IUB Hosts Workshop on Kremlin Power and Recent Russian Elections

“Putin leads nearest presidential rival by 75 percent”
“Candidate Rybkin disappears for five days”
“Pro-Putin United Russia wins Duma supermajority”
“Pro-Western liberal parties lose nearly all Duma seats”
“Putin unchallenged as presidential frontrunner”

Such are some of the headlines in recent issues of Russian Election Watch, a watchdog on major national elections in Russia. Russian Election Watch is edited by political science professor Henry Hale, organizer of a recent workshop at Indiana University Bloomington on the Russian parliamentary elections of December 2003 and the presidential election of March 2004.

These headlines indicate that Putin is certain to win a second term as Russia’s president by a majority of 75 percent or more. The elections appear to be nothing more than a democratic façade to cover up the authoritarian leanings of Putin’s administration. The dominance of Putin raises questions about the state of Russian political culture and the future course of the country’s democracy. It also contributes to a debate about how to structure policy recommendations in democratizing countries that face a host of challenges as they develop viable political systems based on civic participation.

In late February, the Russian and East European Institute (REEI) and the Department of Political Science sponsored a workshop titled “Kremlin Power and the 2003–2004 Russian Elections” that drew about 75 faculty and students. On hand were Russian political experts—such as Timothy Colton, professor of government and Russian studies at Harvard University; Julie Corwin, senior analyst for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; Vladimir Gelman of the European University at St. Petersburg; Robert Orttung of American University who edits the Russian Regional Report; and Nikolay Petrov of the Carnegie Moscow Center—who presented their latest research on the Russian elections and what the election cycle means to Russian democracy.

“There are a lot of interesting dynamics at the regional level,” said workshop organizer Hale, “which raises the question: Do regional governments provide the basis for the future of democracy in Russia?”

The three panels were the following: “Russian Voters, Kremlin Power, and the Party Competition;” “The Duma District Elections: Democracy Developing, Denied, or Denuded?”; and “Implications for the Forthcoming Russian Presidential Elections.”

Russian politics were explained in a variety of ways. Corwin stated that political campaigns in Russia are “competitive and dirty.” She described Russian elections as a type of “clan warfare” that was characterized by showdowns between armed camps with the aid of organized crime and big business. If this is the case, Russia has some distance to go in establishing democratic processes. However, there seems to be some cause for hope. Hale’s research, which surveys political attitudes of Russian voters at the regional level, indicated that most Russians favor a democratic system: 58 percent of Russians believe that democracy is suitable for the country, while 23 percent do not. But only 35 percent consider Russia to be a democracy while 48 percent think it is not. According to Hale, one of the problems could be a weak party system that lacks active participation by Russia’s citizens. Only 2 percent of Russians identify themselves as party members, while 67 percent believe that political parties do not care what people think. A viable party system is often cited by political scientists as one of the foundations of a strong democracy, and, obviously, Russia has much work to do. But, says Hale, it is because U.S.–Russian relations are

continued on page 43
**Macedonian Educators continued from previous page**

At IU Southeast, Jerry Wheat and colleague Frank Wadsworth of the School of Business and Brenda Swartz of the Regional Economic Development Resource Center also provided a two-week intensive training program for six participants from SEEU’s Faculty of Business Administration. These were Izet Zequiri, Abdylmenaf Sejdini, Luan Eshtrefi, Selajdin Abxili, Rasim Zuferi, and Dzemal Nurkovik. The goal of the program was to help them open a business research center for community outreach at SEEU. Another member, Sedat Mahmudi, enrolled for business courses starting in the spring semester 2004. Another faculty fellow, Miranda Abazi, is starting a master’s program in executive development at Ball State University.

The IU–Macedonia Linkage Program exposes SEEU educators and administrators to programs of different scope and scale at each of the Indiana campuses they visit, whether within the IU university system or at other campuses within the state. This provides them with a range of comparative perspectives to take back to Macedonia. With nearly 4,000 students enrolled, SEEU is already gaining recognition within Macedonia and other Balkan countries as a progressive, modern university with a commitment to multicultural education.

—CIEDA and RMN

---

**Kremlin continued from page 28**

so important that Russian politics must continue to be studied.

IU Bloomington has a long tradition of Russian studies with one of the oldest and largest research centers in the United States. The political science department has great strengths in the study of democracy, making it ideal for IU to have hosted a workshop on the Russian elections. The workshop also received support from the Office of International Programs, the College of Arts and Humanities Institute, and the Dean of the Faculties Multidisciplinary Ventures Fund.

—Jonathan Hudgens

Russian and East European Institute