

Foreword

I would like to thank the Editorial Board of *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* (*Studies into the History of Russia and Central-Eastern Europe*) for opening the pages of this excellent journal to a set of scholarly articles that are linked to the project (special purpose grant from the Ministry of Education and Science) ‘Faces and Metamorphoses of Russian Empires (333 years: 1689–2022). Research conducted by the Team for Comparative Research on Russian Imperialism’.

As the head of the project, I take the liberty of recommending these articles to the readers of *Studia*, believing they reveal a particularly important aspect of the history of Russia and Central and Eastern Europe. The keyword here is imperialism, its place in the history of Russian statehood of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the Soviet period, and, unfortunately, today.

The authors of these studies analyse the subject matter in its various manifestations and contexts. Drawing on a meticulous analysis of diplomatic documents from the mid-eighteenth century, Tomasz Szwaciński explores an inter-imperial game: the clash between Russia’s expansion towards the Danube with the Ottoman Empire, as well as the interests of the Habsburg Empire. A broader context of geopolitical rivalry within the rather discordant ‘concert of the powers’ (including, in addition to Russia and Austria, also France and the United Kingdom) makes it possible in this micro-historical analysis to verify the synthetic approaches to the history of Russian imperialism proposed in his classic work by Dominic Lieven.¹

Adam Danilczyk, in his pioneering study of the methods of settling the so-called Novorossiya and Crimea in the late eighteenth century, examines an aspect, hitherto neglected in international historiography, of a phenomenon treated as ‘self-colonisation of the empire’.² Methodical abductions of people from a neighbouring country, that is the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, regarded as the empire’s external resource, turn out to be the real tool of this ‘self-colonisation’.

¹ *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven, 2002).

² See A. Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, 2011).

Henryk Głębocki's article, or rather a selection of sources found by the scholar in Russian and American archives ('Count Adam Gurowski: An Intellectual between the Ambition to Globally Transform the World and Service to Russian Propaganda 1849–1866. A Selection of Documents'), shifts the readers' attention to the history of the Russian empire's propaganda and the building of its influence, in this case – in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. In the letters addressed by Gurowski to Tsar Nicholas I, the head of the Third Section, Alexei Orlov, or Tsar Alexander II, we can discover hitherto unknown patterns and sources of the American fascination with Russia as the 'natural partner' of the United States in the construction of the 'world order'.

The undersigned, on the other hand, presents another direction of Russian imperial geopolitics: the axis of strategic cooperation with Germany, which was renewed already at the beginning of the Soviet period. The article 'The Road to Rapallo: Germany in the Soviet Russia's Policy in Light of Viktor L. Kopp's Reports for Georgy V. Chicherin from 1920–1921' has been written on the basis of new material from the Lenin Archive in Moscow (RGASPI). It explores the beginnings of the concept of Moscow's collaboration with Berlin in the demolition of the Versailles system, as well as the secret negotiations, the objective of which was the joint elimination of Poland and other states between Soviet Russia and the Weimar Republic as early as 1920.

The following two articles, which also explore the post-1917 period, provide insight into various, hitherto unexplored ways of understanding the phenomenon of Soviet imperialism. In his study, Paweł Libera compares perspectives stemming from the operations and publications of the International Anti-Communist Entente (1924–1950) and those produced by the Promethean League (1926–1956). The Soviet Union – a continuation of the 'tsarist prison of nations' or a radically new form of an ideological state, the victims of which also include Russians? Around this interpretation dilemma, we can place the analyses of the Polish Sovietologist Ryszard Wraga, whose vast and hitherto unexamined body of work, as well as its impact on American intelligence during the Cold War, is presented by Łukasz Dryblak.

Finally, two analytical articles examine the imperial practices of Vladimir Putin's Russia. Michał Wojnowski examines a similar topic from a different perspective. He presents in great detail the price that Putin's Russia wants to dictate to Western European countries for this 'stable cooperation'. That price is consent to surrender to Moscow control over the entire area of its 'outer empire' from the Soviet period, that is, the entire area referred to as Eastern Europe. The methods of destroying the independence of countries in the region, beginning with Ukraine, are presented by the author of the study in the context of the geopolitical doctrine of 'neo-Eurasianism'. An finally, drawing on a wealth of empirical material, Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski demonstrates how Russia exploits and cultivates the illusory expectations of some politicians and

economic and opinion-leading circles in the West: the expectation that Moscow will be a stable, peaceful partner for Europe.

Let me express the hope that this collection of articles in this issue of *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, as well as their rich source base, primarily not previously presented, will provide new and revealing insights into the history and contemporary forms of Russian imperialism. This is, in fact, the purpose of our research project, the current results and publications of which, as well as current research plans, can be viewed on the website <https://imperialismofrussia.org/>.

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