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PRIME MINISTER

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

You will recall that Robert Conquest promised to let you have a note on the condition of Soviet and East European Studies in this country. It has now arrived (Flag A). It shows in essence that our capability in this area is in decline. Experts are being diverted into general teaching. Area studies are being ignored by the UGC.

I have had a similar approach from three Professors of Soviet and East European Studies (Branch, Amann and Kaser). Their memorandum (Flag B) argues that:

- we are losing large numbers of our best experts in this area to universities overseas;
- eminent scholars who have retired or will shortly retire are unlikely to be replaced. Our expertise is drying up;
- the quantity of postgraduate research has fallen significantly, largely because of lack of ESRC funding and absence of academic career prospects;
- Soviet and East European Studies' departments tend to be small and not to have much clout within universities. They tend to get squeezed out when it comes to distributing funds.

As a result unless the UGC gives unambiguous guidance to maintain Soviet and East European Studies at least at their present level, we risk losing our national core of expertise in what is a vital area from the point of view of national security.

George Walden is aware of these problems and is, I understand, looking into them. You might like to indicate:

- (a) that you would want to see us retain an adequate research and teaching capability in this area; and
- (b) that you have an interest in the exercise which George Walden is conducting, would wish to be kept informed of progress and be consulted before any decisions are taken;

Agree that I should write to George Walden in this sense?

C.D.P.

Yes - very much so
me

C D POWELL

25 November 1986

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
ELIZABETH HOUSE YORK ROAD LONDON SE1 7PH
TELEPHONE 01-934 9000

FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

Prime Minister
This is an
inquiry report
from George

16 December 1986

Waldh. I propose
to say that you
would like to be
regularly informed; I
would want to see
some recommendations

Dear Charles,

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

attached

Thank you for your letter of 26 November about the representations the Prime Minister has received on Soviet and East European Studies in our universities. This is a concern that I have shared for some time (see enclosed minute). It was reinforced by the Foreign Affairs Committee's report on UK-Soviet Relations last March, which recommended improved support for Soviet and East European Studies and Russian Language Teaching in the universities. In reply, the Government said that it proposed to hold discussions to consider what might be done to meet the concerns of the Committee.

by
Easter.
Agree?
CDP
18/12

After preliminary consultations with the relevant Ministers I have already had some discussions with officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry and representatives from the University Grants Committee. I have also had talks with the leaders of the two main subject associations - the British National Association of Soviet and East European Studies and the British Universities' Association of Slavists - and I am now planning to hold a seminar in the new year that will allow me to hear the views of a wider cross section of academics. My preliminary conclusion is that the problem is most marked at the post graduate level.

The Economic and Social Research Council, which is responsible for funding research in Soviet and East European Studies, is planning to review its position on area studies generally next year and has already had a useful meeting on research on the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China.

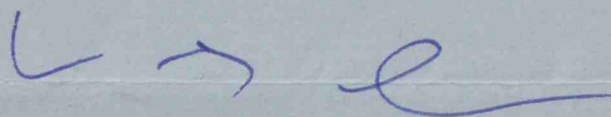
There may be some initiatives that the Government can take to stimulate research and postgraduate study. I have some ideas which I shall test out in the Soviet Studies community. But the University Grants Committee will have to take the lead in

Continued/...

reviewing basic provision in the universities, and I know that they will be happy to do this. It is wholly untrue to say that "area studies are being ignored by the UGC". It was, after all, the UGC that commissioned the Parker Report on the requirements of diplomacy and commerce for Asian and African languages and area studies when the Government declined to do so and I understand that they are likely to agree to its main recommendations on funding when they consider grant allocations for 1987-88 and later years over the next few weeks.

I shall, of course, keep the Prime Minister in touch with the work that is being done and would, in turn, be glad to see the representations that have been made to her.

I am copying this letter to Tony Galsworthy (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).



GEORGE WALDEN



MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

For some time I have been concerned by signs of decline in the number and calibre of Soviet and East European experts in the UK. Not only are there no obvious replacements for such figures as Leonard Shapiro, Hugh Seton-Watson or Isaiah Berlin, but people like Alec Nove, Peter Wiles, or Michael Kaser cannot be around forever. I do not believe that our international standing in this field is as good as it was, or could and should be now.

The need for an adequate cadre of experts with sufficient political and historical background and personal weight, to balance the current emphasis on the more technical arms control aspects of East-West relations is of course your territory. My own immediate, Departmental concern is evidence which is reaching me - notably from Mr Archie Brown at St Anthony's College - of a shrinkage in opportunities in the range and number of postgraduate students in Soviet and East European studies (out of 15 applications for the M Phil at Oxford next year, 12 are from the USA and only 1 from the UK). One of the dangers of not having a top flight British cadre of Soviet specialists is of course that the field could be left increasingly open to "peace studies" and various arms control pressure groups.

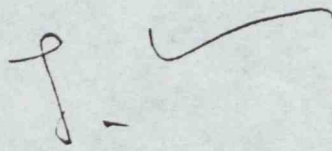
It would be unrealistic to think in terms of an expansion of Russian in schools. If action is necessary, it must be more focused. I know that the Atkinson Report looked into this 6 or 7 years ago, and recognised the need for some concentration of the rather scattered expertise that exists in

our universities (eg. London, Birmingham, Oxford, Glasgow and Bristol). But we still do not have anything remotely comparable in Soviet Studies to, say, IISS in defence.

I would be grateful for your views, and those of other recipients of this letter, on the general issues I have raised, and particularly on the quality and quantity of top level expertise available to them; on what help the universities provide in this area, and whether you share my impression that our overall national capacity may be declining. In the light of your comments, I would then propose to consider convening a meeting of representative figures from the universities, the UGC, the ESRC, and of course from interested Departments, simply to talk over the problems - arming myself beforehand against a simple request for more cash all round. But before proceeding to this, I would like some confirmation from others that a problem exists.

I should add that I am of course well aware of Peter Parker's report on the needs of diplomacy and commerce for Asian and African languages and area studies; this is a separate (though related) problem, on which this Department will be consulting you and others.

I am copying this to David Trefgarne (MOD) and Alan Clark (DTI).


GEORGE WALDEN

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
16 May 1986



file 16
cc GPC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

19 December 1986

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

Thank you for your letter of 16 December about Soviet and East European Studies in our Universities. The Prime Minister was grateful to be informed of the discussions which you are having on this and would like to be kept in touch with the work which is being done. She hopes that it might be possible for her to see some recommendations by Easter next year.

BFW

You asked me to let you have copies of the representations which have been made to her. They are enclosed.

CHARLES POWELL

George Walden, Esq., C.M.G., M.P.,
Department of Education and Science.



SKW ANQ

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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

26 November 1986

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

The Prime Minister has received a number of representatives recently about the condition of Soviet and East European studies in our universities. The general theme has been that our capability in this area is in decline; that experts are being diverted into general teaching; and that area studies are being ignored by the UGC. It has also been suggested that we are losing large numbers of our best experts to universities overseas; that eminent scholars who have retired or will shortly retire are unlikely to be replaced; that the quantity of post-graduate research has fallen significantly, because of lack of ESRC funding and with the absence of academic career prospects; and that because Soviet and East European studies departments tend to be small and to lack clout within universities they tend to get squeezed out when it comes to distributing funds. As a consequence, a risk is seen that we shall lose our national core of expertise in what is a vital area from the point of view of national security.

The Prime Minister understands that you are looking into these problems. She would like to be kept closely informed of the work which is being done and consulted before any decisions are taken. She has commented that we must retain an adequate research and teaching capability in this important area.

I am copying this letter to Tony Galsworthy (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

(C. D. POWELL)

George Walden, Esq., C.M.G., M.P.,
Department of Education and Science.

ECH



School of Slavonic and East European Studies
University of London
Senate House
Malet Street London WC1E 7HU
Telephone 01-637 4934/38
Extension.....

From the Director

Mr. Charles Powell,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1

17 November 1986

Dear Charles (if I may),

I enclose a memorandum on Soviet and East European Studies in British Universities which summarises the main points that were discussed on 31 October when you joined Professor Amann, Professor Kaser and me for lunch. It is a very brief summary of the issue and confines itself to essential points, each of which could be substantiated further if that were required.

I have also had the opportunity to speak to Robert Conquest in Stanford who assures me that his paper on the same issue will reach you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

Richard.

M.A. Branch

Enc.



SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES IN BRITISH UNIVERSITIES

(1) The Level of Provision of Key Specialisms

(a) A list of leading specialists who have left Britain for senior posts abroad during the last few years - or are about to do so - is set out in the appendix. It provides flattering confirmation of our standing in the world scholarly community but, more to the point, represents a measure of our national loss. The main consideration here is the quality of those concerned and the gap they will leave behind them; their departure will weaken the ability of the profession to advise government, respond to requests for information and to train a new generation of researchers. It should be emphasized that the movement of small numbers of key specialists does not necessarily show up in general surveys and, therefore, on the surface national provision might appear to be unimpaired. Only those individuals in the 30-50 age range, who have acquired a significant international reputation, are included in the list, on the grounds that they have reached maturity as researchers and have a peak creative period in front of them before retirement. The list is not comprehensive; it includes only specialisms of direct governmental interest (and excludes language and literature specialists, for example).

There are still a number of prominent scholars left in Britain who have in many cases already turned down good offers from the USA, but if the present decline in funding of infrastructure continues and if the non-replacement of colleagues further erodes their research time, they, too, are likely to be tempted to emigrate.

(b) We need to go further and take into account our most eminent scholars who have recently retired or died and those who will retire within the next five years or so. Such a list would include the names of Malcolm Mackintosh, Hugh Seton-Watson, Alec Nove, Peter Wiles, R.W. Davies, Francis Seton, Ronald Hingley, Wlodzimierz Brus and others: these names are simply illustrative. The loss of such outstanding talent is compounded by the fact that the specialist posts they vacate are unlikely to be refilled.

(c) At the taproots of the profession, the quantity of postgraduate research by British students is substantially less than it was a decade ago and has now fallen to an inadequate level. (This also applies more generally to research funding in the whole of Area Studies as well as to the provision of postgraduate studentships) There are three main reasons for this: (i) lack of ESRC funding, (ii) absence of academic career prospects and (iii) lack of enthusiasm on the part of departments to undertake supervision of these demanding use of difficult foreign language sources, for which they are penalised by the inappropriate ESRC rules governing Ph.D. completion rates when they can earn substantial income by accepting large numbers of overseas students on one year taught master's programmes.

(d) From the trends described above it can readily be seen that the profession is being weakened at all three major age bands and is in serious danger of not renewing itself.

(2) Possible Courses of Action

(a) If the case outlined above has any validity, it is important that the UGC should give firm and unambiguous guidance to universities to maintain Soviet and East European Studies at least at their present level. Academic staff should be replaced and the infrastructure (major libraries, in particular) must be preserved for future generations. There is a distinction to be drawn here between the Russian language and literature departments which are still relatively numerous and might be rationalised to some extent and Centres of Soviet and East European Studies, which were already set up on a rationalised basis in the early 1960s in response to the UGC's Hayter Report. In the case of the latter departments (including, for this purpose, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies) there is much to be said for preserving the present level of healthy competition. Of the major concentrations of expertise at Birmingham, Bristol, Essex, London, Glasgow, Oxford and Swansea, four are already linked by special Consortium arrangements, initiated and financed by the UGC.

(b) It is important that several centres of excellence in Soviet studies in this country should be maintained, and if possible, strengthened rather than run down. The idea has been floated of concentration of the resources in a centre in London which is regarded by specialists in Soviet studies in Britain as a very undesirable step. First, it would jeopardise the chances of preserving much that is worthwhile in the existing university centres to the great loss of students in those universities as well as to research. Second, it would remove a healthy pluralism of academic interests and viewpoints which the present centres sustain. Third (and related to the last point), one consolidated centre in London, funded directly from the public purse, would run the risk of being far too much under the influence of the government of the day.

(c) In view of their national importance, it might be helpful for the UGC to create some special machinery for monitoring developments in Area Studies on a continuing basis. Given their interdisciplinary focus, Area Studies do not fit easily into the scope of any single subject committee.

(d) The ESRC is presently considering its internal structure and has announced that it will report the results of its deliberations by July 1987. Careful thought needs to be given within the ESRC to providing a stronger committee representation for the study of foreign countries with regard to both postgraduate studentships and to research projects. An increase in studentships in Soviet and East European Studies is essential.

(e) There have been very positive developments recently in the links between government departments and Soviet and East European specialists in universities. Our main concern in preparing this note, therefore, is to ensure that we retain a national core of expertise which is sufficient to respond to these approaches.

R. Amann (CREES, Birmingham)
M.A. Branch (SSEES, London)
M.C. Kaser (St. Anthony's, Oxford)

LOSS OF SPECIALISMS OF DIRECT NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

<u>RESEARCH SPECIALISMS</u>	<u>BRITISH UNIVERSITIES</u> (Losses)	<u>FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES</u> (Gains)
Soviet defence policy and military institutions	Edinburgh	Stanford (Full tenured chair)
Dissent and political opposition in the USSR	LSE	Secretary, Kennan Institute, Washington DC. (Presumably, fixed term contract: future intentions unknown)
Soviet diplomatic history and contemporary strategic studies (e.g. SS-20 issue)	CREES / Birmingham	Johns Hopkins and Stanford (no tenured post yet but unlikely to return)
Contemporary Soviet foreign policy	Southampton	Maryland (full tenured chair and possible US government advisory role)
Contemporary Soviet economy (specialising in trade, technology transfer and impact of strategic embargo)	CREES/Birmingham	Harvard (Professorial fellowship: likely to return - but some doubt)
Organisation of Soviet science (work on Soviet SDI/lasers and fusion research at a preparatory stage)	CREES/Birmingham	Sydney (tenured post)
Contemporary East European economics (special field - economic disequilibrium in Poland)	CREES/Birmingham	Florence, European University Institute. (7 year fixed tenure chair)
Contemporary Soviet economy and planning (including mathematical approaches to planning)	Cambridge	Amsterdam (full tenured chair)
Population and labour problems in the USSR	CREES/Birmingham	Texas (tenure-track appointment)

Cont/.....

RESEARCH SPECIALISMS

BRITISH UNIVERSITIES
(Losses)

FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES
(Gains)

Contemporary Soviet politics and
institutional reform

York

Texas (tenure-track appointment)

Contemporary Soviet and East German
politics and economic organisation

Kent

Melbourne (tenured position)

Historical evolution of Soviet system
of central planning

CREES/Birmingham

Melbourne (fixed term contract: might
return if post in Britain were available -
but presently shortlisted for full tenured
chair at Amsterdam)

HOOVER INSTITUTION

ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE

Stanford, California 94305-2323



15 November 1986

Dear Prime Minister,

I said I would let you have a note on the condition of Russian and East European studies in the United Kingdom, and I now enclose it -- giving only the barest essentials and not, for example, going into the gradual withering of the scholarly body through non-replacement. I should add that George Walden is very highly regarded in Slavicist circles.

It was very good to see you in September. I came away more convinced than ever that you have another victory before you. And that's one reason why I am hoping to get back to England on a more permanent basis in the fairly near future...

with warmest wishes as always

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Conquest".

Robert Conquest

PS The expected plenum of the Soviet Central Committee may well have happened by the time you get this. It is rumoured that a power confrontation will take place. If so, and if (say) Kunaev and/or Shcherbitsky go, it will be said that this is a victory for Gorbachev: but he has various coalitions on various issues, and they may have been helping him on foreign affairs...

A Note on the Condition of Russian and East European Studies in
the United Kingdom

It is, I am sure, the government's wish to produce an adequate supply of well-equipped scholars in this field; to train those employed in government, business, science, the media and elsewhere who are concerned with these areas; and to further a general sound knowledge of the Soviet sphere among the ordinary educated population.

If so, the government's wishes are not being given effect.

On the purely language side (in spite of our committment under the Helsinki Final Act) the number of Advanced Level GCE passes in Russian dropped from 619 in 1970 to 293 in 1984; the number of first degree graduates in Russian from 185 to 109. In the secondary schools, of 280 teachers with Russian as their major qualification, only 24 per cent were teaching Russian; of 1,090 with any qualification in the subject only 14 per cent were teaching it (as against 95 and 74 per cent in French and 89 and 66 per cent in German.)

Even more important, the study of Soviet and East European politics, economics, society, history and culture at the University level has been grossly mishandled. The expansion of Russian studies in the 1970s produced a reasonable body of qualified people. They are being misused: Soviet and East European experts have been diverted - for example experts in the Soviet economy and social studies are often largely having to teach general economics or sociology instead.

While previous documents , in particular the Scarborough Report of 1947 and that of the Hayter Committee in 1961, saw the crucial necessity of broad studies of the area, the recent (1979) University Grants Committee

" Atkinson Report" simply failed to recognize any studies beyond those of language and literature. Area studies proper are at present virtually ignored by the UGC and the ESRC.

I know that the Department of Education is well aware of all this. But it is not merely an educational problem, and I suggest that remedying the situation should be considered as a matter of high policy.

SOVIET UNION Policy towards
the Soviet Union

Aug 79

