Latvian Teachers Participate in CIVITAS

The Social Studies Development Center hosted five visitors from the Republic of Latvia in February and March. The visitors, Guntars Catlaks, Liesma Lapina, Irena Saleniece, Valts Smarma, and Aija Tuna, are educators. They were here to participate in the SSDC's newest project, "CIVITAS: An International Civic Education Exchange Program." The program is administered by the Center for Civic Education at Calabasas, California, in cooperation with the United States Information Agency and its affiliated offices in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The U.S. Department of Education provided the funding.

This winter, CIVITAS brought delegations of educators and other professionals from the Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, Hungary, and Russia to sites in the United States. The delegations developed lesson plans for teaching civics in their newly-democratized countries and devised instructional materials for teachers in the United States to teach about emerging constitutional democracies.

Hosting the delegation in Bloomington were John J. Patrick, IU professor of education and director of the Social Studies Development Center; Robert Leming, director of the Indiana Program for Law-related Education at the Social Studies Development Center; and, Laura Pinhey, co-director of the ERIC Adjunct Clearinghouse for International Civic Education in the SSDC. The three are director, co-director, and project associate respectively for the SSDC branch of CIVITAS.

In Bloomington, the Latvian delegation observed primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-level classes. They also visited the Indiana Attorney General’s Office, the Monroe County Justice Building, and the Monroe County Jail. The group participated in seminars led by Patrick and other experts in civics, law-related education, and economics.

The delegation also served as guest speakers at "Democratization in Latvia: Issues and Prospects," a symposium presented by the Department of Central Eurasian Studies, The Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center, and The Russian and East European Institute. In March, the group visited Chicago and Washington, D.C. before returning to Latvia.

The second phase of the project occurs in June, when a delegation of educators from the United States, led by Professor Patrick, will travel to Latvia. The Latvian host organization for the American delegation will be the Democracy Advancement Center. He will be sponsored in this role by the USIA.

Laura Pinhey (center) and her husband Tom Zeta (third from left) take leave of Latvian visitors Irene Saleniece, Aija Tuna, Guntars Catlaks, Liesma Lapina, and Valts Smarma at Indianapolis.

Teachers continued from page 2

growth while acquiring new perspectives on teaching methods and philosophies. Those who sign up undergo vigorous pre-training courses focusing on the history, educational system, and culture of the host country, while earning graduate-level credits. Upon graduation, the students' overseas experiences generally enhances their potential for rapid job placement.

The student teachers, most of whom will end up teaching in Indiana schools, are typically placed in villages and small to medium-size towns where they can readily immerse themselves in the life of the community. They teach their subject areas, ranging from language arts to physics to sports, live with host families, and are required to plan and carry out specific community action projects. They return to Indiana typically transformed: "I can't imagine going on with my career and my life without having done this project!" "I never knew I was the type to adapt as well as I did."

The program has provided such a good model for incorporating intercultural teaching and learning experiences that Dr. Stachowski has been exploring the possibility of applying it to North American Indian communities. — R. N.

Laura Pinhey