



THIS IS Central and Southwest Asia

The Newsletter of the Central and Southwest Asia Program
at The University of Montana

November 2007

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Tajikistan – Pearl of Central Asia

By Rick & Susie Graetz

May 2006 - As we were planning to head to the former Soviet Central Asia Republic of Tajikistan, Nazir Sharipov, the First Secretary at the Embassy of Tajikistan in Washington D.C., told us that our arrival would be just in time for the blossom season. Knowing that nearly ninety percent of Tajikistan's terrain

was mountainous and that the high places would have plenty of snow gracing their upper reaches, the idea of colorful spring flowers livening up the landscape made the trip even more enticing. And when we arrived, we weren't disappointed!

Despite the great beauty of the land, the most memorable aspect of our journey was the people. Whether in the larger bustling cities such as Dushanbe, in small dusty villages, or in the hamlets interspersed throughout the most remote reaches of the Pamir Mountains, they were beautiful, warm, friendly and inviting. Many travelers tend to describe the folks they meet as being friendly, but in Tajikistan friendliness is truly legendary.

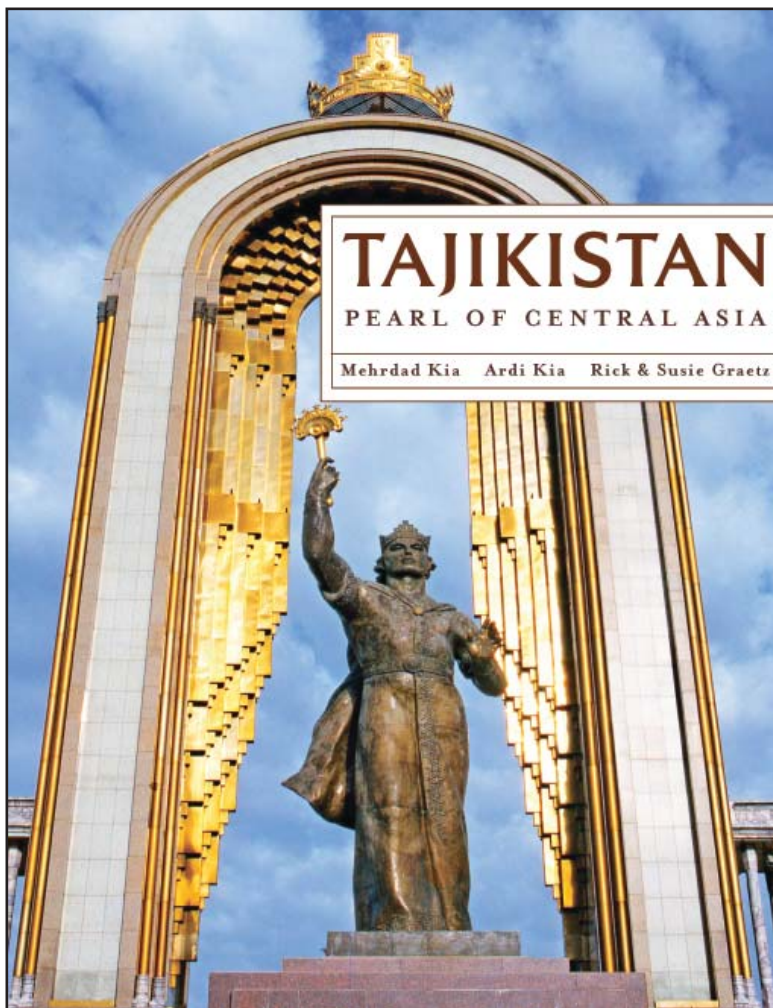
A book then, that was to show the world a place few people knew about - the Pamirs, the world's second highest range, wild rivers, ancient buildings and historical sites - would have to take on another task and show the incredible, hard working, welcoming people that fit into this diverse landscape.

Then another dimension was added. The northern regions of the country served as a gathering place of branches of the fabled Silk Road. The summits of the Tien Shan and Pamir ranges forced the routes into the Zarafshan Valley. The ancient city of Panjakent in the midst of this valley was the nerve center and

financial headquarters for the Silk Road. Today the city, destroyed by the Arabs as they were spreading Islam to Central Asia, is now being excavated. As we stood on the site and looked out over the valley and the ruins of the buildings and artifacts being unearthed in this now very quiet place, it wasn't difficult to imagine the excitement of caravans burdened with fragrant spices and exotic goods from distant lands arriving into the boisterous and multi-lingual noise of the market place.

Awe-some scenery, the Tajik people, and

the very deep history that helped change the world, made producing this book on Tajikistan a great experience. Seeing the beauty of this piece of high Asia and meeting the Tajik people made building the book, Tajikistan - Pearl of Central Asia, a labor of love.



TAJIKISTAN
PEARL OF CENTRAL ASIA

Mehrdad Kia Ardi Kia Rick & Susie Graetz

For more information about the Central and Southwest Asia Program visit our website at www.umt.edu/cap

A Life of Serendipity and Learning

By Bharath Sriraman, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematical Sciences

The Central and Southwest Asia Program welcomes Professor Bharath Sriraman as the newest addition to the Central and Southwest Asia faculty. He plans to teach a course on Indo-Iranian culture in the Fall 2008 semester.

Who I am today and the wide range of eclectic research interests I have are a function of unexpected and atypical experiences during my childhood. I was born in the Southern part of India, in Bangalore (formerly the Garden City of India... now the Silicon Valley of India), but my parents chose to live in Bombay because of my father's profession as a sea captain in the merchant marine. My father was a free lancer, who worked on foreign flag ships and would pull me out of school so that I could sail with him. By the time I was 13, I had traveled on numerous ships and been to many countries in Europe, the Middle East, the Black Sea area, Africa and South East Asia including mainland China in the early 1980's well before it opened up to the western world. These travels didn't go over too well with my school principal and teachers as they thought it interfered with my schooling. Looking back I think that sailing with my father on ships which had crew from Indonesia, Hong Kong, China, and the Philippines exposed me to a whole new way of life, and a culture completely different from what one encounters in mainstream schooling. I learned quite a bit about course plotting, chart work, navigation the old fashioned way (taking sights with a sextant), cargo and maintenance work on tankers and cargo ships and the realization that the world was a very big and wondrous place. Going ashore in exotic places like Sicily, Turkey, Algeria, Syria, Libya and encountering new languages, food and people was quite an amazing childhood experience. Just realizing the diversity of the world made a big impression on me from the very start. In a nutshell, I became aware at a very young age of the outside world, its diversity and developed a thirst for travel which has stayed with me to date. Among the many things I vividly recall is going through the Suez Canal in 1980 and being flabbergasted at seeing all the turned over tanks and other damaged equipment from the old Suez and Yom Kippur was between Israel and Egypt; the Friday markets in Marseilles; the beautiful and abundant stray cats in Istanbul; the tiny boats with fleeing refugees from Vietnam in the South China Sea; bartering and haggling with the boat vendors on the Suez; spending 3 weeks in Shanghai as the owners decided to sell a ship there.

Unknowingly at this time I was quite proficient in multiple languages because of the unusual situation at home. We traveled frequently to Bangalore during the summers where my mother's extended family lived and over the years I became proficient in Kannada. My father's family mostly spoke Tamil and English. Kannada and Tamil are Dravidian languages spoken pre-dominantly in the Southern part of India, quite different from the Indo-Iranian languages of the north, albeit bearing the influence of Sanskrit, which could be called a proto-Indo Iranian language. And living in Bombay, I learned Hindi and was able to understand most of the other spoken languages like Marathi and Gujarati because of the friends I played with. This was not a conscious effort on my part but something which happened. I was sent to a Catholic school where the medium of instruction was English and the school happened to be located in a pre-dominantly Muslim area which was great for me as I made many good friends who spoke and wrote Urdu, and helped me pick up yet another language. I became quite disillusioned by the constrictive educational system by the time I was 17. So, I surprised everyone by announcing that I would rather go out to sea than go to an Engineering School like everyone else. This didn't go over too well with my family, which again is ironic because I was exposed to the seafaring life, and yet my choice was not well received and grudgingly accepted. I was lucky to be accepted as a Deck Cadet (or Officer in Training) by a Norwegian Shipping Company recruiting in Bombay at that point in time. So, at 17, I shipped out, first by going to the training ship for a few months and then being flown out to work on oil tankers and container ships owned by this company. The sense of relief and freedom of finally being away from the educational system did me a world of good. The different ships that I worked on in the next 3 years made voyages to the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, North Africa and the Mediterranean, the Far East, the Caribbean, Western Europe and the Americas. This was another significant learning moment because I worked with shipmates from the Philippines, Indonesia, Norway, Britain, and Japan. My love for languages was kindled anew. Another vivid memory was being on the ship's wheel at 4am in the morning and listening to the Captain speak to the head office in Norwegian. Being half asleep I thought I was listening to someone speak in a strange dialect of English... It seemed I



Professor Sriraman in Nicosia, Cyprus at the divided line in the old city

understood some of the things that were being said for reasons not clear to me.

The best times I had on these ships were the times we could go ashore. I spent as much time as I could going ashore in places like Japan, Algeria, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Italy, Spain, England, Germany, France, the Persian Gulf, many places in the Americas. I would often try to go on train rides into the interior parts of these countries. I also became aware in a global sense of markets and commodities and how the oil and container trade works in keeping economies and multinational companies functioning. Getting such knowledge through lived experiences and not from books is something special I think. Another important learning experience which formal education cannot provide is the experience of living and moving in and out of different cultures within ships. Some of the best memories I have of these days is being in the big storm Ophelia; sailing up and down the Elbe and Maas rivers in Germany and Holland; the delicious street food in South East Asia particularly in Malaysia, Taiwan and Singapore; the relentless white and blinding heat in the Persian Gulf in the summers; the one time it rained (in perhaps a 100 years) in Yanbu' al Bahr- Saudi Arabia; the pleasant surprise of hearing Hindi film music from market stalls in Bandar Abbas- Iran and the similarity in the sounds of spoken Farsi to Urdu and Hindi.

I quit the seafaring life for a variety of reasons. First I went through an existential crisis of sorts as the work was no longer attractive to me. Shore leave was getting quite curtailed as ship owners were in the business of making money and didn't let ships linger in ports for very long. Although I had a wide variety of interests, I thought I was mentally stagnating. Whenever I would return to Bombay between ships, I realized that many of my friends from school were nearly full fledged engineers or doctors whose lives and interests had changed. It was like being a fish out of water each time. On occasions between ships, the boredom was so unbearable that I traveled by train and bus, to the region of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh in Eastern Kashmir, which is an extension of the Tibetan plateau into India. This was my first encounter with the Himalayas. The bus rides through the Rohtang Pass [the highest navigable land pass in the world] and the sheer cliff drops and driving skills of these bus drivers on the switch backed roads are a wonder in itself. Another adventure involved traveling from Pathankot, India to Mashhad, Iran by road through the peaceful interlude in Afghanistan between the Soviet invasion and the rise of the Taliban. The hospitality and the simple way of life in the small villages in the Himalayas and its westward extensions is something one should experience in their lifetime. I suppose one could say that the first 21 formative years of

Continued Serendipity on p. 4

Galilee College, Israel, July 2nd - August 5th, 2008

By Dr. Joseph Shevel, Galilee College President, Israel

Joint Israeli - Palestinian Summer Programme

Political Science and Middle East Studies

Joint Jewish-Christian-Muslim Summer Programme

A Religious Mosaic in the Holy Land

It is my pleasure to announce the official opening of registration to the Galilee College 2008 summer programmes.

One of our 2007 graduates summarized the experience as follows:

Nothing is real until you see it with your own eyes. No matter how much you have read about a place, only travelling there shows you reality. That is why it was so interesting for me to visit Israel and see first hand this land that we read about in the newspapers everyday. The guided visits we did with Galilee College enabled us to appreciate the security concerns of the Israeli society, but also, the harshness of the separation wall and the frustration of the occupation felt by the Palestinians. My personal experience in Israel was very good: I met fantastic people from many different countries and learned a lot about this fascinating place where the three main religions come together. When it comes to a lasting solution to the region's troubles, maybe we need to turn our eyes away from politics and more toward places like Galilee College.

David Bayón

Expert Collaborator Mediterranean Affairs

Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

Summer 2007

The main goal of these programmes is to enable participants to form their unique personal impressions of the region, by providing a framework that allows for immediate and unfiltered exposure to the daily realities as experienced by the peoples in the region. Through lectures and study tours, participants will gain a better understanding of the range of responses offered by the religiously and ethnically varied populations to the complex issues routinely encountered in this region.

It would be appreciated if you could bring this programme to the attention of the students at your university. A limited number of tuition scholarships will be available to qualified candidates. Interested students should contact Ms. Shoshi Norman, the Programme Director via e-mail: snorman@galilcol.ac.il.

For more information about these programs, please contact Professor Samir Bitar in the Central and Southwest Asia Program at samir.bitar@umontana.edu.

Kyrgyz Minister of Education meets with senators and delegation from the United States

"AKI" Press—October 02 Kyrgyz Minister of Education and Science Kanybek Osmonaliev met with a delegation from the United States headed by Utah senator John Valentine and Montana Senator Carol Williams, who is also representing The University of Montana.

The Ministry of Education's press office reports that Minister Kanybek Osmonaliev greeted the guests and expressed his confidence that after the visit close ties will be formed between the states of Montana and Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic, particularly where the exchange of students and teachers is concerned. The Minister also told of his experiences during a visit to the state of Montana in June.

During a working visit to the United States the Minister visited The University of Montana. At the University he held a presentation entitled "Education for today's generation in Kyrgyzstan", members of his delegation made a presentation about Kyrgyz education, history, culture, religion and literature. The delegation and the university signed a memorandum of understanding and collaboration.

During today's meetings the sides discussed Kyrgyzstan's perspective interrelations with the two states. They noted the importance of expanding cooperation. The Minister expressed his hopes in the further development and strengthening of reciprocal relations in the sphere of education.

UM Persian Student Association

All UM students, especially Persian students from Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran, as well as Missoula community members who are interested in this ancient culture and civilization, are encouraged to be involved in the newly recognized Persian Student Association (PSA). The number of students from Persian speaking countries is increasing annually on campus. For this reason, PSA is committed to unite Persian students, celebrate common holidays and organize various activities. In this regard, students and interested individuals are kindly asked to provide Umed Partov with their e-mail and phone numbers. Please send your contact information to the following e-mail address: umedpartov@gmail.com.

UM Arabic Professor speaks to the Madison Valley Women's Club in Ennis, Montana

By Maureen Cheney Curnow, Professor Emeritus, Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures

السلام عليكم
ASSALAMU ALIAKKUM

With that greeting of peace, Samir Bitar began his presentation to a large gathering of the GFWC Madison Valley Woman's Club in Ennis. He described the many countries of the Muslim World and discussed those where Arabic is spoken. He spoke about the historical and cultural background of the Muslim World, particularly Palestine, where he was born and educated and where his parents still live.

Samir has been an American citizen for many years and considers himself both a Montanan and a Palestinian. Samir, his Montana wife and their children live in Missoula where he teaches Arabic at The University of Montana in a program which was directed by Maureen Cheney Curnow, now retired in Ennis and a member of the Madison Valley Woman's Club.

Samir earned a B.S. degree in Engineering at Montana State University and worked as a site engineer in Saudi Arabia. He returned to Montana and owned a restaurant in Missoula before deciding to begin teaching Arabic. Samir works with the Model Arab League, does translation and does his best to promote peace and understanding.

While he was in Ennis, he also did a presentation to the combined middle school and high school classes — the students listened attentively and asked him numerous questions about current conflicts and his personal life. He closed his talks with an Arabic thank you — Shukrun.



UM Arabic Professor Samir Bitar was the International Speaker at the GFWC Madison Valley Women's Club

Serendipity Continued from p. 2

my life were characterized by travel! I had an acute awareness and appreciation of geography, language and diversity.

Quitting the seafaring life was easy but this decision did not go over too well with my family. Nevertheless my mind was made up to do something different. On the first week of January, 1993, I arrived in Fairbanks, Alaska at around 2pm in the afternoon. There was at least 3 feet of bright white snow and it was pitch dark and way below freezing. But it felt like home. My first semester as a “real” student was very eventful. I met a number of students from Scandinavian countries, and Eastern Russia (the Yakutsk region) and also students from the bush communities in Alaska, including many from the North shore (the Inupiaq first nation). The undergraduate experience for me was a delightful one because of the flexibility in the U.S. educational system to take courses to broaden one’s horizons. In two and a half years I had already met all the requirements for a Bachelors degree in mathematics. While I took math courses, which for me was an easy route to a degree I also attended some courses in Philosophy and languages like Inupiaq. A year of studying Inupiaq resulted in making many friends from the Northern communities of Alaska and a non-superficial exposure to their culture and customs.

Serendipity was again at play in many different ways. The phenomenon of discovering one’s origins when one is far away from “home” is well known. I found myself learning about Indo-Iranian traditions like Zoroastrianism and the Vedic tradition, Indo-Iranian migrations and history which led me to become interested in Farsi and Sanskrit and start teaching myself these languages, which in turn made me realize the meanings of many Sanskrit prayers I had memorized as a child. At this time, I was also starting to discover the structural features of languages and slowly began to realize why certain languages sounded and “felt” similar. Professor D.A. Bartlett from the English department with whom I became friends lent me a copy of an Old English -Norse language handbook which made me realize why one of my Captains speaking in Norwegian sounded to me like a strange dialect of English. My undergraduate experience was best characterized by serendipity and wanting to learn everything possible. Several important events occurred during this period. I met Walter Benesch (now an Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and a dear friend), who inspired me in his courses to study comparative philosophy and religion. Two years ago we co-authored a paper together on the interplay between consciousness and science in the Indo-Iranian tradition of Advaita Vedanta for the journal *Theology & Science*.

In the summer of 1995, I traveled across Canada, starting from Fairbanks and ending up in St. Johns, Newfoundland. Due to accidental encounters along the way, I ended up going across the Hi-Line in Montana in May all the way to International Falls, Minnesota and then re-entering Canada. I particularly remember the people on the Hi-Line in the small towns of Joplin, Rudyard, Havre and Glasgow where I was often offered a place to sleep and free food! I was particularly struck by the magic of the Sweet Grass Hills when I was on the Hi-Line. In 1996 I moved to Northern Illinois to start graduate work, and I met my wife in Germany that summer. Frequent trips to Germany and Switzerland helped speed up the immersion process into yet another new language and culture. The German language in particular opened up a BIG window into connections with other languages in the Indo-European group, particularly the Nordic languages and kindled my old interests anew. It did not take me very long to finish my PhD coursework in mathematics at Northern Illinois and pass the qualifying exams. However I was unable to support a wife and a child on a TA’s salary and thought I would get a job teaching at a rural high school in Ottawa, Illinois. I was told by the principal that I was the first “foreigner” to ever teach at that school. He was a visionary man, trying to implement a radical modeling based mathematics curricula in this high school which was not going over too well in that community and was happy to have my support. I had the latitude to do whatever I pleased in terms of running my courses and needless to say I tried out many innovative things like integrating science, philosophy and literature with mathematics; conducting teaching experiments with problems that were isomorphic in structure and studying whether students were able to discover generalizations via this process. I was also put in charge of the gifted program of the school district and started to read the literature on systems views of creativity and naturally wanted to try things out empirically. These experiences became a defining moment of my career that led me to change course, complete a doctoral dissertation in mathematics education. My research ideas were new ground in mathematics education and I couldn’t have completed the dissertation without the support of Professor Robert Wheeler, who chaired the committee and believed that the function of universities was to support innovative ideas. My doctoral dissertation committee consisted of one chair and two co-chairs, a mathematician, a psychologist/philosopher and a math educator, and was one of the first dissertations in mathematics education which tried to make the construct of creativity operational in classroom based research.

It seems that fate had it in store that I would move to Montana. I interviewed here in December 2001, and although I had a multitude of job offers, my wife and I really liked the university setting, the collegiality in the math department, the community and the surrounding environment. It also reminded my wife of Bayern, Germany where she came from. I believe that the multiple directions of my scholarship are the result of many informal learning experiences in life as I’ve narrated here. A major focus of my scholarship has been the study of creativity and innovation, which initially began in a domain specific way within mathematics, but led into deeper scholarly ventures into psychology, artificial intelligence and culture to better understand how creativity functions and how it can be fostered. I also have been involved in designing and researching model eliciting activities in different parts of the world. In other words model eliciting activities and model development sequences focus on simulations of “real life” situations and the mathematics which naturally arise from working on these problems. These are activities in which the context catalyzes mathematical conceptual systems. I have been involved with researchers in Australia, Germany, Iceland, Denmark, Turkey and Cyprus who are interested in developing this work in their countries. My research travels in the last five years have taken me to twenty different countries in Europe, Mediterranean, Asia and Australasia. I have had the privilege of having held eleven visiting professorships at various universities in these counties and supervising doctoral students in Germany, Denmark, Cyprus and Turkey. The University of Montana and the community have provided the ideal environment for me to pursue my myriad interests. For instance, the College of Arts and Sciences offered Farsi for two years starting 2003 because of visiting scholars from the Republic of Georgia who could teach it. This provided me a wonderful opportunity to finally learn it “formally”, which I did, and to become more involved in the university’s push to expand its growing Central and Southwest Asian Studies program. Now the program has offered me a chance to learn Turkish which is invaluable since I have a visiting appointment at Gazi University in Ankara for the next three years (see previous newsletter story). My love for languages and intuiting the linguistic structures and comparative syntax led me to the discovery and study of generative grammars. My life-long interest in Indo-Iranian culture and languages has also opened the opportunity for me to design and offer a course on this topic with Mehrdad Kia and Ardi Kia to be co-taught in Fall 2008. I am indeed very honored to have been invited to be a faculty in the Central and Southwest Asian Studies Program.

I have had a very unusual and serendipitous life which is characterized by a love for learning and an admiration and deep respect for the diversity of humanity. A year or so ago on graduation day (May 12, 2006) I had an unexpected visitor named Dean Hellinger (who graduated here in the class of ‘56 and is on the Presidential Advisory Council). He told me he was a classmate of my old philosophy professor and friend Walter Benesch. It turns out that Walter got his M.A in philosophy here at UM before going to Austria for his D.Phil., and it turns out that Dean lives near the foothills of the Sweetgrass hills!



A photo taken when Professor Sriraman was entering at Sweetgrass, Montana in 1995



Teachers to Teachers: Language, Technology, Math, and Science Exchange (LTMS), October 2007

Seventeen Russian teachers spent most of October at UM working with International Programs and the Division of Educational Research and Services to examine effective high school teaching strategies and curriculum. LTMS is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, United States Department of State, and is administered by the American Councils for International Education: ACTR / ACCELS.

Our Man in Bishkek

By Jeff Renz, Director, Criminal Defense Clinic, School of Law

When you walk into the doors of Juventas, the recently built school for developmentally disabled children on the outskirts of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, you are struck by two things: a couple of dozen happy, active kids and a couple of dozen “Big Sky Country” license plate frames. Welcome to the school directed and operated by Dr. Nadya Semenenko and supported by her husband Jim Carney, UM’s man in Bishkek.

Jim Carney arrived in Kyrgyzstan in 1997 as part of a Montana National Guard mission. The Montana Guard and the Kyrgyz National Guard have been paired under the Partnership for Peace program since the early 1990s. The Montana National Guard’s work was primarily humanitarian. They assisted the Kyrgyz Republic in developing disaster response programs and taught first aid and first responder classes to Kyrgyz Guard. Humanitarian training came to include civilian projects in 1999. To kick off the program, the U.S. Embassy sent Carney and Chief Warrant Officer Ric Bridwell (now the honorary consul of the Kyrgyz Republic in Montana) to visit several sites. One such site was Nadya’s school, then located in a dismal basement of a Soviet-era apartment block. Impressed by what they saw, Carney and Bridwell recommended that the Montana Guard assist the school in finding and constructing a new facility. In 2001, Carney returned to Bishkek to oversee the construction. He’s been in Bishkek ever since.

As a result, Carney was in Bishkek on September 11, 2001. Shortly afterwards he was called to active duty with U.S. Central Command, which was about to establish a coalition airbase outside of Bishkek to support operations in Afghanistan. His knowledge of local contractor and local materials pricing ensured that the United States would not be gouged by war profiteers. His work and expertise saved the United States millions of dollars.

Carney was in Bishkek in 2003, when UM Law School professor Jeffrey Renz and the Central and Southwest Asia Program’s Otto Koester arrived to explore relationships with Kyrgyz law schools and universities. “I remember arriving in Bishkek tired and jet-lagged. I made a cold call to this guy Jim Carney, who, I was told, was from Montana. He showed up 15 minutes later and we’ve been friends ever since,” said Renz. With Carney’s assistance, The University of Montana bid successfully on a United States State Department Educational Partnership Grant. The grant, which partnered the UM Law School with a law school in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, wrapped up this year.

Since then and since his retirement from the military, Carney has built bridges to government and university officials on behalf of The University of Montana. He has formed solid friendships with Dosbol Nur uulu, currently the Vice Prime Minister and number three man in the Kyrgyz Republic, and Kyrgyz Ambassador Zamira Sydykova. He meets frequently with Nur uulu and with the Kyrgyz Minister of Education and his assistants. Carney’s work has paid such benefits that, when a U.S. contractor approached the Kyrgyz State Academy of Law about cooperating on a USAID proposal, the KSAL Rector and two of his assistants advised the contractor to contact UM first.

While Carney’s work benefits UM, it pales before his humanitarian and philanthropic work in the Kyrgyz Republic. To pay the Juventas school’s monthly bills, which approach \$2,000, Jim buys raw pearls, and, when most of his family are asleep, spends hours stringing and mounting them for sale. He sells his work, mostly to visiting Americans. The pearls sell themselves and all the profits go to Juventas.

Juventas is not the only beneficiary of Carney’s efforts. He has adopted a school in Marble Village, outside of Bishkek. He supports the Special Olympics program. As the philanthropic coordinator for the Manas coalition air base, Jim arranges for low cost heart surgeries for Kyrgyz children and other medical care for needy Kyrgyz adults. To date his work has saved dozens of lives and built a wealth of good-will with an important partner.

The University of Montana and the Kyrgyz Republic owe a debt to Jim Carney, America’s good will ambassador and our Man in Bishkek.



Jim Carney and Nadya Semenenko at the 2007 Special Olympics, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Excerpt from Georgia Diary

By Thomas Goltz

Mention the word “Georgia” in Montana where I live, and, with a few exceptions, folks will first think of the American state famous for peaches, Sherman’s March, the corporate headquarters of Delta Airlines in Atlanta, and a certain song by Ray Charles.

Myself, I managed to get through the first thirty-eight years of my life quite oblivious to the existence of the post-Soviet Republic of Georgia, aside from a general idea that it was that part of the erstwhile USSR that gave birth to Joseph Stalin. The exception to this general ignorance was that I also had a vague awareness that “Georgia” was the backdrop for Bertolt Brecht’s play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, thanks to my association with a production of the drama in Chicago more than thirty years ago. At the time, I have to confess that I was less interested in the metaphysical questions of ownership, nature versus nurture, group belonging, and collective responsibility posed by the self-exiled German playwright than in the charms of a young actress playing the female lead role of the servant girl Grusha. It was only much later that I came to appreciate how central the leftist, philosophic content was to the drama, and, even later, how central that content was to an understanding of modern Georgia itself.

... There was the December 1991 military putsch against Zviad Gamsakhurdia by a troika of nasty warlords, followed by the return to power of Eduard Shevardnadze in March 1992. Next came the siege, encirclement, and fall of the city of Sukhumi and the rest of the province of Abkhazia in September 1993, with the attendant flood of refugees, social collapse, and yet another brief civil war that petered out in 1994. There was the energy crisis of 1995 and 1996 with blackouts of the capital city on New Year’s Eve, as the newly wealthy frolicked on the slopes of an up-market ski resort and heated their private swimming pools while people froze to death only a mile away. Brigands controlled major highways in 1997, and the eightieth year celebration of national independence fizzled out in the face of renewed war in and over Abkhazia in 1998. This was followed by the Russian threat in 1999 and again in 2000 to invade part of the country in order to eradicate Chechen refugees whom Moscow was calling “terrorists.” A tour through the country in 2001 revealed world-class corruption in high places and desperate gloom and pessimism in low ones, a state of affairs compounded in 2002 by the collapse of the power grid. . .

... Then, finally, in November 2003, people quite simply had had enough and rose to depose the man who had ruled Georgia, both Soviet and post-Soviet, for something like forty years: Eduard Shevardnadze.

... What made the increased sleaze surrounding Shevardnadze so odious was not that it was so obvious and without any shame on the part of the gougers, but that it had the smell of permanence about it. Shevardnadze and his entourage just sort of assumed they could go on indefinitely, that his term of office would always be extended, that he would always remain in power, and that this state of affairs would be sanctioned in the West because former Soviet Politburo member, former Soviet foreign

minister, and former Communist Eduard Shevardnadze had pulled the Red Army out of Afghanistan, negotiated the end of the Cold War, allowed for the reunification of Germany, and let the Soviet client Saddam Hussein dangle during the first Gulf War.

The West owed Shevy a debt of thanks, said everyone from Maggie Thatcher to Helmut Kohl, Francois Mitterand, and certainly James Baker III. Shevy was Georgia and Georgia was Shevy in the eyes of anyone who had ever heard of the place.

In the West, at least.

The internal dynamic was quite different. While many Georgians truly welcomed Shevardnadze’s return in 1992 as a promise of reestablishing some manner of stability, continued chaos and corruption associated with his government slowly but surely eviscerated his base support. This was true among both the late Soviet nomenklatura class to which Shevardnadze so thoroughly belonged, as well as the new, Western-oriented, American-educated class to whom the charade of democratic development as expressed in periodic rigged elections was both embarrassing and offensive.

... Georgians were sick of Shevardnadze, even if they had worked for him all their lives. Mikheil Saakashvili himself had served as minister for justice for a year before resigning in disgust and going into opposition. Zurab Zhvania, the late prime minister in Saakashvili’s government, had served in that role under Shevardnadze, too. And if celebrated in the West as belonging to a “new generation of post-Soviet politicians,” their service for and under Shevardnadze was not forgotten by many locals. Within three months of the Rose Revolution of November 2003, the atmosphere of liberation from the past was getting poisoned by the all-too-familiar Georgian habit of accusation by innuendo and malicious rumor-mongering about who was really in the pay of Moscow, or America, or Israel, or Armenia,

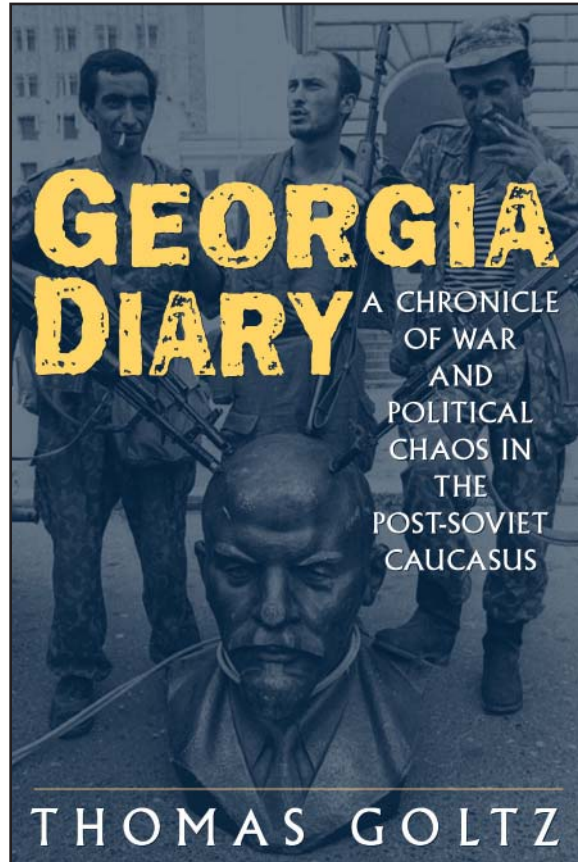
or the centuries-old Masonic conspiracy.

All that was standard Georgian political culture and hardly bodes well for the future of Saakashvili’s regime of young reformers. In November 2003, however, there was a specific target—and that target was Eduard Shevardnadze. With roses in their hands and indignation in their throats, Saakashvili and his people putshed Shevardnadze from power, and, rather than stay and fight or flee the country to become a symbol of something in exile, he might be said to have fallen on his sword gracefully, retiring to his dacha outside Tbilisi, and wishing his successors good luck in governing the modern mess that is Georgia.

That story, of course, goes on.

As for the one related within the pages of this book, the focus is primarily on the Shevardnadze period, and especially on the unnecessary and tragic disaster of the war in Abkhazia, which continues to haunt Georgia to this day. Like Brecht’s opus written more than fifty years ago, it is a complex tale that will be neither short nor easy to follow, but rewarding for those who make the effort.

Continued Georgia Diary on p. 7



Kyrgyz Cadet Training Program, September 2007

The Kyrgyz Cadet Training Program was organized jointly by the Central and Southwest Asia Program and the Montana National Guard.



Kyrgyz Cadets pictured with Professors Jeff Renz and Paul Lauren who gave presentations on Rule of Law and International Human Rights respectively.



Members of the Montana National Guard and the Central and Southwest Asia Program with the visiting Kyrgyz Cadets.

Georgia Diary Continued from p. 6

The following comments about *Georgia Diary* are found on the M.E. Sharpe, Inc. website (<http://www.mesharpe.com/index.htm>).

The third installment in Thomas Goltz's Caucasian diary series is arguably the best written of the three. With Georgia increasingly critical to western interests, *Georgia Diary* fulfills an important mission in providing much-needed background on the civil wars and state failure of the early 1990s. In his typical direct language and his frank retelling of the events he witnessed, Goltz makes the reader feel he or she witnessed Georgia's traumatic formative events in the post-Soviet space. It is required reading for those wanting to better understand the roots of the many problems of present-day Georgia and the Caucasus as a whole. -- *Svante Cornell, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, John Hopkins University*

This is the latest, highly entertaining installment of Thomas Goltz's rip-roaring travels around the Caucasus as the region drags itself from the debris of the Soviet Union. *Georgia Diary* is the perfect complement to his *Azerbaijan Diary* and *Chechnya Diary*, and will not disappoint either those seasoned 'traveling companions' who have journeyed with Goltz in the past from the safety of their armchairs, or the new reader who wants to learn more about this fascinating part of the world. Thomas Goltz packs a punch of insight, information, and atmosphere in every paragraph. -- *Fiona Hill, The Brookings Institution*

Thomas Goltz does it again, this time serving up a rollicking personal account of the formation and crisis of independent Georgia. Rich with insights on the country's ethnic patchwork, the book culminates with knock-down drag-out reportage on the momentous siege of Sukhumi by Abkhaz separatists and Russian-sponsored irredentists. -- Frederick Starr, Chairman, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Washington

In *Georgia Diary*, as in his previous writings, Thomas Goltz plies the ground bounded by journalism, policy analysis, travel literature, and memoir. Above all, he is an open-eyed observer and compelling storyteller. -- *Kenneth M. Jensen, Executive Director, American Committee on Foreign Relations*

At his danger-hopping best, Thomas Goltz is a lyric poet of the chaos, wars, and madness that crazed the small Caucasus republic of Georgia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. ... Through the fog of high-octane fruit brandies and brilliantly recounted absurdities -- in one civil war, both sides call their enemies 'the Opposition' and themselves 'the Position' -- Goltz communicates an instinctive understanding of both the tortured history of the Caucasus and its human victims. -- *Hugh Pope, author of Sons of the Conquerors*

Review: In recent years Georgia has enjoyed a measure of relative stability (and even a peaceful change of leadership), though hardly calm or prosperity. *Georgia Diary* is about a much darker and more chaotic period in its history: the war-torn early 1990s, a subject Thomas Goltz approaches with his usual compelling style. ... Goltz presents unforgettable glimpses of notable Georgians, such as the movie playwright-cum-hood Jaba Ioseliani sitting in the dock; and the 'Silver Fox' himself, Eduard Shevardnaze, under bombardment in Sukhumi. ... Particularly useful in *Georgia Diary* is the author's ability to summarize centuries of complex Caucasus history. Goltz also has the gift of using humor to highlight the poignancy--or madness--of a situation. ... *Georgia Diary* is written by a true friend of the region, a brave soul, and a heck of a good story-teller. EurasiaNet

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