

# Summary

**M**ost of the materials in the 154th *NZ* issue cluster around three main themes that are extremely relevant today.

The first thematic block is called “AUTHORITARIAN TRANSFORMATION: FROM «STATE CAPTURE» TO A REVOLUTION IN LEGISLATION”. The texts collected here talk about various cases of “appropriation of the state” that externally maintain a pretence of keeping the preexisting form of government and even a considerable part of the legislation, and, conversely, they bring up other examples, ones involving decisive transformations of a state’s governance structure and body of laws with the aim of strengthening the new regime.

The block opens with a translation of the speech that the French lawyer and statesman Jean-Baptiste Treilhard (1742–1810) gave at a meeting of the Corps législatif in 1808. Treilhard presents here the new Code of Criminal Procedure, which by that time had been developed by a special committee of the French Council of State by order of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. The committee produced both the Code of Criminal Instruction of 1808 and the Penal Code of 1810, which remained in force until 1958 and 1994, respectively. Treilhard explains the reasoning behind and main provisions of the Code of Criminal Instruction, demonstrating the historical logic behind the country’s new legislation that proved to be one of the most important results of the revolution of 1789–1799, but, at the same time, served to strengthen

Napoleon’s regime and promote a kind of “national reconciliation” within the emperor’s domain.

The topic of a “stabilizing” legislation, which in itself is a revolutionary concept in legal practice, is further developed in the *NZ ARCHIVE* section. It offers an excerpt from the book by the French jurist Maxime Leroy (1873–1957), entitled “*L’esprit de la législation napoléonienne esquisse d’une étude critique*”, with a historical and legal overview of the French Penal Code of 1810.

The first thematic block continues its exploration of how democratic forms of government and authoritarian mechanisms can coexist (sometimes conflicting, but often working together) by offering the readers a fragment of the memoirs of the Syrian politician Khalid al-Azm (“*Mudhakkirāt Khalid al-Azm, al-mujallad al-thānī*”), who repeatedly served as minister and head of government after the Second World War. The chosen excerpt refers to the early 1950s, the short period of parliamentarism in Syrian history, when elections held in the country were at least partially democratic. Al-Azm clearly shows how the party system and the electoral landscape in Syria were shaped by the interests of certain ethnic and religious groups, powerful clans, tribes, state institutions, and social classes. The short and turbulent era of parliamentarism in Syria ended with the 1963 coup d’état, which brought the Ba’ath Party to power. Khalid al-Azm was forced to flee the country; he died in exile.

The thematic block ends with the article by Anastasia Kirichek entitled



“*Seize the Day – Capture the State*»: *Politics and Corruption in Theory and in Practice*”, in which the author examines several methods and mechanisms of “state capture” by authoritarian regimes or even organized criminal groups, that have emerged in post-war practice.

The exploration of the dialectical relationship between democratic forms of government and authoritarian tendencies and practices concludes with the new instalment of Tatiana Vorozheikina’s column **THE REVERSE OF THE METHOD**. This time, Vorozheikina is looking at Argentina in the late 1950s and early 1960s – the “democratic era” between the overthrow of Juan Domingo Perón in 1955 and the next military coup after that. The author demonstrates how the apparently democratic politics of this period were in fact the result of a power struggle between the political successors of the first dictatorship of Perón, and the authoritarian tendencies of the highest ranks of the military.

The second thematic block of the 154th *NZ* issue is called “**IN THE MARGINS OF MAINSTREAM: SOCIOPOLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION**”. Most of the texts published here are materials from the conference “*«Minority Science» in the Short 20th Century: Imagining Science from the Margins of Academia*”, held in Prague in the spring of 2023 by the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

The collection opens with a short introduction by one of the event organizers, Jan Surman. Then the Turkish researcher Göktuğ İpek offers a historical overview of the persecution of left-wing academics at Ankara University during the late 1940s, at the very time when “democratization” had been announced in Turkey and the country was allegedly transition-

ing to a multi-party system. The author’s chosen topic, that is extremely relevant to today’s Russia and some other post-Soviet countries, is the process of transforming mainstream humanities scholars and sociologists into outcasts through the efforts of their ideological opponents and the state itself. A process that culminates in their forced displacement and emigration (which allowed the scholars from İpek’s article to stay in academia and have rather successful careers).

The piece by the American science historian Slava Gerovitch, “*The Kitchen and the Dacha: Productive Spaces of Soviet Mathematics*”, is devoted to the functioning of one of the most flourishing sciences of the Soviet era, mathematics, in the period between the 1960s and the early 1980s. Gerovitch shows how formal academic spaces (research institutes, higher education institutions, the academy of sciences) combined with informal ones characteristic of the Soviet intelligentsia of that era (the kitchen, the dacha).

The block wraps up with a discussion concerning the margins of cultural (rather than scientific) mainstream. In a conversation with the Nizhny Novgorod-based street artist Siniy Karandash (Blue Pencil), Igor Kobylin brings up the not so distant past when street art was close to becoming a mainstream cultural phenomenon in Nizhny Novgorod (referred to as the “capital of Russian street art” in the 2000s and early 2010s), and considers how nowadays this movement is being rapidly marginalized.

In the third main theme of the 154th issue 154 – “**WORLD WAR I: JUST BEHIND THE FRONT LINE. EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS**” – we look at what happens in the “intermediate” zone between military the front lines and the rear. It is here that the biggest humanitarian catastrophes of the modern wars have taken place

(and are still taking place): hostilities and policies of the belligerent states bring devastation to the local civilian population, and the main medical treatment facilities for the primary victims of war (wounded military personnel) are also located in this very area.

The former of the two issues is represented with an excerpt from Shimon Eisenberg's book of memoirs written in Yiddish "*Dust of War. Memoirs of a Refugee from Lithuania, 1915–1917*" (1935). In 1915, the Russian Empire authorities, faced with a series of military failures on the German front, decided to deport the Jewish population from the territory of present-day Lithuania and Latvia to the central governorates of the country. The local Jewish communities found themselves under triple threat at once – vulnerable to the advancing German army, the anti-Semitic local peasantry, and the equally hostile Cossacks from the Russian army. Eisenberg himself was able to save his family, taking them first to Moscow, and then to South Africa, where they ended up settling. His completely forgotten book is an invaluable account of an episode from the history of World War I that is not very widely known.

The second publication in this section is no less historically important: it is an excerpt (translated into Russian for the first time ever) from the non-fiction book by the American Ellen La Motte entitled "*The Backwash of War: The Human Wreckage of the Battlefield as Witnessed by an American Hospital Nurse*", that

caused a stir soon after its release in 1916. Before World War I, La Motte worked as a tuberculosis nurse; in 1915, following the advice of her friend, the classic modernist writer Gertrude Stein, she volunteered to serve as a war nurse at a French military hospital in Belgium. Her book is about this experience; for La Motte, the catastrophe of war is not solely about the havoc it wreaks on the human body, she also interprets war as a mental and social disease. This excellent piece of writing (some critics consider La Motte's style to be the precursor of Ernest Hemingway's "iceberg theory") was banned by American censors after the United States entered the war in 1917, and republished only in 1934.

Some of the other noteworthy materials in this issue include a translation of a public lecture given by the German orientalist, essayist and translator Stefan Weidner, entitled "*Conflicting Perceptions: A Journey through Modern (Mis)Readings of the Qur'ān*", and a detailed historical analysis of the main plot points of Yulian Semyonov's spy novels, undertaken by Boris Sokolov in light of the most recent editions of Semyonov's books being released (complete with documents related, in particular, to the television series "Seventeen Moments of Spring"). 154th NZ issue also contains other book reviews, as well as the latest instalments of the Alexei Levinson's regular column SOCIOLOGICAL LYRICS and the RUSSIAN INTELLECTUAL JOURNALS REVIEW by Alexander Pisarev.

