Vice President for International Affairs David Zaret was in Istanbul last spring in the midst of a popular uprising. He reports on and illustrates the protests and their results.

Memories are fading of the U.S. anti-war protest movement of the 1960s and 1970s. But there are periodic reminders of the force of popular protest in democratic cultures. Last June, Vice President David Zaret, in Istanbul on university business, found himself in the midst of demonstrations that brought back memories of a generation past.

Protests began in late May and were sparked by a government plan to replace one of the last remaining parks on the European side of Istanbul with a shopping mall. That initial protest became the seed for what grew into 5,000 demonstrations involving an estimated 3.5 million people across Turkey’s political spectrum and morphed into more general opposition to the policies and rhetoric of the ruling party. Like the Vietnam protests in the U.S., there was much spontaneous action but no central organizing body.

Zaret captured images of the city in the midst of the upheaval. Taksim Square, adjacent to the threatened park, was the site of massive demonstrations. Istiklal Caddesi is a main thoroughfare leading to Taksim Square. It also saw many clashes with police throughout the summer. This was a side of Istanbul that Zaret had not seen before. This is “one of my favorite cities,” Zaret said. “Istanbul is about the intersection of food, water, and heavy historical memory. It is inadequately described as ‘Islamic.’ The art and architecture of this culture are heavily inflected by central Asian, Byzantine, and Roman antecedents.” In previous visits, he captured images of a more tranquil city.
One of the many burned-out cars and other vehicles left in the square after clashes between protesters and police

Protesters barricaded streets leading to Taksim Square.

Below: Vehicles burned in the demonstrations were also converted to bulletin boards. Below right: “I commend the quiet spaces of the Church of the Holy Saviour in Chora, also known as the Chora Museum, and its exquisite Byzantine mosaics and frescoes. It was constructed just over 1,000 years ago.”—David Zaret

Bottom: The Galata Tower in Karaköy, a neighborhood in the Beyoğlu district. “This area is one of my favorite places in the city,” Zaret said. The tower keeps watch over İstiklal Caddesi—at a more tranquil time.”
For his work on behalf of Latin America and Latin American history, Jeffrey L. Gould was honored with the Indiana University John W. Ryan Award for International Programs in 2013. His 25 years in the IU history department have been punctuated by books in English and Spanish that are regularly cited as authoritative sources for modern Latin American history. For 13 of those years, he directed the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. In addition, he produced two full-length feature documentaries on Latin America and has now begun preliminary work on a third.

Gould began his career working with unions, first in Turin, Italy, and then in upstate New York. Although his sympathies supported those who got a raw deal from factions in power, he found himself at odds with union organizations that failed to serve their constituencies because of their own corruption.

One of the first reporters on the ground after the Sandinista revolution in 1979, Gould (second from the right) was assigned to interview survivors who lost family members in the fighting.