



Caucasus and Central Asia Newsletter

The Caucasus and Central Asia Program
at the University of California, Berkeley
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Notes from the Executive Director

Sanjyot Mehendale

Each year the Caucasus and Central Asia Program supports the development of research and teaching on the region at UC Berkeley. We are steadily increasing our pool of graduate students working on Central Asia and the Caucasus, and we are able to assist them with funds to conduct research in the region. In addition, we are able to provide various campus departments with the necessary financial backing to invite visiting scholars to offer expanded Central Asia and Caucasus curriculum at Berkeley.

In that regard, CCAsP is very active this semester. This spring’s visiting scholar is Professor Alma Kunanbaeva, a Kazakh cultural anthropologist who has worked on issues such as cultural identity, nationalism, and oral history in Central Asia. Prof. Kunanbaeva has been invited to teach “Nationalism, Culture and Identity in Modern Central Asia” through the Department of Near Eastern Studies. In addition, underscoring our commitment to the teaching of regional languages at UC Berkeley, we are sponsoring a course on “Kazakh Language and Culture,” also taught by Prof. Kunanbaeva through the Department of Near Eastern Studies. Additionally, we are continuing to fund “Studies in the Languages of the Caucasus and Central Asia: Introductory Uzbek” taught by Nigora Bozorova in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

Aside from these courses directly funded by CCAsP, we are also very pleased to be co-sponsoring the visit of Professor Boris Marshak, Distinguished Curator of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and Director of Excavations at the site of Panjikent (Tajikistan). Professor Marshak is teaching “Silk Road Art and Archaeology” through the Department of Near Eastern Studies.

CCAsP also continues its commitment to outreach. In addition to its website, this spring will see the publication of several working papers including “Ideologies, Identities

and Cleavages: The Impact of War in Soviet Chechnya, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan,” by Edward W. Walker, Executive Director of the Berkeley Program and Post-Soviet Studies; “The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan,” by Regine Spector, a graduate student in the Department of Political Science; and “Nationalizing Myths: The Image of ‘The Other’ in Tajik Literature in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s” by Anaita Khudonazar, a graduate student in the Department of Near Eastern Studies.

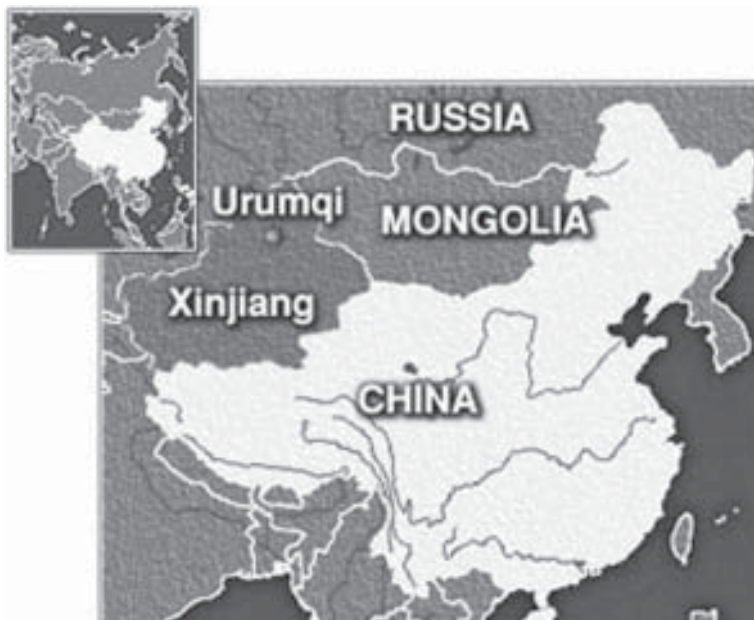
Our broad definition of Central Asia and our continued commitment to the multi-disciplinary development of regional research on campus is underscored by our main event this spring, the fourth annual CCAsP conference titled “Xinjiang: Central Asia or China?” (March 13, 2004, Heyns Room, The Faculty Club, UC Berkeley). This conference, co-sponsored with the Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies and the Center for Chinese Studies, seeks to explore the cross-border and global transnational forces that have an impact on the political, cultural, and social landscape in Xinjiang, and the extent to which these forces pull the province away from China and toward Central Asia and the Middle East. The conference will include presentations by a number of international specialists on the region, among whom are Prof. Dru Gladney (University of Hawaii, Manoa), Dr. Michael Dillon (University of Durham, UK), Prof. Alma Kunanbaeva (Visiting Scholar, UC Berkeley), Prof. Gardner Bovington (Indiana University) and Dr. Dolkun Kamberi (Radio Free Asia). UC Berkeley faculty members Prof. Wen-hsin Yeh (History) and Prof. Pat Berger (History of Art) will also be participating.

The above-mentioned conference is part of a yearlong (2003-2004) program titled “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region: Central Asia or China?” sponsored by a grant from the Ford Foundation through the Institute of International Studies. Aside from the conference, the program includes several workshops, the first of which was held on December 5, 2003 and had as keynote speaker Dr. Justin Rudelson, former deputy director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Rudelson’s talk, which is published in this issue of the newsletter, was titled “Cross-Border and Transnational Influences on Xinjiang Uyghur Nationalism.” After his lecture, faculty and graduate students joined Dr. Rudelson for an in-depth discussion on Xinjiang.

In addition to Dr. Rudelson’s piece, this issue of the CCAsP newsletter includes an article on recent developments in the Republic of Georgia, by George Sanikidze, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies, National Academy of Sciences in Georgia and currently affiliated with the Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies as a Fulbright Scholar.

The third main contribution in this newsletter reiterates our commitment to highlight UC Berkeley faculty and student research on the region. It is a joint piece by Regine Spector and Boris Barkanov, second-year doctoral students in the Department of Political Science at UC Berkeley, on their recent research trips to the region.

Finally, I would like to welcome two new editorial staff members. Andrée Kirk (Events and Fellowships Assistant, Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies) has assumed the role as editor, and Connie Hwang (CCAsP Program Assistant) as the principal designer and content manager, of the CCAsP newsletter. I very much look forward to working with them and continuing and improving our efforts.



Cross-Border and Transnational Influences on Xinjiang Uyghur Nationalism

Justin Rudelson

In 1985 while I worked for the Xinjiang branch of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, China prepared to open Xinjiang to international tourism and trade for the first time since communist control of the region—this was a landmark event. During most of the 20th century, China had closed off Xinjiang's cross border communications, forcing the Turkic Muslim oasis dwellers, now defined as Uyghurs, to focus inward and away from their traditional cross-border ties. I predicted that China's opening of Xinjiang in 1985 might lead the Uyghurs to focus outward once again across the borders, potentially splitting the Uyghurs along four traditional lines that had divided them since the middle of the ninth century. In my anthropological fieldwork in Xinjiang during 1989-90, I discovered that these traditional divisions were finding their most concrete expression in Uyghur nationalistic writings. Authors from various regions of Xinjiang were asserting local ethnic heroes and archaeological finds as most important to what it means to be Uyghur.

Since 1990, it has been clear that the opening of Xinjiang to cross-border and transnational influences has pulled the Uyghurs away from China's cultural orbit to some degree but not in the way we might have expected. Chinese policies themselves, rather than cross-border influences, are exerting the greatest impact on the Uyghurs. Cross-border influences are indirect as they filter through China's perceptions and China's threat/benefit calculations. China's perceptions dictate the government's policies in Xinjiang and these policies directly influence the amount of cross-border interactions.

China's strategy to win Uyghur hearts and minds is to integrate Xinjiang into China proper economically. China's main goals are: 1) to maintain stability in Xinjiang, 2) to prevent conflicts in Central Asia, South Asia and Afghanistan from spreading to Xinjiang, and 3) to exploit the Central Asian economy, something which China believes will help achieve the first two goals. This is wishful thinking but it reflects China's hopes for its unfolding relationship with Central Asia. China desperately needs Central Asian natural gas and oil to lessen its dependence on Middle Eastern/Persian Gulf oil over the next decades. China already has tremendous oil shortfalls. By 2010, China's oil consumption will equal Japan's, and in 2020 it could reach half of the United States'. China has the workforce and the consumer products to conquer Central Asia's regional economy and its over 50 million consumers. All Beijing needs is stability in the region and time.

To eliminate the potential for upheaval in Xinjiang, China has launched a developmental and geopolitical strategy called "Develop the Great Northwest," to completely integrate Xinjiang into China and at the same time link Xinjiang with Central Asia. As part of this, China is bent on settling millions of ethnic Han Chinese to weaken the influence of the majority Uyghurs in Xinjiang. But Beijing's economic and geopolitical strategy also wears jack-boots. Since 1996, China has pursued what it calls its "Strike Hard" policy to fight criminal

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elements such as murderers, social deviants, and embezzlers. Many face execution. In Xinjiang, Beijing's "Strike Hard" campaign does not focus so much on social and corporate crimes as it does on "illegal religious activities," meaning the non-sanctioned practice of Islam and "splittism," the attempt to break Xinjiang off from the rest of China.

Since 1985, Beijing has controlled Xinjiang with two types of policies: soft and hard. Strike Hard is obviously a hard policy. Soft policies involve "affirmative action" type economic rewards. China believes in a very Western way that economic development can undermine Uyghur calls for independence and solve Xinjiang's problems. Soft policies have another function. They "smoke out" disaffected Uyghurs who speak out during "warming periods," only to face political and military crackdowns during the "hard" policy swings. Xinjiang has thrived economically, so much so that Central Asian independence has had little impact on the Uyghurs. Most Uyghurs recognized then and now that they are a lot better off than the Central Asians. However, China's repeated internal crackdowns in Xinjiang have met with considerable opposition, sometimes violent. Such "hard" policies have been very effective in turning Uyghur focus outward beyond the borders.

In 1985, when Xinjiang opened to the outside, the government floated a risky soft policy permitting a controlled revival of Islam for the first time. Uyghurs throughout Xinjiang built tens of thousands of mosques in a five year period. These liberal policies on Islam of the 1980s opened a valve for religious feelings and raised Uyghur cultural awareness. The government's obvious plan was to use religion as an opiate to stifle opposition to Chinese development of the Xinjiang. It was only the Tiananmen tragedy of 1989 that led China to view the revival as dangerous and caused it to reverse its course. By the mid-1990s, the Chinese government had clamped down on almost all Islamic practice as subversive or potentially militant.

The Shanghai Five alliance that began in 1996 proved helpful to China's crackdown on Islam. China

perceived a growing Islamic threat from Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan and the alliance gave China extreme latitude to crack down on all Xinjiang Uyghurs thought to be involved in anti-government activities. It was only two months after the first Shanghai Five meeting in 1996 that China unleashed for the first time its Strike Hard campaign against Uyghur "separatism." The Strike Hard policies have led to a cycle of Uyghur anti-government resistance, alternating with harsh Chinese military retaliation that continues today.



Tomb of Apak Hoja, Kashgar

Uyghur resistance to Beijing takes many forms. In the oasis villages, many traditional Uyghurs resist by participating in the revival of Islam and Sufism. Some in the Uyghur independence movement have resorted to violent bombing campaigns. But the violence in Xinjiang is not evidence that China's grip on the region is weakening. In fact, the violence appears to be the intended byproduct of Chinese experimentation with intermittent openings and clampdowns. This strategy has proved effective in maintaining Chinese control of the region. It also feeds Chinese perceptions that while its economic policies

have succeeded in Xinjiang, cross-border influences from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond are to blame for fueling anti-Chinese terrorist violence in Xinjiang.

Beijing believes upheaval in Xinjiang could lead to certain instability throughout China if uncontrolled. For this reason it cracks down brutally on any Uyghur unrest or organized protest. The Chinese government provides no moderate alternative for venting frustration and its crackdowns seem intended to produce greater militancy among its Muslim populations in order to allow China to identify targets of future crackdowns. It is a dangerous game. Widespread upheaval indeed could spin out of control. According to Israeli scholar Yitzhak Shichor, a specialist on China's military, the Chinese military in Xinjiang is not only weak, but it is also of lower quantity and quality than the forces in the rest of China.

The Communists have always regarded Xinjiang

as a vast buffer zone that could absorb a Russian invasion. The commonly accepted Western estimate of military force in Xinjiang is about one million. Shichor has found that the total is closer to 100,000. He states that with such a weak and understaffed military in Xinjiang, whenever China cracks down on unrest in Xinjiang it must be decisive or else it might simply explode out of control. This seems to have happened in 1990 with riots in Baren, near Kashgar, when military troops were airlifted into Xinjiang from outside provinces

China's perception of its own weakness in Xinjiang is somewhat bizarre given that China is arguably enjoying its most peaceful security environment in 150 years. While it seems China faces no immediate external military threats, we must recognize that fourteen countries border China, eight border on Xinjiang, and eight of the world's eleven largest armies are located in this region. These borders are fairly peaceful especially with the demise of the Soviet threat. But China is very aware that the greater Central Asian region has the largest concentration of nuclear powers on the planet. China's greatest nightmare is that Islamic fundamentalists from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia will provoke unrest in Xinjiang and involve India, Pakistan, the Central Asia nations and/or Russia in the conflict. Perhaps a more realistic concern is that instability in Xinjiang could bring instability to Tibet, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, something China wants to avoid at all costs.

Oasis Identities Research

I have been involved with China and the Xinjiang region for over 25 years now. In my work I have sought to understand the impact of geography on cross border interactions with the regions surrounding Xinjiang. Geography is key to understanding the interactions between Xinjiang and China, and Xinjiang and bordering countries, and predicting how future political, religious, economic, and social changes in China and throughout its bordering countries will impact Xinjiang and the Uyghur people.

In 1985, while working for the Chinese Academy of Sciences and traveling extensively in Xinjiang for nearly a year, I found stark differences among the Uyghurs in various geographic regions of Xinjiang. It appeared that the Chinese government recognized and manipulated these differences to exert its control but that the Uyghurs themselves were largely unaware of the means of government manipulation. In my book,

[Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road](#), I examined present day interactions between China and the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, how these interactions have played out over the 1,500-year history of the Uyghurs, and how the geography of the region shaped and continues to structure ethnic interactions in the region and across the borders.

During my initial research I discovered something surprising. The present Uyghur identity was only redefined in 1935. From 1450-1935, the name Uyghur fell off the map of history. In 1935, the Uyghur ethnic group was redefined after 500 years in an attempt to end internecine ethnic warfare in the region. The new definition masked regional differences and the intense rivalries among the Turkic Muslim oasis dwellers, now defined as Uyghurs. Furthermore, the definition allows the government to manipulate the Uyghurs quite easily without the Uyghurs understanding why.

I also discovered that geography is both key to understanding Xinjiang and central to the misperceptions of the region. My work was influenced by Fernand Braudel's study of sea travel during the 16th century and how the Mediterranean Sea impacted cultural interactions in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean. When I analyzed the Taklimakan Desert along the lines of Braudel's analysis of the Mediterranean, I found that both divided regional cultural spheres in remarkably similar ways. On the map it appears that the oases of Xinjiang must be inward-focused because of the huge mountain ranges that surround the region and seemingly block outward communications. Actually the opposite was true. The oases focused outward across borders. Contacts with and influences from cross border cultures were much stronger and frequent than those among the Xinjiang oases themselves. In 1985, when China opened the region to the outside world, these connections began to reassert themselves. It appears that the Chinese government understood these connections much better than the Uyghurs themselves. The Chinese government through its development programs continued the attempt to transcend Xinjiang's geographic template by redirecting the geographical forces of the region. Here are some examples:

The Turpan and Hami Region of Eastern Xinjiang

In the 1930s, the Eastern Xinjiang region of Hami and Turpan was the epicenter of a bloody conflict that embroiled the Turkic Muslims of the region, Chinese

Muslims (known as Huis or Tungans) and Hans in horrific bloody massacres. To end the bloodshed, the Chinese government delineated the various ethnic groups of Xinjiang and distributed power among them. The Uyghurs were defined in this process. Ever since then, the Eastern Xinjiang oases of Turpan and Hami have been peaceful. The Uyghurs of Eastern Xinjiang throughout their history had stronger ties to China proper than they had to other Xinjiang oases. During the communist period, the Uyghurs of the eastern oases have benefited economically to a greater extent than the oases to the west like Kashgar, Khotan and Ili because of their traditional ties to China proper.

Kashgar and Khotan

When China's leaders focus their attention on southwestern Xinjiang and the oases of Kashgar and Khotan, they are extremely concerned that China's security could be compromised by the Central Asian republics of Pakistan and Afghanistan. They are also extremely concerned that Uyghur exiles in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan or Islamic militants in Tajikistan, Pakistan or Afghanistan could support terrorist cells in Xinjiang in an attempt to destabilize the region.

The United States-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are both a threat and an opportunity for China. The war on terrorism campaign, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and entry into the WTO have shown the world that China is a responsible international citizen, even though it means going along with President Bush. China's strategy is to let the United States worry about global terrorism while it worries about capturing the Asian and Southeast Asian economic markets from the United States.

With the blessing of the international community, China toughened its own anti-terrorism campaign and felt confident enough to carry through an extremely risky and bold experiment in Kashgar. In 1999, China completed the railway connecting Urumchi to Kashgar to assist Kashgar's economic boom and to settle large numbers of Han immigrants in this traditionally Uyghur southern area.

In the past decade, China has developed Kashgar and Ili in a dramatic reversal of policy. For the first 50 years of its control, China intentionally underdeveloped Kashgar and Ili to diminish their bases of power: Kashgar as the center of Islam, Ili the center of the secular Uyghur independent East Turkestan Republic from 1944-1949. China now believes that its control

is firmly established in Xinjiang, enough to link it to Central Asia's new trade, rail and road links through Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, despite the strong possibility that this could invite drug smuggling and militant influence into the Xinjiang region.

Ili (Yining, Ghuldja)

At the same time that the rail line connected Urumchi to Kashgar in the south, in 1999, the international rail line linking Urumchi to Almaty in the northwest and passing near Ili was completed with the intention of jumpstarting development in Ili. This is also a huge risk for China. Two years before in 1997, Uyghur students in Ili launched a non-religious grassroots campaign against alcohol as part of a secular student movement called *Meshrep*. Although Uyghurs are Muslim and forbidden to drink alcohol, alcohol abuse in Xinjiang is extreme and has been destroying Uyghur society. Uyghur students in the Ili anti-alcohol campaign encouraged liquor stores to limit sales and Uyghurs to end consumption. The government branded the campaign Muslim fundamentalist and banned it. Over 5,000 came out to protests against the government's stopping of the campaign. In the ensuing clashes between police and students, over 300 Uyghurs were killed. Over one hundred Uyghurs involved in the protests have been executed.

HIV/AIDS as a Regional Security Threat

While Uyghur resistance in Xinjiang is a headache for China, Xinjiang's heroin addiction and HIV/AIDS crisis is having a devastating impact on Uyghur society, one that could undermine Chinese control there. The amount of Uyghurs and others who will die from AIDS will dwarf the numbers who will die at the hands of militants. The Uyghurs are the most HIV infected of China's ethnic nationalities. Heroin, known as *Aq Tamaq* (white tobacco) started coming into Xinjiang in 1994 from Burma. Uyghurs initially smoked heroin but after Chinese drug crackdowns limited supply, they started injecting it with shared needles. This has led to the HIV/AIDS epidemic that is certain to dramatically affect the social and economic development of Xinjiang and its international neighbors.

When placed in the context of the greater Central Asian HIV/AIDS epidemic that involves China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and the Central Asian nations, the entire region faces a security and stability crisis of the gravest proportions.

The military and police of all of the nations in this region will be profoundly weakened within ten years by HIV infection, both through injected drug use and contact with prostitutes. In Central Asia, HIV/AIDS is spreading from Afghanistan along a drug trafficking route that stretches across Central Asia to Russia and then on to Europe. The rates of extreme poverty and unemployment throughout the region support transit zones for drug smugglers and provide a desperate population with injected drugs. These transit zones are increasingly moving eastward to Xinjiang. This is an extremely dangerous situation.

Before the Taliban cracked down on its drug trade, Afghanistan produced 80-90 percent of the world's opium supply. Today, the government of Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan is too weak to prevent Afghan peasants from selling opium again and it will be difficult for China to keep Afghan heroin from entering the Xinjiang market to meet the huge Uyghur demand. When this happens, it will be catastrophic. According to the United Nations, in 2001 Central Asia and Eastern Europe had the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS. The entire greater Central Asia region including Xinjiang is snowballing into a large-scale HIV/AIDS epidemic fueled by exploitation from drug trafficking.

It is likely that all of the economic gains that Chinese development has brought and could bring to Xinjiang will be wiped out by the cost of treating diseases associated with HIV/AIDS such as tuberculosis, hepatitis B and C, and sexually transmitted diseases, not to mention HIV/AIDS itself. Today, Xinjiang's health system is too weak to respond to Uyghurs with full-blown AIDS. As yet, there are no

hospitals prepared to treat patients with full-blown AIDS.

With China's much-touted program to "Develop the Great Northwest," HIV/AIDS is sure to be extended among the Hans as well by high-risk vectors that spread HIV/AIDS, these being truck drivers, young pioneers, soldiers, government officials, and prostitutes. In the next five years, Uyghurs will begin to die from full-blown AIDS and within a relatively short amount of time after that, Hans in Xinjiang will begin to die in large numbers as well.

The picture is not altogether grim, however. This year, after long consultations with the United States CDC and NIH, China adopted policies that greatly surpass those of the US in terms of the treatment of heroin addicts. China plans to distribute no less than 500,000 sterilized syringes for free each day and will create thousands of methadone clinics throughout the country. Previous to this, China's main treatment method was to incarcerate heroin addicts for up to three years and force them to go cold turkey. That was a tremendous failure. Unfortunately, SARS hit just weeks after China adopted its rather dramatic and far-reaching plan. Most HIV/AIDS work in China went on hold. And the Chinese government still appears to maintain the dangerous view that HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang is a Uyghur disease, reflecting the moral depravity of Uyghur society. While SARS will probably not be China's undoing, should the Chinese government continue to believe that Xinjiang's AIDS epidemic is a Uyghur disease, it is very possible that AIDS in Xinjiang will indeed become China's Chernobyl.



Muslim in Kashgar

photo courtesy of Barbara West

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The Georgian “Rose Revolution”: Causes and Effects

George Sanikidze

2003 is marked in the recent history of Georgia as the year of the so-called “Rose” Revolution. After the announcement of the official results of the November 2 parliamentary elections, large demonstrations, and an increasingly desperate political situation, Georgia’s President Eduard Shevardnadze was forced to resign and the ruling elite in the country changed. After the January 4, 2004 mid-term presidential elections Mikheil Saakashvili became the new president. This article discusses the main issues of the revolution, the problems with the political development of Georgia in the last decade, the place and role of E. Shevardnadze in the recent history of Georgia, the peculiarities of the electoral processes, the aims of the main political actors, the foreign orientation of Georgia and the role of foreign countries and organizations in this Revolution. Also, the attitudes of the USA and Russia towards the New Georgia are examined.

Despite the fact that Georgia, along with the Baltic countries had been the champion of national independence since the late 80s, the processes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union had the most unfavorable impact on this Caucasian republic. At the end of the Soviet period the first free elections were held in still-Soviet Georgia, and in a rebirth of nationalistic feelings the former dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia won the election and became the president of Georgia. But shortly after this, his often not well thought-out decisions and unbalanced behavior became the cause of a deep division in Georgian society between his supporters and his adversaries. A civil war began, that ended with the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia who was forced to leave the country. Military and paramilitary forces took power.

While the civil war raged, other former Soviet republics obtained official recognition of their independence from foreign countries and soon became

members of the UN. The population of formerly one of the richest Soviet republics lived in misery and on the verge of famine. The armed conflict began in the autonomous region of South Ossetia; the Secessionist movement in Abkhazia strengthened. One part of the governing elite invited the former communist leader of Georgia and the former foreign minister of the Soviet Union, E. Shevardnadze to head the country.

Shevardnadze’s role in the recent history of Georgia is particular and without any analogy. Since 1972 he had been the communist leader of Georgia. Even in the Soviet period his style of ruling was different from most other republican communist leaders. Along with traditional elements of Soviet policymaking he introduced some novelties. On the one hand he was fighting with the pitiless against corruption and underground business and jailed some of the most prominent figures of Georgian illegal business; on the other hand he promoted the creation of a semi-legal business elite, loyal to him. (One of the representatives of these nouveau-riches was the father of today’s chairwoman of the parliament Nino Burjanadze, a friend of Shevardnadze.)

In addition, intellectual life in Georgia under his leadership attended some degree of liberalism. First of all, it concerned cinema, theater, and literature. He gave the right to shoot the film “Repentance” which became the manifesto of the condemnation of the Soviet past in the early Gorbachev Era. As a foreign minister of the USSR he actively participated in the de-ideologization of Soviet foreign policy and in the processes of liberation of the states of the former Soviet bloc.

After the collapse of Gamsakhurdia’s regime the authority of Shevardnadze in Georgia was quite high. To many Georgians he was perceived as a charismatic leader who was able to save the country and lead it

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towards prosperity and welfare.

In 1992 Shevardnadze arrived in Georgia and the last period of his rule began that lasted 12 years and ended on November 23 with his resignation. In the end, his rule didn't bear the welfare and stability that society had been waiting for. In general, in many post-Soviet countries there existed a great illusion that once free from imperialism they were headed irrevocably toward prosperity and happiness. I think that Shevardnadze is a perfect symbol of this illusion.

During his rule Georgia practically lost control over the autonomous regions. As a result of the defeat in the war in Abkhazia more than 200,000 persons became refugees. Abkhazia and South Ossetia emphasized their independence from Tbilisi and Russia protected their separatism practically without hiding. One illustration of such politics is the establishment of the visa regime between Georgia and Russia by President Putin—this regime didn't concern the citizens of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, when Russia officially recognized the territorial integrity of Georgia. It must be added that after the resignation of Shevardnadze the Russian government lifted its visa regime with Ajara. This autonomous republic of Georgia didn't require independence, but its authoritarian leader Aslan Abashidze didn't submit to the center. He declared himself “president” (and Ajara's highest military as well as political official) and had strong links with Russia. There is a Russian military base in Batumi, the capital of Ajara.

At the same time, it must be said that the beginning of the rule of Shevardnadze also had some positive results. Owing to his past authority Georgia quickly obtained international recognition and became a member of the UN. The West, remembering his past contributions loaned very important financial aid to Georgia and as a result, the economy grew for some years. But then began the stagnation, firstly because of enormous corruption. Perhaps the corruption was the most negative aspect of the rule of Shevardnadze. In the last several years, Georgia was among the ten most corrupt countries in the world. By official data, Georgia occupies the last place among the former Soviet republics by revenues per capita. The foreign debt is about 1.8 billion US dollars (the principal debtors are Russia and Turkey). Since 1989, one million people have emigrated. The gross domestic product has shrunk by two thirds. Up to 80 percent of the economy is illicit. Because of the corruption many international organizations and countries ceased financial aid which

has had an extremely negative impact on Georgia's economy. Practically illegal financial clans were created and the population often associated them with Shevardnadze's relatives. All of these significantly diminished Shevardnadze's popularity and ratings especially during the last 2-3 years, and became the principal cause of the disintegration of his party.

Despite all this, objectivity requires saying that during Shevardnadze's rule positions of the free media were strengthened. Independent TV channels and newspapers were practically uncensored. For example, the TV channel Rustavi 2 became the tribune of Shevardnadze's opposition during the elections and after, until Shevardnadze's resignation.¹ Non-governmental organizations also actively participated in political life and played an important role in the organization of a protest movement against Shevardnadze's rule.²

In general, Georgia has not become a stable nation state, nor has it implemented credible reforms. A huge gap exists between official rhetoric and political, social and economic realities. One astute observer has dubbed Georgia a Potemkin Democracy.³ But at the same time “it certainly had a plurality of views, of parties, of leaders—of regional leaders—and so on.”⁴

Alongside Shevardnadze, in his party has grown the new generation of Georgian politicians, without a Communist past. Ironically, these new politicians became Shevardnadze's opposition, who forced him to resign and formed a new Georgian ruling elite.

It would be useful to say some words about the history and general trends in Georgian electoral processes to understand the situation that was created during these last elections.

The institution of elections is often considered to be one of the principal indicators of democracy. With this point of view, Georgia has made a big step towards it. The citizens of Georgia have gone to the polls in nationwide elections nine times since 1990. However, the quality of the electoral process has shown a general tendency to decline over the years. As a result, all political actors have routinely expressed mistrust in the fairness of the electoral process. Disaffection from fraud during elections reached its apogee in these last elections.⁵

Since 1990, Georgia has held four parliamentary elections (in 1990, 1992, 1995 and 1999), four presidential elections (in 1991, 1992, 1995 and 2000), and three local elections (in 1991, 1998 and 2002). The government bodies formed as a result of the 1990

and 1991 elections were violently overthrown in the 1991-1992 coup against President Zviad Gamsakhurdia but since the new constitution was adopted in 1995, all presidential and parliamentary elections have been held in full accordance with the constitution and conducted in a more or less orderly manner.

The presidential elections of 2000 were possibly the worst in Georgia's electoral history (Shevardnadze won 79.8 percent of votes). Both domestic and international observers confirmed that voter turnout was visibly very low, while stuffing of ballot boxes was carried out on a large scale.

The worst problem of the election legislation in Georgia may be that it is unstable. It has become an unfortunate tradition for significant changes to be introduced into it before each election. Members of the electoral administration complain that such last-minute changes disrupt the orderly conduct of elections. Until 2001, presidential, parliamentary and local elections were regulated by separate laws. In August 2001, Parliament enacted a new, comprehensive Electoral Code. However, even after this, Georgian politicians were speaking of the need to overhaul the electoral legislation once more.

The quality of the electoral process in Georgia enjoyed little credibility with the Georgian public and was increasingly criticized by all political actors, different civic groups or individuals, and international actors. The most important challenges and violations included: insufficient financing and late allocation of funding electoral commissions, poor performance by the election administration and, especially, the poor quality of the electoral registers.

In many elections, and especially in the last local elections in 2002, large numbers of people could not find their names on the electoral register and had to fight for the right to vote, and were included in what were called "additional lists." This created an atmosphere of chaos—favorable conditions for electoral fraud, as mobile groups of supporters, parties or candidates could move between polling stations and include themselves on the lists (often with the assistance of corrupt members of electoral commissions). This technique is known in Georgia as a "carousel."

Also, other factors that must be noted are the unlawful involvement of the local administration and police, especially in the regions outside Tbilisi; the trend towards election-related violence; and sharp differences in the conduct of elections between re-

gions. The incidence of electoral violation and fraud differ considerably from one region to another. In the central districts of Tbilisi, elections have tended to be more fair and orderly, although that tradition has also been broken during precedent parliamentary and local elections because of the chaos in the electoral registers and the incidences of violence.⁶ In Ajara, on the other hand, "elections" are rather reminiscent of a Soviet-era ritual, as is illustrated by the official results: the turnout figure is usually close to 98-99 percent, with 95-98 per cent voting for the Union of Democratic Revival of Georgia (UDRG), Aslan Abashidze's party.⁷ Abashidze is criticized in the West for his crackdowns on press freedoms and human rights in his small region. International observers say the vote in Ajara was nothing short of a "shocking fix" enforced by violence, threats and intimidation.

All these flaws characterized the last Georgian parliamentary elections, but in this case the manipulation of the electoral lists took on a special significance and became an arm for Shevardnadze's opposition. The above-mentioned carousel was largely used (it must be added that this wasn't a novelty even for the opposition, who was undoubtedly the participant of electoral manipulations during preceding elections). But now the popular discontent was used by the opposition, who was well prepared for the escalation of the situation, for organizing large protests. The demands of these protests became increasingly radical. If in the beginning of the protests the demands were mainly the recount of votes or the organization of the new elections,⁸ gradually, by the efforts of the leader of the opposition and organizer of demonstrations Mikheil Saakashvili, the principal demand became the resignation of Shevardnadze.

These last parliamentary elections were supposed to have been a dry run for Georgia's next presidential vote, testing the strength of candidates who could replace President Eduard Shevardnadze when his term expired. Instead, it became a referendum on Shevardnadze himself, and sparked this former Soviet republic's biggest political crisis in years.

The official results of these elections were annulled by the Georgian Supreme Court on grounds of fraud: the pro-Shevardnadze bloc "For a New Georgia" came in first place with 21.32 percent of the vote. "The Revival Party" (Abashidze's party), which had criticized the government in the past but sided with the president in the post election crisis, finished second with 18.84 percent. Protest leader Mikheil



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Saakashvili's bloc, "The National Movement," came in a close third with 18.08 percent of the vote. The leftist Labor Party had 12 percent; the Democrats, who allied with Saakashvili's party, got 8.8 percent; and the New Right party had 7.4 percent. The non-official count differed from these results. Both "Fair Elections," the Georgian NGO coalition which monitored the November 2003 vote, and the U.S.-based "Global Strategy Group," which conducted an exit poll, concluded that the National Movement came in first place. "Fair Elections" estimated its share of the vote at 26 percent, "Global Strategy" at 20 percent.⁹

International organizations and foreign countries strictly criticized the official results. The State Department charged after the announcement of official results of elections that these results "do not accurately reflect the will of the Georgian people." In an unusu-

ally strong statement, spokesman Adam Ereli said the results reflect "massive vote fraud in Ajara and other Georgian regions." Ereli said exit polling conducted by reputable independent organizations "differs significantly from the results released by the central election commission." The head of the National Democratic Institute, former State Secretary of the US Madeline Albright made a comment regarding the election: "The consequences of a failed election process in Georgia could undermine peace and stability as well as deny the right of Georgians to freely choose those who would have the authority to govern in their name and in their interest."

Georgian authorities began to speak about some irregularities during the elections. Even Shevardnadze, some days before his resignation admitted that the official results perhaps differed from the real results by

8-10%. In my opinion the fraudulent election results served only as an additional factor for public discontent. These elections were only a symbol of the weakness of Shevardnadze's rule with unfulfilled promises and the refuse of considerable political changes. As the English-language Georgian daily *The Messenger* put it during the crisis days: "Despite the fact that he is adored in the West as an "architect of democracy" and was credited with ending the cold war, Georgians cannot bear their president."

I think that any election results would have been unacceptable for the opposition, who was ready even before the elections to organize mass protest actions against Shevardnadze's rule.

It must be added that there also exists an absolutely different point of view about this election. For example, British Helsinki Human Rights Group's (BHHRG) representatives observed the 2003 election and concluded that it was conducted to a higher standard than all the other polls the Group has monitored in Georgia since 1992. However, BHHRG was aware that elaborate plans had been laid both in Tbilisi and abroad to dispute the conduct of the election as well as the results. An agenda was devised for opposition parties to challenge the compilation and accuracy of the country's electoral registers claiming that voter lists were at the same time both inflated and incomplete, in the latter case due to the absence on the rolls of large numbers of their supporters. At the same time, a deliberately misleading opinion and exit poll was used to persuade the population of Georgia that the Western-favoured opposition parties led in the opinion polls and that its two electoral blocs had been cheated of victory by the manipulations of the Shevardnadze regime.¹⁰

The establishment of the electoral threshold of 7% votes for entering in the Parliament some years ago persuaded a goal of the creation of bigger parties and the creation of more effective conditions for the work of Parliament. Indeed, involved in the last parliament were only the governmental party, the bloc loyal to Ajarian leader, and a small group from the party "Industry Saves Georgia."¹¹ Now, by official results the Parliament would once again be extremely multiparty and the presented parties have absolutely different interests. I think that even in the case of fair elections it wouldn't be the dominant majority sufficient for decision-making. Even if the two oppositional blocs "Saakashvili-National Movement" and "Burjanadze-Democrats," initiators of protest actions

and of Shevardnadze's resignation could have obtained 5-10% of additional votes, they couldn't reach the necessary majority of more than 50%. According to the official results Shevardnadze's party obtained only 3% more than Saakashvili's party, but in reality it was only a psychological victory to be in first place but without allies in the Parliament. This party would also be unable to promote any of its own decisions. Consequently, in this new Parliament collaboration between parties would be very difficult and there would be a danger of this new Parliament self-paralyzing.

In this situation the protest actions began. In the beginning, the priority of most Georgian intellectuals was organization in the near future of the new parliamentary and presidential elections, but events developed in an entirely different way. One day when the new Parliament was about to begin work and Shevardnadze was giving the speech to open the session, Saakashvili and his supporters, with roses in their hands (to show that they hadn't any arms) rushed into Parliament's hall and forced Shevardnadze to leave the hall (it must be noted that police practically didn't resist Saakashvili's assault). From his residence Shevardnadze ordered a state of emergency, but after one day he agreed to resign and rejected the urging of some of his advisers to order a military assault on the protesters. "I see that this could not have ended bloodlessly, and I would have had to exercise my power," said Shevardnadze, and added: "I have never betrayed my country, and so it is better that the president resigns." "Everything was ready—the army, the internal troops, the police—but I looked at the huge crowd," he also said.

All oppositional leaders now speak with respect of Shevardnadze's decision. "History might be a gentler judge than the ferocious crowds in the streets," said Nino Burjanadze.

Commenting on Mr. Shevardnadze's resignation, Mikhail Gorbachev said: "He is not a coward and probably understood that the moment had come to make this step so that Georgia would not break up. I think he was right."

Now about the attitudes and interests of US and Russia toward Georgia: Georgia's geopolitical and geostrategical position make it very important and attractive for both sides.

Georgia has been a significant beneficiary of U.S. foreign aid aimed at supporting democratic and free-market development. The United States has poured in

\$1 billion in aid in the last decade. That puts Georgia in the same league, per capita, as America's biggest aid recipients, Israel and Egypt. In addition, American companies have important positions in the Caspian energy consortium; Washington pushed hard for construction of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline via Georgia. The Bush administration feels it owes Shevardnadze a debt of gratitude for stewarding the collapse of Soviet Communism as a Soviet foreign minister under Gorbachev.

The United States is also spending about \$64 million over four years to train 2,000 Georgian soldiers, primarily as a counterterrorism force, a military involvement that has made Moscow unhappy.

It must be stressed that US confidence in a weakened Shevardnadze had long been falling. A string of very senior envoys was sent to warn him this summer that ever crucial diplomatic and financial backing might suffer if he tried to block the political evolution the US deemed essential to protect its interests. Chief among these envoys was the ex-secretary of state, Texas oilman and Bush family intimate, James Baker.

As a result of disappointment over the rule of Shevardnadze, on September 23, 2003 the United States announced that it was cutting USAID funding to Georgia. The World Bank and IMF also pulled the plug, stopping loans until, that is, the "corruption" in Georgia was cleared up.¹²

For its part, Russia has never genuinely accepted Georgia's independence and still maintains some military bases in the country in violation of international treaties. Practically the totality of energy supplies for Georgia is in the hands of Russia.¹³ It is already said that Russia supports the separatism of the autonomous regions of Georgia without hiding. It must be noted that after the resignation of Shevardnadze the three leaders of Georgia's autonomies were invited to Moscow to give them instructions for their future relations with the new Georgian authority. "When such meetings are conducted without notifying Georgia's central authorities, who were ignored, Tbilisi is, naturally, very irritated," Nino Burdjanadze said about these consultations.

Some observers noted that Shevardnadze's overthrow might also be viewed as a US-engineered coup, as a "soft power" regime change on the Serbian model. But Bush administration officials denied any significant role in Mr. Shevardnadze's ouster. They described their role as limited to denouncing the

electoral irregularities in the parliamentary elections earlier this month and pressing Georgians to handle events "peacefully and constitutionally." At the same time the US ambassador to Georgia and former head of the US military mission in Serbia, Richard Miles, gave an extraordinarily undiplomatic interview during the crisis days: "We are disappointed at the slow pace of reform in Georgia," he said. "We would like to see stronger leadership and faster progress." Was this a green light? For in retrospect it now appears that the US pulled the rug out from under Shevardnadze, ostensibly for the very best of democratic reasons, and opened the way to a more biddable leadership.

The United States has since put its unconditional support behind Shevardnadze's successors, pledging election funds and vowing to resume financial aid to the impoverished country.

But Russia took a sour note, saying it was "concerned" that "the change of power in Georgia happened against the background of heavy pressure," according to President Vladimir Putin. "Those who organize and encourage such actions take upon themselves an enormous responsibility before the people," Putin said in televised comments in his first public reaction since the dramatic opposition takeover in Tbilisi. Moscow hoped the "future lawfully elected Georgian leadership will do everything to restore the centuries-old ties between our countries," he said. Putin has also indicated acquiescence if a new Georgian government can satisfy Russia's security and other concerns. But given the stakes, and a long history of double-dealing in the Caucasus, that is a very big "if."

The outcome of the December 7 State Duma elections significantly changed Russia's political landscape. Only four political groups—United Russia, President Vladimir Putin's power base; the misnamed Liberal Democratic Party, led by nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy; the political bloc Rodina (Homeland); and the Communist Party—will be represented in Russia's new parliament. All four espouse, to various degrees, a combination of statist and nationalist ideas.¹⁴

Tensions between Moscow and Washington escalated in the days after the "Rose Revolution." Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov accused Washington of staging a coup, telling a Moscow newspaper on Dec. 6: "I think there are enough facts proving that the events were not of a spontaneous nature."¹⁵ The risk of confrontation increased when Defense Secre-

tary Donald H. Rumsfeld visited Tbilisi on Dec. 5 and met with opposition leaders. He demanded that Russia withdraw its troops from Ajaria and the other secessionist areas, and suggested the United States might be ready to send its own troops to the Caucasus. The next day Secretary of State Colin L. Powell denounced “breakaway elements seeking to weaken Georgia’s territorial integrity.”¹⁶

Shevardnadze openly accused the US of preparing this coup d’état. “When they needed my support on Iraq, I gave it,” he said. “What happened here, this I cannot explain.” He said he suspected the involvement of US ambassador Richard Miles, who was posted to Belgrade before the overthrow of former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic in 2000.

He also blamed George Soros for the recent political crisis in Georgia: “Soros is behaving badly, politics is not his business, but he devised a philosophy of holding elections in Georgia so that different people became government members and set up bodies that were once set up in Yugoslavia.” It must be noted that George Soros also financed during some years an “anticorruption program” in Georgia, but without any success—during these years the level of corruption even increased. Perhaps it explains the disappointment of Soros over Shevardnadze’s rule and his decision to finance his opposition.

The ex-president also insisted that the Supreme Court invalidate the results of the elections under

influence from the opposition.

Generally, it’s true that the Georgian opposition movement modeled its campaign on the popular uprising that deposed Yugoslavia’s president, Slobodan Milosevic, in October 2000 and even adopted its slogan. Opposition leaders traveled to Belgrade for advice and brought their Serbian counterparts to Tbilisi. Thousands of Georgians were trained in the techniques honed in Belgrade. And the opposition persuaded Georgia’s independent TV Channel Rustavi 2 to air a documentary on the Serbian uprising.

They turned to Serbian activists for lessons in how to take on entrenched power. Saakashvili and another major opposition leader, former parliament chairman Zurab Zhvaniya, went to Belgrade for a couple of days to meet with leaders of the democracy movement there and later invited them back to Tbilisi. In May and June, more than 1,500 National Movement members went through two-day training courses in political activism based on what the Serbs had done.

“They studied how to protest, how to organize demonstrations,” said one of the leaders of Saakashvili’s party Merabishvili. “Our party was ready to make this protest.”

In April 2003, a new group called “Kmara,” or “Enough,” financed by the Soros Foundation was founded to energize disaffected youth. It too offered training courses to about 2,000 recruits based on Serbian advice.

FACULTY NEWS

Johanna Nichols, professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, spent June at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, researching Ingush (with a colleague from Ingushetia) and Chechen (with emigre Chechens in Leipzig).

Harsha Ram, associate professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, published an article (co-authored with Zaza Shatirishvili) entitled, “Romantic Topography and the Dilemma of Empire: The Caucasus in the Dialogue of Georgian and Russian Poetry.” *Russian Review* 63 (January 2004). His book, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (University of Wisconsin Press), appeared in June 2003. His article, “Pushkin and the Caucasus,” has been accepted for publication in *The Pushkin Handbook*, due in Spring 2004 from the University of Wisconsin Press.

Edward W. Walker, executive director of BPS and associate adjunct professor in the Department of Political Science, traveled to St. Petersburg, Russia, to attend the “Five Nations Conference: Weapons of Mass Destruction in South and Central Asia,” from September 15-17, 2003.

I think that all of the above shows that the part of the opposition led by Mikheil Saakashvili was ready for radical steps, even to overthrow Shevardnadze, and the fraud that occurred during elections gave them an excellent chance for acting in this way. In other words, November 23 would have happened in any case, whether or not November 2 parliamentary elections had taken place.

Were November's events a real revolution or a simple coup d'état? Generally speaking, it's true that it's very difficult to give an exact qualification to this event. Even in the West, initial praise for Georgia's "Revolution of the Roses" — as the bloodless change of regime is now known in Tbilisi — is giving way to more skeptical assessments. "This was not a people's revolution. It was a coup, masked by the biggest street party that Tbilisi has ever seen," said in a commentary published in London's *Guardian* daily.¹⁷

In fact, it wasn't (or was not only) a popular uprising. One part of the political elite (Saakashvili was the Head of Tbilisi Municipal Council, Burjanadze - the Chairwoman of the Parliament, Zhvania - head of the party presented in Parliament) has forced the other, more powerful part of governing elite led by President Shevardnadze to resign by the support of oppositional media and NGOs and by organizing a popular protest movement.

The protest movement is led by two parties: the bigger and more radical "Saakashvili-National Movement" and the smaller and less radical "Burjanadze-Democrats." It has created the triumvirate of Saakashvili, Burjanadze and the leader of democrats, Zurab Zhvania.

After the resignation of Shevardnadze, by the general opinion, Nino Burjanadze, the more neutral and moderate Acting President was considered a common candidate for president. At the same time, there were rumors that in the event of Burjanadze's presidency, Zhvania, who wasn't as popular as the two other leaders, but who was the most skilled in the art of governing, would be a gray eminence of Georgian politics. It should be added that "while Burjanadze often enjoyed more public sympathy, it is the symbolic figure of young Saakashvili who demonstrated strong will and uncompromising position that created ground for public confidence in ultimate victory of the opposition and attracted support in decisive moments."¹⁸

However, Burjanadze noted that it's not a very good idea to be a president of Georgia. "Georgia is a country with a lot of very serious problems. So a

person who will run for president should be very brave."

At the end Georgia's new leaders set aside rival ambitions to nominate the U.S.-educated lawyer Mikheil Saakashvili as their sole candidate for the Jan. 4 presidential elections. Some analysts assert that he could be the most Americanized national leader ever seen in the former Soviet Union outside the Baltic States. Saakashvili stresses: "I was really raised on American democracy, not only my studies but much more... JFK is my political idol." Undoubtedly, he's most popular politician of Georgia for the last two years and he was most highly visible as the main organizer of demonstrations. He has built himself the reputation of a crusader against corruption and an enemy of poverty. On January 4, 2004 new Presidential elections were held and in the absence of serious concurrents Saakashvili won 96 percent of votes.¹⁹ President Bush telephoned President-elect Mikheil Saakashvili and congratulated him on his landslide victory. For his part, Secretary of State Colin Powell said he would attend the inauguration of Georgia's new president, and did.²⁰

While he was Minister of Justice in Shevardnadze's government, Saakashvili was much favored by the West for his anti-corruption efforts; he tried to promote a bill on illegal property confiscation, which the president strongly opposed. After the dissociation from Shevardnadze's policy, his National Movement (NM) coalition included the Republican Party of David Berdzenishvili, and the Union of National Forces headed by Zviad Dzidziguri. The National Movement made its debut in the 2002 local elections when it got the second highest results in Tbilisi²¹, and Saakashvili was elected to chair the city council.

At the same time, some critics describe him as a demagogue and a populist or even mentally unbalanced (in this sense, some critics compare him to Zviad Gamsakhurdia). "If he becomes president, it will be an economic and political disaster for Georgia. Saakashvili is not very sane," said Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia, a Shevardnadze former ally after the victory of oppositional forces. Saakashvili's impulses put him at odds with his more restrained coalition partners several times during three weeks of demonstrations. At one point, Shevardnadze invited opposition leaders for talks, but Saakashvili forced his two allies to reject the offer. "I think it was a big mistake," Zhvania said in an interview at the time. Burdjanadze did not even go

along with the demand for the president's resignation only a day before the rushing of Saakashvili into the Parliament hall.

In any case, the main task of Saakashvili as a president will be self-transformation from radical oppositional leader to moderate statesman.

The key tenets of Saakashvili's election program were clamping down on corruption, including confiscating illegally acquired wealth; strengthening the rule of law; and creating conditions conducive to an economic revival. In his campaign speeches he has promised virtually all things to all men (and women), from better food for the armed forces and homes for the elderly to fair conditions for small and medium-sized businesses. At the same time, he has threatened to confiscate the fortunes amassed by some prominent members of the Shevardnadze administration and to arrest two cabinet ministers should they fail to fulfill his orders, even though he is not legally empowered at present to issue instructions to members of the government.

Zhvania, the final member of the triumvirate that ousted Shevardnadze, became State Minister, the second most important post in the executive after president. His post is widely seen as a stepping-stone to Zhvania becoming prime minister, a post abolished seven years ago, but which parliament is expected to revive.

In the end, what can be said about the future development of Georgia?

First of all the real test of time for Georgia is not the ousting of a corrupt and unpopular president, but its aftermath. In a country that had been the personal fiefdom of Mr. Shevardnadze for much of the past three decades, since he was Communist Party chief during Soviet times, the new generation of leaders now faces all the problems that defeated him. Those include a stalled economy, widespread unemployment, deep-rooted corruption, and a breakdown in government services, political fragmentation, clan rivalries and separatist movements.

One of the main tasks in this situation for the triumvirate is the normalization of relations with Ajara. Saakashvili often called Abashidze a dictator and even accused him to organize a plot against Georgia's territorial integrity. In response, Abashidze said, "Revolutions have never brought any benefit to any country," he said on television. "They can only destroy, and such movements are usually led by people who have not brought any good to the nation and use

all methods to get into power." He firmly opposes the new Georgian leadership's pro-American, pro-EU, pro-NATO stance and has declared an emergency in his territory. This is one reason why Georgia's "Rose Revolution" could easily morph into something even rougher.

After November's events the existence of some political forces or parties practically came to an end. This not only concerns governmental parties, but also some oppositional parties, who considered the results of elections as legitimate. Under the conditions of the emotional predisposition of the society against these elections, it is doubtful that they can restore their political rating in the near future.²²

One of the main characteristics of Georgian political life is the instability of political unions. Often they were created before elections and were disintegrated shortly after elections. Often in such unions are presented parties with absolutely different ideological basis. For example, in Saakashvili's movement are the Union of National forces of ex-President Gamsakhurdia's supporters and the Republican party, who is radically opposed to Gamsakhurdia's ideology. Shortly after the Revolution, the "Union of Georgian Traditionalists" left the Burjanadze-Democrats bloc on the basis of disagreement on Saakashvili's candidature for presidency. "Traditionalists" declared themselves the opposition of the new authority. Additionally, Shevardnadze's former ally is trying to organize political movement against the ruling elite.

Also it must be noted that Saakashvili's movement and the Burjanadze-Democrats couldn't reach an agreement for unification before elections. There exists an opinion about the introduction in Georgia of the French model, which implies the enlargement of the power of a prime minister at the expense of diminishing presidential power. In this case there could be the possibility of conflict between Saakashvili and Zhvania, as past disagreements between them prevented the organizing of the common party.

Observers stress also a negative tendency that characterized Shevardnadze's rule and which was one of the strong arms in the hands of opposition: when officials from the old government began leaving their posts, the victors in Georgia's popular uprising began appointing friends and relatives to their positions. As the Caucasian specialist De Waal put it, "kind of like replacing one clan with another clan."²³

If the new financial clans create support for the new authority, for Georgian society, who are expecting

real changes from the “Rose Revolution,” it will be one more great disappointment.

The population of the country is expecting from the new government first off the improvement of their economic situation. Foreign countries and international organizations are ready to support a new authority, but there exist some conditions for this support. The economy cannot stabilize until donors become confident that aid will not go into players’ pockets. The World Bank, says Tuck-Primdahl, wants to help Georgians “come to grips with corruption and...diagnose a fundamental problem in the country.” While some analysts expect Saakashvili to fulfill promises in that spirit, it is hard to say how even spirited reform efforts will translate into jobs.

The fight against corruption must bear real results and this is a great task for the new government in the conditions when a culture of corruption is very hard to uproot.

In addition, still, it remains uncertain what the ultimate goals of the U.S. and Russia in the region might be. If Moscow and Washington seem to have found a modus vivendi in Azerbaijan, the same cannot be said of Georgia. It must be showed by Moscow and Washington that they can work together in a delicate power balance to allow a vulnerable small country express its desire for a workable democracy.

Notes

¹ Now Rustavi 2, traditionally perceived by public as permanently opposing the government, enjoys the support of the new authority and can hardly be described as oppositional.

² Two Georgian NGOs, the Liberty Institute and the student-led association “Kmara,” led aggressive get-out-the-vote efforts before the November 2 elections and used their organization to keep protests steady and visible afterwards. The ability of NGOs to influence recent events may be connected to circumstances that are exclusive to Georgia, which has a relatively open political system in comparison with most other former Soviet states. Given greater room to operate, NGOs in Georgia built capacity during the last decade, creating a solid core of experienced activists. The same cannot be said for the NGO sectors

in many other CIS countries, many of which feature authoritarian-minded political systems that harbor suspicious and sometimes hostile attitudes towards the non-governmental sector.

³ Charles King, Potemkin Democracy, Four Myths about Post-Soviet Georgia, *The National Interest*, Summer 2001, N° 64, pp. 93-104.

⁴ Don Hill, “Caucasus: Georgia’s Neighbors Look Warily To Tbilisi As Political Crisis Shakes Itself Out,” *The Georgian Times*, November 28, 2003.

⁵ See: David Usupashvili and Ghia Nodia, Electoral Processes in Georgia, *Building Democracy in Georgia*, Discussion Paper 4, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), May 2003.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The mystery of Ajara’s voter lists has never been resolved. In the beginning of the 1990s, there were 216,000 registered voters, a figure that increased by 19,000 for 1995 parliamentary elections, to 245,000 in 1999 and to over 280,000 in 2003. See: Civil Georgia, “Opposition Seeks for Votes in Ajara,” posted on October 20, 2003. www.civil.ge.

⁸ At the beginning of the crisis, the less radical oppositional party Burjanadze-Democrats demanded the abolition of the election results, in contrast to another opposition protest leader Mikheil Saakashvili, who urged the government to concede first place in the elections to his bloc, the “Saakashvili-National Movement.”

⁹ GEORGIA: What Now? ICG Europe Report N°151, December 3, 2003.

¹⁰ “Georgia 2003: The Revolution of Guns not Roses. The story of a coup d’état, British Helsinki Human Rights Group,” *The Georgian Times*, December 26, 2003.

¹¹ There is information that the Labor party also obtained more than 7% of votes, but the ruling party didn’t allow them to enter the Parliament.

¹² Natalia Antelava, United States Cuts Develop-
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ment Aid to Georgia, www.eurasianet.org.

¹³ A part of the society accused Shevardnadze's government of wrongly privatizing strategically important energy facilities and diverting from the political course in Russia's favor. The Soros-funded 'Kmara' youth movement held vigorous protests against the entry of Russian United Energy System into the market.

¹⁴ Rodina wants Russia "to act as a dominating force in the zone of Eurasia," according to one of the party's leaders, Dmitry Rogozin. He also indicated that Rodina would prefer to see the Russian government adopt a tougher stance against the United States—to counter what the party believes to be Washington's encroachment on Russia's sphere of influence. In comments published by the *Trud* daily, Rogozin said the United States is trying to prevent Moscow from reasserting itself in Moldova, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. "If I only could, I would create the similar problems for them [Americans] in Mexico and Panama," Rogozin said.

¹⁵ Interview in *Komsomolskaja Pravda*, December 6, 2003.

¹⁶ David Ignatius, "Success in Georgia," *Washington Post*, January 2, 2004.

¹⁷ *Guardian*, December 3, 2003.

¹⁸ Nana Sumbadze & George Tarkhan-Mouravi, "Public Opinion in Tbilisi: In the Aftermath of the Parliamentary Elections of November 2, 2003," Institute for Policy Studies, Tbilisi.

¹⁹ State-Minister Zhvania was the head of electoral staff of Saakashvili. Ironically Zhvania also headed the electoral campaign of Shevardnadze in 2000.

²⁰ Ex-President Shevardnadze also voted for Saakashvili. "He is young, he has a lot of energy, and is well educated," Mr. Shevardnadze said, and then added: "He should talk less and work more. Enough of populism. There is a lot to be done."

²¹ During these elections, Saakashvili's movement used for the first time the slogan "Tbilisi without CCAsP Newsletter Winter 2004/ 18

Shevardnadze" which was transformed into "Georgia without Shevardnadze" during 2003 parliamentary electoral campaign.

²² 'Revival', as another oppositional Labor party, have boycotted the presidential election, but Abashidze allowed Ajarian population to vote.

²³ Source: Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, Inc., <http://www.rferl.org>. After some such appointment the independent groups required from government to renounce such practice. Abashed, the three leaders agreed. It was, after all, these same groups that helped bring the new leaders to power. But in spite of their agreement, the new leaders changed their opinion to appoint David Usupashvili, one of the representants of these groups, as a Head of Central electoral commission and choose another person, very close to Saakashvili's party.

Central Asia: Window into Cultural Crossroads



photo: Regine Spector

Meros Center for the Traditional Arts inside the Abdul Khasim Madrassah, Tashkent

**Boris Barkanov
and
Regine Spector**

To Western audiences, Central Asia has always been a remote place, both geographically and in the imagination. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Western political scientists focused primarily on the Russian/European peoples of the USSR, while travel restrictions largely prevented scholars and tourists alike from visiting the region. Today things are changing: for 100 US dollars, an American can get a visa to Uzbekistan hassle-free. The tourist industry is steadily growing and academic interest is on the rise. Nevertheless, it seems that psychological barriers persist. In particular, Western observers face the challenge of locating Central Asia within a larger context: nominally included within the post-Soviet space, to what extent does the former Soviet legacy actually shape the current condition of these five new states? Or is consideration of these polities as Soviet successor states largely misguided? Do they constitute a separate area unto themselves, Islamic societies on a trajectory distinct from the other regions of the former USSR? In what way is Central Asia familiar, and to what extent is it remote?

Our recent travels to the region suggest that Central Asia's complex amalgamation of traditions necessitate acknowledging both the common and idiosyncratic aspects of its social development and history. Visibly Islamic in character with a social structure that is very different from other parts of the FSU, Central Asia also exhibits a strong Soviet legacy both in terms of social practice and institutional form. It is our hope that the following impressions about our experiences in Central Asia last summer, one from the perspective of a Russian-American on a two-week visit from Moscow and the other from the perspective of a student on a more prolonged language immersion, though by no means exhaustive or definitive, will give the reader some insights into the rich world that is contemporary Central Asia. At the same time, we hope our experience will shed light on broader questions concerning the placement of Central Asia within a larger socio-political context.

Regine Spector and Boris Barkanov are second-year Ph.D. students in the department of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley.¹ Regine spent the summer of 2003 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan learning Uzbek with the ACTR/ACCELS language program. Boris spent the summer in Moscow, Russia studying Russian and taking courses in Russian history, literature, and art. He also spent two weeks traveling in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Boris

To be honest, my interest in the Central Asian republics is relatively recent. As a child of Soviet émigrés to the United States, I vaguely knew of their existence, but mostly I associated these five “distant” and “obscure” union republics with names that were difficult for me to remember and pronounce, and capitals the names of which kept changing. This is odd, for I knew that my father and grandmother had been evacuated from Moscow to Tashkent during World War II, and my great-grandfather, who died during the evacuation, is buried in an unmarked grave in some Tashkent cemetery. As it turns out, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are more familiar than I had ever thought. It only remained for me to venture out and realize it.

Language

In fact, the most unexpected aspect of my two-week trip to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan was how familiar and comfortable it actually was. I had no trouble communicating; because I spent most of my trip in urban settings, my Russian was more than sufficient to get around. Neither pharmacies, nor taxis, nor even corrupt policemen presented the slightest linguistic difficulty. On a visit to the history museum in Tashkent, I had the pleasure of “unofficially joining” (read: covertly tagging along with) a group of local high school students on a field trip with their teacher. The tour, conducted in Russian, was far more informative than the sparse signs in Russian (there were no signs in English) would have permitted.

Even my “official” interactions were somehow facilitated by my Russian proficiency. On my way to the Ferghana valley, at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Tashkent (the first of many), a policeman “fined” me for not having my foreign exchange receipts. As was later explained to me, employment as a militiaman is a coveted opportunity for young Uzbek men; bribetaking constitutes lucrative access to wealth in an otherwise depressed economy. From what I understand, law enforcement has its own dynamic; territory is divided and extracted “rents” are passed up the hierarchy. On this particular occasion, I was out five dollars. The militiaman was very smooth, but I was even smoother.

“So what should I do with you? (grin) Perhaps you can leave me a *...souvenir?*”

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(to myself) “How about a used Bic pen?” (out loud) “I only have five dollars.” (polite smile)

(pause as he sizes me up) “Alright.”

My most poignant interaction was with my friend Regine’s host family. Abdulla and Mavjuda are perfectly fluent in Russian. To a Soviet eye, they are “*intelligentniyi lyudi*” (culturally refined and with integrity). The father had received his higher education in Moscow and stayed in a dormitory across the street from where my uncle has lived for the last 50 years. That their apartment is lined with volumes of Russian classics – Lermontov, Pushkin, and Turgenyev, among many others – reminded me of my grandfather’s home in Chicago when I was growing up. From what I could tell, both savored speaking Russian, fondly remembering their interactions with Russian speakers who had long since left Tashkent. I felt especially close to Mavjuda as she shared with me her anxiety about sending her youngest son to study abroad in New York City. She lamented the lack of professional opportunities in Uzbekistan, but also



photo: Boris Barkanov
Honey seller at the main bazaar (Siab bazaar), Samarkand



photo: Boris Barkanov

Morning feast for men at an Uzbek wedding, Namangan

feared that he would end up staying in America; she might visit, but it is so far away. As I listened to her, I imagined my own family confronting a similar dilemma 25 years earlier.

My ability to converse in Russian at this level allowed me to connect with the Uzbeks I encountered in a way that despite extensive travels around the world, I had never experienced before. Uzbek hospitality certainly played a role. All the same, I am convinced that it was a common native tongue that allowed me to feel that I was traveling among people who only a short time ago (and in some ways a very long time ago) were citizens of the same country as me. I might add that the younger generation is already losing both their command and appreciation of the Russian language; should I return in 15 years, I suspect my communication might not be as unhindered and genuine, as Uzbeks lose their native grasp of Russian and turn to English as a foreign language.

Urban Landscape

In addition to the Russian language, there were other ways in which Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan were familiar. When I first arrived in Tashkent – Regine and Sobir, the youngest brother, met me at the airport at six in the morning – I was surprised to find that the urban plan was reminiscent of other Soviet cities. It was the sort of *déjà vu* you experience when you arrive in Honolulu for the first time and see that, palm trees and rainbows notwithstanding, the stripes on the road are the same as in San Francisco, which are the same as in Miami, which are the same as in Chicago. Tashkent is the only city in Central Asia that has a metro system; in Soviet fashion, it is very clean,

elegant, and efficient. Dilapidated housing projects, mostly built after the earthquake, litter the Tashkent landscape much as they do all post-Soviet cities. The poorly lit, squeaky elevator in my building has many a twin in Moscow. And graffiti on its outside door also familiarly shouted: *Lift ne vinovat shto zhizn' takaya* (It is not the elevator's fault that life is like this).

Social Practice

In Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan I decided to visit a “banya.” I am an avid fan of the public bath and I try to partake in every country that I visit. From the outside, the facility was like no other banya I had ever visited. Two white washed buildings located in the center of Bishkek, one of the buildings with a dome, reminded me more of the planetarium in Chicago than any banya I had visited in Russia. But the interior was just as you would expect: a steam room, a dry sauna, and a cold swimming pool in the building with the dome. Men wore Kyrgyz “kalpaks” (pointed hats made of felt) so as not to get a headache in the extreme heat, just like my Russian friends and relatives do. Inside the dry sauna, friends practice the Russian ritual of lightly beating each other with birch branches to stoke the hot air against the body and purportedly purify it of toxins. Next to the dressing room is a “stalovaya” (dining room) where men sit in sheets and chat over cigarettes and assorted beverages, mostly tea and beer. Between baths, men who can pay the extra price enjoy full body massages and washings, which are performed in exactly the same way as they are in Russia. Perhaps most striking of all was the lack of modesty. Muslim countries are reputed for their modesty; Turkish men scrupulously cover themselves in the hamam. In Bishkek, however, the patrons walk around fully naked, even when they are in the presence of the female cleaning ladies who work in the dressing room.

Discourse

I had a most memorable experience during a day trip to Shakhrisabz. An American friend's host father had arranged a guided tour of the historical sites for us. We went inside the crypt that Amir Timur (Tamerlane) built for himself (he is actually buried in Samarkand), saw Ak Sarai, the remains of Amir Timur's most grandiose palace, and met a man who was 104 years old. After sightseeing, the host father and his son invited us to an outdoor shashlik restaurant in the mountains. I have been eating shashlik in the

open air since early childhood; Russian men take pride in making shashlik as much as their American counterparts enjoy a good old-fashioned barbeque. Actually, my hunch is that shashlik picnics are at least one practice that traveled from south to north during the Soviet period. Our table overflowed with meat, breads, and vegetables. The event took on a decidedly Soviet flavor for me when our hosts set wine and vodka on the table. Predictably, the first toast was for “znakomstvo” (making acquaintance). Subsequent toasts for “druzhbu narodof” (international friendship), “zhenshin” (the ladies present), and prirodu (nature) followed. Interestingly, while the father proposed toasts with great enthusiasm, the son made no toasts at all.

Our host father was most perplexed that different beverage factions had emerged during the course of the evening; he pointed out that the women were drinking wine (red) and the men were drinking vodka (white), a clever allusion to the Russian civil war, I

thought. He insisted that for at least one toast, everyone should symbolically drink a shot of vodka. The American women demurred. Not to be outwitted, I added that I was drinking a little of both; I was pink. To my surprise, the host father picked up on my lead and exclaimed: Yes, and the Jew looks both ways! The comment in and of itself was ambiguous. Deep inside myself, I tried to give it a positive interpretation: I was the crossroads, the mediator between cultures. Nevertheless, this too was familiar. To my knowledge, discourse about ethnic nationalism and in particular comments about Jews in this particular form is yet another Soviet legacy. This kind of discourse is alien to Central Asia, a European import to a region where Jews enjoyed friendly relations with their Muslim neighbors for hundreds of years.

Despite the brevity of my trip to Central Asia, I feel that I had a remarkable experience. The hospitable people, beautiful monuments and nature, and the intricate social fabric, all of which I only scratched the surface, make me want to return very soon. The next time I go, I hope to be able to communicate in the local language. Russian permitted me to access fascinating corners, but I sense that my experience was somewhat limited: I had far fewer insights in rural areas where Russian is not as prevalent, and I was hardly able to experience the non-Russian speaking, non-Soviet dimension of these rich cultures. By examining that which is non-Soviet, the observer can understand the Soviet legacy in Central Asia in greater relief. Furthermore, only by examining both elements – the Soviet and the non-Soviet – can one understand their social significance.

Regine

This past summer I traveled to Tashkent, Uzbekistan for the first time. My main goal was to learn the Uzbek language and explore the region that I had researched during my first year as a graduate student at Berkeley and prior to that as a research assistant in Washington, D.C. While many Soviet legacies in Central Asia remain, such as high-rise developments, Ladas, and others that Boris has mentioned, living in Tashkent for the summer brought to my attention numerous uniquely Central Asian and Uzbek customs and practices.



photo: Boris Barkanov

Soft drink stand at the main bazaar (Siab bazaar), Samarkand

Language

While Russian is still widely understood, titular languages including the one I was studying, Uzbek, seem to be increasingly spoken in Central Asia. My host family in Tashkent and many other families, especially outside the capital, speak Uzbek at home. English is displacing Russian as the foreign language children and students learn. And those teenagers who were educated in Russian-speaking schools use Russian infrequently and at times with grammatical mistakes. Thus, while Russian is still spoken by many, in particular in government and business contexts, proficiency in Uzbek will be necessary over the coming decades to understand contemporary politics, culture and society.

Anticipating this trend, one of my main summer goals was to focus on learning the Uzbek language. Four times a week I had one-on-one language instruction with an Uzbek teacher, Ruslan, coordinated by the ACTR/ACCELS summer language program. Ethnically half Uzbek and half Tatar and linguistically fluent in both Russian and Uzbek, Ruslan was experienced in teaching Americans and Koreans, although he spoke little English. Thus I learned Uzbek via his explanations in Russian, in effect improving both my Russian and my Uzbek. After six weeks of intensive study, we had covered most of the major grammatical constructions and had moved on to reading short texts, writing diary-like essays, and probing the finer details of the language. At home, I became increasingly comfortable talking with my host-family in Uzbek.

The one year of Turkish that I learned at Berkeley



photo: Regine Spector

Boris (far right), Regine (third from right), and her host family in Tashkent



photo: Regine Spector

Khalon Mosque, Bukhara

significantly helped in learning Uzbek, especially since the grammatical structure of both languages is strikingly similar. In some ways, Uzbek is easier than Turkish primarily because Uzbek lacks vowel harmony. Yet in other important ways, it was more challenging to pick up the language than expected. First, there are a number of sounds in Uzbek that do not exist in English, Russian or Turkish that I struggled to pronounce correctly on a regular basis. Moreover, quite a few “false friends” are sprinkled in the language. Just as one example, “hayir” in Turkish is “good-bye;” in Uzbek, “hayir” means “no.”

My forays into the Uzbek language and local libraries confirmed that both Russian and Uzbek will be necessary to do further extensive research in this society. While Russian remains necessary to do historical research and to understand the nature of the Soviet past in Central Asia, Uzbek will increasingly help with everyday conversation and contemporary sources.

Ethnicity

Prior to traveling to Central Asia, numerous friends and scholars I had met from the region indicated that I would have no trouble physically blending into Central Asian society with my half-Asian (Japanese) and half-white (Jewish-American) origins. Indeed in Tashkent and throughout my travels, many inquired about my ethnic background and some even confused me for my host-sister’s relative or sister. In fact, the running joke became: what happens when you combine a Japanese with an American? You get an Uzbek!!!

Perhaps one of the funniest stories combining language and ethnic identity occurred towards the end



photo: Regine Spector

Fellow UCB graduate student in the Department of History Christine Evans, at the Amir Timur Museum, Tashkent

of my stay in Tashkent, when my host sister and I went to the bazaar across the street to find special rice for the Korean beef recipe I was cooking for my host family. Despite my “Uzbek” appearance, the vendors had sensed over the weeks that I might not be a local, and when we finally decided upon a stand from which to buy, the young men working there started barraging me with questions: Where are you from? Are you two related? My host sister and I were quietly talking in Russian about which rice to purchase, and I chose to ask questions about their rice rather than answer their questions about my origin. They guessed everything from Tajik to Bukharan Jew. After smiling mysteriously at all of their guesses, I paid for the rice and said, “Thank you, good-bye” in Uzbek. They burst out laughing as we were leaving and called out, “Uzbek? Well, she is Uzbek after all!”

In general, I sensed that my ethnic Uzbek appearance and my broken Uzbek had an intriguing effect on many whom I met, adding to my status as a “foreigner” or “guest.” On a side note, perhaps due to my looks, or because I was a woman, I had no problems in public – not once was I hassled for bribes or paperwork as I was on numerous occasions while living in Moscow, Russia in 1997.

Gender

During the Soviet period, women were encouraged to participate in the workforce and indeed my host mother was a classic example of a “Soviet” woman who worked full time at a state agency and simultaneously raised three children. Yet I observed that men and women in Uzbekistan today inhabit

increasingly bifurcated social spaces, although an important exception to this trend is President Karimov’s eldest daughter, who allegedly owns numerous companies and has a significant political status among the ruling elite. While young women may work for a period as secretaries, waitresses, administrative assistants or in other entry-level positions, many marry at a relatively early age, often via arranged marriages, and move in with the husband’s family. While expectations do vary to some degree, it is generally the case that the woman raise the family, tend to domestic duties, and rarely venture out to restaurants and clubs in the evenings as some Russian women do.

While living in Tashkent, I learned that men, including my host father and his Moscow-educated friends with high-level positions in business and government, occasionally attend weekly or monthly “gaps,” or discussions (from the Uzbek word, to talk.) Held in restaurants or country homes outside the city, I heard from other foreign male students who were invited to these meetings that conversations ranged from personal issues to political debates. Excited by the opportunity to talk about political and social issues often not discussed openly due to the authoritarian nature of the regime and the limitations of free speech and press, I inquired with my host father about joining him for one of them. Abdulla consented and came up with a compromise plan to escort me to the first hour or two of the meeting and then have a car drive me back to the apartment. Yet on the morning of the event, we talked again over breakfast and I sensed an



photo: Regine Spector

Regine (center right) with her host family in Namangan



photo: Regine Spector

Three generations of women in Regine's host family

extreme reluctance to bring me along. He even went as far as to state explicitly that if I were his daughter, he would not permit my attendance. After realizing that I would be putting him in an uncomfortable position, I retracted my desire to go and instead stayed home, indeed disappointed but also inspired to find other avenues to meet these people.

I learned quickly that the best way to connect with my host family and other Uzbek families as a woman was to share recipes and other cultural insights. To this end, I found the ingredients to prepare Spaghetti Bolognese, chocolate chip cookies, Korean beef and guacamole. While the first three were a whopping success, the last did not turn out quite as planned. My host sister had brought an avocado back from a brief trip to Germany with the hope that I could make "some Mexican sauce" that she had heard about. In light of the fact that I make guacamole often here in California, I thought to myself, "No problem!" Well, I waited about two weeks for this precious fruit to ripen, bought all the necessary ingredients, and finally cut it open, my host sister and host mother watching intently. To my great surprise, it was rock solid inside.

The skin usually just peels off, but I literally cut the avocado like one does an apple. How could this be? It had been ripening for over three weeks! After explaining that this version would be a bit different, "guacamole á la Uzbekistan," I chopped it up like a carrot and added all the other ingredients. It kind of tasted like guacamole, but it was crunchy instead of creamy. Oh well. They thought it was "interesting." I promised a more authentic version the next time I visit them.

I hope that "next time" will come soon – my trip to Central Asia increased my desire to dig deeper and explore further the various historical legacies and contemporary trends in the region, while at the same time cautioned me to think creatively and realistically about how to approach research in the region.

Notes

¹ We would like to thank the Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies and the University of California, Berkeley Graduate Fellowships Office without whose support our trips to Central Asia would not have been possible.

VISITING SCHOLARS

Professor Boris Marshak is a Distinguished Curator and Head of the Central Asian and Caucasus section of the Oriental Division at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. For many years, Prof. Marshak has directed excavations at the medieval Sogdian settlement of Panjikent in Modern Tajikistan and is considered one of the leading experts on Sasanian Iran and the Central Asian Sogdians. Prof. Marshak has lectured and taught extensively in the United States regarding his area of specialization, including at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Washington. He is the author and co-author of numerous publications including *Peerless Images: Persian Painting and Its Sources*, Yale University Press, 2002; and *Legends, Tales and Fables in the Art of Sogdiana*, Bibliotheca Persica Press, New York, 2002. This semester, Prof. Marshak is teaching Silk Road Art and Archaeology in UC Berkeley's Near Eastern Studies Department.

Professor Alma Kunanbaeva is a cultural anthropologist and ethnomusicologist specializing in Central Asia. Her research interests include traditional culture and contemporaneity, linguistic anthropology, anthropology of folk religion, and music of the oral tradition in nomadic civilization. She has taught at several US institutions, including the University of Wisconsin, the University of Iowa, and the University of Washington, as well as a number of times at UC Berkeley. Her professional appointments include consultant and curator of, and a presenter at, the 36th Annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington D.C. in 2002. Prof. Kunanbaeva is the author and co-author of numerous publications including *The Soul of Kazakhstan*, Easton Press, New York, 2001; *Boris Asaf'yev on Folk Music*, co-edited by Izaly Zemtsovsky, Leningrad, 1987; and "Nomadic Civilization as the Art of Interpretation" in *Sound Travels: A Musical Journey Along the Silk Road*, UC Berkeley, 2003. Prof. Kunanbaeva is currently teaching two courses in the Near Eastern Studies department: "Nationalism, Identity and Culture in Modern Central Asia" and "Kazakh Language and Culture."

UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Central Asia and the Caucasus: Transnationalism and Diaspora

Sanjyot Mehendale and Turaj Atabaki, eds.

Routledge, London, forthcoming 2004

This book is a volume of the proceeding of the academic conference "Currents, Cross-Currents and Conflict: Transnationalism and Diaspora in the Caucasus and Central Asia" held at the University of California, Berkeley, in spring 2002. The book explores the roles diaspora communities play in the recent and ongoing emergence of identities in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of linkages have been established between newly independent Central Asian states, or populations within them, and diaspora ethnic groups. The loyalties of these diaspora groups are divided between their countries of residence and those states that serve as homeland of their particular ethno-cultural nation, and are further complicated by connections with contested transnational notions of common cultures and "peoples." Related phenomena are to be found in the cobbled web of Afghanistan and in an extremely restive Xinjiang province in China. This volume is intended as a contribution to emerging scholarship concerning these and other transnational and diasporic currents in Central Asia and the Caucasus.



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