

Luke March (1994 - 1999)



Judging by some of the other comments here, John Barber should have been paid for his recruitment services to CREES! I am just one of many steered towards Birmingham by his advice. I already had a casual curiosity towards Russia, but it was only after travelling there in 1992 and taking John's fascinating course at Cambridge that it really became a major interest. But even then I was toying with various possibilities (including seriously contemplating landscape architecture at Heriot-Watt) when John raised the possibility of learning Russian from scratch and doing a Masters at CREES, something and somewhere I didn't know existed.

I joined the CREES Masters in 1994/5 and then did a PhD (1995-1999). I took a temporary lectureship in Jan-June 1999 when my supervisor Edwin Bacon was on research leave. It was a wrench to leave Birmingham, but such was/is the academic job market. I joined Edinburgh University Politics (now, inevitably, Politics and IR) as a teaching replacement in October 1999, became a full lecturer in 2002 and a Senior Lecturer in 2007.

CREES continues to inform my academic interests and ethos. Clearly, anyone who has seen me at the CREES conference might think I only research Russian communists, but the influence is most marked in the care and attention I try to give my students, the need to be determined and forensic with research (that's what you get from reading *Sovetskaya Rossiya* for three years), the enthusiasm I try to infuse into my teaching, and my attempts to convey it (not always successfully) with a sense of humour, all qualities I learned from my fantastic supervisor Ed, and several other core staff and students besides.

There's a saying that 'if you remember the sixties, you weren't there'. This is very probably also true of Staff Bar where I spent an inordinate amount of time (under others' influence for sure), but I've got some very fond and vivid memories of CREES – its intense commitment to research, its cutting-edge external speakers, the real sense of staff-student camaraderie, and the genuinely active and influential community that the CREES conference brought under one roof. Some memories are less serious – Dave White's apoplectic reaction to the exclusion of a question on parties from the G12 exam; students' concerned approach to me after a lecture in which I had sipped Red Bull (they mistook it for beer); Erica's sock obsession, and my transformation into General Lebed at one particular CREES conference are particular highlights. These experiences were no less life-moulding for that. As many other alumni here attest, CREES changes you. It springboarded my academic career and has given me a bunch of friends/colleagues who are always a joy to catch up with, even though these days that is as likely to be Boston as it is Birmingham.