

## Introduction to the Tenth Anniversary Issue

**D***emokratizatsiya* has exceeded the expectations of the American University students who hatched the idea in the university dorms eleven years ago.<sup>1</sup> They wanted to start a journal devoted exclusively to the changes under way in the Soviet Union. Nothing they found on the library's shelves could satisfy their curiosity. No journal was consistently addressing those changes.

The three main schools of American University (with the leadership of deans Goodman, Kerwin, and Bennett), provided the initial capital to launch *Demokratizatsiya*. Louise Shelley, J. Michael Waller, and Nikolai Zlobin were recruited as the journal's editors. An impressive editorial board linking the United States and Russia was formed. American University and Moscow State University became partners in this intellectual effort. The policy approach of the journal was also covered by the International Freedom Foundation and later by the American Foreign Policy Council, both of which assumed critical roles in editing and financing the journal.

An application was made to Heldref Publications, a division of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, which publishes academic journals that would not be viable as stand-alone projects. *Demokratizatsiya* could then concentrate on editorial matters, leaving production and distribution to the professional editors and production staff at Heldref. The president of the foundation, Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, supported the journal, and Heldref acquired *Demokratizatsiya* in 1994. Managing Editor Joyce Horn, and later also Melody Warnick, provided many hours and much skill at managing the production of each issue. Heldref's broad distribution system also allowed it to reach a wider audience.

*Demokratizatsiya* was the first journal of its kind dedicated exclusively to the study of the sociopolitical transformation in the newly independent states (NIS) of the former USSR. Its goal was not only to attract the traditional Sovietologists but also to engage in a paradigm shift by inviting specialists in other fields (law, aid, policy, other regions, and so forth) who were coming in contact with the new countries to share their views and their experiences. *Demokratizatsiya* took only half seriously the axiom that "if you want to understand Russia, forget everything you learned about the USSR." It has followed an interdisciplinary approach with articles written by sociologists, political scientists, demographers, historians, legal experts, and policymakers, among others. The approach is reflected in articles penned by renowned Sovietologists such as Michael McFaul, Louise Shel-

ley, Blair Ruble, Peter Reddaway, and Timothy Colton, and by emerging scholars such as J. Michael Waller and Andrew Bennett. Experts from other fields have included Catherine Barnes (on elections) and Jaroslav Basta (on Czechoslovak lustration), and policymakers such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Mart Laar, Askar Akaev, Paula Dobriansky, and Paul Goble, as well as future leaders (one hopes) such as Iurie Rosca and Vladimir Lysenko.

We sought to make the journal a genuine democratic and diverse forum that reflects a broad spectrum of views, and in essence, we have done so. Scholars from the NIS, unaccustomed to this approach, complain that they do not understand “where the journal stands.” But that is a compliment because our goal is to be nonpartisan and to give equal time to many and varied analyses and predictions about the path of democratization in the post-Soviet world.

*Demokratizatsiya* has usually had three or four executive editors who agree only on their commitment to study in depth the transitions in the NIS. The backgrounds of the current editors hint at their diversity (and yes, *it was* founded by a twenty-two-year old Mexican, but we never boast that). This ensures that it will not be seen, as many other periodicals, as somebody’s mouthpiece. Nevertheless, the three original executive editors left their lasting influence on the journal. Waller brought a fresh policy perspective, as one of the few thinkers at the time who consistently and realistically addressed the special challenges of policy toward the NIS, especially the influence of leftover Soviet institutions on the new Russian reality. Zlobin is an academic guru on the Russian transition who even by then had been widely published and quoted on perestroika and post-Soviet issues, and who brought a fresh and holistic approach. Shelley, even in 1992, was strategically positioned to understand better than most in our profession the unique problems facing the NIS, since she was, in addition to being a Sovietologist, also a criminologist.

*Demokratizatsiya*’s structure ensures that editors can participate when they have time and withdraw when they leave the field, become too busy with another project, or become employed by the government. Of the sixteen original editors, only five remain today. Others have joined, bringing a rich perspective on the complex world we study. Sally Stoecker and Vladimir Brovkin, two specialists on early Soviet history who also follow current events, joined *Demokratizatsiya* in 1998 as executive editors. Michael McFaul, who had emerged as one of the leading authorities on post-Soviet Russia and who had been member of the editorial board almost since the beginning, joined them in 2001.

Other changes have also taken place since those heady early days. *Demokratizatsiya* began when there was no Internet. In 1992, the field was starved for basic information on the happenings in the Soviet successor states. An article on Tajikistan, for example, contributed to filling that void. Writing my recent book on the thirty-two postcommunist transitions and revisiting the publications from the years when those transitions began (1989–91), I was struck by the dearth of material on many of those countries at that time. Aside from a few short articles in newspapers and the occasional piece in the Radio Liberty bulletins, the goings-on in some countries were a complete mystery.

Looking back at some of the early issues of *Demokratizatsiya*, one is impressed by how correct our authors were—Victor Yasmann, J. Michael Waller, Nikolai Zlobin, and Michael McFaul, for example, looking at the fragile nature of Russian democracy from quite different angles. As Louise Shelley states in this issue, *Demokratizatsiya* became the main authority on the topic of organized crime and corruption, so prevalent in the first decade of post-Soviet transition in many of the NIS.

*Demokratizatsiya* is now a major academic journal with a broad influence on policy. Many of our colleagues teaching in and administering departments of post-Soviet studies at institutions in the United States have named it as the leading journal in the study of the post-Soviet transition. The journal has paid subscribers in twenty-six countries around the world. Its articles have been introduced in the *Congressional Record*, and the mass media have brought the authors' critiques about American foreign assistance to the former Soviet Union to a larger audience. In Russia, Ukraine, the Baltics, and Kazakhstan, newspapers have cited our authors, and their ideas have become part of the intellectual debate there.

*Demokratizatsiya* has also stood out in its analysis of the different regions of Russia, which are laboratories in gubernatorial elections, economic reform, legal reform, and some in autocracy. The perceived mismanagement of U.S. and multilateral aid to Russia was another hot topic that made it a must for all those engaging in this timely policy debate. Early in its existence, for some mysterious reason, *Demokratizatsiya* also became a forum for a raging debate on the Ukrainian constitutional drafts.

We feel blessed by our friendship and association with Galina Starovoitova, the late co-chair of the Democratic Russia Movement and onetime leader of the democratic opposition to the Soviet Communist Party. Her murder in November of 1998 was an incalculable loss. We also have a long-standing relation with the architect of perestroika and glasnost Alexander Yakovlev, and with Mikhail Gorbachev, whose foundation has provided *Demokratizatsiya* with archival and other materials. Our archival section on the establishment of the Soviet presidency (Spring 1994 issue) was useful on shedding light on an important event during perestroika.

This issue of *Demokratizatsiya* will include most of the articles written in honor of its tenth anniversary. The next two issues will include a special section with three additional articles. The anniversary issue captures the essence of the post-Soviet debate and the nature of the journal itself. Our authors on the economies of the region broadly share a surprisingly optimistic prognosis for the economy of Russia and other NIS. Our foreign policy contributors diagnose the continuing ambivalence of Russia's role in the world.

In the democracy-building section, the original democratic leader of Belarus discusses his country's relapse into authoritarianism. Similarly, leaders of three difficult transitions (Georgia, Moldova, and Bulgaria) and the architect of what is arguably the most successful transition (Estonia) discuss their different challenges in the next issues. Other articles discuss the next generation and demographic change in Russia—a source of both optimism and pessimism. A leading

expert on Russia's communists explores the odd nature of that party, and another renowned expert speculates on Central Asia's struggle between terrorism and democracy.

Five leading authorities also discuss prospects for the rule of law in the region, including the topics of crime and corruption, the Russian state, constitutional law, *zakonnost'* or legal consciousness, and (in the Spring issue) federalism. The collective prognosis of this group of authors on the rule of law is less sanguine. This anniversary issue concludes with an exploration of what became of Sovietology and what lies ahead for it.

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#### NOTE

1. The original team was composed of Kelly Adams, Ruth Pojman, Paula Orlikowski, Vasilios Fotopoulos, David Bain, Christopher Dwyer, Frederick Williams, Stephen Cruty and myself. Invaluable assistance was later given by Peter Serenyi, Grant Benson, Dmitri Iudine, John Knab, Natalia Melnyczuk, Laurence Olson, Christopher Corpora, Rangarajan Soundararajan, Shinjinee Sen, Kelly McKenna, Brian Simon, Craig Coulter, Birgit Brauer, Svetlana Bagaudinova, Liesl Heeter, James Stevens, Ross Phelps, Timothy Scott, and Glenn Bryant, among others.