Romanian Ambassador Speaks at IU Bloomington

The Russian and East European Institute (REEI) and the Office of International Programs at Indiana University were pleased to host His Excellency Sorin Dumitru Ducaru, Romanian Ambassador to the United States, who visited Bloomington on February 18, 2002. Ambassador Ducaru gave a formal address on the future of Romania in an evolving Europe and met with the faculty and students of IU's Romanian Studies Program. His visit attests to the importance of Romanian Studies at IU Bloomington, the largest program of its kind in the United States.

Ducaru began his public lecture by reflecting on his first meeting with IUB's Christina Zarifopol-Illias (Slavic Languages and Literatures), director of the Romanian Studies Program, while he was serving as the permanent representative of Romania to the United Nations. He remembered a “first encounter with a Romanian intellectual from a place [Indiana University] about which I had heard so much.”

Ducaru’s address was entitled “Romania’s Evolving Role in the International Environment: Choices, Challenges, Changes.” Speaking to an overflow audience in the Indiana Memorial Union, he outlined the goals Romania has set for itself in the near future and the challenges the Romanian people face as Europe moves toward political and economic unity. The primary issues are NATO membership, European Union accession, and a broader acceptance into Western Europe. Against a background of the upheavals of the early 1990s, Ducaru stressed the importance of obtaining the security, stability, and symbolic significance that NATO membership would provide as Romania regains a foothold in Western Europe.

Speaking on behalf of himself and Romanian Consul-General of Chicago Sever Voinescu who accompanied him, Ducaru mentioned the pride they feel in representing a “new generation in Romanian diplomacy.” He credits students throughout Romania during the communist regime with challenging the authority of the state a time when doing so was extremely dangerous. This same generation is now starting to make a real difference in Romania as it builds a civil society, market economy, and responsive government. He described the warm feelings Romanians feel toward the United States as well as the longstanding cultural, economic, and educational ties that had existed before their disruption by successive fascist and communist regimes. The resumption of educational exchanges between the two countries is therefore very important in helping to shape democracy in Romania. Ducaru went on to praise IUB’s Russian and East European Institute and the Romanian Studies Program for gathering “bright minds and bright intellectuals from Romania to keep Romanian culture alive” and affirmed the resiliency of Romanian culture to withstand so many years of oppression under communist rule.

Ducaru sees the year ahead as one that will further challenge the Romanian people, but also offer them opportunities. On the heels of recent economic progress and stabilization agreements with the International Monetary Fund as well as the attainment of visa-free travel status for Romanians to Western Europe—a huge psychological step forward, he noted—come the issues of NATO membership and continued negotiations on EU membership. Even more importantly, Ducaru welcomes the challenge of bringing Romania back to its traditional place as a well-integrated member of the European family of nations.

Commenting after the lecture, REEI Director David Ransel explained that Romania’s strong

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East Asian Studies Center Receives Major Grant for Undergraduate Education

In December 2001, Indiana University's East Asian Studies Center (EASC) received a four-year grant from the Freeman Foundation Undergraduate Funding Initiative for Asian Studies. The grant is for $2 million, the maximum available under this grant initiative, and confirms the already strong relationship between EASC and the Freeman Foundation that has been cultivated over the past five years through a series of outreach grants.

The grant covers a variety of goals and programs under the theme, "Communicating East Asia." The first goal, to which the bulk of the funding is dedicated, is to integrate an East Asian presence into disciplines where there has traditionally been little or no coverage at IU. This will be met primarily by adding three faculty lines, one each to the School of Education, the Kelley School of Business, and the College of Arts and Sciences. The grant will fund the faculty positions for four years, after which the university will assume responsibility for converting them to permanent positions. EASC will also fund professional development for current faculty and sponsor visits by scholars and established journalists with East Asian interests to the School of Journalism.

Another goal is to raise awareness of East Asia among IU's undergraduates, primarily by adding new courses, inviting guest lecturers, and creating more overseas study and internship opportunities. A third goal is to help fund programming for IU's undergraduate residential language houses, in particular the existing Japan House and the planned houses for Chinese and Korean.

Finally, EASC will be able to enhance its long-running community outreach and K–12 educational programs and workshops, in particular, a distance-learning project involving interactive video conferencing between IU faculty and students at schools throughout Indiana.

"This funding will help us accomplish the major goal of fostering a more global view in our students by teaching them about East Asian cultures, traditions and societies, and the impact of that cultural heritage on our own," said George Wilson, EASC director. He adds, "Through the foundation's assistance, we at IU look forward to significant activity over a sustained period. The result will be to build our program in important ways."

The Freeman Foundation is based in New York and was established in 1992 to support greater understanding between Asia and the United States.

-Jacques Fuqua Jr.
Associate Director, EASC

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affinity to the cultures of Latin Europe were key to maintaining Romanian identity throughout the years of communist rule—Romania's regime having been the most repressive of any in the former Eastern Bloc. "Their traditions are connected to the cultures of Italy and France, and [they] were closely associated with them before communist rule," said Ransel.

The Romanian Studies Program at IU is the only program in the country that offers in-depth study of the history, language, and culture of Romania. It has been part of IUB's East European studies curriculum since the early 1950s. The specialized curriculum includes three years of language instruction during the academic year as well as a summer intensive language program; library resources sufficient to support advanced research in Romanian studies; and strong relationships with Romanian institutions of higher learning. The program counts among its alumni U.S. foreign service officers, humanitarian aid workers, and educational exchange specialists.

-Mark Betka, REEI
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