

Melanie Ilic (1983)



I joined CREES in 1983 as a postgraduate student in history, and remain at CREES today as an Honorary Research Fellow. 2013 for me, then, marks both CREES's 50th anniversary and the 30th anniversary of my contact with the Centre.

I studied firstly with Bob Davies and Steve Wheatcroft for an MPhil and then with Bob Davies and Arfon Rees for a PhD. I subsequently worked closely with Bob, Steve, Arfon and Jeremy Smith on a number of externally-funded research projects in Soviet history. Whilst engaged on these projects, I did some sessional teaching at the Universities of Birmingham and Warwick before taking up my current post. I have recently been appointed Professor of Soviet History at the University of Gloucestershire.

CREES provided the important foundation for my research right from the necessary training in Russian language (with Dave Adshead and Mike Berry at CREES and Valya Hine in the Russian department) through to the meticulous study of primary historical sources of the early Soviet period. I first travelled to the Soviet Union for a one month language course in Leningrad in 1985, arriving just a few weeks after Gorbachev had come to office. I spent 3 months of the following year as a British Council exchange student in Moscow, working in the Lenin library and making my first ventures into the archives. I have been travelling to Russia regularly ever since.

I came to CREES too late for the heyday of its Women in Eastern Europe group, but the members of the group and their published works have provided much inspiration for my own research into Soviet women's history.