



When I came to the Skalny Center in the fall of 2008, I had studied neighboring Slavic languages, Czech and Russian, and in parts of the post-Communist world further east (Russia) or south (Bulgaria). My doctoral work focused on political parties in the wake of democratic transitions in post-Communist Russia and post-authoritarian Brazil. But this year my goal was to add Poland as a field of specialization and expand my research to include it as a critical case for the phenomenon I study: the consolidation of party systems.

My dissertation examined political party systems in two large and diverse transition countries which had quite unstable and incho-

Message from the Director



By Randall Stone

The past year has seen startling changes sweep across Central Europe and the world. In August, Georgian troops moved into the de facto independent province of South Ossetia, and were repulsed by a well-planned Russian combined ground, air and sea assault that occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia and advanced to within 30 kilometers of the Georgian capital. Tensions rose throughout the region, pulling Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states into a deeper diplomatic confrontation with Russia. These events were quickly eclipsed, however, by the financial crisis that spread from American subprime mortgages to European banks, Russian securities, Asian stocks, and back to American financial institutions. Russian industrial production fell 25 percent in January. China announced a \$500 billion fiscal stimulus plan. As the waves of financial distress spread, Hungary, Iceland, Ukraine, and Lithuania turned to the International Monetary Fund for emergency loans, and in April the G-20 agreed to triple the IMF's available resources. Rarely have the perils of global economic interdependence been so immediate, or the necessity of understanding international relations so clear.

The Skalny Center has been full of activity this year, as the following pages illustrate. Ognian Hishov, a Bulgarian economist, visited us from the *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* in Berlin and taught a course on the political economy of post-Communist countries. His research is on economic integration in the European Union. Annamaria Orla-Bukowska visited from Jagiellonian University in Krakow, and taught a course on the Cold War. Her research interest is in Jewish-Christian dialogue in contemporary Poland. Ewa Hauser, the founding director of the Skalny Center, returned from Ukraine this year and taught courses on Polish society and politics and political film. We will soon be saying good-bye to her, since she has accepted a position at the University of Warsaw. Daniel Epstein (Ph.D. 2008, Harvard) was our post-doctoral fellow this year, and taught courses on democratization and Russian politics. He will join the faculty at Colgate University next fall. I have spent the year teaching about international relations and writing a book about informal governance of international organizations.

Our luncheon talks and evening lectures covered a broad range of topics, including Ukrainian national identity, social policy in the European Union, contemporary Polish Catholicism, and current developments in Polish political











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