

Editorial

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special interview issue

It has been both a great challenge and an incredible honour to work on SLOVO Journal during such a thriving year for our awareness of Russian history and culture, marking the centenary of the Russian Revolution, but also a year that has tested the academic community's ability to come together and defend its right to academic freedom. In the past year, we have produced two pronounced issues under VOL. 29 of SLOVO Journal, concentrating on the publication of interdisciplinary academic work of the highest standard. As an exclusively self-managed postgraduate project, and a unique part of the UCL Press family, we continue to provide some of the freshest insight into the Russian, East & Central European and Eurasian regions to our global readership. I'd like to repeatedly thank this year's Editorial Board and the School of Slavonic and East European Studies for the precious amounts of time and dedication offered to SLOVO Journal.

For our anniversary volume, we publish a special interview issue that aims to introduce our readers to some of the high-profile individuals connected with the journal. In a year during which some have expressed a growing frustration with the restrictive nature of academia, often perceived as stuck within the boundaries of its own Ivory Tower, we have aimed, through some of the following pages, to stress the importance of bridging divides and conveying the main message of our work in a more approachable and effective way. Additionally, SLOVO Journal has expanded its online presence and begun to publish a series of short blog posts, that aspire to introduce every single one of our authors and their stories in a more intimate way than ever before – something that I sincerely hope will develop into a tradition for the way we continue to popularise our future work.

To open this special interview issue, we publish an interview with the Director of Conciliation Resources, and one of the first ever Editors of SLOVO, Jonathan Cohen. Jonathan revisits the initial conception of SLOVO, its humble beginnings as a journal shaped by the influence of the early phases of Glasnost and Perestroika and the desire of students at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies to ask more questions and receive timely answers. The interview also draws a particular focus on the importance of

area studies and the benefit this can bring to the work of independent international organisations like Conciliation Resources.

The second interview we publish is with Prof. Alena Ledeneva, the internationally renowned expert on informal governance in Russia, and internal Academic Adviser to SLOVO Journal. Alena talks about her breakthrough work on *blat*, and her subsequent involvement with the FRINGE CENTRE: Centre for the Study of Social and Cultural Complexity at University College London, highlighting the significance of cross discipline work in an era of compartmentalised sciences, and the possibility of impactful research in both the art and humanities, and the social sciences.

Closing this issue is an interview with the outgoing Director of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, Prof. Jan Kubik. He talks about his tremendous journey in the world of academia, coinciding with the past and present tribulations for freedom, as experienced in Poland and the wider region. Most importantly, as Scientist-in-Charge and Managing Director of the FATIGUE Project, Jan brings our attention to the idea of delayed transformational fatigue in Central and Eastern Europe, responding to the rise of right-wing populism – a new scheme, that allows for a three-year training of doctoral students, spearheaded by SSEES.