

**Columbia University**  
**in the City of New York**

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NAVAL SCHOOL OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

February 28, 1945

Joseph H. Willits, Esq.  
Rockefeller Foundation  
49 West 49th Street  
New York, New York

My dear Mr. Willits:

In our letter of 27 February, it was stated that the proposed Russian Institute at Columbia University "will have two interlocking objectives of national importance: first, the direct advancement of knowledge in the Russian field, through the coordinated research work of faculty and students; and second, the training of these students (a limited number) as American specialists who will subsequently do work of authority and influence in the Russian field".

Before a detailed research program can be formulated, it will be indispensable first to appoint the specialists in the several disciplines who will make up the staff of the Institute, and then to bring them together for prolonged conferences (preferably well in advance of the opening of the Institute). At these conferences, the first point to be explored should be the individual research plans and commitments that each member of the staff will probably have made before his appointment. With this beginning, an attempt should be made to modify, expand and coordinate these plans of the specialists in the various disciplines, in such a way as to produce a general research program for the faculty and students of the Institute - with the way always left entirely open for subsequent suggestions from both the staff and the students.

It is fully expected that some of the most fruitful suggestions for the development of work in each discipline will arise out of the needs and experience of the specialists in the other disciplines. It is also anticipated that the faculty contacts which begin in these preliminary conferences will lead in some cases to the inception of cooperative studies undertaken by two or more members of the staff. Finally it is expected that the subsequent research work of each member of the staff will receive the benefit of close constructive criticism by his colleagues, and that the work of each student will benefit similarly (inside and outside the Research Seminar), through suggestions and

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criticisms by teachers and students representing the various disciplines. For example, it may be anticipated with a fair degree of certainty that some of the most helpful comments on legal studies will come from specialists in economics - and so with the other fields. It is of the essence of the plan that this cross-fertilization of the disciplines shall be operative throughout the whole course of each research project of every staff member and every student. In the case of each student project, it will be a special responsibility of the faculty sponsor to see that this principle is made operative.

To facilitate this integration of the several disciplines in both training and research, the University is offering a separate building that will provide the offices and the seminar rooms necessary for the Institute. At the same time, provision has been made for granting to the Institute a considerable degree of administrative autonomy, and acceptance of appointment to the staff will involve acceptance of the principles of coordinated research which has been described above. These physical and administrative arrangements do not by any means guarantee a successful integration of the work, but they certainly create conditions favorable to that result.

On the basis of three and one-half years' experience as director of the first large staff organized in this country for research in the Russian field, the writer is prepared to say that the plan outlined above is not utopian, but is in a considerable measure realizable in practice.

The Russian field teems with problems of major significance that have never been seriously investigated; but one of the difficulties that must be faced, in laying out a research program, is that for some of the freshest and most important of these problems complete materials are unlikely to be accessible, either outside or inside the Soviet Union. For the consideration of this aspect of program making, the special knowledge of the several members of the staff will be indispensable.

With all these difficulties in mind, the attached list of possible subjects for research is submitted, not as an integrated and carefully considered program but as a part of the material that the members of the staff might consider in their opening conferences. If the members of the staff have the high qualifications that we believe they have, the program that results

Joseph H. Willits, Esq.

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from their joint effort will have very little resemblance to the miscellaneous suggestions assembled in the attached list. What we have here is the first step toward a research program, rather than the last.

Very sincerely yours,

*Geroid T. Robinson*

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Personal and property rights of the "State Peasants" on the eve of the Great Reforms of the 1860's.

Why were the serfs on the private estates emancipated?

Property rights of individual, family, and commune in peasant customary law, late 19th century.

The agrarian revolution of 1917.

The second agrarian revolution: collectivization in the early 1930's.

Individual and collective elements in peasant economy, late 1930's.

The standard of living in the village:

(a) c. 1906-1914.

(b) c. 1927-1940.

Property holdings and economic enterprises of the Imperial government, c. 1913.

Development of the Don-Donetz industrial region (or some part of it) before the Revolution:

Statistics on growth.

Distribution of values produced (wages, profits, etc.).

Organization and management.

Standard of living of labor.

Relations of labor with management.

Same for Ural industrial region (or some part of it) since the Revolution.

Cotton: history of importation, domestic production, and manufacture.

Factory legislation and social insurance for industrial workers:

(a) before Revolution.

(b) since Revolution.

Efficiency of labor in specific industries in the Soviet Union and in the United States: a series of comparative studies.

Standard of living of industrial workers:

(a) c. 1906-1914.

(b) c. 1928-1940.

National income, and its apportionment to:

current consumption,  
capital investment, and  
military expenditure.

- (a) c. 1906-1914.
- (b) c. 1928-1941.

Birth and death rates since the Revolution: trends and "causes".

The family since the Revolution: Communist theory; Soviet law; mores;  
statistics.

Crime and correction since the Revolution: law and practice.

Pre-Revolutionary history of political parties:

- (a) The Constitutional-Democratic Party.
- (b) The Socialist-Revolutionary Party.
- (c) The Social-Democratic Party.

The processes of nomination and election to the Imperial Duma:  
law and practice.

The Petrograd Soviet, March to November 1917.

Censorship and freedom of publication:

- (a) 1906-1914.
- (b) 1917-1941.

Techniques of indoctrination, as practiced by the Soviet Government  
and the Communist Party in the USSR.

Private property rights in Soviet law.



Ideological content of the works of

Lenin  
Trotsky  
Kamenev  
Zenoviev  
Radek  
Stalin, etc., etc.

Church and State in Russia since the Revolution.

What do the Soviet people read?

General statistical analysis  
of circulation of different  
types of publications (News-  
papers, periodicals, books --  
by sub-categories), and of se-  
lected individual publications.

Attempt at a similar analysis for  
different population groups:  
i.e., industrial workers' clubs,  
peasants' reading rooms, etc.

Social ethics in the writings of major pre-Revolutionary writers:  
for example, a comparison, on this basis, of the works of  
Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Gorky.

Social ethics in selected recent novels, plays, and motion pictures.

Significance of the Turkish Straits in Russian Foreign trade and  
foreign relations (statistics and policy):

- (a) c. 1900 to Revolution.
- (b) Revolution to Second World War.

Same for Danish Straits.

Same for Archangel-Murmansk.

Same for land and water routes, via Southeastern Siberia.

Russian policy in Outer Mongolia.

- (a) before Revolution.
- (b) since Revolution.

Same in Persia, beginning with 1907.

Russian Foreign trade with Britain, Germany and the United States  
(statistics and policy):

- (a) 1906 to Revolution.
- (b) Revolution to Second World War.

The Public History of the Communist International.

Soviet relations with certain revolutionary movements abroad:

- (a) in Hungary, 1918-1919.
- (b) in Germany, 1918-1919.
- (c) in China, in the 1920's.

Recent trends in the Soviet Union, toward or away from a Communist society (an extremely vital problem that calls for the fullest application of cooperative methods of research, analysis and synthesis).