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## *Russian Area and Language Studies in the U. S. Army<sup>1</sup>*

NOW that a national and nationwide emphasis is being placed on the study of foreign languages and intensive language training is being increasingly advocated throughout our school systems in order to ease a shortage, presently termed "critical," of accomplished linguists, it might be of interest to describe a program, which the U. S. Army has been conducting for some years and which represents a step in the right direction toward partially solving the problem of securing language and area specialists for various U. S. Government agencies. The so-called FAST or Foreign Area Specialist Training Program in Russian is a course established by the U. S. Army to provide Russian language and area training for a limited number of U. S. Army officers and a few selected U. S. Government civilians. Originally open only to regular officers of the U. S. Army, the program was expanded in 1951/1952 to include non-regular officers, i.e., Reserve officers serving on extended active duty with the U. S. Army. Army officers taking this FAST program in Russian receive either three or four years of training, depending on whether they are non-regular or regular army officers. All officers start the program by taking the one-year Russian course at the Army Language School in Monterey, California.<sup>2</sup> Following this one-year Russian course, all regular Army officers spend one year at Columbia University, where they take courses in Russian history, economics, political science, etc. . . . and have the opportunity, if they so desire and qualify academically, to earn a master's degree in Russian studies. Non-regular Army officers are not entitled to take this year of civilian schooling at Columbia University. However, the consensus among those students who have had the opportunity of attending Columbia University seems to be that the year there, while pleasant, interesting, and instructive, does not essentially add to their area knowledge of the USSR, since most

of the subjects studied at Columbia University are subsequently covered in much greater detail during the final two-year phase of the FAST program at the U. S. Army Area School in Germany. Furthermore, inasmuch as during the year at Columbia a great deal more emphasis is placed on area or background studies than on the Russian language, the students in that time all but lose whatever fluency they may have acquired in Russian as a result of the previous year at the Army Language School.

The last and most important portion of the FAST program consists of two years entirely and exclusively devoted to Russian area and language studies in a setting and atmosphere endeavoring to approximate as nearly as possible the conditions that would obtain if the school were actually located in the country being studied, which is, of course, not possible in the case of the USSR. This part of the program is conducted at a special U. S. Army School, known as Detachment "R" and located in Oberammergau, Germany.<sup>3</sup> Regular U. S. Army officers assigned to the FAST Russian program take this final two-year phase after completing their year at Columbia University, while non-regular officers report to Oberammergau immediately upon completion of the one-year Russian course at the Army Language School in Monterey. The few U. S. Government civilians that may be assigned to this program take only

<sup>1</sup> The author was a student officer in the U. S. Army Foreign Area Specialist Training Program in Russian from 1952 to 1954, and was graduated in 1954 from the U. S. Army Russian Area School, also known as Detachment "R," in Regensburg, Germany.

<sup>2</sup> See my article "The One-Year Russian Course at the Army Language School," *Modern Language Journal*, XLIII (February, 1959), 66-71.

<sup>3</sup> Originally started in Oberammergau after World War II, Detachment "R" was moved to Regensburg, Germany, where it remained from about 1950-1954; toward the end of 1954 it was moved back to Oberammergau, where it is now located.

the last two-year phase at Detachment "R" and are not sent to Monterey or to Columbia University, although most of them have received previous training in Russian at some institution or university.

The course at Detachment "R" consists of two academic years, the "junior" year and the "senior" year, which, like any university academic year, run from October to the following June. Two groups of students, the junior class and the senior class, are simultaneously in attendance at the school; when, after two years of study, the senior group graduates in June of one year, a new junior group reports to the school about September or October of the same year. The entire course at Detachment "R" consists of about 2,000 class hours on Russian area and languages subjects to be described below. In addition, students have to do considerable homework, the amount of which is generally left up to the individual student; however, two hours a day would represent an absolute minimum. Before graduating, students must also complete a paper or thesis on a military, political, economic, historical, or cultural subject related to the USSR. Furthermore, students participate in a number of other training activities designed to provide variety and a change in pace in the course and to relieve somewhat the monotony and tension of constant class lectures, study, and examinations. During the two-year course, especially in the summer months between the junior and senior years, in addition to annual leave, students take various field trips; some of these are of an official and classified nature, connected with U. S. Army intelligence activities; others afford the students an opportunity to familiarize themselves first-hand with the work of Western psychological warfare and cultural information agencies, such as the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberation, with the research and publications of Russian scholarly emigré groups like the Institute for the Study of the USSR in Munich, as well as with the methods and procedures of anti-Soviet political Russian Emigré organizations such as the N.T.S. in Frankfurt and T.S.O.P.E. in Munich. Through these activities the students gain the advantages of personally contacting and observing Russian refugees active in the above-mentioned centers

and are thus exposed to a wealth of otherwise unavailable Russian area information. Whenever, either within the USSR or on the international scene, something occurs which might affect the course of events in the USSR or which in any way is of interest or concern to a student of Soviet affairs, the school holds conferences, wherein the entire faculty and student body participate in order to exchange and compare views and opinions on the particular issue involved. For example such conferences were called to review, analyze, and discuss such events as Stalin's death, the first summit meeting in Geneva, the alleged MVD Captain Kokhlov's mission to assassinate the leader of the Russian Emigré Organization N.T.S. in Frankfurt. The faculty and the students review and discuss in detail all the facts and circumstances concerning each event and then try to formulate coordinated conclusions and estimates as to the Soviet position and policy with respect to them. Since all these debates are conducted in Russian, they constitute excellent practical Russian language and area exercises, from which the student benefits greatly by increasing and improving his knowledge not only of the language, but also of Soviet policy, administrative procedures, diplomacy, and possible military intentions. Until about 1956 all military students in the FAST program were also able to take short official trips to Moscow and other European Soviet Bloc capitals.

The faculty of Detachment "R" consists of carefully selected and screened experts, every one of whom is an authority in his particular field. Some among them are truly outstanding and recognized as such in international scholarly circles. Most of them are native Russians who came to the West during or immediately after World War II, and all of them are one-hundred percent fluent in the Russian language. Furthermore the school invites other Russian experts to come as visiting lecturers and to address the students on various Soviet topics. The entire two-year course is conducted exclusively in Russian: all lectures and conferences are held in Russian; all training aids, mimeographed material, and pamphlets are prepared by the school staff in Russian; all examinations are conducted in Russian. Students must use Russian during school hours, and they also use

it very often outside of school in their social contacts with the instructors, since few of the latter know English. Consequently one might conservatively state that, including classes, homework, conferences, official and extra-curricular contacts with the teaching staff, a student during his two years at the Russian Area School is exposed to at least 3,500 hours of Russian. The school also has an excellent, complete library of books in Russian and in English, covering every phase and aspect of Russian life and comprising many official reports and documents. The students are encouraged to use this library throughout the course and naturally they rely heavily upon it when preparing the aforementioned paper or thesis required for graduation.

During the entire two-year course and while classes are in session the Detachment "R" academic schedule calls for an eight-hour day five days a week. Excepting only the beginning months, when students must gradually become accustomed to assimilating lectures and material entirely in Russian and of a considerable degree of newness and difficulty, or the final portion, when students are writing their theses, the daily schedule remains fairly constant throughout the course. Out of these eight hours a day, four are devoted to lectures on various area subjects, two are set aside for language instruction, and two are reserved for individual free study time. Whenever special conferences or lectures are called, they are held during these last-mentioned two hours so as not to interfere with or reduce the time allotted to the area and language instruction schedule. The two hours of daily language instruction are organized as follows. During one hour each morning half of the students in a class, i.e. a group of about eight to ten, attend lectures given by an instructor on Russian grammar and syntax, practice drills and exercises on difficult grammar points, or translate various English texts into Russian. During this period the remainder of the students in the class, divided into groups of two or three each under the guidance of one instructor, practice Russian conversation. This entire procedure is repeated in the afternoon; however, the students alternate, so that those who had grammar class in the morning now practice conversation in small groups and vice

versa. In order to afford the students this opportunity for language practice in small groups of two or three in spite of a relatively reduced teaching staff, all instructors regardless of specialty participate in conducting these oral exercises.

The area subjects covered during the remaining four daily class hours fall into four major categories or subdivisions, paralleling the four departments into which the school faculty is divided, namely Political, Economic, Military, and Satellites. Each one of these departments is staffed by two or three instructors, who specialize in the subjects offered by the department and who take turns teaching the various area courses. Naturally, all courses are compulsory and must be taken by all students.

The Political department offers the following courses: History of Russia and the USSR from the early beginnings to the present; History of the Communist Party including an extremely detailed study of the revolutionary periods, party congresses, post revolutionary developments, N.E.P. five-year plans, Stalinism, etc. . . . ; Communist ideology with a detailed analysis of Communist theories from Marx and Engels to the present and of Communist personalities; Administrative structure and organization of the Soviet government and of the Communist party apparatus underlying it; a course on Soviet law, courts, and legal procedures, including a three-day mock court and trial conducted in Russian by the students, who assume the various rôles of judges, prosecutors, attorneys, defendants, and witnesses; History of Soviet diplomacy and international relations; History, organization, methods, and procedures of the Soviet State organs of Security; and finally Soviet psychological warfare methods and procedures.

The Economic department endeavors to give the students a complete picture of the geography and economy of the USSR. For this purpose the students are first given a very detailed basic course on Russian geography. This is followed up by two general courses, one on the economic geography, natural resources, and general economy of the USSR, and one on the Soviet national economic structure and administration, including economic and industrial ministries and State economic planning and

banking institutions. Finally, the department offers a long series of courses, each one covering one of the major regions of the USSR as to geography, natural resources, means of communication, economic and industrial development, economic potential, and military capabilities in case of war.

The Military department offers courses on every conceivable aspect of the Soviet Armed Forces: history of the Red Army; Soviet officer and enlisted personnel organization, policies, and procedures; Soviet military schools, academies, regulations and field manuals; organization, doctrine, and standard operating procedures of the various branches and services of the Soviet Army; Soviet staff organization, doctrine, and procedures, including the various types of field orders and communication codes; Soviet logistics and supply; Soviet Army intelligence; Soviet Air Force; Soviet Navy; Soviet military personalities; and lastly the detailed history of the German-Soviet operations and battles during World War II.

The Satellite department conducts a detailed review of all European Soviet Bloc or satellite countries, as well as of the neighboring Scandinavian countries and Turkey, as to history, geography, economy, industry, political organization, economic potential, and military capabilities in case of war. In addition to this impressive array of compulsory courses, students may, toward the end of the two-year program, take a few elective courses either dealing with new subjects such as Russian and Soviet literature and Soviet documentation, or covering in greater detail previously studied material.

All the above-listed area courses are taught consecutively by the respective departments responsible for them. These courses vary in length from about twenty-five or thirty hours to up to eighty or more hours. As soon as any one course in any of the four departments is terminated, a new course in that department is begun. For all courses the procedure with respect to lectures, course reading material, and examinations remains the same throughout the two-year program. At the very outset of the course each student in the class is given a mimeographed course synopsis containing a fairly detailed lesson by lesson summary in Russian of the entire course. Each day the in-

structor gives a one-hour lecture in Russian on the particular subject of the course; the students may take notes either on separate sheets of paper or directly on the course synopsis, in which the outline and summary of the one-hour lecture appear as a separate lesson or section. Prior to the next lecture on the following day, the student is expected to study the material previously covered. At the end of each course, or, if the course is too long, upon completion of about thirty to forty lecture hours, the students are given an examination on the material covered. The questions are in Russian and must be answered in Russian; they are mainly factual and of the objective type, although they do frequently include a few essay type questions. Occasionally the students are also given pure language examinations, mostly translations from English into Russian, to measure their language progress. The examinations are graded, but no relative class standing is officially announced.

It is evident that a student, after taking the above courses on every aspect (political, ideological, military, economic, and cultural) of Russian or Soviet life and activity, has been repeatedly exposed to and has used almost every type of Russian vocabulary and language pattern that one may possibly encounter under almost any circumstances. As a matter of fact, with regard to specialized or technical vocabulary, peculiar to certain political, economic, military, and cultural activities, the student may even have acquired a knowledge of terms with which he previously was not too familiar in English. The only possible gap in his acquisition of vocabulary and language patterns might be in the realm of common every-day expressions such as would be used in the household or on the street. Active fluency in such expressions connected with the daily prosaic necessities of life are always hardest to acquire under artificial conditions and cannot be mastered unless one spends many years in the country itself. However, due to the fact that most of the Detachment "R" students have extra-curricular or social contacts with the faculty, they do at least acquire a passive or recognition type knowledge of such terms. In any event, at the end of this two year program, all students are fairly proficient in Russian. Even the poorest students

understand and read it well. Those students who have a certain talent and interest in languages, and who in their independent studies have endeavored to emphasize not only area subjects but have also devoted diligent care and attention to the Russian language itself are, upon graduation from Detachment "R," quite proficient in Russian and perfectly able to use it in their work, be it in understanding, reading, speaking, or writing.

The purpose of this paper has been mainly to describe, not to evaluate, the Russian Army Area and Language program. However, it might be pertinent and worthwhile to anticipate and counter two possible objections that might be voiced against area and language programs in general, one with regard to their relative superficiality,<sup>4</sup> another concerning their eventual adaptability to conventional school curricula not exclusively devoted to area and language studies, but simultaneously comprising courses in other subjects. Programs of the type described above emphasize concurrently both area knowledge and language proficiency and are primarily designed for students who have not previously acquired either one to any significant extent. Therefore, the degree of truly thorough, intensive, and scholarly area specialization they can achieve will necessarily be limited by the fact that learning the foreign language is a much more difficult and slower process than acquiring area knowledge. It is a recognized fact that there is "no easy way to learn a foreign language and to maintain fluency in it. And fluency can be best secured by a constant use of the language, hardly possible in the United States despite the aspiration of the student. Somewhere, somehow there must be a compromise."<sup>5</sup> A program such as the one conducted by Detachment "R" endeavors to effect just such a compromise. By providing area studies conducted in the foreign language it demands constant use of the latter for two whole years on the widest possible range of subjects. It does not turn out narrowly specialized students versed in every scholarly detail of a particular subject, be it political, economic, historical, cultural, or military. Such is not the primary purpose of Detachment "R" and a school of this type should not claim that it prepares specialized area scholars comparable to

those who obtain advanced degrees in universities. It does, nevertheless, lay a strong foundation upon which further progress can be built: it provides its students with the fundamental and essential knowledge of the target area and language, and this does not in any way prevent them from subsequently continuing their studies in depth and acquiring more detailed specialized knowledge of some particular aspects which they might later on want to stress. Furthermore, schools of the Detachment "R" type may conceivably teach more of the specialized technical vocabulary peculiar to certain activities such as military jargon, etc.—than the students could learn in the average university. In any event, short of spending many years in a foreign country, what other opportunity can students find for extensive repeated practice in hearing, reading, and using an extremely varied vocabulary pertaining to all sorts of subjects and specialties and including the technical terms of many diversified activities and fields of interest?

To the second possible objection, that, due to the necessity of concentrating on one language and area for an extended period of time, such a course can only be conducted in special institutions and cannot be readily adapted to conventional curricula, the following reply may be given. The considerable amount of time exclusively devoted to language and area instruction could be paralleled by starting language instruction at an early stage in either elementary or junior high school and by extending it over the entire school life of the student or at least over a major portion of it. The emphasis on area subjects could be approximated by an adequate and balanced choice of foreign language reading material and by not using only the traditional literary readers, but by introducing more area readers containing diversified subject matter and language patterns. In any area and lan-

<sup>4</sup> "... area studies represent but a slight increase of detailed knowledge over that which the average student acquires before he begins specialization in any linguistic or historical field. This knowledge must be supplemented by detailed studies in one of the accepted fields of learning if the student is not to remain a talented amateur." Clarence A. Manning, *A History of Slavic Studies in the United States*. The Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1957, p. 102.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

guage program the two elements, area and language should not be separated. The inherent unity of the program and the interdependence of both elements should be maintained. The teaching of the language itself and the teaching of the area background should proceed hand in hand; both should be conducted harmoniously, mutually complement each other, and together contribute to achieving above all the student's eventual ability to communicate as efficiently, effectively, and widely as possible in the foreign language studied. Furthermore, it is my humble opinion and conviction, based upon long ex-

perience and wide observation, that this type of program, if adapted to a university, could contribute very greatly to developing individuals of far wider interests and capacities than is presently realized. As educators concerned with a more satisfactory development of our national intellectual resources we should, on the basis of this factor alone, further study and consider the feasibility of incorporating in some form or other language and area programs into our college curricula.

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### *Communications Media Research Program*

The Advisory Committee on New Educational Media, to help implement the National Defense Education Act of 1958, Title VII (Research and Experimentation in More Effective Utilization of Television, Radio, Motion Pictures, and Related Media for Educational Purposes), was recently announced by U. S. Commissioner of Education, Derthick. It includes: (1) individuals identified with the sciences, liberal arts, or modern foreign languages of institutions in higher education; (2) individuals engaged in teaching or in the supervision of teaching in elementary or secondary schools; (3) individuals of demonstrated ability in the utilization or adaptation of television, radio, motion pictures, and related media of communication for educational purposes; (4) individuals representative of the lay public who have demonstrated an interest in the problems of communication media.

The Act also provides that the Commissioner be Chairman of the Committee and that it include a representative of the National Science Foundation.

Title VII provides for grants-in-aid and contracts for research and experimentation in the development and evaluation of projects involving television, radio, motion pictures and related media of communication proving of value to education.

Educational institutions, organizations, agencies and individuals are invited to submit appropriate proposals in accordance with the format developed for use in the Cooperative Research Program. Inquiries should be addressed to the Communications Media Research Program, Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington 25, D. C. The program has been initiated under the direction of Dr. Roy M. Hall, Assistant Commissioner for Research, with the assistance of two consultants who are on leave of absence from their academic positions: Dr. Kenneth D. Norberg, Professor of Education and Coordinator of Audio-Visual Services, Sacramento State College; and Dr. Clarence Walter Stone, Professor of Library Science, University of Illinois.

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