

Russia opens archives on Terror

TH 22
11
41

BY HUW RICHARDS

REVELATIONS ABOUT crucial periods of Soviet history are expected to follow the admission of leading British historians to previously closed Russian archives.

Robert Davies, professor of Soviet studies at Birmingham University and Robert Service, professor of Russian history and poli-

tics at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, were among the first historians allowed to see the central Communist Party archive.

They say that the fraction of the 148 archives they were able to see shed new light on the Lenin and Stalin years, and that there must be much more in the sections they did not see.

Both fear for the survival of the records in current political and financial uncertainty, but came away with the impression that there had been little previous British-style weeding of papers.

Professor Service concentrated on the Lenin period: "The scale of his complicity in the Terror became much clearer, as did the extent to which the Bolsheviks were worried about their identification as a Jewish party. It is also clear that their military strategy in relation to foreign countries was much more aggressive than had previously been known."

Professor Davies's work on the Stalin period found that debate on policy in the party's inner circles went on much longer than had been thought - there was still some controversy in 1934 although it had long been clear that Stalin's was the dominant influence.