



UNSSEESING
THE ALUMNI
MAGAZINE
FROM SSEES
FEATURING...
*BREXIT, SPACE
EXPLORATION,
RESCUING
REFUGEES AND
SCHOLARSHIPS!*

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR



Can there be any other topic for this edition of *UnSSEESing* than the impact of the UK decision to leave the EU which of course includes most of the SSEES countries? I've been talking to the Director, Professor Jan Kubik, who, as Pro-Vice Provost for Europe at UCL, attends discussions with universities and government about the post-Brexit future. His thoughts, along with facts and figures about current links with the EU, form the first part of the newsletter.

But that is not all. Apart from announcements, we have two articles about eminent alumnae, Helen Sharman, the first British astronaut and Clare Hollingworth, the journalist, who died in January, aged 105.

We hope you enjoy them and welcome any comments you might have (send them to l.bettiol@ucl.ac.uk).

Faith Wigzell

President SSEES alumni



THE BREXIT CRUNCH AND SSEES

Professor Kubik sees the vote to leave the EU as an indicator of more general but unhappy trends. Brexit signals a loss of trust in post-War institutions. These institutions, that those who did not experience the 20th century neither fully comprehend nor value, are being slowly dismantled. Since May / June 2016 the sense of global citizenship is on the wane, while the forces of fragmentation and division are on the rise. Sadly, this makes certain politicians and public figures happy. Some parallels between current developments and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s do exist, though they should not be exaggerated. These trends will inevitably affect everyone, including the university sector.

Research and the general intellectual climate is one such area. The present crisis, he hopes, may also engender a greater focus on the humanities and social sciences. It may lead away from the current emphasis on education as a technical preparation for employment, towards a recognition in universities of the need for people who can discuss, analyse and understand, and hence have been trained in the humanities and social sciences. Professor Kubik worries, however, that the trend may be towards creating national research 'silos', rather than transnational research networks that are clearly necessary to attract top talent to the top institutions that exist in Britain and of which it can be proud.

There is a recognition in government circles of the need to avoid disruption to research, albeit first thoughts are for the applied sciences and the interface with industry. The Director is often the sole voice from the humanities and social sciences at meetings, but those present agree, when reminded, that research is much broader and no less important.



Currently, at institutional level, cooperation with European colleagues continues as before, with applications still going in for projects up to 2020. As far as individuals are concerned, however, there is some anxiety about the future and whether cooperation with British colleagues is wise. Professor Kubik is cautiously optimistic that, with such a strong research industry in the UK, the government will come up with a way of preserving the intellectual networks of UK researchers. But there will be some costs; not everything will stay the same. We can't be sure that SSEES will continue to participate in large EU-funded research projects, such as ANTICORPP (on anti-corruption policies: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/research/funded-research-projects>).

Student recruitment and expectations

Part of the attractiveness of BA social science programmes at SSEES lies in the possibility of studying abroad: MA IMESS students spend a year at an EU university, while BAs offer the option of a year at an EU university via the EU Erasmus student exchange scheme. How these will fare in the future is unknown, but universities will wish to preserve the Erasmus scheme in some form.

THE BREXIT CRUNCH AND SSEES

And then there are the EU students:

- SSEES has the 4th largest number and the third highest proportion of EU students among UCL departments
- In 2015 nearly a quarter were from the EU
- More than 50% of the intake to BAs in History, Politics and Economics, Politics and East European Studies and Economics, Business and East European Studies were from the EU
- The 2-year International Masters in comparative area studies (IMESS) attracted more than twice as many students from the EU as from the UK

UCL has promised the cohort of 2017 the same level of support through their degree even if Brexit happens before they graduate. Nonetheless, currently EU applications for SSEES BAs are 16.5% down against a 7% national drop. It is not clear how much the decline is caused by Brexit worries, though there is isolated evidence of individuals choosing not to come to the UK. These figures from late January are not final, however, as the recruitment period has been extended.



The financial implications for SSEES

The prospect of losing students, and consequently a chunk of income, is the stuff of nightmares. Departments of UCL are given a target number of students. SSEES needs to recruit that number, as over 80% of income now comes from fees. Failure to meet target numbers means the target is lowered for the following year. Hence one year with lower student numbers affects the finances not just for that year but for subsequent years too. Less money may mean cuts, though the UCL administration is designing plans to help all the units, including SSEES, through this difficult, transitional period.

What can SSEES do except cross its collective fingers? As it no longer recruits for History (applications go to UCL History), numbers cannot be boosted there. Applications for European language degrees have long been in decline nationally, though SSEES Russian does relatively well. HPE (History, Politics, Economics), the flagship BA degree, continues to attract students. It also remains popular on the continent. SSEES is looking to initiate new BA degrees including in politics and culture. Or else expect slightly lower required A-Level grades. It's wait and see. The Director does not own a crystal ball.

Faith Wigzell

Image left: SSEES atrium with art installation whose varied hues represent the many nationalities at SSEES

SPACE EXPLORATION AND SSEES



You might think there's no connection. Wrong! The first Briton in space, astronaut Dr Helen Sharman, who spent 8 days in space in May 1991 conducting a range of experiments, did indeed study for an MA at SSEES some 8 years later.

In 1989 though the Berlin Wall was down, the USSR was still shut, but Gorbachev decided to offer astronaut training for hard currency to Western countries. Helen applied to the British company set up to manage the mission. Even after the no-hopers and wishful-thinkers had been eradicated from the original 13,000, there were still 5,500 qualified UK applicants. Medical and psychological testing and the requirement for some linguistic ability whittled the numbers down to four. Following two weeks stuck for screening in a Moscow hospital (they caused panic by going out to have a look at Moscow), the final two were selected live on British TV, and given 4 days notice to go to Zvezdnyi gorodok, then a military facility with 3,500 inhabitants.

Here learning Russian was a matter of urgency, since Helen's Russian did not even include 'Menia zovut...' (My name is...). The trainees were taught very formal Russian, discovering an entirely different kind of Russian once they began training with the astronauts.

Gradually she learnt to communicate in Russian not only with the Soviet scientists and cosmonauts but also the other trainees.

Subsequently Helen spent 8 years talking to schools and groups about science. Eventually she felt she needed a change of direction. The MA at SSEES allowed her to develop her interest in the East European languages she had encountered in the USSR. With the Yugoslav crisis raging, she chose to focus on South Central Europe, taking courses on Balkan anthropology and linguistics. Never afraid of a challenge, Helen chose Hungarian rather than a somewhat easier Slav language. She enjoyed the contact with fellow students with their varied educational backgrounds, ages and countries of origin. At a time when life had its complications, the SSEES MA became both an oasis and a luxury. It is not normally listed among her educational achievements and many honorary fellowships and doctorates, but that doesn't mean she did not value her time at SSEES.



Image top: Portrait of Helen Sharman (Photo credit: Thomas Angus, Imperial College)

Image top: Crew insignia. Caption: Crew insignia for the flight. Note that Helen's name has been spelt incorrectly in Russian

A WOMAN AHEAD OF HER TIME: CLARE HOLLINGWORTH



Among SSEES' notable female alumnae and staff, Clare Hollingworth, the famed war correspondent who died on 10th January, was a student at the School from October 1935, when she enrolled in a two-year diploma course in Balkan history (albeit never completed).

Invariably described as 'intrepid', Hollingworth made her name just three days into her journalistic career with the scoop of the century – Germany's invasion of Poland. Hollingworth's derring-do attitude took her briefly across the Polish border into Germany on 28th August 1939, where her prying eyes spotted Nazi military hardware poised to invade the country. The next day's byline in the *Daily Telegraph* read '1,000 tanks massed on Polish border. Ten divisions reported ready for swift strike'. She had made her name.

Her scoop was pre-dated by a stint as a voluntary aid worker. Her work in helping refugees flee from

Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia not only earned her a reputation as the 'Scarlet Pimpernel' among British journalists (at one time she had over 1,000 refugees in her care), it also brought her into contact with another notable SSEES personality – Doreen Warriner.

The two women most likely met in Prague in late 1938, where Warriner headed the office of the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC), arranging the safe passage of refugees out of Eastern Europe. They met again in the spring of 1939 in Katowice, in south-western Poland, where Hollingworth had been posted to co-ordinate the BCRC's work. Warriner visited Clare in Katowice to warn her that her operations had been compromised; she was under Gestapo observation.

Hollingworth's audacious character also sparked the attention of MI5 and MI6. Her efforts to arrange British visas for several well-known Czech communists (e.g. Richard Slansky) ultimately curtailed her role with the BCRC. Despite several remarkable coincidences, including the fact that Hollingworth shared the same birthday as British spymaster Kim Philby – whose defection to the USSR she uncovered in 1963 – she always denied working for intelligence herself.

Towards the end of her career, during a recording of *Desert Islands Discs* for BBC Radio 4 (1999), which included a rendition of 'Deutschland über alles', Hollingworth summed up her remarkable career, replete with colourful characters from the military and political establishment internationally, with the words: 'I enjoy danger, I enjoy action'.

Dr Katya Kocourek



*Image top left: Portrait of Clare Hollingworth
Copyright Pearl Freeman. © reserved. Photos from
the Clare Hollingworth personal collection. Published
by kind permission of Patrick Garrett/attorney to
Clare Hollingworth.*

*Image above: Refugees in Clare's care in Katowice,
1939. Image Clare Hollingworth.*

**SSEES
ALUMNI**

Calling all SSEES Alumni from 1990–1994 **Keep the evening of Saturday 20th May free**

Time to come together (about) 25 years on, see where our lives have taken us and remember:

‘What a time that was to be at SSEES, says Andy Gardner. “The Berlin Wall was still standing when we enrolled; we all knew changes were accelerating, but hadn’t expected them to go that far”. Robert Service and Rudolf Muhs recalled that they visited the Moscow archives only to be told in the afternoon that documents they’d looked at in the morning didn’t exist.

I’d studied with second generation exile descendants whose families had found they had nothing left to go home for after all they’d achieved. Few parents and grandparents envisaged a return. The EU numbered 12 countries.

We were a close knit college, mixing socially between departments and degrees, so whatever you studied we’d love to see you in May.’

Register your interest on The SSEES Alumni Facebook page or by emailing Andy at ajegardner@gmail.com. Exact time and place tba, but it will be in London.

SSEES CENTENARY SCHOLARSHIPS



The money that so many of you kindly donated during SSEES' centenary is available to students entering in 2017. We have borne in mind the wish expressed by many of you that funds should, generally speaking, be awarded to home students, and at postgraduate level to SSEES graduates. Successful applicants are expected to engage as fully as possible with the life of UCL Union and its SSEES Committee.

There will be 2 bursaries of £3000 each for 3 years for undergraduates who come from a demonstrably socially or economically disadvantaged background. Academic excellence will then be the major factor in choosing between otherwise equal candidates. One of the bursaries will be for a student of language and culture (East European or Russian), including joint degrees with a SSEES language. Applicants fill up an application form and the scholarships will be awarded following A Level results. If you know any likely candidates, get them to look at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/prospective-students/undergraduate/centenary-scholarship-ug>.

At the postgraduate level SSEES is offering two bursaries of £3,000 each towards fees for a taught Master's degree (MA, MRes or IMESS), and one SSEES Excellence Scholarship also of £3,000 for a PhD student. These are for those who have or will have completed their first degree at SSEES.

Despite the specific application criteria, Twitter has gone into overdrive, with the news re-tweeted round Africa. Lisa receives phone calls asking whether the speaker can, for example, have a scholarship to learn to be a pilot or study dentistry!

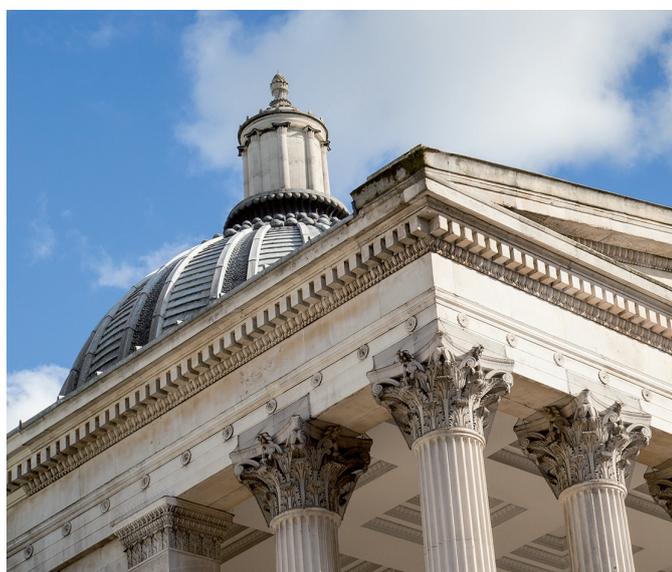
LAST BUT NOT LEAST

SSEES Alumni Association

SSEES Alumni Association (official) Facebook page now has over 270 members. It features events (inevitably mainly in the London area), but also job opportunities, photos and comments. It is a quick way of communicating, and if you do Facebook, we urge you to join. Do note that if you don't live in the UK, you will not be sent details of alumni events (this because of complaints from those who live far away about unnecessary emails). Events are always posted on the Facebook page, so if you might be in the UK and want to come along, you will find the details there.

Do keep in contact

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



SSEES EVENTS

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 **Dr Svetlana Makarova** at SSEES (s.makarova@ucl.ac.uk).

SSEES Alumni Association Committee

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

March Event

Bliny, strudel, kielbasa, vinegret, Moscow mules, vodka, vino and much more! Don't miss the East European Food and Drink Event at SSEES, **Thursday 16th March at 6pm**. Tickets £10 via bank transfer or £11.50 via Eventbrite (see Facebook or alumni webpage for details).

Newsletter edited by **Faith Wigzell** with the help of **Fliss Probert**.