

From the Editor

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This is my last issue as editor of the *Newsletter*. As I announced at our meeting last December, I am resigning with the publication of this number. An End implies a Beginning. So, it is appropriate, I think, to start this last editorial with a bit of history.

The East European Anthropology Group first took shape at the 1979 Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Cleveland, Ohio. An informal session was organized by Mitchell Ratner and me for the primary purpose of facilitating communication among the growing number of anthropologists working or planning to work in Eastern Europe. With the proliferation and diversification of anthropological study in the area, it was feared that we were losing the sense of community that our small group had earlier enjoyed. The consensus seemed to be that the informal gathering had served the purpose intended, and accordingly, similar sessions (always followed by a group dinner) have since been held at every AAA meeting.

I put out the first issue of the *Newsletter* in the Fall, 1981. Its primary goal was the same as for the annual get-togethers. It was hoped that we might not only augment what was accomplished at the annual meetings but incorporate into our growing community those (particularly students, but also many faculty) who were unable to attend annual meetings of the AAA. Specifically, I stated the goals of the *Newsletter* to be (Volume 1, Number 1, page 1):

- to better organize and coordinate activities of the EEAG at the annual meetings of the AAA, including both symposia and informal gatherings;
- to serve as channel of communication, transmitting news of particular interest to East European specialists;
- to develop and strengthen better understanding and mutually beneficial relations with our colleagues in Eastern Europe;
- to promote a sense of community and co-operation among all North American anthropologists working in Eastern Europe.

The *Newsletter* was first made possible by a grant which I had obtained from the Joint Committee on Eastern Europe of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council. This financial support lasted for 3 years and allowed us to distribute the *Newsletter* without charge. When the grant ran out, the generosity of Charles Gribble of Slavica Press (who was a charter member of EEAG, though not an anthropologist) helped us weather the next couple of years. In 1984 we began to charge membership dues, but payment has always been intermittent (even a newly elected Board Member had to be asked to become a dues-payer), and we continued to distribute the *Newsletter* to nearly everyone on the accumulated mailing list. To have been stricter in this regard would have meant dropping some of our most frequent contributors and some of our most illustrious members. Keeping the publication financially afloat on our own resources was always difficult but the situation worsened a couple of years ago when AAA began to charge \$100 for room rental and program listing for our annual meeting. After publication of each issue, I worried whether there would be money enough to publish the next, but we always made it.

Mitchell and I continued to coordinate EEAG activities (he handling arrangements for meetings and I, the *Newsletter*) until EEAG was reorganized in 1985 under the direction of a three-member Board of Directors. The idea was to democratize the organization, bring in new ideas, and share the ever-increasing work load. Membership of the Board was to rotate, with one member being replaced by election every third year. Unfortunately, the Board failed to do much, including arrangements for the election of their own replacements.

I hope that over the years of publication the *Newsletter* has served to further the ambitious goals stated in that first issue. Perhaps, as some believe, it is now time for East Europeanist anthropologists to widen their perspective, to abandon their "parochialness." Perhaps the EEAG has served its purpose, and it is now time to move on. But perhaps not. I believe we need an organization as much as we ever did. Perhaps even more so. The field of East European anthropology is no longer what it was. The number of anthropologists concerned with the area is much, much greater than it was in 1979, by a factor of several times. We had then accumulated a body of anthropological literature only for Yugoslavia and Romania (and Greece, if that is to be included in Eastern Europe). Now our number includes anthropologists who have worked in and written about every country in Eastern Europe with the exception of Albania. Once associated with a small number of Universities, we are now scattered about the country, both inside and

outside of educational institutions. The need for information about and interaction with our colleagues abroad remains as great as ever.

There are a number of reasons for my resignation at this time. Most important, I have edited the *Newsletter* long enough. It is time for a change, for someone new, with new ideas. For this reason, I have tried several times in recent years to turn over the editorship, but no one with the needed resources has come forward. I am also motivated by my disappointment regarding the recent past and the apparent future of EEAG. We have been abandoned by a portion of our membership (including several of our strongest contributors of the past) in favor of the Bigger Arena, i.e. The Society for European Anthropology. (The error of this way is demonstrated in the composition of SEA symposia planned for AAA 1988; it will be a difficult struggle if East Europeanists are not the poor stepchildren of this organization, as we have been of so many others). No matter that there are many, probably a majority, of EEAG members who wish to continue our organization. It has been a difficult struggle up to now to remain afloat, and the loss of a significant number of members (albeit a minority), who put their money and their energy elsewhere, leaves little hope for our continued viability.

The crisis has not been any easier in that it has occurred at a time when we are very weak organizationally, under the leadership of elected board members who have failed to live up to their obligations. There is still a chance, however. On the last pages of this issue is a statement from the Board which indicates a commitment to setting things right. It is my hope that younger East Europeanist anthropologists will now step forward and take up the reins, including editorship of the *Newsletter*. In my current disillusionment, I cannot be of much help. I remain committed, however, to the original goals of EEAG, and I look forward to contributing in whatever way possible.