

Stefanie Harter (1993-1997)

I arrived at CREES after studying economics in Dortmund and a Master's degree at SSEES in London. Being a German student of the 1980s, I was inspired by both the peace movement and Gorbachev's policy of *konversiya*. After four years of studying under the close supervision of Julian Cooper, I left with a PhD and an enthusiasm for Russian military aircraft. The design and flight characteristics of the Sukhoi aircraft clearly especially impressed me. This was my personal conversion in the UK.

I was privileged to experience at CREES an academic approach that differed significantly from the one in German universities. After some initial bewilderment when the bibliography of my first draft chapters was returned to me with corrections of commas and typos, I quickly learnt to appreciate the way research was done at CREES: with rigor and precision and a thorough knowledge of the facts. Apart from everything else, it seemed Julian Cooper also knew the names and telephone numbers of basically every director of every defence enterprise in every part of the former Soviet Union. And he was prepared to share them with his students! From the perspective of a German student, this behaviour was very unusual. I am still grateful today for the reliable support I received at the Centre from many members of staff.

Returning back to Germany and later on to Eastern Europe, both the education at CREES and its excellent reputation proved to be a great benefit both within the academic world and outside. During the years when I worked for the Delegations of the European Union in Moscow and in Kyiv, and where I mainly focused on administrative reforms and public finance systems, I realized that I learnt the right things at CREES and that the theoretical approaches were actually applicable.

Today, I am employed by the German Agency for International Cooperation in Berlin. When travelling to Transnistria today, I feel a strange familiarity. It reminds me of the field trips to Russian provinces for the doctoral thesis. Back then, equipped with Julian's addresses, I contacted the defence directors to interview them on their views on military conversion. In retrospect, I am not sure what these men thought about a Western female research student interested in, but largely ignorant of arms; but I realize that what mattered more was the confidence the CREES staff had in their students. This was always inspiring and motivating.

