


Master of Technology - Dr. Csaba Szabó

Global Lecture Hall

An exciting event of the conference was hosted by the Central European University on Friday afternoon. The Auditorium of the University was expanded to a virtual Global Lecture Hall by a multisite, multi-media conference directed by Professor Takeshi Utsumi, a leader of the international distance education community, and Dr. Huba Brückner, in the U.S.A. and in Budapest, respectively. Participants joined the conference from Norwalk Hospital, Connecticut, from Michigan State University and from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, using videoconferencing equipment from PictureTel, a world leader in videoconferencing solutions and one of the sponsors of the event. Videoconferencing is a standard technology used worldwide that enables one to transmit quality moving pictures and sound over standard switched digital telephone connections such as ISDN, the Integrated Services Digital Network, which is available now in many developed countries at a cost equal to or slightly higher than the usual (analog) telephone. In Budapest, temporary ISDN connections were set up by MATÁV, the Hungarian Telecommunications Company. The professional job done by MATÁV experts which was coordinated by Dr. Imre Abos contributed to the success to a great extent. All participants in the auditorium were

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able to follow the videoconference on a big screen and could ask questions at any time, irrespective of where they sat in the hall. The conference started by an introduction from both sides of the ocean and an interesting discussion took place about the possibilities and significance of international distance

education. Mr. George Soros joined the discussion for a couple of minutes (from his rural cottage, where he was able to talk only by telephone and could not use his PictureTel equipment from his home office). Mrs. Fulbright and Mr. Soros discussed the cooperation possibilities between the two important foundations. The second half of the conference was a series of exciting demonstrations of telemedicine and distance education. In this part, inex-

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pensive alternative technologies to videoconferencing were demonstrated including ShareVision, a technology that makes it possible to transmit moving pictures and voice/data over standard analog telephone connections, and CU-SeeMe, a data/voice/video transmission capability of Internet. These technologies are particularly im-

portant tools in bringing knowledge to those areas in developing countries that lack of modern telecommunication services except POTS, the Plain Old Telephone Service. If even such a basic telecommunication facility is missing, satellite technology helps: small size, portable Immarsat terminals can provide telephone connectivity virtually everywhere, within minutes. The success of the Global Lecture Hall conference was the result of the excellent teamwork of many people in Hungary and on the North American continent, including those who created the scenarios and the numerous people who contributed from the technical side. It would be impossible to give credit to all of them. As one of the organizers I am particularly glad that the technology and telecommunications worked smoothly and thus all the participants, both the active and passive, were able to concentrate on the content. This way a clear message was sent to everybody who witnessed this exciting event about the importance of the globalization of education and research and how the combination of current information technology and telecommunications can help.

GLOBAL CHANGES IN THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Plenary Session "A" was co-chaired by Dr. Tibor Frank, Director of the School of English and American Studies of Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, and a member of the SGU '96 Program Committee. Dr. Frank reports on this session:

After a brief, personal introduction by the co-chairpersons on how their own lives benefited from the Fulbright experience, Georgene Lovecky, a longstanding associate of the Fulbright Program/CIES in Washington, D.C. introduced her project on the international perception of the Fulbright experience. Géza Jeszenszky, former Foreign Minister of Hungary and an enthusiastic Fulbrighter between 1984-1986, discussed the impact of his Fulbright years in Santa Barbara on his political and academic career, particularly in the years 1990-1994, when he became a member of the Hungarian Government. Professor Thomas Keil, Professor of Sociology at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, in turn spoke of his own Fulbright experience in Bucharest in 1991-1992 and how it contributed to his better understanding inter-ethnic relations in both Europe and the United States. Professor Ervin László, President of the Club of Budapest, provided the theoretical approach of a systems scientist in an effort to provide a general framework for understanding human existence in a modern society.

Very well received by Fulbrighters present, the session served as a remarkable introduction to what the Fulbright experience has been all about and how it could contribute to global understanding in a constantly changing world.
