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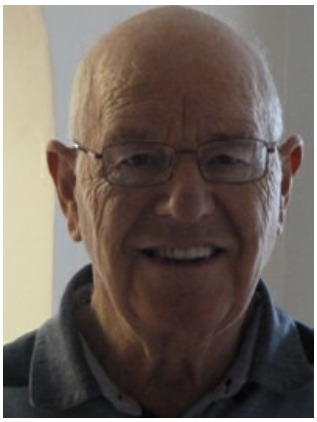
David Adshead (1968 - 2011)

A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu



CREES has always enjoyed a much deserved reputation as a power house of research into all things connected with Russia and the USSR. In Research Exercises CREES consistently achieved the highest acclaim. In teaching too, CREES and the Russian Department achieved glowing reports. Working as a Chair and Reporting Assessor for the Quality Assurance Agency over more than a dozen subject areas I came across few rivals for its achievements in teaching and learning and none to rival the support for students.

I joined CREES as an attached lecturer from the Russian Department in 1970. Before that (1968-70) I was a Research Associate in the Department working on the Birmingham University Language Laboratory Course in Russian for Social Scientists. This was published in 1970 as a Basic Course and was followed in 1971 with three Readers for each of the major social science disciplines, sociology, economics and politics. I was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1990 and, after my retirement, I became a Part-Time Teacher & Honorary Senior Lecturer in Russian. The last group of undergraduates I taught over their four years from *ab initio* to Final Year, the graduates of 2009, were among the most rewarding. It was an excellent way to finish my career.

My research interests have always been connected to the teaching of the language. I was one of the first scholars to develop Computer Assisted Language Teaching in Russian producing software which has been used at many universities at home and abroad. This expertise led to me being invited to teach all over the world, especially at the University of Melbourne where I ran the Russian Language Summer School for six successive years in the 1990s, and in the USA at Browne University (1987) and the University of Minnesota in 1989.

Students who were attracted to do postgraduate work in CREES were of an exceptional calibre and were a delight to teach. Though few of them were natural linguists with their skills lying more in the social sciences many of them achieved very high standards in the language. That they were able within a short space of time to conduct research into their chosen areas using authentic and original documents is a tribute to their application and desire to succeed in their chosen fields. Many of the students whom I taught have reached the highest echelons of academic life; some have become Vice Chancellors, many have reached professorial rank. A number of those who chose to follow a non-academic career have also prospered greatly in their chosen fields.

I feel privileged to have been part of CREES and to have enjoyed the opportunity of teaching such highly motivated students. I still miss the buzz and the fillip which being in contact with such young talent gave me during my career. In the words of Proust:

"Let us be grateful to people who make us happy, they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom."

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