

## REPORTS

### Report on the Balkan Summer Seminar, June 1999

Margaret H. Beissinger, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The International Summer School of the Institute for Sociological, Political, and Juridical Research of Saints Cyril and Methodius University (Skopje) took place June 7-26, 1999 in Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia. Organized by Jovan Donev (of the above institute), the seminar was titled "The Bright Side of the Balkans: Mutuality in a Common Future." The seminar brought together scholars from the United States and Europe (who lectured on specific topics regarding the Balkans) and participants (most of them young faculty and candidates for the doctoral degree) mainly from eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union. It was funded by George Soros and the Open Society Institute of Macedonia.

Each of the three weeks of the summer school was devoted to a broad topic in which the Balkans were treated from the standpoint of mutual common areas. The invited professors delivered lectures at the beginning of the week, setting the stage for the discussion sessions that subsequently took place. The first week—in which I participated — included lectures on Balkan identity. Grace Fielder (University of Arizona, Tucson) spoke about common historical and political myths in the Balkans; I treated Balkan cultural and oral traditions; and Victor Friedman (University of Chicago) lectured on morphological similarities in the Balkan languages. Additional lectures during that week were also given by scholars from Greece, Albania, and Macedonia. The participants were then responsible for writing and delivering brief position papers on these topics followed by directed questions and discussions.

The second week covered regional problems. Rastko Moćnik (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Carole Hodge (University of Glasgow, Great Britain) spoke on nation-building, totalitarianism, and the legacy of the Great Powers' policies in the Balkans. Finally, the third week included discussions on the Balkan agenda for the twenty-first century in terms of regional policy — treated by Bogdan Szajkowski (University of Exeter, Great Britain) and Caterina Garsia Segura (Pompeu Fabra University, Spain).

Cultural events and field trips were planned for each week. The week I attended, we went to a folk ("*narodna*") music concert, toured two monasteries, and visited a tiny mountain village near the

western border of Macedonia. Ohrid was a beautiful and serene setting for a seminar devoted to peoples who have not always been at peace during the 1990s. In fact, while I was in Ohrid, Slobodan Milošević signed the peace treaty, and the bombing by NATO ceased. The work that lies ahead for mending and rebuilding the Balkans is overwhelming. I'm hoping that the "brightness" which we at the seminar contemplated for several weeks becomes a reality in the Balkans before too long.