



When we renovated the Harriman Institute thirteen years ago, under the leadership of the late Catharine Nepomnyashchy, we created a beautiful exhibit space. One of the first exhibits mounted was *Perestroika + 20: Selections from the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art*, a series of works by contemporary Russian artists. This began a long-standing collaboration with the Kolodzei Art Foundation, with the Harriman mounting several fantastic exhibits from the organization's collection over the years.

The Kolodzei Collection consists of more than 7,000 works, including paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, and videos, by more than 300 artists from Russia and the former Soviet Union, and chronicles more than four decades of Russian and Soviet nonconformist art from the post-Stalin era to the present. It is an honor for us to feature a cover story by the foundation's executive director, curator and art historian Natalia Kolodzei. She writes about the prominent nonconformist artist Oleg Vassiliev, whose work we displayed at the Harriman Institute in 2017.

We are also delighted to include a profile of our alumnus, the Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer William Taubman, who recently published *Gorbachev: His Life and Times*, the first full-length English-language biography of Mikhail Gorbachev. Taubman earned a certificate from the Russian Institute in 1965 and a Ph.D. from Columbia's Department of Political Science in 1969; in 2004, he was named our Alumnus of the Year. His new biography is not only a literary feat but also a great resource for understanding U.S.-Russian relations.

We are pleased to publish a timely article from another alum, Peter Zalmayev ('08), who comments on the current political situation in Ukraine, in light of the recent wave of protests there, as well as a piece from our postdoctoral research scholar Edward Lemon. Lemon discusses his research on the pathways to violent extremism in Tajikistan, work that is particularly relevant given the recent spike in media attention devoted to Central Asia and the region's potential connections to Islamic terrorism. In his article, Lemon helps to debunk some of the myths surrounding Central Asia and violent extremism, and to add nuance to the generalizations that have prevailed in the mainstream media narrative.

Also in this issue, we have a profile of historian Catherine Evtuhov, who joined the Columbia faculty from Georgetown University two years ago, and the second part of our two-part interview with journalist and Carnegie Europe senior fellow Thomas de Waal. De Waal discusses his book *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, the interviews for which have recently become available in audio and transcript formats at Columbia University Libraries.

We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to hearing your feedback and ideas for future stories.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Alex Cooley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Alexander Cooley
Director, Harriman Institute