

Summary

The main thread running through 137th *NZ* issue is individual conscience amidst a historical event of great importance. The pieces published here discuss situations that involve a large-scale historical break-up, an all-encompassing tragedy that changes forever life, its course and mechanisms, as well as related sets of emotions, reactions and habits; people finding themselves in such circumstances and responding to them, changing their ways of thinking, living and so on; and, of course, their testimonies of it, both private and public.

The 137th issue appears around the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War; consequently, its largest thematic section focuses on the initial stage of the war. Titled “«ON THE 22ND OF JUNE, AT 4:AM...»: ON THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NAZI ATTACK ON THE USSR”, it comprises five articles. In their introduction, the editors of the section, Oleg Beida and Igor Petrov, talk about a conceptual approach they have adopted to compile their material: what the contents of the section have in common (besides the general war theme) is their historical anthropological angle. Mark Edele, a professor at the University of Melbourne, does not merely trace the transformation of the Soviet military administrative and ideological apparatus, formed by the autumn of 1941 – he also analyses Joseph Stalin’s mental state, which significantly influenced the process (“*Stalin in the Summer of 1941:*

Managing Catastrophe”). A detailed piece by Anatoly Voronin is centred on foreigners in Moscow at the beginning of the war, before the mass evacuation. Dozens of protagonists, mostly diplomats and journalists; personal stories intertwined with “big history” in unexpected ways; all set against the background of catastrophic upheavals that transformed the life of the Stalinist capital. At the same time, in the summer of 1941, Soviet cultural workers, caught up in the war, tried to do all they could to make themselves useful to the front-line action and to the motherland. Erina Megowan, an assistant professor at College of the Holy Cross (Worcester), describes how the efforts of film and theatre directors, musicians, actors and writers, disjointed and chaotic at first, were soon taken under an ideological and administrative control by the authorities, who created a special mechanism for providing “cultural services to the war”. However, the victory was won, first and foremost, by the officers and soldiers. An introduction to war anthropology studies focusing on the Red Army’s everyday life is given in “*The Stuff of Soldiers: A History of the Red Army in World War II through Objects*”, a book by the American historian Brandon M. Schechter, excerpted at the end of this section.

The war section is thematically echoed by two reviews. Pavel Gavrilov’s piece is about “*Debates on Stalinism*”, a book by Mark Edele. One of *NZ* editors, Andrei Zakharov, writes about a unique Great Patriotic War testimony published this year: a memoir of a first-wave Russian

emigre, who fought on the Eastern Front in the ranks of the Spanish Blue Division.

The second section of 137th issue can be said to further develop the same theme. Its centrepiece are individual historical testimonies – or more precisely, ways in which history shapes these testimonies – and glimpses they provide into the minds of those who make history, if only imperceptibly and passively. Two major pieces included in “EGO-DOCUMENTS: MECHANISMS OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY IN HISTORY” are based on the Soviet period, one of them on the war. Pavel Polian describes various types of war testimonies, as well as archival stories and human lives behind them. Yury Zaretsky in “*Ego-documents of the Soviet Times: Terminology, Historiography, Methodology*” offers a brief history of the notion of ego-document itself, touching upon discussions accompanying its emergence in contemporary historiography, and then he focuses on methods used to study ego-documents as applied to the Soviet period. To go back to the opening piece of the section, it stems from a much earlier ego-document. Alina Kovaleva writes about a surprise archival discovery: a copy of a teenage diary kept by the Great Duke Alexander Pavlovich, the future Russian emperor Alexander I. The themes of war and childhood are interlinked in the CASE STUDY column, in which Olga Okhotnikova and Alexander Khryakov analyse the use of childhood images in war propaganda, discussing German and Russian postcards dating back to WWI.

This NZ issue, like the previous one, contains extended instalments of our regular sections CULTURE OF POLITICS and POLITICS OF CULTURE. The first includes three articles, each of them highlighting a certain aspect. CULTURE OF (LEFT-WING)

POLITICS is a detailed analysis of a polemic between the prominent British Socialist Raymond Williams and George Orwell. In “*Orwell and Williams: Language and Socialism*”, Tony Crowley, a professor at the University of Leeds, dissects the disagreements between the two major figures in the history of Socialist thought in Britain. In CULTURE OF (ECOLOGICAL) POLITICS, we publish a chapter from “*Human Era: The Rhetoric and Lethargy of the Anthropocene*”, a book by Eva Bińczyk from the University of Nicolaus Copernicus (Poland), discussing political, social and ideological causes of denialism: the denial of the very problem of climate change. Bińczyk’s book will be published in Russian in 2021 by New Literary Observer. Finally, CULTURE OF (MODERN) POLITICS contains an article by Yulia Prozorova, “*The Reception of the Western Liberal Project and the Experience of Post-Soviet Modernity in Russia*”, whose title speaks for itself.

In POLITICS OF (URBANIST) CULTURE NZ editor Igor Kobylin conducts a cultural analysis of the first post-Soviet decade in the life of Nizhny Novgorod (“*Nizhny Novgorod Returns: A Time of Perestroika / A Perestroika of Time*”). Anatoly Ryasov in POLITICS OF (ACADEMIC) CULTURE tracks down the rather cool attitude of the French – and especially the Anglo-Saxon – academia to Jacques Derrida and his philosophy.

Also in this issue are our regular columnists: Alexander Kustarev in POLITICAL IMAGINARY (“*A Russian Landscape with Trump in the Foreground*”) and Alexei Levinson in SOCIOLOGICAL LYRICS (“*On Sakharov and the Intelligentsia*”). The issue concludes with the RUSSIAN INTELLECTUAL JOURNALS’ REVIEW by Alexander Pisarev and a NEW BOOKS section.



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