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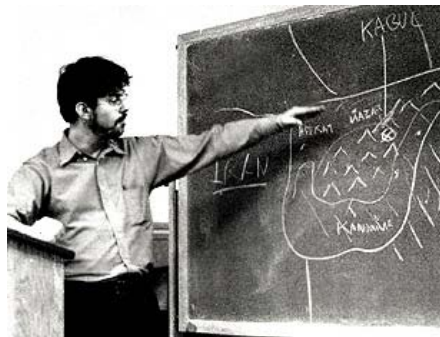
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Journalist and Policy Expert Challenges U.S. View of the International Order

Molly Guidette '03

What has been left behind in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse? What are the historical precedents for Russia's involvement in Central Asia, and what will be the future of such relationships? And what does any of it have to do with the war on terrorism?

Anatol Lieven, Senior Associate for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, addressed these and other questions in the short course *Russia and the Geopolitics of Contemporary Central Asia*, sponsored by OCREECAS. As a correspondent for *The Times* of London, Lieven covered the 1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the start of the Afghan civil wars, as well as the Baltic revolutions of the early 1990s and the first Chechen War. His most recent book, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, analyzes Chechnya's tumultuous history and recent Russian defeats there.



Anatol Lieven
Photograph by Molly Guidette '03

In Mr. Lieven's first lecture, entitled "Strategies and Lunacies in the War against Terrorism," he argued that a gulf of values is growing between Europe and the United States. Lieven contends that Europeans are concerned by an increasing tendency of the Bush administration to act unilaterally, without pretense of negotiation or cooperation.

European politicians and citizens - who showed overwhelming sympathy for the United States after the terrorist acts of September 11 - are concerned that nationalism and imperialism are now defining US foreign policy. In US actions in the Balkans, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan - where the US military rejected the British offer of 25,000 troops - Europeans hear echoes of their own troubled recent history. European experiences fighting 'nationalist demons' are explicitly addressed in the charter of the European Union, which proclaims itself a moral force committed to overcoming nationalism.

What may be perceived as the Bush administration's contempt for international cooperation, reliance on military and moral righteousness,

and deliberate cultivation of righteous victimhood, recall the origins of all nationalist states. Lieven maintains that Europeans are wary of what appears to be the Bush administration's imperialistic determination to dominate the world stage completely. Europe's own unsuccessful late colonial wars proved the impossibility of retaining hostile nations, or engendering lasting economic, cultural, or political change there.

Students were invited to join Mr. Lieven in a less formal brown-bag lecture entitled "Chechnya as a Post-Colonial War." Students who had read Lieven's book, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, were familiar with the historical events that Lieven covered as a correspondent in Chechnya.

Lieven outlined the causes and developments of the first war in Chechnya, citing the mass armed revolution of 1991 (compared to the peaceful transitions to independence almost everywhere else in the former Soviet Union) as the major distinguishing feature of the time and a grim warning of the events to follow. This upheaval was the result of strong nationalist sentiment among the majority Chechen population and the presence of armed radicals and criminals in Chechnya.

As a route for the export of Caspian oil, Chechnya was of significant geopolitical and economic importance to Russia. The rise in banditry and kidnapping after the break-up of the Soviet Union provided the major motivation for Russian intervention and the 1994 launch of a full-scale military operation.

After a bloody 20-month operation, Russia withdrew and negotiated peace in 1995. Internal conditions in Chechnya deteriorated. Loss of life and economic ruin had left Chechnya full of unemployed and "brutalized" young men, who were soon joined by Islamic extremists drawn to Chechnya in the hopes of creating a base. Ensuing lawlessness and corruption eroded official authority.

Islamic radicals dedicated to "freeing" the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus—most of whom were not interested in breaking away from Russia--launched a series of raids and bomb attacks, and invaded Dagestan in 1999.

Bombings on residential Moscow apartment buildings attributed to Chechen terrorists and imminent elections, in which Vladimir Putin was eager to present himself as a strong leader, provided a pretext for the 1999 Russian re-invasion of Chechnya.

Moderate Chechens have been radicalized by the savagery and brutality of this second war. Until problems of Russian sovereignty and Chechen independence are reconciled, it is unlikely that a Russian military withdrawal and creation of a Chechen state will be addressed, said Lieven. He suggests Western peacekeeping troops and reconstruction efforts are key for the emergence of a functional Chechen state.

In a second talk, "Russia as a Land Empire," Lieven identified thought and behavior shared by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union in relation to their Eastern possessions. Lieven cited similarities in speed and extent of 19th century Russian imperial expansion and expansion by European countries of that time, noting that hunger for territorial acquisition was by no means uniquely Russian.

Lieven went on to discuss Eurasianism, a Russian philosophy of shared identity with the peoples of Eurasia, calling it a product of Russia's sense of inferiority to the West. "Eurasianists" express frustration over their exclusion from Europe and seek to prove their superiority by turning to the East, Lieven said.

"Fantasy and Reality in Afghanistan," drew on Lieven's own experiences in Afghanistan. Noting his shock at the complete absence of a state there, Lieven drew a picture of political developments in Afghanistan since the 1880s, when the British funded and propped up a ruthless puppet government to maintain a buffer state between its Indian colonies and the expanding Russian empire. British-imposed rule was widely hated, leaving Afghans an enduring view of the state as harsh and alien control.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was a response the counter-revolution threatening the Afghan communist leadership. Resistance leaders were not religious, but tribal. The

United States backed radical religious groups to oppose the Soviets.

The fall of the communists gave way to anarchy and civil war. In 1992, an alliance of Mujahedeen parties took power in Kabul. The rise of the Taliban, heavily armed and funded by Pakistan and international extremist forces like Al Qaeda, was welcomed by ethnic Pashtuns, who had been excluded from power, as a restoration of order.

Since the US defeat of the Taliban, local war lords have reclaimed their local provinces. The official United States program calls for the creation of a modern democratic state, but Lieven suggests that a central negotiating committee of local rulers is probably the most that can be hoped for at this time.

Lieven pointed to the ineffectiveness of Western aid passing through Kabul. He proposes aid be distributed through the various regions, where it can be used to gradually build state institutions and a class of people who can identify with a central state.

Lieven went on to stress the importance of highway and infrastructure construction in Afghanistan, warning that United States withdrawal will leave the country open to destabilization and the regrouping of terrorist forces.

“Russia in Asia after the Fall of the Soviet Union,” examined Russia’s role on the world stage, questioning American and European Union tendencies to minimize Russian influence in post-Communist states.

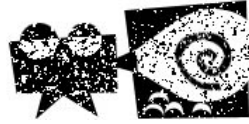
Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia, once one of the world’s two superpowers, has been relegated to status as a regional power, and thus poses no threat to the United States. Lieven argues that it behooves the United States to co-operate with Russians in their relationships with Central Asian states rather than limit their influence there.

Several ageing communist leaders are heading toward what could become violent succession struggles, and Moscow should be encouraged to foster economic development and prevent crisis. The question is whether the United

States is willing to relinquish exclusive dominance in this, or any part of the world.

Soviet Films Enrich Lecture Series

Molly Guidette '03



Professor Heather Hogan, organizer of the short course “Russia and the Geopolitics of Contemporary Central Asia,” presented a brief overview of the geography and history of Central Asia and introduced the first of two films that illustrated political and social change in human terms.

Students watched the film *Storm over Asia: Heir to Genghis Khan* (1928). Set in Tuvan steppe during the Russian civil war, this avant-garde Soviet film contrasts the simple honor of native fur-trappers and multi-ethnic, brotherly “partisans” (Reds) with shamelessly exploitative foreign interventionists who oppose the Revolution and exploit the natives. The film concludes as the hero, this heir to the greatest Mongol ruler, escapes captivity and thunders across the plain with a band of warriors as the British imperialist troops are swept away by the storm. The obvious glorification of the Mongol past is striking in this silent film made over 70 years ago.

For the last meeting of the course students watched the 1991 film *Urga: Territory of Love*, directed by Nikita Mikhalkov. Set in Chinese Inner Mongolia, the film was made just before the break-up of the USSR. Questions of national identity and displacement in the face of modernity haunt the protagonists, a Russian truck driver out of his element in the farthest reaches of the empire and a family of Mongolian herders who live in a yurt and occasionally dream of Genghis Khan. A shared sense of loss for a glorious past unites them, and although modernity inevitably comes to the steppe--smoke stacks and all--the redeeming strength of the human bonds forged signals hope for the future.

Faculty Profiles



Courtesy of Tom Newlin

Tom Newlin, Associate Professor and Chair of the Russian Department, has taught Russian language and literature at Oberlin College since 1991. This fall he offered a new first-year seminar titled "The Meaning of Life: Dispatches from Nineteenth-Century Russia." He describes the course as "an upbeat and somewhat irreverent exploration of nineteenth-century Russia's extraordinarily rich existentialist tradition." He has been actively involved in Oberlin's Environmental Studies Program, and teaches a course on Russian and American representations of nature titled "Literature and the Land."

The spring of 2001 saw the publication his book *The Voice in the Garden: Andrei Bolotov and the Anxieties of Russian Pastoral* (Northwestern University Press). Although unknown to most Western readers, Bolotov (1738-1833) is Russia's most prolific writer. Drawing extensively from archival sources, Newlin uses Bolotov as the focal point for a broad investigation of the valorization and idealization of rural life in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Russian literature and culture. The book aims to provide a fuller context for understanding the problematic pastoralism of later and better-known figures such as Pushkin, Turgenev, Aksakov, Goncharov, and Tolstoy.

The National Endowment for the Humanities will underwrite the next stage of Professor Newlin's research. He will take a leave next year to work on a new book that explores the ways in which nineteenth-century Russian artists, scientists, writers, and religious/ philosophical thinkers looked at, interpreted, and represented the natural world. The study will argue that a more complex and integrative vision of nature began

to find broad expression in Russian culture during this period, and that this vision had a profound (and still largely unacknowledged) influence on the development of modern ecological thought in both Russia and the West.

Chair of the History Department, **Heather Hogan**, has been teaching Russian history at Oberlin College since 1981. This past semester Professor Hogan added a new senior seminar, "Russia in Asia," to her list of courses. She is also developing a colloquium with the tentative title "Silk Roads and Great Games".

Professor Hogan describes her recent sabbatical as an immersion in the rapidly expanding body of scholarly literature on Central Asia. For Professor Hogan it was "incredibly exciting to read material that was completely new." She marked the end of her sabbatical this past summer by participating in a 5-week summer institute supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities at Harvard University. "The Institute sought to define the meanings of 'Eurasian civilization' from roughly the beginning of the Christian Era to 1700 and focused on nomadic-sedentary interactions, the impact of the Mongols and especially on various successor states to the Mongols in Eurasia, and the diversity of interactions (cultural, economic, religious) of peoples across the Eurasian landmass."



Professor Heather Hogan
Photogr. by Russell Kornblith

Professor Hogan explained her new interest in Central Asian Studies as a response to the shifting nature of Russian history; the recent increase in scholarship of the history and culture of Central Asia reflects the increasing scope of "Russian" history. Relations among various Muslim

groups comprise another important focus of her study. Professor Hogan is currently working on a document collection translating articles written in Russian by nineteenth-century administrators in the Caucasus and Central Asia, including authors such as Maev, Shchedrin, and Fadeev.



Announcements

Talisman (coming April 1-7 2003)

OCREECAS will be sponsoring performances and lectures by the musical group Talisman next spring. The concerts and lectures will focus on Russian guitar traditions, women composers of the 18th Century and Russian romances. Soprano Anne Harley and guitarist Oleg Timofeyev, leading authority on the Russian guitar tradition formed the ensemble in the year 2000. Talisman also includes Etienne Abelin, a Swiss baroque violinist.

Talisman will be joined by Moscow's Kolpakov (Roma) Trio, whose program will include songs from the written and oral traditions. The Roma musicians' performance has been described as "full of vitality and unique ethnic character." To compliment and explain the historical context of the music performed, Anne Harley and Oleg Timofeyev will read selections from the composers' memoirs.

For more information about the group, visit their site: www.talismanmusic.org

OCREECAS HAS A NEW LOOK!

Visit www.oberlin.edu/~creecas/ to see the new site and get updates on activities around Oberlin.

If you are on the Oberlin computer network, check out Eastview, a searchable database of current and archived published newspapers from Russia, the Ukraine, and other NIS countries. The site is:

<http://dlib.eastview.com/sources/index.jsp>.

Alumni News



Grahman Hettlinger (OC '88) recently returned to Oberlin to promote study abroad programs for the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR). He is currently the Program Manager for Outbound Programs, which sends 200-250 students to the former Soviet Union each year to study. He has been working at ACTR for the past four years.

Hettlinger also holds a Masters in Creative Writing from the University of Virginia and has completed some graduate work at the Ohio State University in Russian literature. Before going to work for ACTR he worked as a Resident Director for undergraduate students at the Pushkin Institute in Moscow and has lived in Russia (mostly St. Petersburg) for three years.

In addition to his duties at ACTR, Hettlinger also works on various translation projects in his free time and has recently published *Sunstroke: Selected stories of Ivan Bunin*, for which he translated and penned an introduction.

Camp, Kazakhstan, and Kumiss

Katie Scodova '03



After spending the 2001 fall semester in Krasnodar, Russia, I was anxious for another trip abroad at the end of the spring semester. I was looking for internships in Russia when I stumbled across a job announcement in Kazakhstan at an English language camp for school children. The camp, Camp Boomerang is situated in mountains northeast of Almaty in the Dzungarskogoe Altai Mountains. The camp is operated from Taldykorgan, which is a 2.5 hour drive southwest of the campsite. The camp gets its name from the physical layout of the site. It is situated in a narrow valley between two peaks at a bend in the Balakhta River. The camp was founded with the help of the US Peace Corps and has been in operation for five years.



Camp Boomerang. Photograph by Katie Scodova '03

The road from Taldykorgan to the camp passes by a military air base (equipped with many

fighter jets), through several former *kolkhozes*, and along dusty, disintegrating roads. I made this trip eight times in a cramped bus with a multitude of excited campers. Once the bus reached the end of its route, it was unloaded and the belongings were transferred to the camp director's Soviet (circa 1970) jeep. The road steeply winds down to the river at the point where the bus stops. One can only reach the campsite on foot, in an aquatic vehicle or on a horse because one has to go through tall weeds, over a stream, and then around a rock face that precariously overlooks the river or simply go upstream through the river. Surprisingly both methods worked well with the latter being more difficult when the river was up, and the only incident occurred when a portly Russian mother joined us for the hike and broke the heel off her shoe. (The shoe was immediately repaired upon arrival back in the city.)



Building a yurt. Photograph by Katie Scodova '03

From mid-June to the end of July, I lived in an old Soviet tent with the other volunteers (The children stayed in *yurts*). The camp was staffed with a director, two cooks, an instructor of tourism and adventure, and a maintenance man. The children ranged from 9 to 18 years old, and their ability to speak English varied accordingly. My initial responsibilities included a two-hour class each morning and various activities in the afternoon. The children routinely stayed up late around the campfire, and then they were too tired to do anything the next day. They wanted to sleep all afternoon instead of participating in the day's activities, unless it was the day for horseback riding or rock climbing. Instead of enforcing a lights out policy, the camp director, Sasha claimed that the activities should be more physically intense, so that the children would be tired and want to sleep at night. Then when the activities were too physically intense,

the children complained and Sasha insisted that the activities should be easier.

The level of language ability varied significantly. The owners proudly hail that it is the only English language camp in all of Kazakhstan, however, their concern for the educational quality of the program is questionable. On the first day of camp, the other volunteers and I tried to fairly divide the children up according to ability, but the children copied off of each other or whispered responses, so the groups had to be re-sorted after a few days of lessons. It was painfully obvious that only a handful of kids from each session genuinely wanted to practice English, the rest were just sent to the camp by their parents and caused problems. To make matters worse the actual authority figures made excuses for the children's behavior and paid no attention to the volunteers' complaints.

Local farmers benefit financially from Camp Boomerang's relative proximity; they supply the camp with milk, smetana, tvorog, eggs, and various other farm products. One of the farmers also rents out his horses for horseback riding. When in season, they also provide *kumiss* (fermented mare's milk) and fresh honey for the camp. Produce and other essentials (like candy for tea) are bought twice a session in Taldykorgan. I took every opportunity to get out of the camp and away from the children. This usually meant hiking to the local farms, where I became acquainted with the farmers and their employees. I enjoyed talking with them, and they shared their opinions and social commentaries on Kazakhstan, Russia, and America. This was by far the most rewarding part of my summer. The closest farm is a 3-kilometer hike across the river and straight up the mountain. Every morning at 6 am Egor or Zhenya, two of the camp staff members had to hike to the farm and retrieve the fresh dairy products (in rain or shine). I started making this trip with Egor during the second season for some peace and quiet away from the campers. One morning after a day of heavy rain, Egor and I set out for the farm. Trying to be a gentleman, Egor offered to carry me across the river, so that my feet would not get wet. Well, the water was way up and the current was rushing, so after the first couple of carefully placed steps, Egor slipped and we both landed in the river and were completely soaked!

I also had the opportunity to become acquainted with the bee farmers, Irislav (40+) and his father Mikhailich (65+). Both men were educated and fairly well traveled- characteristics that were quite noticeable compared to their neighboring farmers. They had the best stories, which they narrated in deep calm voices. I quickly became Irislav and Mikhailich's favorite of the group. They kept me supplied in fresh honey and the "mother's milk" the creamy substance that surrounds the bee larvae and is a valuable commodity for cosmetic companies.



Mikhailich checking for 'mother's milk'
Photograph by Katie Scodova '03

During the first and second sessions, Mikhailich gave all of the girls some of the "mother milk" to "keep them young and beautiful." Another treat that Mikhailich and Irislav shared was their *samagon*, homemade vodka. It was so strong that it made mass-produced vodka taste like water. Speaking of interesting drinks, I also tried *kumiss*, which is the traditional drink of Kazakhstan. It is quite possibly the most disgusting thing that I have ever tried. The Russians all hated the *kumiss*, but the Kazakh kids loved it! They insisted that it had to be drunk quickly, so I complied after the first few sips because the slow pace was too unbearable. I am not sure if it was better that way, but I did manage to finish my glass and not offend the kids.

I should clarify that drinking, except for the *kumiss*, was technically not allowed in the camp, but there always seemed to be a supply on hand for "special occasions." The children

also smuggled in alcohol, but when they were caught, the director did not do anything about it. When the staff members drank, it was always after hours and in Sasha's tent to prevent the children from witnessing. These late night socializing events were occasionally accompanied by random visitors- usually friends of the director. One night, two rugged men came into the dining tent, where Sasha and I were discussing upcoming events. These men were Sasha's old hunting buddies, and they came to do some late night hunting. Of course, this meant drinking a few bottles of vodka first, exchanging old hunting stories, having a little something to *perekusyt'*, and then the adventure began. In this case, hunting meant mounting spotlights to the director's jeep, two tipsy men strapped to the back with guns, and driving across through the fields on the mountain top. By this point in the summer, I had already received quite a reputation for being adventurous, so I could not pass this opportunity up. Egor also asked to come along, but the others were too scared or tired to join the action (maybe they were the smart ones). Sasha, Egor, Irislav, the two hunters and I all climbed into Sasha's jeep around midnight to go hunting. As far as I know, hunting with a spotlight is illegal in the states, and when I shared this information with the others, they assured me that it was also illegal in Kazakhstan. However, Kazakhstani officials could be easily bribed, so no one worried about the consequences. The night of hunting was rather uneventful; the men did not succeed in their mission, and I fell asleep.

Overall I really enjoyed my time in Kazakhstan. I was the only person in the camp who spoke Russian and English, so I was the designated translator between the staff and the teaching volunteers. It was hard for me to deal with my employers for several reasons such as the complete lack of professionalism and rampant sexual harassment, but I was determined to make the most of the situation. I became friends with the other staff members and took every opportunity to learn more about the culture and history of Kazakhstan. I became more comfortable speaking Russian, and the experience reinforced my desire to attend law school and do work on rule of law and freedom of speech issues in the former Soviet Union.



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