Summary

The 149th *NZ* issue focuses on some core concepts of the historical period of modernity – the era which, despite it having repeatedly been declared over, our world still lives in, if we were to judge by the events of recent years. The most relevant, "hottest" concept out of those is the concept of "human rights", which has become a cornerstone of both so-called "Western modernity" and (being recognized by nearly all countries of the world, albeit in some cases purely nominally) of the current world order as well as the relevant international organizations, international law, and so on.

As an introduction to the problem in the "Concepts of Modernity" section we publish a chapter from the book by the American historian and legal scholar Samuel Moyn, "*The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*". The title of the chapter is "*Humanity before Human Rights*"; it is devoted to a historical analysis of the formation of the concept of human rights in the 18th–19th centuries and the contradictions that arose during this process, as well as to critically reviewing a number of classical liberal notions about the concept's "ahistoricity". A Russian translation of Moyn's book is being prepared for release by the *New Literary Observer* publishing house as part of the "*NZ* Library" series.

What follows is a selection of materials devoted to the important – as well as tragic – aspect pertaining to the issue of human rights, namely a consistent and cruel violation of the rights of individuals and entire nations to freedom and life. This concerns mass repressions and genocide. Alexei Levinson devoted his regular column in Sociological Lyrics to the fading (and deliberately stifled by the efforts of Russian state propaganda) memory of Stalin's repressions, which are increasingly ceasing to be perceived by society as an anomaly and instead starting to be categorized as "the norm".

Thematic block "Genocide: Political and Law Aspects" devoted to an even more serious violation, a violation of the right to physical existence of particular nations, of their culture, language, way of life, and so forth. Pavel Polyan offers the readers a brief overview of the history of trials of those Nazis who in September 1941 committed the massacre of Jews (and representatives of a number of other ethnic groups) in Babyn Yar. The article has to do not only with the chronology of trials, court rulings, executions and prison sentences, but also with legal difficulties in defining genocide and determining appropriate methods of prosecution for this crime. The topic developed by the German historian and publicist Michael Mertes, who discusses the little-explored issue of how the Holocaust affected the process of European integration after World War II ("*The Shoah and the European Integration Project*"). The thematic selection wraps up with an extremely informative article by the Nigerian historian Nicholas Ibeawuchi Omenka called "*Children in Biafra War: A Study on their Evacuation, Rehabilitation, and Repatriation*", which talks about the genocide in Biafra,

a province of Nigeria that attempted to gain independence in the late 1960s. The Nigerian authorities tried to thwart the uprising with hunger, causing mass deaths among the local population, especially children. Omenka focuses on the measures that international organizations, primarily Catholic and Protestant ones, employed to rescue the children. More precisely, they moved minors who were dying of starvation and disease to neighboring countries to be treated and rehabilitated there, and as the civil war ended, tried to repatriate and return them to their families (provided they had survived the conflict). The author also emphasizes the legal complexities behind such actions in relation to international law.

The topic of large-scale violations of human rights, of repressions and genocide is also thematically adjacent to the first text of this issue's NZ Archive, which is a Russian translation of the memoir – written in Yiddish – by the Polish communist turned political emigrant Hersh Smolar, "*Where Are You, Comrade Sidorov?*" ("*Vu bistu haver Sidorov?*"). Born into a Jewish family in Poland, Smolar participated in the revolutionary movement on the territory of the Russian Empire, fought in the Civil War on the side of the Bolsheviks, worked as a party functionary in Soviet Ukraine, and in the late 1920s was secretly sent to Poland for revolutionary activity, where he spent many years in prison. It was there that the outbreak of World War II caught him; following a miraculous escape that allowed him to avoid extermination by the Nazis, Smolar found himself on the territory occupied by the USSR. Here yet again he found himself imprisoned, this time by the Soviets, albeit not for long. Smolar participated in the partisan movement during the World War II, and after that, he returned to Poland – by then already a socialist state – where he joined the efforts to revive Jewish culture and community. During the anti-Semitic purge of the late 1960s, Smolar was forced to leave for Israel, where his book of memoirs was created. *NZ* publishes one chapter of Smolar's memoir, in which he describes his last months of imprisonment in Poland (1939) and the mass escape from the Brest-Litovsk prison that had been abandoned by the Polish military and police.

The second piece in NZ Archive also directly concerns human rights, but here the issue in question is the long and hard struggle for women's rights. *NZ* publishes a translated excerpt from the memoir of one of the pioneering founders of the Arab gender equality movement, the legendary Anbara Salam Khalidi. The published excerpt describes mainly the interwar period, Khalidi's childhood, youth, and the early stages of her social activism.

Some other key concepts of modernity are at the center of the second thematic block of this *NZ* issue. Most notably, here are interpretations of the sacred, the living and the dead in the specific historical conditions of the late 19th–20th centuries. A new essay by Vladislav Degtyarev continues his series and dedicated to the style (and type of artistic/cultural thinking) known as "Art Deco" ("*Art Deco or Medusa's Gaze*"). Vadim Mikhailin continues his cycle of studies of the Soviet cinema with an article about the film "*Little Vera*", a real blockbuster of the era of perestroika. It is essentially a love story, unfolding in the midst of the ruination of Soviet modernity, in the hopelessness of everyday life of the industrial city of Zhdanov (Mariupol), where the film is set. Anatoly Ryasov in his article draws unexpected

parallels between early Christian theology and the way the Soviet economy was managed ("*Sacred Management: Notes on Economics, Theology and Image*"). In a sense, the theoretical framework for discussing the sacred and the temporal in modernity is set here by Oleg Larionov's response to Fredric Jameson's book about Walter Benjamin, "*The Benjamin Files*" (Culture of Politics).

Case Study section provides analysis of the presently topical political aspect of international higher education. In their article "*Soviet School: Do Old Ties Help to Promote Russia's New Influence in Africa?*" Alisa Shishkina and Evgeny Ivanov are trying to see how and if the practice, popular among African students, of getting a higher education in the USSR and post-Soviet Russia has served to increase Soviet, and later on Russian, political influence on the continent. Boris Sokolov in the same section continues to reveal the previously concealed pages from the biography of a classic author of socialist realism, the poet and writer Nikolai Tikhonov, procuring more and more evidence that during the Russian Civil War Tikhonov served in the White Army (for Sokolov's first publication on this topic, see *NZ* #5(145), 2022).

Wrapping up the 149th *NZ* issue is the New Books section, where we can single out Yulia Krutitskaya's review of a Russian translation of Edith Eva Eger's book that discusses psychological consequences of the Holocaust for its survivors, entitled "*The Choice: Embrace the Possible*".

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