

Peter Kneen (1969-1976)



From 1969 until 1971 I was a research student at CREES and from 1974 to 1976 a temporary lecturer in Political Science and research fellow on the social history element of the Soviet industrialisation project. In between I spent two periods in the Soviet Union as a British Council exchange student at the universities of Tbilisi and Moscow. I completed my Ph.D in 1979 on the politics of Soviet science supervised initially by Misha Lewin and then, following Misha's departure to the United States, by Ron Amann. In 1976 I was appointed as a lecturer in Politics at Durham University from where I retired in 2002. Subsequently I spent a number of years in Australia.

An aspect of the Centre's character, which I appreciated more fully only after I had left, is what might be termed its intellectual generosity. Its edited monograph series, seminar programmes and annual conference are examples of the abundant opportunities it offered to participate in its activities and benefit from its initiatives. The knowledge, imagination, and selfless dedication invested in these kinds of endeavours have, it seems to me, yielded intellectual returns which extend far beyond the Centre's own remarkable record of sustained academic achievement.

One particular memory may serve to illustrate some of the radical changes in publishing practices introduced by the internet. Although not as pressing as they later became the Centre always received regular inquiries from the media. My first experience of this came in the summer of 1975 when, around the time of the joint Apollo-Soyuz space mission, the New York Times requested a piece on the political significance of science in the Soviet Union. Ron suggested that I might like to respond which I did with enthusiasm. To meet the deadline I had to hurry down to New Street station and hand my freshly typed article to the guard of a particular London train to be collected on its arrival at Euston by a representative of the newspaper. By way of a postscript, any extravagant ideas I might have harboured about the impact of my debut on the world media stage were tempered in the weeks that followed. I received just one response in the form of a courteous note from a gentleman in New England who, sharing my slightly unusual surname, wondered if we might be distantly related.