

XVIIth English Speaking Summer University

History, Historiographies, Politics, 20th August to 7th September 2001 in Cetinje (Montenegro, FRY)

Transeuropéennes (Paris) ; Co-organized with Euro-Balkan Institute (Skopje) ; in cooperation with: Centre culturel français, Podgorica; with support of : Council of Europe, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Open Society Institutes (East-east programme), European Cultural Foundation (Amsterdam), Robert Bosch Stiftung (Stuttgart); with participation of : Mobil Art Foundation (Podgorica), CEDEM (Podgorica), Monitor (Podgorica).

Within the frame of Transeuropéennes' programme "Democracy Building and the Challenge of Difference", a programme for the encouragement of democratic dialogue and the reconstruction of social ties. In the frame of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe (Round Table 1).

The programme's frame

The programme is based upon the recognition of the role played by the human sciences and culture in the forms of ethno-nationalism which have developed in the Balkans, and above all in the countries which made up the former Yugoslavia, over the past ten years, and of the weight of the communist heritage in the renewal of the humanities and culture. It is also based on a further observation: students in the humanities, journalism, political science, law, and the arts - who in the future will play a determinant role as opinion-makers in their societies - are not provided with the support and with the opportunities for movement which they require if they are to challenge the dominant discourse in a tangible way, through meetings and common endeavour. And lastly, it is based upon one further observation: academics, researchers and so on, who attempt to preserve their academic independence and freedom of speech, as well as their contacts with their students, are at jeopardy, and deserve support.

The programme's goals

Programme's goals are the following :

- Making a tangible contribution to regional cooperation in the Balkans, to intercultural actions and thinking through both differences and common references on the basis of a systematic will to overcome barriers;
- Enabling young opinion-makers from South- East Europe to meet and work together on urgent problems, which today are stifling their societies and which threaten long-term peace, and to provide them with the tools for critical reflection and comparative

analysis;

- Linking young and future opinion-makers from South-East Europe to the European Union through grass-roots co-operation, attentive to local needs, focusing not on democratic norms but rather on practices adapted to the local context;
- Network building between people of younger generations - the decision-makers of tomorrow - and the generation currently in charge;
- Drawing attention on those NGOs and universities which are open to today's world, to the issues of democratisation and civil society, and that aim at developing a thorough-going knowledge of the city and society where the sessions are held.

Human Sciences as a priority

Right from the outset of the programme (1994), Transeuropéennes chose to focus on the humanities, political science, communications and law, because they are the disciplines in which most opinion-makers are trained, whether they be university professors, journalists, essayists, lawyers, etc.

However, instruction in these disciplines has been and remains highly vulnerable to politically motivated manipulation, particularly along nationalist lines (manipulation of history and sociology, the take over of linguistics by politics - and above all through the fabrication of the new Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian languages - clashes between Bulgarian and Macedonian researchers with regard to the relationship between their languages, and so on).

Opinion is not shaped by the media alone. It is shaped through daily life, in the street, in the university, at primary and secondary school, in high school, in the language of the cities and their neighbourhood.. Any attempt to address democratic practices must integrate this dimension.

The Programme's Background

Interdisciplinary training and networking activities aim at struggling against ideologies of hatred and violence, against manipulation of culture and knowledge by politics, and at promoting democratisation of university life. Three interdisciplinary training sessions, each of them lasting 3 weeks, are being organized each year for under-graduated students in human and political sciences and journalism. Participants to these sessions are connected afterwards to a network of around 600 alumni, who took part since 1994 in Transeuropéennes' summer universities. They keep in touch through forums of discussion and smaller projects, as well as through other networking activities, esp. those run by Transeuropéennes - Macedonia, an NGO which was created beginning of 2000 on the initiative of Transeuropéennes' students' network in this country. A new dimension in the field of high education and citizenship has been developed in Zagreb in 2001 with the first conference of a middle-term project focussed on democratisation of university life.

The 2001 Summer University

The summer university set up by Transeuropéennes and Euro-Balkan Institute will

continue to increase the student's proximity to the society where they are situated. At the same time, it will allow the students to distance themselves from more traditional modes of learning, by incorporating into the three-week curriculum sessions for which they alone assume full responsibility (the workshops), as well as meetings with leaders from the cultural, associative, economic and local political communities, etc. This horizontal selforganization aims at strengthening the capacity of initiative among the students.

The project consists of a three weeks long summer university, designed for students in their third or fourth year of studies in the humanities (comparative literature, philosophy, history, ethnology, anthropology, cultural sociology, linguistics, etc.) who, through their extra-academic activities, have demonstrated a deep-seated involvement in their society. These are graduate students for whom there exists no alternative training project or possibility for intra-regional meeting, and future opinionmakers.

The working language is English.

Pedagogical principles

An interdisciplinary approach, bringing together academic research and field work in the host city (non-governmental organisations, cultural and local political life, local media) through a common foreign language (English), is the key ingredient of a programme based upon the intense human and intellectual involvement of the teaching staff and the participants' unflagging motivation. The speakers from the region will be joined by speakers from western part of Europe.

Programme's contents are the result of a cooperation between partners, along shared objectives. They are both co-ordinating the summer university.

Working methods

The students follow lectures in the morning (3 hours, of which 1.00 of lecture and 1h30 hour of discussion). They work also for 30 minutes in working groups.

The afternoons are dedicated to workshops, with self-organized discussions around film screenings, material brought by the students for discussion, as well as visits and meetings with local media, local NGO's, minority groups, other professional groups, as well as with local authorities.

The programme is enriched with cultural visits and excursions.

It aims at promoting alternative ways of teaching and learning and at creating alternative regional frames for academic trainings, in order to encourage freedom of speech, autonomy, access to interdisciplinary methodology and methods, the interdisciplinary approach being a key element for critics of manipulations of human sciences and culture.

Participants

Students are recruited independently of any institutions, through an informal network of university teachers, researchers, NGO's activists, journalists, of 350 persons. They are chosen not only on the basis of their intellectual and language skills, but also in light of

their commitment as citizens and their desire to establish lasting ties of co-operation amongst one another. Recruitment is organized and finalised by Transeuropéennes. Before coming to the summer university, students will be asked to prepare working material, based upon photos, video tapes, articles, suggesting their personal approach on the question dealt with during the SU. Each of them will have to present that material and its personal point of view on the topic, avoiding any “official” statements. During the course, they will be asked to participate in the discussion with lectures, to organize themselves in order to debate on the current issues proposed in the programme, to give account of their visits and meetings with local realities. They will have to produce both collective work and individual statements, which may consist of common exhibition or performance (as in Istanbul 2000), of a short video film with interviews, etc.; of articles brought together before the end of the session and being discussed. However, they will have to take the initiative for proposing their final results.

Introduction to the subject

To say that the Balkans are over-burdened with their past and history is a commonplace and recurrent stereotype, whose implications deserve analysis. Is there an excess of the past in the Balkans, which has to be dispensed with in order to “live”, to be able to exist in democratic terms? Is there an excess of history?

A double contradictory movement is in fact at work in the region. On the one hand, the historical events are made mythical, held as sacred, and feeds both nationalist myths and the construction of the discourse of otherness; on the other hand (and there is no contradiction in this) they are repressed - often violently.

At the same time, the transmission of the past remain a major political issue : rewriting textbooks is on the agenda of intergovernmental institutions as well as foundations and NGOs. “School textbooks as well as national history books – in other words, texts targeted to a large number of citizens or future citizens, remain profoundly marked by national ideology, just as they were at the end of the nineteenth century” wrote an historian of the region in its presentation of one Transeuropéennes’ workshop in 1999. The role of the media in developing false images of the past is well-known and analysed as well.

Very few tools are left to the citizens to take some critical distance with these manipulations of history. Moreover, amongst the young generations in the countries of the region, attitudes of refusal of the history and of the images of the past are recurrent, whether it be the recent history (beginning of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the Communist period, World War II), or the more distant past (Ottoman era, Balkanic wars, the historical ruptures of the 1920s, etc). Going hand in hand with the silence of their parents and/or grandparents, this position is not without its effects on family and societal cohesiveness, on the structuring of social ties and modes of transmission of oral history within families.

Understanding historical events means knowing them and it implies understanding the historiography processes. How do we write history? How should we deal with history writing, history teaching, dissemination of history, in order to reconnect with the contradictory aspects of the past as well as with today’s realities? Is the experience of

other countries helpful? Etc.

Students' preparatory works

Before attending the summer university, students are asked to prepare a personal work on the topic, to be presented in the frame of the workshops. Students will chose either in textbooks, in the medias or in their daily life a sample of interpretation of historical events serving a political purpose. They will present it to their colleagues, either on a written or visual form (videos, photos). The approach as to be a very personal one, and students should feel free to touch upon the issues they are interested in.

Partners

Euro-Balkan Institute ; Director: Jovan Donev ; Coordinators: Despina Angelovska, Natasha Zaeva. French Cultural Center ; Director: Rodolphe Courpied. Transeuropéennes ; Director: Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes ; Coordinators: Silvie Camil, Sébastien Babaud.

Scientific coordination of the Summer University: Mucahit Bilici.

Notes
