

For SAIS Alumni Association
John Hopkins University
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www.sais-jhu.edu

Almaty, Kazakhstan, Central Asia

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On a lightning visit to Central Asia, Professor Fred Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Adjunct Professor of European and Eurasian Studies at SAIS, parachuted into Almaty, Kazakhstan from Astana and met with Kazakhstan Economic University (www.kazeu.kz), members of Seven Private Members Club (<http://www.s-e-v-e-n.com>), and ARBA Wine (www.arbawine.com).

At KazEu, Serik Svyatov, Rector, and Victoria Tsay, Vice Rector, outlined the university's ambitious and entrepreneurial plans to become hands down the best business school in Kazakhstan. With over 50 years of history, KazEu is going places; its alumni are well placed all over the region. And as a private institution, it has the flexibility and spirit to reach its educational objectives. Towards that end, there is no doubt. (Below Picture: Svyatov, Tsay, Piedra, Starr – left to right)



Following the university meetings, Fred, Javier and Victoria had drinks and dinner with members of Almaty's exclusive Seven PM Club. Discussions ranged from wine making to food processing and from geopolitics to



(Starr, Piedra, Shodiev and Bond, Starr).

Kazakhstan's key role as a transport hub. Starr's recently published book *"Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia's Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane"* featured largely throughout the evening. A particular thanks to Matthew Bond, Co-Founder of the Club.

Maxmud Shodiev, a well know Central Asian entrepreneur, shed light on the manufacturing industry in Central Asia, the Customs Union and, in particular, the meat processing business as he is the principle at Bekker & Co. the premier high end meat company in Kazakhstan; his Uzbek heritage spiced up the evening.

On Saturday, Fred and Javier met with Zeinulla Kakimzhanov, the owner of ARBA WINE vineyards and winery and former Minister of Finance of Kazakhstan, for a fantastic wine tasting afternoon and discussion about Kazakhstan and its future. But, at the end of the day, nothing could beat the wine. In addition to tasting a superb Rkatseteli, Saperavi, Cabernet Franc and Gewürztraminer, we were treated to a mind boggling Pinot Noir and Riesling. The Assa Valley Pinot Noir is welcoming and reflective in a slightly metaphysical sense, much like the mysticism of the steppe nomads. Kazakh Riesling is brilliant, distinctive, polite and stirring in its sun burst of aromas from meadow flowers, honey scents and rich minerals. These are no mere words. (Below Picture: Starr, Piedra, Kakimzhanov)



Wine experts have signaled Assa Valley's Pinot Noir, Riesling and others (in fact, all the wines herein mentioned) as future winners of international wine tasting competitions. The remarkable quality of soil, the ideal daily temperature swings (35° C to 20°) as well as Assa Valley's superb geographic location at 43° 25' 34N latitude/77° 37' 23E longitude at 915 meters above sea level make for ideal wine growing conditions.

And so, virtually everywhere one looks, it is clear that Kazakhstan is on the rise; and it is even clearer that the glories of the Silk Road will return. It's not just Fred and Javier who agree, investors do as well. Come and see!

Next message: Special on Assa Valley and its wines; KazEu University and other activities and insights

Javier Piedra,
Senior Advisor, Strategy
KazEu University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
Piedra@kazeu.kz
SAIS Grad 1988 and Representative SAIS Alumni Association, Central Asia.