camellia’ and the ‘Camel’: Dostoevsky’s Borrowings from the Courtesan Legend in The Idiot’s Nastasia Filippovna” at the AATSEEL conference in Chicago, December 2007. She is a CRES fellow at the University of Kansas.

J. Douglas Clayton (Ph.D., Russian, 1971) presented “Claire de lune ... sur l’eau: Maupassant and Chékhov’s Sagull” at the AATSEEL conference in December. He is professor of Slavic languages and literatures at the University of Ottawa.

Elizabeth Radziszewski (Ph.D., political science, 2007) defended her dissertation, “Social Networks, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy,” in August of 2007. Also in August, she received a grant to participate in the Junior Scholars’ Training in East European Studies at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC. She is assistant professor of political science at Yeshiva University in New York City.

Kirsten Rutsala (Ph.D., Slavic, 1999) presented “A Cup of Tepid Chocolate: Nabokov’s Response to Tarasov-Rodiono” at the AATSEEL conference in Chicago. She is assistant professor of Russian at the University of Oklahoma.

Jeff Sahadeo (Ph.D., history, 2000) was awarded tenure at Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada), where he teaches at the Institute of European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies. He also serves as a resource person for the Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade on policy towards Central Asia.

Yevgeny Silkin (Ph.D., Slavic, 2000) presented “The Poem Found in Saragossa: The Function of Grammatical Gender in the Poetics of V. Sonora” at the AATSEEL conference in December. He is instrucor of Russian at the University of Oklahoma. Along with concerts and festivals in Poland, in 2007, Jolanta Sosnowska (M.M., violin, 2005) performed at the Zalathorhaiska Lyra Sacred Music Festival in Minsk (Belarus), the Polozk (Belarus) International Early and Contemporary Music Festival, and the Ålands Internationella Orgelfestival (Finland). She continues post-graduate work in Baroque Performance Studies at the Vienna Conservatory.

In September 2007, Thomas Trice (Ph.D., history, 1998) was awarded tenure and promotion at Cal Poly–San Luis Obispo and received a two-year fellowship for teaching political engagement through community-based service from the Carnegie Foundation. He was elected to assume directorship of the M.A. program in history beginning Fall 2008.
Noontime Scholars Lecture Series

January 29
“Azerbaijan: a Country in Political, Social, and Educational Transition”
Mohammad Babadoost (Crop Sciences, Illinois)

February 12
“Gender and Transition: Responses to Economic Change in Siberia”
Elizabeth Sweet (Urban and Regional Planning, Illinois)

March 11
“Cultural Contestation in the Caucasus”
Natasha Kipp (Musicology, Illinois)

March 25
“The Political Role of the Internet in the Russian Federation”
Heather Macleod (Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Illinois)

April 15
“Tolstoy and Herder: Nationalism and Brotherhood in Tolstoy’s War and Peace”
Lina Steiner (Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago)

April 22
“Re-dimensioning the Boundaries of Nationality: ‘Albanians of Kosovo’ vs. ‘Kosovars’”
Eda Derhemi (Institute of Communications Research, Illinois)

“Directions in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies” Colloquium Series

January 22
“Putin vs. YUKOS: Russian Law and Oil Politics”
Robert Amsterdam (Partner, Amsterdam & Peroff)

January 24
“The Soviet Gulag”
David Satter (REEEC-Journalism Visiting Faculty, University of Illinois; Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute)

February 14
“Balkan Anti-Semitism: The Cases of Bulgaria and Romania Before the Holocaust”
William Brustein (Associate Provost for International Affairs, University of Illinois)