Editor’s Note

To state the obvious, this is a time of great concern for those of us who work in the Soviet and post-Soviet studies communities. I want to take this opportunity to express the journal’s absolute opposition to what the Kremlin euphemistically terms the “special operation” in Ukraine, which is in fact a war not only against the people of Ukraine, but also against the principles of democracy and national self-determination. SPSR states its unwavering support for the people of Ukraine who are currently enduring immense privation and suffering as they stand against the forces of violence and oppression. In addition, the journal is unequivocal in its solidarity with the many Russians who oppose the war in Ukraine, which is having a profoundly negative impact on the people Russia as well. It is our hope that the fighting will end soon and the peoples of the region that this journal is devoted to can begin to rebuild their lives.

Finally, SPSR strongly opposes the “cancelling” Russian scholars who, simply due to their nationality, have found themselves excluded from academic discourse by certain elements who wish to turn the current conflict into a witch hunt against all Russians. Locking out our Russian colleagues as they struggle with personal and professional hardship is not the way to end this conflict, and this journal will continue to serve as a forum for scholarship originating from the former Soviet Union. In fact, this issue of SPSR contains two articles written by scholars from the Russian Federation.

Now, on to the contents of this issue of SPSR, which includes four articles and a pair of book reviews. Our first article is “Поход Алексея Сидорцева против советского суда: свидетельства, аргументы и поиск материально истины” (Alexei Sidortsev’s March against the Soviet Court: Evidence, Arguments, and the Search for Material Truth) by Maria Starun of the National Research University Higher School of Economics (St. Petersburg, Russia). Starun explores the interactions between Alexei Sidortsev, a Soviet worker, and the Soviet legal bureaucracy. This article describes and analyzes the range of rights and legal opportunities available to the Soviet worker under interwar law. Starun argues that material truth in the socialist legal consciousness is not determined by the discursive political language of denunciation that we have come to regard as a hallmark of the Soviet system.

The second article, by Sergey Sergeev of Kazan Federal University (Russia) and Alexandra Kuznetsova of Kazan National Research Technological
University (Russia), is “Under the Weight of the Soviet Legacy and Political Repressions: The radical Left in Late Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.” Professors Sergeev and Kuznetsova examine mass protest movements that stimulated the rise of radical left organizations in Russia. These organizations were also influenced by an upsurge of social protest movements and were participants in the Bolotnaya Square protests of 2011–2012. While these groups were marginalized and ceased their activities shortly after the protests, they resumed their activities in 2019. Sergeev and Kuznetsova also offer projections for the future of the radical left in Russia.

Third in this issue is “Strangers: First Encounter with the Soviets through the Eyes of the Population of the Polesie Voivodeship” by Stanisław Boridczenko of the University of Szczecin (Poland). Boridczenko addresses the manner in which local population of the Polesie Voivodeship (a district in interwar Poland) perceived the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939 through the prism of their encounters with the “others.” Boridczenko also focuses on the local understanding of the “other,” and how this perception changed after the Soviet invasion. Also, Boridczenko explores the image of the Soviets held by local Polish communities before the Second World War.

The fourth and final article in this issue is “The Soviet Entrance to the Middle East and Manoeuvring between Superpowers: The Case of Israel and Egypt” by Yacov Livne of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Jerusalem, Israel). A returning contributor to SPSR, Professor Livne focuses on the Soviet Union’s strategies during the first decade after World War II to overcome the obstacles created by the West its policy in the Middle East. Livne employs the cases of Israel and Egypt to reveal two different strategies used by the Soviet Union that reflected significant changes in Soviet foreign policy. While Stalin chose to support Israel indirectly, Khrushchev decided on a more direct approach with Egypt. While Khrushchev’s tactics presented the Soviet Union with new opportunities in the Middle East, they also created long term challenges for the Soviet regime.

I invite you to enjoy this latest issue of SPSR during this time of crisis in Eastern Europe.

Christopher J. Ward
Editor-in-Chief