Introduction: A Festschrift In Honor of Donald J. Raleigh

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This issue is the first of The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review to honor the impact of Dr. Donald J. Raleigh on Soviet historical studies through the work of his students. Over the course of his long academic career in the History departments at the University of Hawaii and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Raleigh supervised over 50 theses and dissertations, and mentored countless students and junior colleagues, many of whom have become leading scholars in the field of Soviet history. As a mentor, Raleigh's flexibility, his generosity, and his unflagging support helped to expand the scope of historical research on the Soviet era. Even as he encouraged his students to pursue widely diverse topics that often reached far beyond his own areas of scholarly expertise, Raleigh demanded adherence to the strictest ethics of historical research and the highest professional standards. The results, as illustrated by the articles contributed to these SPSR issues by a small sample of his former doctoral students, reflect Raleigh's commitment to scholarship and reveal the ways that his mentoring has shaped the next generations of historians of the Soviet Union.

Scholars of the Russian revolutionary era should be familiar with Raleigh's work. His first book, Revolution on the Volga,1 broke new ground by establishing the importance of the Russian provinces in understanding the outcome of the Bolshevik Revolution and challenged traditional interpretations of the nature of the Bolshevik Party and Bolshevik authority. Previously, scholarly attention had been lavished on the events in Petrograd (today St. Petersburg), the mechanizations that brought the Bolsheviks to power, and their efforts to

assert their control over Russia. In *Revolution on the Volga*, Raleigh shifted the focus away from the Center, revealing the broad popularity of socialist parties and the idea of socialist revolution in the provinces, how local conditions shaped responses to both local and national developments, and the support that Bolsheviks earned in places like Saratov by standing for Soviet Power in ways that differed from Bolsheviks in Petrograd. He argued that socialist revolution was not imposed on an unwilling and resistant population but was rather a widely embraced alternative to the failures of autocracy and the perceived ineffectiveness of liberal policies.

The Soviet collapse in 1991 opened new possibilities for archival research, and Raleigh led this archival revolution in Soviet historiography, enthusiastically advocating for the importance of the archives for local history. He drew heavily from local archives for his second monograph, *Experiencing Russia’s Civil War: Politics, Society, and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917–1922*. Insisting that the reality of the Civil War experience was messy and complicated, Raleigh argued for the primacy of language, ideology, and identity, and stressed the ways that local circumstances shaped outcomes. Asserting that the Bolsheviks did not win the Civil War, they survived it, Raleigh joined other scholars in seeing the Civil War as a formative experience through which the characteristics and tendencies of the Soviet state emerged. The post-Soviet conditions that permitted his engagement in the provinces also fostered Raleigh’s growing interest in oral history, in capturing the historical record of a generation whose lives and experiences were both fundamentally shifting and changing, but also offered great insight into the past and had previously been inaccessible. For his third monograph, *Soviet Baby Boomers*, Raleigh

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shifted his focus to the immediate post-World War II period, compiling an oral history-based study of his generation that compared the experiences of students who graduated from two elite high schools, one in Saratov and one in Moscow. His desire to explore the context for his own experiences during the Cold War continued with his ambitious project to produce a scholarly biography of Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev, the leader of the Soviet Union from 1964 until his death in 1982. Over the course of his career, Raleigh's scholarly focus continually adapted to embrace the changing possibilities for research and his own evolving interests. His flexibility, his willingness to engage with new theories and methods, and his openness to embracing the experience of today in service of a more complete understanding of the past, have ensured that he has remained at the cutting edge of Soviet historical scholarship during a time of great transformation.

Those same qualities that made Raleigh a leading historian also shaped him to be a flexible, supportive, and enthusiastic mentor. Regardless of his research interests, Raleigh encouraged his students to explore their own. As a result, over the course of roughly 30 years he supervised theses and dissertations on a diverse array topics spanning the entire Soviet experience, from studies of revolutionary-era children’s literature, female deviance, famine, ethnic identity, and prohibition to investigations into Stalinist-era collectivization, health care, the Gulag, mobilization, international relations, and post-war reconstruction, to research into late-Soviet ideas of masculinity, religion, sport, youth culture, food, transportation, and civil defense, among others. Raleigh's deep knowledge of the Soviet experience, his versatility, high expectations, and commitment to scholarly ethics, enabled him to guide his students to produce high quality scholarship, regardless of their chosen topic. Indeed, through his encouragement and support of this wide range of research topics among his students.


students, Raleigh contributed to the diversification of scholarship in the field of Soviet history overall. Furthermore, Raleigh’s generosity extended beyond his own students, reaching other junior and senior colleagues in the field. He also supported the work of Russian scholars through the translation and publication of their studies, and worked tirelessly to ensure that their scholarship reached a broader audience. For his accomplishments as a scholar and mentor, Raleigh received the Association of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies’ Distinguished Contributions Award in 2021.

As anyone who has interacted with him will attest, Raleigh is supportive yet constructively critical, encouraging yet demanding. His impact on the field has been accomplished not only through his extensive and innovative scholarship, but maybe even more through his mentoring of diverse students researching diverse topics. For that reason, the traditional method of honoring a mentor and their scholarship—the festschrift volume—is not easily accomplished, as the divergent topics of the articles in these issues attest. We hope that the articles included in this and the upcoming issues of SPSR provide at least a

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sense of the impact that Dr. Donald J. Raleigh has had on his field and offer a step toward recognizing his lasting legacy.

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