



UNSEESING  
THE ALUMNI  
MAGAZINE  
FROM SSEES  
FEATURING...  
*A GUEST  
EDITOR,  
NIGHTLINE,  
LEONID ILYICH  
BREZHNEV AND  
NEW BLOGS!*

TWELTH EDITION | AUTUMN 2016

## A WORD FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

### “BUSINESS AS USUAL”: A LOOK TOWARDS THE PAST



**Image above:**

Guest editor Dr Katya Kocourek

The academic year 2015-16 was very busy for the School with both high and low points. While SSEES’ Centenary celebrations were still in full-swing, in October 2015 came the unveiling of a bust of one of the School’s founding members, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the unflappable and tee-total first President of Czechoslovakia (1918-35), which now adorns the lower staircase of the SSEES Library. Second, in June 2016, came the UK’s referendum vote in favour of “Brexit”.

Although diametrically opposed, these two events share common roots: Masaryk, like the School he helped create, was a leading proponent of the idea of European unity, while the reaction to Brexit from the academic community at UCL and other leading UK universities has reinforced the idea that British academia cannot do without its European counterparts. Indeed, despite the profound disappointment at the vote, since the results became known, UCL, like Oxford and Cambridge, has insisted that it is business as usual for the time being.

While applications for EU-backed grants continue apace, there will be time to digest the magnitude of what has happened, before the eventual invocation of Article 50. Whether “in” or “out”, one fact remains: the idea of European unity is a notion of long standing. The Holy Roman Empire aside, from the time T.G. Masaryk emerged from the proverbial fires of the Great War in 1918, he was in favour of economic integration based on zero barriers to trade, coupled with a wider concept of a greater good, otherwise known today as the somewhat sugar-coated concept of “democracy”.

But this was not the same as “self-determination”, as Jan Kubik, the Director of SSEES has explained in recent articles and commentary about Brexit. Rather, this appreciation of the wider historical context is something SSEES graduates pride themselves on – myself included – in being part of a wider European academic community whose sole purpose is “prosperity for our time”. We hope you will enjoy reading this edition of the SSEES Newsletter, which is jam-packed with historical reminiscences from some of your peers, alongside thought pieces from some of your favourite, now-retired tutors from the School.

**Dr Katya Kocourek, SSEES Alumna**

## FORMER STUDENTS REMEMBER THEIR DAYS AT SSEES AND THEIR TEACHERS

**The brilliant range of exotic teachers ...** “I REMEMBER the brilliant range of exotic teachers I had, or in one case I didn’t have. Phyllis Auty’s classes were a climb to the top of 21 [Russell Square], groping through a fog of cigarette smoke, to be regaled with personal anecdotes of Tito. The gentle academic put-downs of Francis Carsten were legendary amongst the year of 1971. Finally, at last encountering an agitated Hugh Seton-Watson on the stairs of 21, asking why I, or any other history second year, was not in his Russian History lecture. Whilst I was pleased, if mystified, that he knew me, I had to reply that I was one of just two who did not take the Russian Modern History course.” **Robert Jongs, SSEES History, 1971-74**

**The Great and the Good ...** “I REMEMBER Senate House’s rooms for the SSEES lectures and studying medieval, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russian history with the great Professors Geoffrey Hosking, Roger Bartlett and the late Lindsey Hughes”. **Renate Wright, 2000-03**

To be continued...

**Image, below left:** 21/22 Russell Square, copyright: Faith Wigzell.

**Image, below right:** Senate House, copyright: UCL Imagestore.



## HISTORY, POLITICS AND ECONOMICS – *Faith Wigzell*

**The Centenary year saw the launch of a new BA degree combining history, politics and economics. The first students started in September 2015, and throughout this academic year have followed core courses in each discipline with one of their choosing, often a language. In the coming year they drop one of the disciplines and in their final year focus mainly on one. The degree has proved attractive, despite entry requirements of 3 As at A Level; if for 2015 there were five applicants for each place, for entry in 2016 there are seven.**

I went to meet some of this year's students. I was surprised to learn how international the cohort is, including a sizeable French contingent. As Céline, Maxime and Christina, products of the French or German education system with its broader curriculum, explained, the idea of studying three subjects at a high level seems entirely natural to them. Being able to emerge with excellent English and a degree from a prestigious university in three years was a plus. British students, Grace, Tom and Josh

chose the degree for the opportunity to expand their interest in history into disciplines that would make them more easily employable. Everyone I spoke to was finding the work challenging but absorbing.

It goes without saying that option choices focus primarily on our region, but viewed from the vantage point of its global interconnectedness and significance. The regional emphasis had come as a bit of a surprise to some of the students, but they were pleased to find it possible to indulge other interests; Christina was learning Japanese and Josh was researching Latin America for his politics course work. The theoretical grounding that they receive certainly will make them able to apply their knowledge and skills in many areas, including international agencies, business, NGOs or consultancies.

**Image, below left:** full elevation from high SSEES, Taviton Street – copyright SSEES-UCL



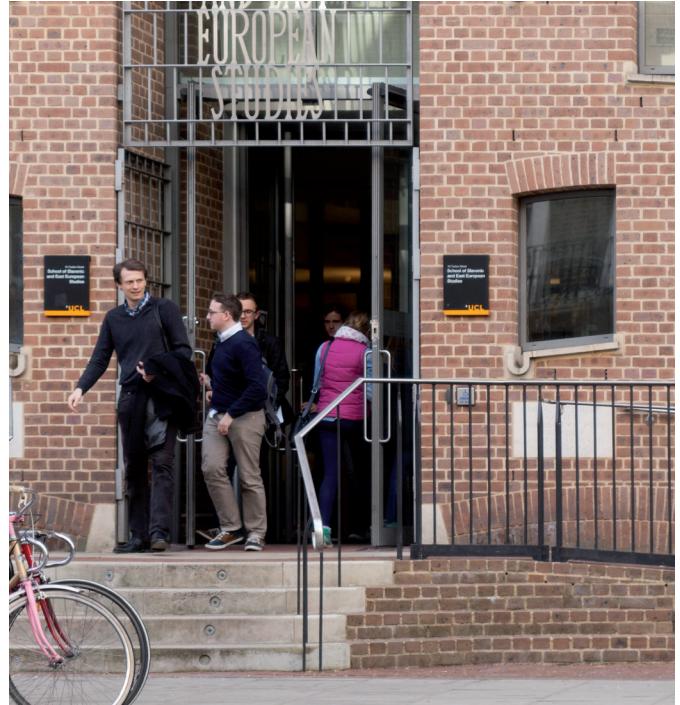
## The Origins of **Nightline** – *Geoffrey Hosking*

**Geoffrey Hosking, Emeritus Professor of Russian History at SSEES-UCL, helped to found Nightline, the student listening service. Despite its roots at Essex University (where Professor Hosking taught before coming to the School in 1984), this also has special resonance for SSEES-UCL, given that they are part of the London and Open University branch of Nightline.**

Nightline first opened at Essex University on 7th May 1970. It grew out of the experience of one student, Maggie, who was slightly disabled and hence spent a lot of time in her room in one of the towers. She found that colleagues were calling in to discuss their troubles at all hours of the day and night. She was a sympathetic listener and was happy to play this role, but found it getting too much for her.

It occurred to Maggie that it would be better if this help were centrally organised, and she went to Malcolm France, the Anglican chaplain and a former Samaritan director in Yorkshire, to discuss what to do. Straight away he suggested setting up a student night time telephone service on Samaritan lines. He insisted there should be proper training first.

Malcolm called me in. I was already a Colchester Samaritan volunteer, and one other faculty member, John Lewis, who also was to help with the training. Between March and May we set up and ran a Samaritan-style training course. Then came the evening when Nightline was launched. We gathered with great trepidation at the venue assigned to us, a prefab hut on the perimeter, which had just ceased to be the Chaplaincy Centre. Despite two rooms suitable for sleeping, a small sitting room, and an office with a telephone, it was in many ways very unsuitable: it had no toilet, and so the sanitary facilities were al fresco!



**Image, above:** Students leaving SSEES-UCL at Taviton Street – copyright SSEES-UCL

The reason for these unsatisfactory arrangements was that the University was ambivalent about allowing Nightline to start at all: the Council was worried that it might attract bad publicity on the lines of “Essex University has an epidemic of suicidal students” etc. Our answer was that (a) professionals don’t operate in the middle of the night, and (b) Nightliners would be sufficiently well trained to spot when professional help was needed, and it would then (with the caller’s permission) be sought the following day.

When we opened, there were about seven weeks of the summer term left. I thought there was a good chance that we would only get half a dozen hoax callers and then would have to give up. I could not have been more wrong. After a week or two, there were calls or visits almost every night, some of them serious. It became clear that we were meeting a real need.

## The Origins of **Nightline** – *Geoffrey Hosking (Cont'd)*

At the beginning, we had only 14 volunteers, including John and myself, and just enough to have two on duty all night once a week. We were soon able to pull out as the number of volunteers, led by a student committee, began to grow quite quickly.

Then the University began to find Nightline useful. Especially the night security staff, who were able to direct to it drunks and other “difficult” or distressed students they found roaming around. Eventually Nightline was given a whole suite of rooms, occupying an entire floor of one of the residence towers. It was even equipped with a rubber floor for cleaning up vomit!

**Image, below:** UCL at night,  
copyright UCL Imagestore.

Over the years, Essex University became proud of its pioneering role, and began to advertise the service in its publicity brochures as a valuable part of student life. Nightline now has a presence in most UK higher educational institutions. I met my wife Anne during the Nightline training sessions, and we are still together after 46 years. So Nightline proved to have strong staying power!

**Geoffrey Hosking**



## The Hammer & Sickle's **Politburo Telegram** – *John Daly*

**It was the best of times, it was worst of times.**

**It was a dark and stormy night...**

Ermm, actually, 10th November 1982 was a typical late autumn London cold and rainy day.

Little did the assembled multitudes in the SSEES bar know the humanitarian catastrophe about to overwhelm them and the progressive world.

The basement dive in 21st Russell Square, which at the time I managed, was filled with the usual afternoon reprobates: students celebrating the end of exams, students commiserating their dismal performance on said exams, celebrants of the beginning of a new love affair, those devastated by the end of others, leavened by a sprinkling of faculty who nipped in for a quick one.

Dominating the basement's decor was a poster of the Soviet Politburo. This increasingly resembled a noughts and crosses board, as the death of each Politburo gerontocrat was marked by a large cross over an ever youthful visage, as the elderly shuffled off to meet Marx. It is a little known fact, but in the years before Photoshop, the Soviet Union was a major importer of Nivea, as in each successive picture, the Soviet leadership appeared more youthful, wrinkles were erased and grey hairs reversed. Little did the assembled multitudes gracing that subterranean afternoon know that the Grim Reaper had come for the General Secretary of the CPSU.

The grievous news of Brezhnev's passing arrived about a half an hour before the 2 pm last call; after playing suitably sombre music the Soviet media informed a grief stricken world, "Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, the third General Secretary of the

Communist Party of the Soviet Union died aged 75 after suffering a heart attack."

SSEES bar mourned his passing in a round of vodka shots. After these were imbibed, it was proposed that those assembled commemorate this loss to the socialist world order via a telegram of condolence.

After much debate a text emerged: "SSEES bar notes with regret Comrade Brezhnev's passing, but remember that, all in all, it's just another stiff in the wall." A subsequent whip-around produced £5.78 to telegraph the bereft Politburo, with the hope that the Politburo would pick up on our witty Pink Floyd reference.

**Image, below:** Brezhnev leaves the podium after a meeting of the CPSU's Central Committee.



Source: RIA Novosti archive, image #36535 / Yuriy Ivanov / CC-BY-SA 3.0 (Wikicommons)

## The Hammer & Sickle's **Politburo Telegram** – *John Daly (Cont'd)*

After the bar closed, I went across to the phone box in Russell Square. BT assured me that they could forward the missive, at which point I dictated, shovelling in 50p pieces, then learning that we only had enough money for "SSEES bar notes with regret Brezhnev's passing".

The next morning the SSEES faculty member responsible for overseeing the watering hole approached me in some agitation, and told me that British security services had contacted him about SSEES sending telegrams of condolence to the Politburo. I explained, and heard nothing further.

After the collapse of "Ye Olde Evyl Empyre", a friend of mine at Moscow State University told me the fate of our missive. Apparently the Soviet government got so many telegrams that they forwarded them to the equivalent Soviet establishments; accordingly, someone in the Soviet communications network looked up the word "bar". Determining that it came from a University of London legal institution, it was shunted to Moscow State University Faculty of Laws.

**John Daly, Former SSEES PhD Student**

## SSEES' Research Blogs Expand – *Katya Kocourek*

### SSEES will soon have two academic blogs.

The first, launched by Sarah Young and Seán Hanley in 2011, regularly publishes intellectually tantalising thought pieces by academics and postgraduates. The UK's referendum vote sparked an intense discussion about Brexit after 24th June. As a result, some of the School's academics are now launching a second "SSEES Opinion" blog, based on that original debate. This new forum, which will be available via the SSEES website, will also feature themes from more recent informal discussions about the implications of Brexit. Watch this space...

**Image, right:** SSEES atrium, Copyright SEEES-UCL.



## In other news...

### SSEES Scarf Competition Result

The SSEES Student Site Committee produced scarves embroidered with “SSEES 100”, reproduced from the traditional 1950s-60s SSEES university scarf. One of these splendid scarves was up for grabs during the Centenary Appeal. The results are in and following a long drum-roll, we are pleased to announce that the winner is Louise Hardiman with the following caption:

***“Bright scarves – bright citizens!  
Glory to centenarians!”***

Scarves are still available. See the alumni webpage: [www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/alumni](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/alumni).

### Centenary Scholarship Fund

It is expected that the money raised by alumni in the Centenary Appeal will be allocated to talented students from socially or economically disadvantaged backgrounds entering in 2017.

SSEES Alumni Association (official) Facebook page now has well over 200 members. It is a quick way of communicating, and apart from news from SSEES and about cultural events, recently it has had notices about jobs. We would sincerely encourage you to join.

### Contact details.

Please don't forget to tell the Development Office if you change your contact details.



### Internships

SSEES is very grateful to those alumni who have offered or arranged internships for students. We need more since, in an increasingly competitive world, internships offer graduates the kind of work experience that employers seek and which often leads to full time employment. 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. Contact Beatrix Vegh ([b.vegh@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:b.vegh@ucl.ac.uk)).

### SSEES Alumni Association Committee

**Members: Faith Wigzell (President), Angela Garrett (Vice-President), Anna Tomlinson, Kathryn Larin, Hugo Allen and Ciaran O'Donohue. We could not manage without Lisa Walters and Lilla Bettoli, our invaluable admin support.**

This edition has been edited by alumna Dr Katya Kocourek.