George Blazyca

Colleagues will be saddened to learn of the death in March this year of George Blazyca of the University of Paisley in Scotland.

George was one of the UK’s leading authorities on the Polish economy and author of numerous articles and books on that economy. After graduating from Sussex University in the early 1970’s in Mathematics and Statistics, George then completed an MA and DPhil at Sussex with a thesis on the Polish economy. His early career took him to a Lectureship in Economics at the University of East Anglia, followed by a short period at Coventry Polytechnic (now University), and subsequently to the position of Head of the School of Social Sciences at Thames Polytechnic (now Greenwich University). From 1992 until his untimely death this year, George took up a Professorship at Paisley University. Until 2000, he was Associate Head of the Department of Economics and Management at Paisley and a crucial stage in his career culminated in his role in helping to establish Paisley’s Centre for Contemporary European Studies in 1995/6, just prior to the 1996 RAE. In 2000, he became the Director of the Centre which went from strength to strength in raising its research profile, not least in the 2001 RAE which George led in the subject-area of European Studies.

George’s publications and other activities in European Studies (eg he was an elected national member of BASES — the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies and on the editorial board of a number of leading journals in the field such as the Journal of East-West Business and the Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics), were highly regarded by peers and others. He had a beautiful writing style and an ability to encapsulate the key issues pertinent to the problems of economies in transition such as the Polish economy. He worked collaboratively with many colleagues in Paisley and beyond. In particular, he was instrumental in establishing strong links with two of Poland’s leading Schools of Economics — the Warsaw School of Economics and the Krakow School of Economics. With Professor Ryszard Rapacki of Warsaw, George co-authored two key works on Poland, *Poland into the New Millennium* (2001) and *Poland into the 1990’s: Economy and Society in Transition* (edited volume) (1991) as well as numerous other journal articles and books.

George was, above all, an outstanding advocate of the European project. This was clearly manifested in a number of initiatives in his professional life such as the so-called West Coast Seminars on Economic and Social Change in Russia and Eastern Europe. George established the series in 1994 involving colleagues from the 4 West of Scotland Universities (Glasgow, Strathclyde, Caledonian and Paisley) in an annual series of seminars (usually 5 or 6 a year) which is now into its’ 11 year. A Working Paper series was also established in European Studies. However, possibly the highlight of George’s later contributions was the outstandingly successful 2004 conference that he organised at Paisley; “What does EU enlargement mean for Scotland?” which was held to mark the accession of the 10 new countries to the EU in that year. That conference was a great success, with all ten accession countries represented, thanks to George’s tireless efforts and superb organising abilities. It is an enduring testimony to his contributions over nearly 30 years of academic life.

George was above all else a gentleman. Since his passing in March, his colleagues at Paisley, in Poland, and in many universities up and down the country continue to miss him dearly.

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}*RES Newsletter, July 2005, no. 130*