

## INTERVIEWS:

JHW

RFE	7/28	RM
ME	1/4	me

January 30, 1947

2005  
Columbia Univ  
Russian Inst-

Conversation with Geroid T. Robinson  
Director, Russian Institute, Columbia

MAY -5 1959

I had asked Robinson sometime ago to give me his own views as to the state of Russian studies in this country, and the needs as he saw them if this country was to attempt reasonable maturity and knowledge of Russia and Russian problems.

He came in yesterday and left the appended outline from which he talked.

## PERSONNEL AND RESEARCH

(1) After one year of depending on the research fellowships of the Social Science Research Council, R feels that it is better for the Institute to get to the fellows before they formulate their program. The Social Science Research Council requires a research project. In Russian studies before formulating a project men need to know the vital questions, - which have been worked on and which have not been worked on, and which of the latter show any practical prospects of being worked out, in view of materials available, etc. "Having a boy in Wichita prepare a project with some interest in but great ignorance of Russia and then submit it to the SSRC Committee does not work out well! Wichita fellowships for Russian studies had better be handled at Columbia and Harvard which are the two real centers which R feels have significance and strength. R would not process these applications through a national mill.

(Columbia now has 60 civilians with 6 more to be added on February 1st. They have 10 Army officers plus four detailed from West Point. They have 10 additional officers on a part-time basis working chiefly on languages - JHW wonders whether this may not soon be ripe for GWG to use in the Trustees' Bulletin).\*

(2) R would like also to have permanently three positions as research associates somewhat similar to the memberships of the Institute for Advanced Study. Thus more mature men from colleges and universities or government or business could be invited to come there for genuinely advanced work. He also feels that the principle of long-term fellowships, say for 10 years, as worked out in his letter of July 25th should be adopted. He thinks that while the student fellows and the research associates should be handled by each Institution, there should be a national committee to handle long-term fellowships.

visas for

R does not know what the prospects are going to be for research studies in the Soviet Union. Nor can he find out yet what the prospects are for visiting professors from Russia. It is very difficult to find out if they can speak English.

## LIBRARY MATERIALS

Here R waxed deeply eloquent over the complete failure of the efforts to obtain materials from Russia. He referred to the big conference of two years ago

\* This information is confidential

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which led to Ruggles' being sent to the Embassy in Moscow, but Ruggles has almost no assistance and has even to wrap up the packages and materials which he sends back to various government departments himself. The result is that no institution can get service here via the Library of Congress or the State Department to enable them to get the essential basic materials which they have to have to perform their educational job. For example, the Columbia Library had set aside \$17,000 this year for the purchase of library materials. To this the Institute had added another \$2,500. It has been practically impossible to spend any of it. The problem of materials from Russia has been the story of "defeat, defeat, defeat". R is very critical of the Library of Congress for not showing more life and drive and putting more effort into it. R feels that someone needs to go into this situation "with a tank" to find out where the real bottleneck is. "The Russians have a well organized team here, and in our open and free market buy and ship materials back to Moscow by the ton." In other words, Russia in our easy and open market is making a great effort. We, facing a very difficult market, are making almost no effort at all. What R urges is that RF make funds available to put someone on the job for a year here and in Moscow to find out what is necessary to break this basic log jam. R thinks it should not be under a single university, but should be under some national organization other than the Library of Congress, - perhaps the SSRC. As to funds, he thinks a salary of \$9,000 might be necessary, plus expenses here and to and in Moscow.

R also stressed B, C, and D in his outline on the need for cheap means of reproduction.

#### CENTERS OF STUDY AND RESEARCH

R made a strong plea for another center, and that at Harvard. Although a Stanford man, it was clear that he was not impressed with the personnel resources available at Stanford. He says that Donald McKay is the man at Harvard to correspond to Schuyler Wallace. Columbia does not want to maintain an exclusive position. It cannot take care of the demand. He therefore went into some detail in discussing the personnel resources at Harvard. He praised the following:

Karpovich - history

Leontief - economics

Fainsod - government (L and F may not give full time, but they are competent men who know their fields). R thinks much less well of B. Hopper in international relations, calling him rather a flop. He said that the death of Cross had weakened them on the language and literary side.

I told him that <sup>Kepnel</sup> Temple and McKay were coming down from Cambridge today for a conference with DHS and JHW.

#### SPECIAL NEEDS OF RUSSIAN INSTITUTE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

(See outline attached)

About the Rubakin Library R spoke with great enthusiasm. It is the biggest private Russian collection in the world. The owner has now died and steps are

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underway to evaluate the legal status of the collection. The purchase of that collection constitutes in R's judgment the greatest opportunity for building up library facilities on Russia that is now available.

If a Harvard center should be supported, R hopes they will not raid his Columbia Institute staff.

JHW

2/3/47

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