

Summary

In the autumn of 2021, *NZ* editorial board discussed a special issue for the centenary of the USSR. We imagined it as a big international project that would feature texts by scholars from the former Soviet republics, as well as by our European, American, and Asian colleagues. The war in Ukraine has put an end to the concept of a shared post-Soviet space and excluded Russia from the international intellectual/scientific space where it is possible to carry out projects like the one we were preparing in 2021. Still, we did not abandon the idea of putting together a thematic issue on the centenary of the USSR – and we have tried to keep it congruous with the current tragic state of affairs.

What does it mean? First of all, with just a few exceptions, this *NZ* issue features Russian authors. Consequently, alas, there will be no commentary on the Soviet Union from, say, the Ukrainian or Kazakh perspective. Moreover, due to Russia been cut off from the international scholarly community, we are unable to publish translations of many important texts relevant to the topic of the new issue. All this has forced us to focus our attention on more general, theoretical problems of Soviet history – on processes of “long duration” – or on some particular episodes from it.

Alexander Abalov and Vladislav Inozemtsev write in their essay “*The Fate of the Doomed: On the Centenary of the Soviet Union*” about the USSR’s continuity with / break from the Russian Empire and the Tsardom of Muscovy – and they

do it from the end point of the post-Soviet historical perspective (*CULTURE OF POLITICS*). And the 146th *NZ* issue opens with Alexei Levinson’s regular column (*SOCIOLOGICAL LYRICS*) in which he analyses “Soviet nostalgia”, that largely determined the post-Soviet period of Russian history.

The main focus of most texts in this issue is the so-called “national question” – in the shape and form in which it existed in revolutionary Marxism, Leninism, in the political practice of the early Soviet state and in the discussions that took place in that period. Which leads to one of our regular themes – the problem of federation and federalism. The thematic section “*REVOLUTION AND FEDERATION*” opens with the *NZ*-organised round-table discussion “*On the Centenary of the USSR: Marxism and the National Question*”, in which Sergey Abashin, Anna Egorova, Ilya Budraitskis and *NZ* editors Kirill Kobrin and Igor Kobylin took part. The “continuity of crises” between the pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet regimes is the subject of Konstantin Tarasov’s article, and the section ends with an article by *NZ* editor Andrey Zakharov on how in recent decades federalism has been used as a weapon of aggressive expansionist politics.

The main theme is continued by *NZ ARCHIVE* installment, in which important one-hundred-year-old historical texts from the time of the disputes over the Soviet federation (1917–1922) are republished. Also the reader is getting acquainted with an excerpt from the book by the Lebanese publicist and politician Karim

Muruwva about the dramatic, at times fatal role that the national question played in the history of the Lebanese communists and in their relationship with the CPSU in the 1960s–1980s.

The second thematic node of this NZ issue is the transformation of the “Soviet person”, regardless of his or her nationality; or, to be precise, the transformation of a non-Soviet person (such as the soldiers of the White Armies, or the first-wave emigrants) into a Soviet one, as well as the transformations undergone by the so-called late-Soviet citizen in his or her cultural everyday life and mental practices. The block of materials entitled “THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SOVIETS: PERSONAL/ COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES” opens with the second and final part of Boris Sokolov’s mini-study of the “White-Guard episodes” in the biographies of the classic authors of socialist realism. Part one, published in the previous issue, dealt with Nikolai Tikhonov, while this one talks about Valentin Kataev and Vsevolod Ivanov. Aleksey Vovk devoted his article to the history of White emigration in the 1920s–1940s “turning Red”. Vadim Mikhailin writes about one of the late-Soviet personal strategies of “embedding” into the system while maintaining a certain distance from it – the so-called “languages of omission” (*Lacunnilingus*,

or *On the Pragmatic Aspects of Soviet Languages of Omission*). The block ends with the translation of the article by the German publicist, editor of the “*Stimmen der Zeit*” magazine Klaus Mertes entitled “*The Cult of the Autocrat*”, which discusses, in the context of the current autocratic regime in Russia, the views of the priest and theologian Alexander Men on the nature of the Russian/Soviet autocracy as related to the Orthodox Church.

The 146th NZ issue concludes with the RUSSIAN INTELLECTUAL JOURNALS’ REVIEW by Alexander Pisarev and the NEW BOOKS section, where we suggest to pay attention to the Margarita Shakirova’s piece about the book “*The Infinite Empire: Russia in Search of Itself*” (2021) by Alexander Abalov and Vladislav Inozemtsev.

Historical, sociological and theoretical reflection is inseparable from the historical circumstances in which it takes place. That is why the issue dedicated to the centenary of the USSR turned out exactly the way it turned out – in this historical period it could not be any different. The editorial board sincerely hopes that the current catastrophic circumstances will serve as an impetus for a radical rethinking of the entire field of study of Soviet history and Soviet society, which, as a result, will bring about a new stage in its development.



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