



cc/c

Pl. await  
Mr. Butler's response  
C188 13/4

FCS/88/071

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

1. I am writing to express my concern at the apparent lack of progress in our efforts to improve the condition of Soviet and East European studies in our universities, about which we continue to receive expressions of serious concern from academics. You may recall that the Prime Minister commented in November 1986 <sup>Prop DTI</sup> that we must retain an adequate research and teaching capability in this important area, and that she asked to be kept closely informed of the work which your Department was doing on the problem.

2. Previous correspondence about this before the election between Ministers of State here, at the MOD and DTI and your Department, was ultimately inconclusive. The problem, as ever, was one of resources: there is no disagreement between us over the need to stem the disturbing erosion in our capability in this important area. Our view however was and is that the FCO could not justify general support for academic ventures in this country from FCO funds, since our first priority must be to channel available resources into our own Research Department. We are, however, also helping, with the MOD, to fund Chatham House's five year programme of Soviet and East European studies and providing customer support to

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British universities through the placement of language trainees. We have also found from within our own resources additional funds to promote more Anglo-Soviet activity, including increased academic exchanges.

3. Most recently there has been discussion at official level of the possibility, first canvassed by George Walden in his letter to Tim Renton of 23 March 1987, of setting up an enquiry into the state of Soviet and East European studies which would be similar to the one undertaken by Sir Peter Parker into Oriental and African studies. The East European Trade Council have also been keen to see such a review established. We have provided advice on a possible Chairman for this enquiry and also agreed to consider offering some administrative support.

4. However, I now understand that at the annual conference of the British Association for Soviet and East European Studies (BASEES) Robert Jackson suggested that your Department may be reconsidering the whole question of holding a review on the grounds that it would be difficult to see the purpose of a review if no additional resources are available. Clearly the question of resources needs to be addressed. But surely the purpose of a review is precisely to establish whether there is sufficient evidence to enable your Department with the help of others to press a case for additional funding in support of Soviet and East European studies in this country and to identify areas where remedial action is most urgent.





5. I hope that you will feel able to look at this again. I think there is general agreement that a real problem exists. It should be tackled. Academic opinion had been led to expect an enquiry and their reaction will certainly be one of considerable disappointment and unhappiness if this turns out not to be the case. Your own visit to Moscow later this year will inevitably focus attention on this question.

6. I am copying this minute to George Younger, Paul Channon and the Prime Minister.

  
(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

13 April 1988

SOVIET UNION: Pong PR



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Lyn Parker Esq  
Assistant Private Secretary  
to Sir Geoffrey Howe  
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20 May 1988

Dear Lyn

I refer to Sir Geoffrey Howe's minute of 13 April 1988 to my Secretary of State about Soviet and East European Studies.

The Minister for Higher Education, Mr Robert Jackson, is having discussions with the Chairman of the University Grants Committee about the state of these studies, including the possibility of holding an enquiry. Mr Baker will be responding to Sir Geoffrey as soon as these considerations are completed.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Prime Minister, Mr Younger and Lord Young.

Yours  
Chris de Grouchy

C G DE GROUCHY  
Assistant Private  
Secretary



SOVIET UNION: Policy PT2

