

Introduction, Fifth Anniversary Issue

D*emokratizatsiya* has exceeded the expectations of the ambitious and energetic American University students who hatched the idea in the university dorms over five years ago.¹ They wanted to start a journal devoted exclusively to the changes under way in the Soviet Union. Nothing they could find on the library's shelves could satisfy their curiosity because no journal was consistently addressing these problems.

Fredo Arias-King, the intrepid founder of the journal, persuaded the university to provide the initial capital. Louise Shelley, Mike Waller, and Kolia Zlobin were recruited as the journal's editors. An impressive editorial board linking the United States and Russia was recruited. American University and Moscow State University became partners in this intellectual effort. The American Foreign Policy Council subsequently assumed a critical role in editing and financing the journal.

After two years, the journal was intellectually but not financially viable. An application was made to Heldref Publications, a division of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, which publishes academic journals that are not viable without subsidies. The president of the foundation, Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, supported the journal and Heldref acquired *Demokratizatsiya* in 1994. This transition was excellent for the journal because it gave us strong editorial and marketing assistance. Heldref's broad distribution system allowed *Demokratizatsiya* to reach a wider audience.

Demokratizatsiya is now a major academic journal with a broad influence on policy. Many of our colleagues running Soviet studies at major institutions in the United States have named us as the leading journal in post-Soviet affairs. Scholars, students, policymakers, and journalists read our magazine. Its articles have been introduced into the *Congressional Record* by Chairman Gilman of the House International Relations Committee. The mass media have brought *Demokratizatsiya*'s concerns about American foreign assistance to the former Soviet Union to a larger audience. In Russia, newspapers have cited our authors, and their ideas have become part of the intellectual debate there. Our journal's impact has been noted in other successor states such as Ukraine, the Baltics, and Kazakhstan.

The journal has achieved distinction by focusing on areas that are outside the interests of most scholarly journals. *Demokratizatsiya* has made an effort to have scholarly material of the highest caliber and to be accessible to a wide readership. We have sought articles and interviews with key individuals shaping develop-

ments in the region (including Gorbachev, Yakovlev, and Shakhnazarov). Its access to Communist Party and Gorbachev Foundation archives has given *Demokratizatsiya's* readers valuable information for understanding the Soviet period and the final years of perestroika.

Demokratizatsiya has made its mark by focusing on the regions of Russia and the successor states; American assistance policy to the former USSR; legal reform and problems of corruption and organized crime; and new security issues, including the problems of the former security apparatus and civil society, and the impact of the social transformation on ordinary citizens.

History of the Journal

The most widely acclaimed issue before Heldref acquired the journal was one dedicated to American policy in the region after the Soviet collapse. It included such recognized authorities as Martha Brill Olcott, Askar Akaev, Stephen Blank, Nicholas Daniloff, Paula Dobriansky, Paul Goble, Nancy Lubin, Blair Ruble, and Alexander Yakovlev, among others.

Demokratizatsiya's policy effects in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are more diverse. The first impact stemmed from Gregory Stanton's critique of a major draft of the proposed Ukrainian constitution. That piece may have contributed to rejection of the constitution by a slim majority in the Supreme Rada, after the parliamentary librarian forwarded a Ukrainian-language version of the article to the deputies. Many deputies later called to congratulate the journal. The incident made the journal a magnet for three further critiques of the Ukrainian constitution: one by a U.S. federal judge, another by the former Ukrainian attorney general, and one by a Harvard University scholar. Shortly afterward, *Demokratizatsiya* was banned in Uzbekistan after an unflattering article about the Karimov regime appeared under the pseudonym "C" in the fall 1993 issue.

By that time, the chief architect of glasnost and perestroika, Alexander N. Yakovlev, had joined the editorial board, uttering the now famous phrase, "Neither we nor the Americans have an understanding of Russia's path toward democracy." Galina Starovoitova, former presidential spokesperson and the co-founder of the Democratic Russia Movement, joined the board shortly thereafter. In fact, one of Mikhail Gorbachev's last interviews as Soviet president was for *Demokratizatsiya*, courtesy of the famed journalist Yuri Shekuchikhin—also a board member and a Duma deputy for Yabloko. Gorbachev continued to cooperate with the journal in various ways after his resignation.

Also in 1993–1994, *Demokratizatsiya* played a key role in documenting the excesses of that most threatening, yet understudied, Soviet institution, the KGB, and in supporting some of its victims. Yasmann speaks about that story in his article in this issue. Vil Mirzayanov, the jailed dissident scientist who caused an international uproar by denouncing the Russian military's continued illegal covert production of chemical weapons, thanked *Demokratizatsiya* at a press conference for the role it had played in his eventual release.

Demokratizatsiya, continuing its investigation of KGB practices, published a thorough and meticulous article on the agency's illegal actions against environ-

mental activist Alexander Nikitin, which was written by his Norwegian lawyers. There were policy pieces written by Joachim Gauck of the former East Germany and Jaroslav Basta of the Czech Republic, two individuals who have successfully dismantled a Communist secret police force (the Stasi and StB, respectively). Their articles offered advice to a Russian government losing its battles against the successor agencies of the KGB.

Demokratizatsiya has also been a forum for figures of the CIS who feel they “need to get the word out” but are ignored by the local press. For example, the ousted chairman of the Russian Constitutional Court, Valery Zorkin, blasted Yeltsin’s “illegitimate regime” on our pages, declaring that “influential circles in the West are seeking to weaken Russia to the maximum.” The winter 1993/94 issue contained an article by Askar Akaev, the president of Kyrgyzstan, who began his article by stating, “I cannot but express my gratitude for the opportunity to present my views on the processes taking place in Kyrgyzstan.” Similarly, the journal obtained (courtesy of Nicholas Daniloff) an exclusive interview by telephone with Chechen president Dzhokhar Dudayev. It was one of the last interviews he gave before being killed by the Russian Air Force. Finally, Vladimir Podoprigora, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the upper chamber of the Russian Parliament, discussed Russia’s “unique” foreign policy on the pages of *Demokratizatsiya*.

In terms of primary material, *Demokratizatsiya* has obtained some precious gems for its readers. The journal serialized in five issues the suppressed transcripts of a special Russian parliamentary committee hearing on the role of the army and the KGB in the 1991 coup and the whereabouts of Communist party finances. The transcripts were suppressed when the reform-minded investigative committee found many coup conspirators were still in power after the post-coup “purges,” and that these Communist turncoats were personally benefiting from the stolen funds. In addition, *Demokratizatsiya* obtained special rights from the former Communist Party archives to select and publish documents from the Lenin and Stalin eras in the spring 1994 issue, including personal correspondence. American scholars were especially delighted with the minutes from a highly secret Kremlin meeting between Mikhail Gorbachev and his “kitchen cabinet” of most trusted advisors debating how to further weaken Communist Party power through the creation of a stronger Soviet presidency. [The final sections of the transcript of the special parliamentary hearing and of the documents from the Communist Party archives are printed in this issue of *Demokratizatsiya*—Ed.] In the same issue, Yuri Baturin (only one week before he was selected to become President Yeltsin’s powerful national security advisor) published a firsthand account of the byzantine negotiations at Novo-Ogarevo, the dacha where Gorbachev and republican leaders were debating the future of the Soviet Union in the days before the August 1991 coup attempt.

Since its inception, *Demokratizatsiya* has been quoted in the main press of Russia and other CIS countries, but a new level was reached recently when *Izvestiya*, *Zavtra*, and *Obshchaya Gazeta* bitterly debated the unfortunate scandal that broke out among USAID, Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly

Chubais, and the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID). The Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Newsline* on 3 July 1997 reported:

Neither First Deputy Prime Minister Chubais nor the government's press service has issued a statement on new accusations against Chubais published in *Izvestiya* on 1 July. The paper claimed, among other things, that the Center for the Protection of Private Property, founded by Chubais in early 1996, received an allegedly suspicious loan from Stolichnyi Bank (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 2 July 1997). Citing the U.S. journal *Demokratizatsiya*, *Izvestiya* also said that the Russian Center for Privatization, which Chubais had long coordinated, received more than \$100 million in recent years from international financial organizations.

The journal's greatest achievements, however, are the small but visible steps of educating students, policymakers, and scholars on the still mesmerizing phenomenon that is the democratization of the post-Soviet states.

The Future

The renowned authors who contributed to this issue come from several disciplines, all sharing a love for the transformation of the former USSR. Anders Åslund, Marshall Goldman, and Donald Bowles revisit the debate on strategy to reform a post-Communist, namely the Russian, economy. Victor Yasmann discusses the next five years of *Demokratizatsiya* and what role we can play in helping consolidate Russian democracy. Vladimir Brovkin and Martin Walker tell us of the necessity and future of NATO, as Vladimir Lysenko does of the Russian democrats. Martha Brill Olcott gives us an overview of the Central Asian nations' post-Soviet transition. Loren Graham illustrates that the "history of the Soviet Union is an important lesson in the importance of reality, both natural and social," by revisiting some of the disasters that occurred when the Soviets forgot this axiom. Bruce Smith places trends in a larger perspective. Louise Shelley looks at the theft of the Russian state in recent years and its impact on the future development of society.

In the words of one observer, "*Demokratizatsiya* is more than a journal." It is shaping policy debate on the future development of the former Soviet Union. We hope and plan that we will continue to play a key role in the exciting process of transformation.

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NOTE

1. The students included Kelly Adams, David Bain, Stephen Cruty, Vasilios Fotopoulos, Natalia Melnyczuk, Laurence Olson, Paula Orlikowski, and Ross Phelps. Many of the founding students are active in post-Soviet affairs and now reside in Soviet successor states. They were subsequently assisted by Christopher Corpora, Kelly McKenna, and Brian Simon, who devoted innumerable hours to the journal.