

Editorial

2021-2022 Editorial Team

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The intensification of the Russo-Ukrainian War over three months ago saw the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of its neighbouring country. Russia is single-handedly responsible for the recrudescence of war in Europe for the first time in over two decades. The invasion has engendered a humanitarian crisis with an almost incommunicably abject effect on the Ukrainian population. As of the 25th May, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has recorded nearly 4,000 civilian casualties and over 4,600 injured civilians, figures which do not even include the equally high number of casualties in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, as well as various other regions. The war has displaced almost a quarter of the Ukrainian population. The monumental reverberations of the invasion on neighbouring East European countries, the European block at large, as well as the international community have already been felt and will continue for many years to come. The last few months have seen the entire world's eyes fixed on Ukraine, as well as our own at *Slovo*.

Naturally, the focus afforded to Ukraine by academics and scholars concerned with Russian, East European and Central Asian affairs has seen a recent increase, no less those engaged with *Slovo*. Of the four research articles which we are delighted to publish as part of the Spring 2022 issue, Damir Sedrayev's (Universidad Carlos III and Universidad Rey Juan Carlos) "The Evolution of Military and Non-Military Means in Russian Strategic Thinking (1991-2022)," offers an insightful contribution as to the causes of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Sedrayev's

illuminating findings are rooted in an examination of the increasing significance afforded to non-military means of warfare in Russia, contributing to an expanding branch of war studies concerned with the important role played by hybrid warfare in the contemporary world. We are equally delighted to publish Ioannis Lainas' (University College London) "Terror or Errors?: From the Socialist Narrative to the Post-Cold War Era," a perspicacious treatment of existing literature concerned with a little-trodden area of research known as the 'leftist errors' — a series of obstacles faced by the Yugoslav National Liberation Movement during the first year of its fascist occupation (1941-42). The axis of focus for Sedrayev's sensitive examination is the crucial question which the Yugoslav Partisans and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia confronted during their struggle: to pursue a course of popular anti-fascism or socialist revolution?

We are similarly pleased to present Lara Olszowska's (University College London) "From Hollywood Mobster to Russian Gangster: Representations of Mafia in Coppola's *Godfather* Trilogy and Balabanov's *Brother* Films," an astute comparative study of Russian film director Aleksei Balabanov's reimagining of the modern gangster filmic genre developed by Hollywood heavyweight Ford Francis Coppola. Olszowska examines the uniquely Russian stylistic elements which Balabanov infuses within the gangster genre to reflect the realities of post-soviet life, as well as the ambivalence of his response to the influence of globalised American culture. Last but certainly not least, we are very glad to publish Nicholas Ong's (University of Oxford) "'The Victim of Death-Rays from Mars': An Evaluation of 'gap-filling' in Chaikovskii's Biographies," a masterly written examination of the proclivity of biographers of nineteenth-century Russian composer, Petr Ilyich Chaikovskii, to construct their own narratives regarding the elusive facts relating to the composer's death. The unique value of Ong's study lies in his circumvention of conventional efforts to establish such facts by instead examining the purpose which these events serve in the narratives of the composer's major biographers.

Two of our film reviews return to the issue's key subject matter of the Russo-Ukrainian war: Andrii Smytsniuk's (University of Cambridge) treatment of Kornii Hrytsiuk's documentary, *Train: Kyiv – War* (2020) and Anna Kotichenko's (University of Warsaw) analysis of Zaza Urushadze's *A Friendship That Survived the Wrath of War* (2019). Smytsniuk's review explores Donbas-native Hrytsiuk's interpretation of the war through the eyes of fellow Ukrainian passengers on a 12-hour train journey to the country's capital. Kotichenko's poignant

examination of Urushadze's film treating the Bolshevik occupation of Southern Ukraine from the perspective of two young boys underlines the undeniable relevance of the film today. Our final film review, Marianna Jaśniak's (University of Warsaw) treatment of Semyon Serzin's 2020 adaptation of Dmitry Danilov's theatrical production, *A Man from Podolsk* (2019), underscores the Kafka-esque quality of the stage play successfully transposed to the film production.

Our three book reviews, Mathias Fuelling's (Temple University) analysis of Jonathan Dimbleby's *Operation Barbarossa: The History of a Cataclysm* (2021), Elizabeth Gabriele's (Shanghai Jiao Tong University) evaluation of the panoramic collection *Memories of Terror: Essays on Recent Histories* published the same year and Alejandro Perna's (Higher School of Economics) analysis of Jorge Saborido's *1917: La Revolución Rusa Cien Años Después* (2017), altogether cover a wide array of subject matter. Fuelling offers a concise and comprehensive review of Dimbleby's interpretation of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. Gabriele's review insightfully covers all seven essays in the valuable collection which sheds light on Holocaust stories from around the world. Perna presents a well-balanced critique of Saborido's Spanish language work dealing with Russia's political history from the period immediately preceding the reign of Nicholas II to the early years of Bolshevik rule.

I cannot close this editorial note without extending immeasurable thanks to each member of this year's terrific editorial team at *Slovo*. They have all worked tirelessly from October of last year to the present to produce this issue of which we are fiercely proud. Our Managing Editor, Pippa Crawford, upon whom I have continually relied, has had an enormous hand in the issue's success. Our General Editors, Qianrui Hu and Margo Bondarchuk, too, deserve very special thanks for their vital work on the issue. As our resident Ukrainian, Margo has afforded us with invaluable insight which we would be ignorant to otherwise. I am grateful to our Film Editor, Louis Marmion, and our Book Editor, Monica Zulyte, who have engaged in admirable work to ensure that you see the perceptive and engaging reviews before you. Our Online Editor, Sarah Moore, and our Online Editor's assistant, Alina Vrabie have continually kept *Slovo's* readers up-to-date with our developments throughout academic year, for which I remain most appreciative. We regret that Alina is leaving her role, however we are certain that wherever she next decides to devote her wonderful skills will be all the richer for it. I would also like to thank our copywriter, Eleanor McDonald-Dick, and our typesetter, Aleksandra Walczak who have assiduously prepared the issue for publication.

Additionally, we have received a generous helping hand from many people out with our editorial team who have indefatigably worked on the issue with us. Firstly, our anonymous peer-reviewers remain the publicly unacknowledged forces who afford us their valuable time and expert knowledge. We are most grateful for their support. We are also very thankful to Ian Caswell at UCL Press who has patiently assisted us as we acclimatise to our new website and submission system. Finally, of course, I would like to express my gratitude to the authors of the articles and reviews which comprise the issue, without whom there would be no issue at all.

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