

MAKING DECISIONS: GOING QUARTERLY!

In its twenty-two years, *Nationalities Papers* has undergone a turbulent history; one marked from its inception by fortuitous and imaginative decisions. The first was taken in 1972 by its founder Stephan M. Horak who had the foresight to highlight an otherwise marginalized theme by underscoring the centrality of multi-ethnicity in Soviet studies.

For the next fifteen years, *NP* thrived modestly until the unexpected advent of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986 and his surprise opening of the Soviet Pandora's Box. Unwittingly, Gorbachev freed the genie of ethno-nationalism throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and, overnight, the topic of the rise of national minorities in the Soviet sphere literally overwhelmed the profession.

How to cover this phenomenon? It was time for a decision. To avoid getting caught in the trap of "keeping up" (an assignment best left to journalists and co-ed authors), *NP* turned to the Special Topic format (and, on occasion, resorted to interviews as an appropriate scholarly vehicle).

For the past five years, *NP* has alternated between "regular" and Special Topic issues, allowing the journal to survey the field as a whole and to focus in depth on 'front-line' topics. Thus, for example, *NP* pioneered the study of a disturbing aspect of Russian conservative nationalism by devoting one complete issue to *Pamyat* (1991); similarly, with *Voices of the Slovene Nation, 1990–1992* (1993), *NP* was able to provide a platform for a broad spectrum of that young state's national architects. In this manner, *NP* was, so to speak, able to stay on "the cutting edge." But it was not enough. Events accelerated, as did the need for broader analysis.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 coincided with the demise of two prominent journals: the older *Problems of Communism* and the younger *Soviet Nationalities* (followed, as of this writing, by an announcement of the imminent demise in August of the invaluable publications of RFE/FL Research Institute). As a result, even as *NP* was receiving ever increasing numbers of submissions from scholars behind the once Iron Curtain, it also obtained more from Western scholars who now had fewer academic journals at their disposal. It was time for yet another major decision.

In order to accommodate so many worthy manuscripts from East and West it was clear that *NP* had to expand. If it was to become an ongoing forum for a wider array of scholars, the journal had to increase the number of annual issues. Hence the recent decision to switch as of 1995 from a semi-annual to a quarterly publication. For the immediate future, this will mean continuing to alternate between the regular and Special Topic formats. The quantitative growth will allow further expansion, internationalization of contributors, and a broadening of topics covered.

However, this necessitated another soul-searching decision re the outer reaches of coverage. For some time, as the old geopolitical order collapsed, *NP* has been reexamining its traditional parameters. Were they still appropriate? Should *NP*

contract its focus by limiting itself to Eastern Europe and what had been the European part of the USSR, jettisoning Caucasasia and Central Asia? Or should *NP* *expand* its boundaries to take into account natural new links heretofore circumscribed by Moscow's hermetically sealed borders? The decision is to favor the latter policy.

This issue represents the start of the process of redefining the journal's new parameters in the light of our changing times and circumstances. *NP*'s first step in realizing this goal is the placement of Rudelson's article in the lead position. It is there in recognition of the reality that post-Soviet Central Asia now extends into western China. Future articles will reflect this new policy. Articles on post-Soviet Transcaucasia will make occasional intellectual forays into Turkey and Iran; and studies of post-Yugoslavia will undoubtedly look increasingly across the boarder. (Note, for example, the short piece on Albania.)

Since its inception, *NP* has long recognized it is dealing with a transcontinental region astride dozens of ethnic fault lines. Indeed, its founding twenty years ago was based on the implications of this premise—that the large and small multi-ethnic entities would not and could not last indefinitely. And now that the genie of ethnopolitics has been liberated from Soviet and communist constraints, many more unforeseen changes can be expected. *NP*'s editorial team will have to remain vigilant and flexible, adjusting to new patterns emerging in the post-Soviet territorium, hopefully, *before* rather than *after* they become obvious. Now having gone quarterly, *NP* looks forward to the next round of challenges and decision-making.

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