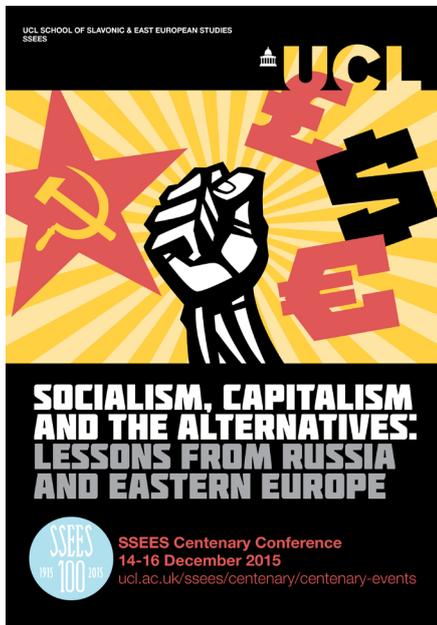


UN**SSEES**ING
THE ALUMNI
MAGAZINE
FROM SSEES
FEATURING...
POSH DINNERS,
STOLEN
MASCOTS, EAST
EUROPEANS AND
COMPETITIONS!

Looking back on the Centenary Year



It's over, but what a year it was for SSEES.

A celebratory opening reception in January was matched on Foundation Day, 19 October, by a ceremonial unveiling of the bust of Tomáš Masaryk. Through the year major conferences tackled subjects ranging from sexualities in Russia to Lithuanian history, the politics of teaching and learning, Polish migrants in the UK, the challenges and achievements of emerging economies and the future of area studies in the 21st century. The culmination was December's major three-day conference, '*Socialism, Capitalism and the Alternatives: Lessons from Russia and Eastern Europe*'. An audience of around 900 packed into Friends' House to hear keynote speeches by economist Thomas Piketty and social activist Naomi Klein and then by political theorist Chantal Mouffe and the former Polish Minister of Finance, Leszek Balcerowicz. More papers and lively debate filled the next two days.

THE UCL SCHOOL OF SLAVONIC AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES
CENTENARY FILM FESTIVAL
 12 October - 17 December
 The Bloomsbury Theatre



Images above posters from two SSEES centenary events

Equally popular were the SSEES 100 lectures by eminent former members of staff, Geoffrey Hosking, George Kolankiewicz, Dennis Deletant and Norman Davies. Getting a ticket to the panel discussion on Russia and Europe at the House of Commons in March was no easier, though some alumni managed it.

It was not all talk. Language teachers produced a fascinating online journey through the East European communities of London, which you can find on www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/language-trails. The musical heritage of the last 100 years was celebrated in two free chamber music concerts, while SSEES' strength in film studies was reflected in an autumn-long festival of East European film. The range of films was extraordinary, spanning the century from 1915 and the whole geographical area, including many from countries less well-known for their film-making and those which had never been shown commercially in the country.

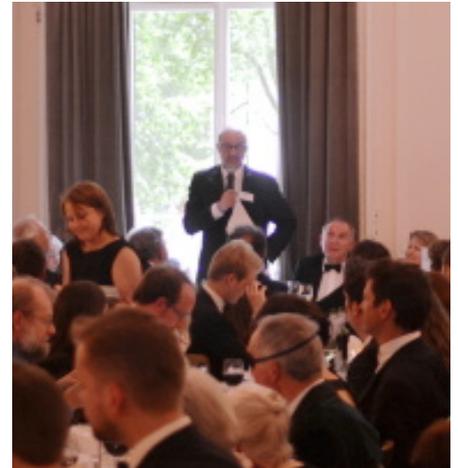
www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees

Alumni and the Centenary

Alumni also played an important part in the centenary year, in particular through their amazing generosity. A huge thank you to the many alumni who have generously donated more than £28,000 to SSEES during the centenary fund-raising campaign. All the money is going to students, and in the next edition we will be able to tell you how it was allocated.

Apart from gifts from you as individuals, the Alumni Association raised £1389 (including gift aid). This came from the dinner raffle and the mugs. We had priced the mugs assuming we might sell only the first order of 84, but in the end we sold around 200. Thank you for buying what is now a collector's item! Several of you also sent in their recollections of SSEES, and we hope to be able to use some of these in a future edition of *UnSSEESing*.

The big alumni event was the dinner, held in the splendid premises of the Polish Hearth Club in South Kensington. 150 people packed the downstairs bar for a champagne reception before ascending the splendid staircase to the old ballroom that stretched from the front of the building to the back overlooking the grassy square behind. It was wonderful that some had travelled across continents to come to the dinner, but sad that we could not fit everyone in. Thanks to donations of raffle prizes, the cost of room hire and the generosity of the Polish Hearth Club in treating us as members, the cost was kept down but the enjoyment level kept up!



Images above the SSEES Centenary Dinner



"A huge thank you to the many alumni who have generously donated more than £28,000 to SSEES during the centenary fund-raising campaign. All the money is going to students"

Looking back to 21–2 Russell Square:

1. Remembering the Clunns

From the 1970s to the early 90s 21/22 Russell Square was the heart of college life at SSEES. Within its imposing facade lay the JCR and SCR and, in the basement, the small bar. If you were at SSEES then, you'll surely have fond memories of long term live-in caretakers, Mr and Mrs Clunn.

For many students away from home for the first time, Irene and Ron were surrogate parents in all but name. The Students' Union did not have a bespoke on-premises welfare service, but the Clunns provided one. They helped undergraduates' cope with loneliness and homesickness, particularly students from far away; listened privately to the mental chaos of the first crush; helped others cope with the first break-up. Irene advised those moving out of Hall and into flatshares on how to manage a household budget so that there would be food and power. I remember on one occasion Irene – who also ran the canteen – frogmarching a student – to Safeway for an object lesson in how to devise a shopping list.

They were tolerant but certainly put their foot down when there were instances of riotous debauchery. The Hammer and Sickle, the small bar in the basement of 22 Russell Square was founded as a Staff-Student Club in 1980, and although they didn't interfere, the Clunns watched it like hawks, and successive managers at the end of the early evening shift (it closed at 7pm) referred to 'taking the keys up to Mum and Dad'. The counter threat if people weren't eager to leave, was 'She'll be down with her mop!'

As Secretary of the Students' Union in 1991–92 it was my privilege to help arrange their 20th anniversary party. When pressure on space obliged the Clunns to move out of their flat in

1994-5, there was much sadness – the building was not the same without them!

Andrew Gardner, SSEES History 1989 – 1992



Image above clipart picture of Andrew Gardener



Image above The Clunns would have been shocked to see the building taken over by anarchist squatters in 2006. Copyright Kaihsu Tai

Looking back to 21–2 Russell Square:

2. The Great Velesh Heist



The SSEES mascot Velesh materialized in the early 1960s. Every London University college, however tiny, needed one, and what better choice than the ancient Slav deity Veles(h)/Volos, protector of cattle, bringer of plenty and protector of poets? A huge bull's head with splendid horns was attached to a beer barrel (sadly empty) and given sturdy legs. Eventually torso and legs were jettisoned. John Shirley (1986) recounts the story of Velesh's abduction.

“In the summer term of 1985 a gang of stripy-blazered scoundrels burst into the ground-floor JCR at 21 Russell Square. Ignoring the stares of Ron and Irene Clunn, and dismissing the few bleary-eyed students smoking roll-ups with their tea, they grabbed a couple of plastic-backed chairs, rammed them against the corner cupboard, grabbed Velesh by the horns and rushed out! Word soon got around. Great was the consternation. Within a few days the perpetrators of the heist were revealed to be Imperial College! But could we rescue Velesh? After some probing we learnt that, if their Student Union president appeared at their AGM without a gown, he was to be thrown into the Serpentine!

A nonchalant incognito saunter into their Union soon brought the item to SSEES, and, knowing their AGM was imminent, a note suggesting an exchange was despatched. A time and date were reluctantly agreed.

Come the day, a SSEES snatch-squad of three was cobbled together, the most important being the student in possession of an open-top sports car, the engine of which was to be kept running during the exchange. Deep in enemy territory on Exhibition Road, I and a budding OTC officer walked slowly towards the foe, holding aloft the cherished black gown. This triggered them into bringing out Velesh. Out-numbered, out-blazered, with not even a bow-tie between us, we pressed on till one of us held a horn, and finally, when we both had full grasp, we released the vital gown on which they had equally gradually got their mitts. Fearing enemy treachery, we raced to the car, leaping into the back with our precious cargo, shouting “Go! Go!” to the impatient driver who sped off towards the Great West Road! You can be sure that not a few victory pints were pulled by Vietnam-protester barman and PhD student John Daly in the SSEES basement bar that evening!”



Images above Cartoons by John Shirley

Alumni events and competition!

Win a SSEES scarf!

The SSEES college scarf has been reproduced for the centenary by the same company that made them 50 years ago. This limited edition is available from Sarah-Jane (s.gregori@ucl.ac.uk) for £20 (postage extra). However, you can win one. Just devise a caption for the picture of the **Spirit of the Slavs** (seen here). Submit your entry to ssees-events@ucl.ac.uk by March 10th 2016.



Next alumni event

March 17th at 6pm

Keir Giles, SSEES alumnus and associate fellow of Chatham House, and an expert on cyber security will be talking on 'Russia and the internet: a love-hate thing'. Why does Russia seem so confused about what the internet is for? At home, Moscow is deeply worried about the influence of what President Putin has called a 'CIA project', but abroad, Russia is one of the world leaders in using everything from cyber attack to social media exploitation against its adversaries.

This talk looks at the history of Russian attitudes to the internet to explain how these attitudes work together, why Russia is trying to treat the internet like it did newspapers in the Cold War, and what we should worry about next in Russia's use of cyber attack and information war. The usual convivial feasting will follow.

Image above: 'We have nothing to lose but our networks' – banner from an internet freedom rally in St Petersburg in 2013. Image Author [VOA](#). [Creative Commons](#). Click [here](#) for original source.

East Europeans Celebrated!



Bloody East Europeans. Not a phrase likely to be hovering on the lips of those who study, studied or work(ed) at SSEES, but we can't be unaware that some UK citizens are convinced that 'all the UK's problems are caused by Eastern European immigrants with funny names and an annoying habit of working too hard'.

Now the immigrant experience has been distilled into a satirical play-cum-musical revue *Bloody East Europeans*. Enjoying considerable success at the Edinburgh Fringe 2015 (great audience reviews, excellent ticket sales), it was longlisted for the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression award. Its authors are SSEES alumni, Olesya Khromeychuk (PhD 2011) and Uilleam Blacker, now a lecturer at SSEES. In 2010 they founded Molodyi teatr, a theatre company focussing on productions in Ukrainian drawing on the country's history, poetry and literature. *Bloody East Europeans* is a new departure, tapping the experience of company members,

some of whom now come from other East European countries. The text is largely written by Uilleam on the basis of material compiled by Olesya and other company members, with song lyrics and production by Olesya. As they say in their publicity, the play features 'mean gangsters, glamorous ladies, romantic bricklayers and professional toilet scrubbers, ... combining comedy, tragedy, Red Army songs, Ukrainian folk ballads and 70s disco hits to tell you everything you ever wanted to know about these strange and unpronounceable people'. It includes a lesson in 'East European'. Poignant, witty, exuberant and revealing are among the audience comments, with the play appealing both to those who share the immigrant experience and those who do not. We hope the production comes to UCL and will certainly let you know if it does.

Image above The cast of *Bloody East Europeans*

Future events, news etc

Future events

While we are not currently intending to organise a large dinner in the near future, we are looking at running different kinds of events on a smaller scale, and would be grateful to hear suggestions and reactions. Would you come to a smaller dinner? To drinks receptions? Contact Lisa (l.walters@ucl.ac.uk)

Library news

Alumni now have access to the ejournals in UCL Library including SSEES. While some of the more specialised SSEES holdings are not available online, many others are. For details see: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/alumni/benefits/alumniejournals>

SSEES Alumni Association (official) Facebook page now has over 200 members. It is a quick way of communicating, and if you do Facebook, we suggest you join.

Instagram

SSEES has joined the Instagram community! Search for '**uclssees**' and **#ssees** your photos for a chance to feature: <https://www.instagram.com/uclssees/> (we won't repost without permission)

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 Dr Peter Duncan (p.duncan@ucl.ac.uk).

Newsletter edited by Faith Wigzell with the help of Hugo Allen.

Committee Members:

Faith Wigzell (President), Angela Garrett (Vice-President), Clare Griffin, Kathryn Larin, Paulina Polak, Hugo Allen and new member Ciaran O'Donohue. We could not manage without Lisa Walters and Sarah-Jane Gregori, our invaluable admin support.



The UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies is one of the world's leading specialist institutions, and the largest national centre in the UK, for the study of Central, Eastern and South-East Europe and Russia.

www.ssees.ucl.ac.uk/alumni