



UNSSSEESING
THE
ALUMNI
MAGAZINE
FROM SSEES
FEATURING
HONOURS,
NEWS, EVENTS,
STUDENTS,
HISTORY...
AND
SWORDS!

SECOND EDITION | AUTUMN 2011

EDITORIAL – IN GOOD FAITH



Welcome to the second SSEES alumni newsletter. This one is smaller but, we hope, beautiful nonetheless! As before, we have tried to combine news about developments at SSEES with alumni achievements, reports and announcements. We hope memories will be evoked by recollections of the past, and hope some of you will think of writing your own, so that we can build up a history of SSEES from the student perspective. If accounts are long, they will go onto the alumni webpage with tailored versions in the newsletter. Send your contributions, as well as any comments and suggestions, to alumni@ssees.ac.uk.

The newsletter launched in the spring was far too big to be emailed, and sadly SSEES finances will not stretch to printing and mailing. All newsletters will therefore be posted on the alumni webpage, but we may be able to email shorter newsletters if they fit into an email attachment. Of the 3795 of you registered as SSEES alumni, some 40% do not have or do not give an email address. Do encourage fellow ex-SSEES students to supply an email address, and do keep your own updated with UCL (see the alumni webpage for details of how to do this). We want to keep you in touch with SSEES and with each other: we are experimenting with a system for alumni to make contact with lost friends from SSEES. Read on to find out how to do this.

Faith Wigzell

UNSSSEESING

SSEES ALUMNA **HONOURED**

SSEES' connections with Czechoslovakia are long and distinguished; after all, T. G. Masaryk, who became the first President of Czechoslovakia, gave the opening lecture at the School in 1915.



A more recent event underlines the long connection and at the same time is, we think, a first. In March **Dr Katya Kocourek** became the first alumna to receive a Czech military medal when she was honoured for her contribution to Czechoslovak military history.

Using some of her PhD thesis material, Katya (**BA History, PhD Modern History 2009**) has produced a political biography of General Rudolf Medek. Medek, a contemporary of Masaryk, led the Czechoslovak Legions in Russia during the Great War. He was one of the leading military figures of his generation, whose poems and nationalist verse defined an age in Czechoslovak politics after 1918.

At the Military Historical Institute (VHÚ) in Prague, Dr Kocourek was presented by the Director with a special commemorative medal named after General Medek, and the book was officially 'christened' with Rudolf Medek's Sword (see picture).

Following this, Katya has now been elected a Fellow of the RSA/Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. Katya's book, entitled *echoslovakista Rudolf Medek. Politický životopis (Czechoslovakist Rudolf Medek – A Political Biography)*, is being sold all over the Czech and Slovak Republics and can be purchased on Czech Amazon (amazonek).

Katya now works for a risk management consultancy in central London but remains passionate about modern history and continues researching and writing things academic.

SSEES EVENTS

Representations of the European Migrant and the Irony curtain...



March Alumni Event

SSEES Professor George Kolankiewicz gave an illuminating talk in March on representations and experiences of the Polish migrant throughout the ages. Starting with the **'Polish peasant'** of America at the turn of the twentieth century and ending with Britain's more recent **'Polish plumber'**, the talk struck a good balance between the serious, poignant and tongue-in-cheek, covering all the important points - including, crucially, why the Poles don't take milk in their tea! It was followed by a lively debate, which spilt over into the Masaryk Room, where alumni of all ages enjoyed both a good catch-up and new introductions over a glass of wine. The talk was accompanied by a poignant photographic exhibition about life in post-war Polish resettlement camps in the UK assembled by Agata Blaszczyk-Sawyer in connection with her research under the supervision of Professor Kolankiewicz.

Katie Morris (Russian and French 2008)

Next Alumni Event ... Can We Be Joking?

Thursday October 27th

As before, the event will focus round a party with wine and snacks but will be preceded by a talk featuring a member of the current SSEES staff talking in a not too serious way about an area of their expertise.

This time Dr Seth Graham will be giving a talk entitled **"The Irony Curtain: Popular Humour in Soviet Russia"**. Seth has been teaching at SSEES for five years. He has wide ranging interests, not just the Soviet anecdote on which he has written extensively, but also Central Asian cinema and Russian popular music. More details to follow but do put this in your diary.



Organising a local Alumni event?

Please let us know. To advertise a SSEES alumni event, please e-mail: alumni@ssees.ucl.ac.uk.

SSEES NEWS

The creation of digital language repository supporting research on our area...



“... a real goldmine not only for researchers but also for language teachers who have too often found themselves working in isolation.”



‘Language matters more and more’ claimed the British Academy in its position statement last January. It certainly matters to postgraduate students and researchers undertaking fieldwork or archival research in Eastern Europe. Yet whilst it may seem obvious to state that language training is essential to the generation of meaningful research on the region, teaching and self-study materials in Slavonic and East European languages that are designed specifically around the needs of postgraduate researchers are few and far between. A new digital repository developed by the Centre for East European Language-Based Area Studies (CEELBAS) will address this substantial gap in provision, and is set to become a major national and international resource to support language training for research on Central and Eastern Europe and Russia. We believe it will be the first repository of its kind deliberately to target the requirements of research-focused language training for this region. As an open-access collection, the repository will also give SSEES alumni an opportunity to brush up on their own language skills!

Curated by UCL Library Digital Collections, the CEELBAS Language Repository will house teaching and self-study materials for a wide range of so-called ‘strategically important and vulnerable’ languages that are taught at only a few institutions in Western Europe. Materials include audio and video files, flashcards, grammars and readers, websites incorporating interactive language learning and virtual learning environments ... a real goldmine not only for researchers but also for language teachers who have too often found themselves working in isolation. The adaptation of authentic materials from various contemporary media outlets in the CEELBAS region adds to the social and cultural relevance of this innovative resource. The repository will also house presentations and guides on course design, reflections on pedagogy and linguistics, and innovative guides to postgraduate fieldwork and the region’s archives.

CEELBAS is one of five inter-university Language-Based Area Studies (LBAS) Centres funded under a joint initiative between the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC), the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Higher Education Funding Councils for England (HEFCE) and Scotland (SFC). The initiative was cited as ‘exemplary’ in the British Academy position statement referred to above, and CEELBAS strategic research collaboration and language development was also highlighted by HEFCE as a successful case study in their recently-commissioned report on support for Strategically Important and Vulnerable Subjects.

The CEELBAS Language Repository will both enhance the Centre’s achievements in this area and help to sustain them for the long term. It will be available shortly at www.ceelbas.ac.uk and at **UCL Library Services Digital Collections**.

SSEES IN THE **EARLY 1960s**

Recollections of Life and People by Martin and Anna Hansford (née Grieves) and Peter Seagrave.



When we arrived at SSEES in 1961, most students were male and ex-Forces. They had undergone Russian language training in uniform during their compulsory military service, but by now this was being phased out. Martin and Peter had both learnt Russian in the RAF, before going on to serve in Berlin. Anna belonged to the growing element that had learnt Russian at school.

SSEES was then a small independent college of the University of London (only Jews College had a smaller annual intake). Located in Senate House and 28 Russell Square it had the flavour, particularly at its student dances, of an ex-Forces drinking club. Hence, in 1962 the newly elected Students' Union Committee set about trying to improve the situation. The new committee had Martin as President, Peter as Vice-President and Treasurer, Anna as Secretary, Nick Wynn as Social Secretary plus Ron Stewart, John Holman and Colin Davis. The dances they organized proved very popular, attracting students from SOAS, Birkbeck, the Institute of Education

and even Kings and UCL. To collect the booze for the dances Martin, Peter and Nick usually drove in Martin's vintage Riley to Fuller, Smith and Turner's brewery at Chiswick - very educational, especially the visits afterwards to the brewery's hospitality room!

“... In the songs and sketches we lampooned many of the staff, who took the jokes very well.”

One of the significant things about SSEES was the camaraderie built up amongst the students and with the staff. Relations were tested and cemented at each term's dance for which, in a major innovation, we devised a cabaret based on songs and sketches about ourselves and the staff. The presence of various staff members was very gratifying, but particularly delightful and amusing were the wonderful piano duets by George Cushing (lecturer in Hungarian) and Harry Leeming (linguistics, incl. Slavonic Philology and Old Church Slavonic). They were hilarious and usually started with a toss for ends: “Thanks, I'll take the deep end!”

In the songs and sketches we lampooned many of the staff, who took the jokes very well. These included Mr Whitworth (ex-army College Secretary, famous for walking with enormous strides), Mr Tappe (lecturer in Romanian, famous for his tea parties with students), Dr Charles Drage (phonetics, famous for his tuning fork, morphemes & phonemes), George Bolsover (ex-Foreign Office School Director, a dour but kind Lancastrian, who brought his daughter to the dances), Dr Harry Leeming, Dr George Cushing, Prof. Auty, Dr Vivian de S. Pinto (an occasional lecturer in Bulgarian but better known

for selling his eggs and tomatoes to his colleagues) and a librarian, Arthur Helliwell, who sometimes had a crush on pretty girl students, notably the beautiful Masha Leontowich.



After graduation in 1964, Martin went on to join the Foreign Office and completed foreign tours in Vienna (using his Russian on UN work there) and Johannesburg, before transferring to HM Treasury. Anna joined the British Council, but resigned to look after their children. She was later tempted into teaching (French and Russian) at school and university levels. Peter chose a career in export sales, starting with an East European focus at Perkins Diesels.

There is much more where that came from: see website ...



TRACK DOWN YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS!

We are keenly aware that what many alumni would like is to renew contact with university friends...



Data protection legislation does not permit us to send you someone's email address, but we have decided to try out the following system:

Email: Faith Wigzell
f.wigzell@ssees.ucl.ac.uk

with the name. If it appears on our records, Faith will contact the person concerned and ask whether

he/she would like to renew the acquaintanceship. Bear in mind that our database is very far from complete, that some people (mainly women) may have changed their names, and that you might have to wait a while for an answer. If you do not hear back, you should assume that the search has not succeeded for whatever reason.

PLEASE HELP TODAY'S SSEES STUDENTS!

Working with Eastern Europe – would you be willing to talk to SSEES undergraduates about your experiences in the world of work?

SSEES is organizing an evening event for first and second year undergraduates to meet SSEES alumni, young and older, and listen to them talk for five or ten minutes each about their careers.

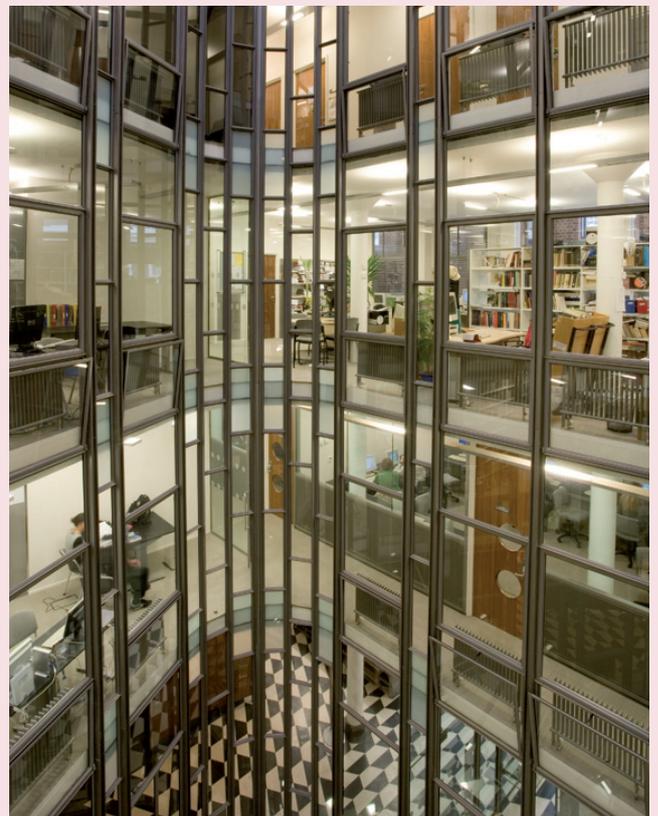
The theme of the evening will be 'Working with Eastern Europe' (broadly defined to include Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union, Central and South-Eastern-Europe).

The talks will be followed by a drinks reception.

Thursday 17 November, 6-8 pm.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact

Pete Duncan at SSEES,
020-7679 8762 or
p.duncan@ssees.ucl.ac.uk



UCL SCHOOL OF SLAVONIC AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

HOW YOU CAN **CONTRIBUTE TO SSEES**

The SSEES Alumni Association is part of the overall UCL alumni network. Consequently, from time to time you will be contacted by mail or phone with a plea for donations. These are handled centrally from UCL. However, if you make it clear that any contribution is specifically for SSEES, the School receives the money.

We want to say a big thank you to all those SSEES alumni who have contributed so generously to the SSEES endeavour. Money received goes to two vital areas of our work: small bursaries to support PhD students, and help with the cost of internships for both postgraduates and undergraduates.

In an increasingly competitive world, we have found that internships offer graduates the kind of work experience that employers seek and which often lead to full time employment.

The internship scheme is still in its infancy. In 2010 funds were allocated on a competitive basis to students on our International Master's programme (IMESS) who had found an internship and needed help with travel and accommodation . We are now looking to expand this area of work. If you are an employer, or you work for an organisation that would be interested in offering internship opportunities for SSEES students, we would like to hear from you.

**www.ssees.ucl.ac.uk/alumni
alumni@ssees.ucl.ac.uk**