

CAS ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

Paul Austin

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It is probably difficult for younger scholars to realize the difficulties our members had doing their research as graduate students or as scholars in the Soviet Union before its collapse. With the expansion of existing programs in Russian and Soviet studies and the establishment of new M.A. and Ph.D. programs in the 1960s, it soon became apparent that Canadians, unlike their American and European counterparts, could not study or carry out research in the USSR since there were no formal agreements between Canada and the USSR or between our universities.

After he was appointed Director of the new Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Toronto, Gordon Skilling set about to rectify this situation. On a visit to Moscow he met with people in *Dom družby* who put him in contact with other administrators. He was soon able to sign a bilateral exchange agreement between the University of Toronto and the Russian Ministry of Higher Education. On the Canadian side he worked tirelessly to raise funds to support Soviet students at Toronto and assist Canadians studying in Moscow. The first group of three graduate students from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures spent the 1964-65 academic year at Moscow State University. In the following year the exchange broadened to include students outside the University of Toronto; two students went to MGU and two went to Timiriyev Agricultural Academy. Thanks to much hard work Professor Skilling was able to persuade the Russian authorities to accept Canadian graduate students' spouses, for whom he provided additional support for travel and maintenance. Many of the senior members of CAS will always remain in his debt.

The Toronto exchange produced the first generation of Canadian scholars with experience in the Soviet Union. Although not without political problems, this exchange worked well until in 1973 the Federal government negotiated a national exchange agreement with the Soviet Union on the American and European models. Funds were provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs to the Canada Council, which at that time was responsible for funding research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The new National Exchange allowed Canadians to work in more universities and institutes and in more cities than the Toronto exchange. Again with the usual problems, the National Exchange worked well and produced a new cohort of Canadian scholars with Soviet experience.

Along with many other western countries, Canada "suspended" the National Exchange in 1979 after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This was part of a number of sanctions, including a boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. Other countries gradually withdrew these measures, returning to earlier patterns of trade, sport, tourism, etc. Canada renewed its not insignificant trade agreements with the Soviet Union, leaving exchanges in the academic and cultural spheres the only areas without normal contacts. While the entire Canadian academic community suffered, it was Canadian Slavists who were the most affected since neither graduate students nor professors could do research in the USSR. The Canadian Association of Slavists set up a special committee on exchanges in an attempt to cope with this problem. Various members of CAS chaired this committee and many people tried to

pressure the Trudeau government into re-establishing the National Exchange. Despite Trudeau's own political sympathies, Canada did nothing until the Liberal Government was replaced by the Conservative Government, which in a major policy shift re-established the Canada-USSR exchange. The Government found new funding for this National Exchange, the administration of which was given to the Association of Colleges and Universities of Canada, which appointed Doris Bradbury as its full-time director.

Under the auspices of Joe Clark, a Mixed Commission for Academic and Cultural Exchanges (GenExAg in diplomatic jargon) was created. CAS was able to persuade Foreign Affairs that the Canadian academic community should be involved in the negotiations, which was not the case before 1979. As a result, I, as President, was asked to represent CAS in particular and the Canadian academic community in general. After a number of consultative meetings in Ottawa, the Mixed Commission met with its Soviet counterparts in Ottawa in 1986 to negotiate a new National Exchange Agreement. Every conceivable detail had to be negotiated and agreed upon: the number of man-months for graduate students, junior and senior scholars, per diem ruble and dollar stipends, number of photocopies per person permitted in the USSR, travel, libraries and institutes open to Canadians. This new two-year agreement served Canada well, allowing scholars from all academic disciplines from Islamic studies, chemistry, and archeology to music and Slavic studies access to Soviet research and educational institutions. It was renewed in 1988 when the Mixed Commission met in Moscow, again with me representing CAS and the academic community. The third and last agreement was negotiated in Ottawa in 1990. Each commission was under the able leadership of the late Allan McLean of Foreign Affairs. When the 1990 agreement expired, the Soviet Union no longer existed and scholars and universities were free to make their own private arrangements for research.

The Canadian Association of Slavists can justly take pride in its efforts in re-establishing the National Exchange at a crucial point in East-West relations. Members from across Canada did much to promote exchanges, while contacts made when academic exchanges were the only way to do research in the Soviet Union and meet our counterparts have played a major role in facilitating contacts with universities and institutions in the post-Soviet academic world.

*McGill University
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