

Russia and European Human Rights Law: Progress, Tensions, and Perspectives

Introduction

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This Special Issue of the *Review of Central and East European Law* focuses on the general theme “*Russia and European Human Rights Law: Progress, Tensions, and Perspectives*”.¹ As guest editor of this Special Issue, I dare to argue that this is a very timely topic. On 7 October 2010, the First Section of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) delivered its judgment in *Konstantin Markin v. Russia*.² In this case involving discrimination based on gender in social-security matters in the Russian Army, the ECtHR found that Russia had violated the European Convention on Human Rights. Moreover, the ECtHR dismissed an earlier interpretation of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation and suggested that the Russian government—in order to comply with the European Convention—would need to initiate a legislative amendment in the State *Duma*.

Upon the request of the Russian government, the Markin case was referred to the ECtHR’s Grand Chamber. The Grand Chamber’s judgment was rendered on 22 March 2012—soon after Russia’s presidential elections.³ However, even before the Grand Chamber judgment was handed down, the Markin case had become famous. Soon after the initial Markin judgment in 2010, the President of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, Valerii Zor’kin, published an emotional article in the daily newspaper *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, entitled “The Limit of Giving In”, in which he essentially suggested that the ECtHR had crossed the red line of Russia’s sovereignty.⁴ Moreover, Chief Justice Zor’kin warned that if Russia’s “historical, cultural and social situation” were to be further ignored in the European system of human-rights protection, Russia might be forced, in the future, to bypass judgments of the ECtHR.⁵

¹ Research for this Special Issue was supported by grants from the European Research Council and the Estonian Science Foundation (Grant No.8087).

² Case of *Konstantin Markin v. Russia* (7 October 2010) No.30078/06.

³ Case of *Konstantin Markin v. Russia* (22 March 2012) No.30078/06, (Grand Chamber).

⁴ “Predel ustupchivosti”, *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (29 October 2010), reproduced at <<http://www.rg.ru/2010/10/29/zorkin.html>>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

The whole issue continued to be hotly contested during the months preceding the elections to State *Duma* in December 2011. In June and July 2011, the talk of the town among the political elite in Moscow was a legislative initiative by Aleksandr Torshin—the then-acting Chairman of the Federation Council—which suggested that the judgments of the ECtHR could only be implemented in Russia if first checked and approved by the Constitutional Court. Although the draft law was put on hold and Russia's media reported negative reactions (in particular among Russia's expert society but, also, among other parliamentarians⁶), Torshin's initiative was seen as a targeted provocation *vis-à-vis* the Strasbourg system.⁷ When then-Prime Minister Putin—announcing that he would run again for the presidency in 2012—suggested in a newspaper article that a Eurasian union be created, Mr. Torshin immediately hooked up to the idea and suggested that Russia should also create a separate human-rights court for CIS countries.⁸

Of course, the Russian Federation is neither the first nor the only country that has developed a certain disliking of the ECtHR. In January 2012, British Prime Minister David Cameron, in Strasbourg, strongly criticized the ECtHR for its judgments in anti-terrorism cases involving Britain.⁹ As far as Russia is concerned, it was only a matter of time before a case such as Markin came up. There have been a number of much more politically laden cases involving the Russian Federation: from Ilaşcu to Chechen cases, from Kononov to Yukos, not to mention cases involving Georgia that are still pending. Yet perhaps because the subject matter in Markin's case was relatively 'non-political' (at least, it did not involve major historical events such as World War II or the collapse of the USSR), the ECtHR chose a straightforward and head-on approach *vis-à-vis* the human-rights violations in question. It was a way to ask the government of Russia: what is your intent with the European consensus on human rights?

This is the context in which the present Special Issue will be presented to the reader. However, the idea of the Special Issue is older than the landmark case

⁶ Svetlana Sukhova, "V PASE protiv popravok Torshina", *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (24 June 2011), reproduced at <http://www.ng.ru/world/2011-06-24/2_pase.html>.

⁷ See, e.g., Ian Gordeev, "Rossiia prigrozila Evropeiskomu sudu", *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (11 July 2011), reproduced at <http://www.ng.ru/politics/2011-07-11/3_sud.html>. See, further, Maksim Ivanov, Vladimir Solov'ev, Kristina Volobueva, "Aleksandr Torshin otlozhil Evrosud na osen", *Kommersant* (18 July 2011), reproduced at <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1681064>>.

⁸ Nataliia Gorodetskaia, Anna Pushkarskaia, "Stat'ia prem'era nashla svoego chitatel'ia", *Kommersant* (6 October 2011) reproduced at <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1788610>>.

⁹ Nicholas Watt, "David Cameron Calls for Reform of European Court of Human Rights", *The Guardian* (25 January 2012), reproduced at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/2012/jan/25/david-cameron-reform-european-court?INTCMP=SRCH>>.

of *Markin v. Russia*. In order to lay out the writers' perspective, I would like to describe how this project came about.

In November 2003, a fax from Venice arrived on my desk at the Faculty of Law at Tartu University in Estonia. The European Inter-University Centre, with its headquarters in the medieval monastery of San Nicoló on the Venice Lido, wanted to take into account the enlargement of the European Union to the East and invited the Tartu Law Faculty to represent Estonia in the European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (<www.emahumanrights.org>). The invitation was gladly accepted, and the University of Tartu—along with a number of other universities from former socialist countries—joined the 'Venice programme'.

Currently, the European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation is a network of forty-one European universities. The programme, subsidized by the European Union, has fostered the emergence of a unique interdisciplinary collaboration among different European universities, departments and scholars.

One challenge that the Eastern European universities faced when joining the programme was that they were latecomers. They needed to reflect on what they could contribute to existing structures of teaching and research in the areas of human rights and democratization. Western European universities were better equipped in terms of material resources and had historically stronger traditions in research and teaching in the fields of human rights and democratization. It seemed that human rights and democratization were exactly what the Cold War had been about. Now since the West happened to win that ideological confrontation, there had to be losers as well. It was clear that, since 1989, the Eastern Europeans—having been subjects of Communist rule—had themselves been disciples, not teachers, of liberal ideology and values, including human rights and democracy. The whole Strasbourg system of human-rights protection needed to be understood, absorbed, and implemented. Again, this was a classic disciple's situation—not a teacher's situation.

Yet in terms of setting the research agenda, Eastern European scholars had another sort of legitimacy for talking about human rights: the experience of a different history and a different knowledge of their own region. Knowledge of the Russian language became an asset too. Many exciting and transitional developments in Europe were now taking place precisely in the East. The US Secretary of Defense in the George W. Bush administration, Donald Rumsfeld, provocatively captured this sentiment when he coined the terms 'old Europe' and 'new Europe'. Whether liberalism really marked 'the end of history' had come to be tested primarily in Eastern Europe. Things are now again starting to change with the financial crisis and the rise of anti-immigrant movements

primarily affecting Western Europe and questioning liberal democracy as the ‘end of history’.

If it ever made sense to speak about ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe, the ‘newest’ Europe was the Russian Federation. Countries such as Estonia or Poland had been relatively successful converts to liberalism and ‘European values’, whereas Russia had proven to be a bigger challenge. The Russian Federation ratified the European Convention on Human Rights in 1998, but news about Russia’s difficulties in the European Court of Human Rights and backlashes in implementing the Convention in Russia have become relatively frequent.

In any case, as historical Venice built its success on trade with the Orient, and the Portuguese, Spanish and the British still have unique links with, and expertise about, their former colonies, it was clear that the Baltic states—and, in the particular context of this initiative, Estonia—could serve as a bridge between Russia and Western Europe.¹⁰ The history of Russia’s laws had fascinated Tartu’s (Dorpat’s) legal scholars already in the early nineteenth century, after Tsar Alexander I had reopened the university in 1802.¹¹ Within the European Master’s Programme, it was soon evident that the latecomer-universities from Eastern Europe did not simply need to follow their elder peers in what they were doing. In order to be competitive or even be taken seriously by their colleagues, they needed to offer a different perspective, to add some value. Thus, at Tartu we decided to focus our research on the human-rights situation in the former USSR, especially in the Russian Federation.

We would like to think that this approach proved fruitful—or at least interesting. The bulk of this Special Issue consists of three master’s theses written at the University of Tartu in the framework of the European Master’s Programme. Dorothea Schönfeld and Petr Preclik defended their master’s theses in 2008; Dara Hallinan in 2009. I had the honor to supervise all three theses.

One possible danger with studying human rights in Russia ‘from the outside’ is Orientalism. One may not fully understand ‘the Other’ and too easily fall into the trap of moral judgmentalism. The problem may be particularly relevant in the Baltic states which, perhaps more than any other member states in the European Union, may have historical scores to settle with the former imperial centre: Russia. Having oscillated from Russia’s imperial control to the West’s orbit, the Balts may have particular reasons to demonstrate and prove their faithfulness to Western values—whatever those are in a given historical period. They may also

¹⁰ See, further, Lauri Mälksoo, “The Science of International Law and the Concept of Politics. The Arguments and Lives of the International Law Professors at the University of Dorpat/Tur’ev/Tartu 1855-1985”, 76 *British Year Book of International Law* (2005), 383-502.

¹¹ See, e.g., Johann Philip Gustav Ewers, *Vom Ursprunge des russischen Staats: Ein Versuch, die Geschichte desselben aus den Quellen zu erforschen* (J.G. Hartmann’s Buchhandlung, Riga, 1808); and *id.*, *Das älteste Recht der Russen in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (A. Sticinsky, Dorpat, 1826). Further, see, e.g., Fedor Witte, *Ein Blick auf die geschichtliche Entwicklung des älteren russischen Erbrechts, bis zum Gesetzbucho des Zaren Alexei Michailowitch (1649)* (Dorpat, 1848).

want to prove that Russia is ‘bad’, whereas they are ‘better’. The British scholar (and then journalist) Anatol Lieven followed the ‘Baltic revolution’ on the spot in 1988-1991 and made the observation that—even though their own socio-economic and other crises may have been extremely difficult—Baltic leaders took particular comfort in affirming to themselves and their peoples that “at least we are better than Russia”.¹² According to Lieven, this had almost become part of people’s identity in the Baltic states. Maria Mälksoo demonstrated in her doctoral dissertation that the post-Communist Baltic states and Poland, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other hand, have struggled about the history of World War II for partly political reasons—to fight against their own liminality in Europe by singling out their neighbor as even less European and, thus, more liminal.¹³

It is up to the reader to decide whether we, the authors of these chapters, are (or have not been) similar to the man who has a hammer and, therefore, sees nails everywhere. As far as the danger of Orientalism goes, the only way to deal with it was to become aware of it. Human rights are a very normative field, of course, and one cannot and should not avoid taking firm positions, critical, if necessary. Yet, when writing these articles and exercising the criticism that can be found here, we do not speak from a position of ultimate truths. We may have misunderstood certain matters, not known certain things, or simply failed to grasp all the complexity of the topic. These here are our views; there may be other, perhaps better reasoned or more justified ones. Yet the authors in this Special Issue have explored the subject matter in good faith and share the belief that these issues must be discussed and talked about. An alternative that can sometimes be encountered, a polite and ‘diplomatic’ refusal to talk about these things frankly, was unattractive for us.

Nor do we imply that when Russia has the problems it has, everything is fine and rosy in our own home countries. Surely Estonia, Germany, the Czech Republic and Great Britain—among other EU member states—have their own problems in the field of human-rights protection.¹⁴ These problems should not be downplayed, and serious scholarly research should be conducted on them.

Yet this particular Special Issue is about the Russian Federation’s attitude towards, implementation of, and dialogue with European human-rights law. Note that we have narrowed down the subject matter—referring consciously to the European regional understanding of human-rights law and the Strasbourg system of human-rights protection. However, this Special Issue is not about universal

¹² Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1994).

¹³ See Maria Mälksoo, *The Politics of Becoming European: A Study of Polish and Baltic Post-Cold War Security Imaginaries* (Routledge, London, 2010).

¹⁴ For example, Russian authors often have criticized citizenship legislation in Estonia and Latvia; namely, the fact that since 1991, it is based on the idea of state continuity with the pre-1940 republics and, consequently, no automatic citizenship was granted to the (Russian-speaking) Soviet era settlers. See, e.g., Aslan Abashidze, Ekaterina Alisevich, Aleksandr Solntsev, *Regional’nye sistemy zashchity prav cheloveka* (Rossiiskii Universitet Druzhby Narodov, Moscow, 2012), 165-166.

instruments such as the universal periodic review in the UN Human Rights Council; nor is it about Russian domestic protection of human rights such as the Russian ombudsman institution or the work of the RF Constitutional Court. Moreover, the general topic of Russia's interaction with European human-rights law is not entirely exhausted with sub-problems and issues as presented here. One could write chapters on other civic, political, social, economic, and cultural rights than those that are contained herein. Yet one ought to start somewhere, and this is our start. We believe that something historically significant happened in 1998 when the Russian Federation ratified the European Convention and became a member of the Strasbourg system. What exactly this significance would be is contested, and that contestation is what this Special Issue is about.

One relative difficulty that we faced when preparing this study was that the object of the study has been—and inevitably remains—in constant flux. For example, the elections to the State *Duma* in December 2011 and mass protests regarding the alleged falsifications, that took place during the elections, created again a new situation, a new momentum. In Russia's case, the connection between the state of democracy and the state of human rights is particularly revealing. On 12 April 2011, the First Section of the ECtHR found that the liquidation of the Republican Party of Russia by the Russian government just before the 2003 State *Duma* elections violated the right to assembly of the party members.¹⁵ Each new major judgment issued in Strasbourg will cause shifts in the discourse. Our Special Issue has not been conceived to predict all important new developments; nor does it claim to tackle everything that has already been significant in the field. Rather, we have taken a few mental steps back and have made attempts to generalize about certain trends and perspectives. Of course, the articles have been updated since the MA theses were defended in 2008 and 2009; yet, the main points that were made in theses back then remain the same.

The first article is by Petr Prelik, who takes an international-relations-theory perspective on the human-rights situation in Russia. Prelik makes the point that international-relations theory has not been too eager to include insights into human rights, considering it primarily the realm of lawyers. However, the opposite is true as well: the mainstream of human-rights scholarship often does not bother to go beyond the dichotomy of legal/illegal. In contrast, Prelik's approach is general and even philosophical; he offers an interesting interpretation of why things are the way they are between Moscow and Strasbourg. His application of the theory of contestation is something that lawyers are in that form unable

¹⁵ Case of the *Republican Party of Russia v. Russia* (12 April 2011) No.12976/07. See, further, Maria-Luiza Tirmaste, Olga Pleshanova, Seda Egikian, Tamila Dzhodzhuva (Geouga), "Evropeiskii sud vypolnil partiinoe sozdanie", *Kommersant* (13 April 2011), reproduced at <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1620520>>.

to offer. Prelik's approach is strongly influenced by the Constructivist theory of international relations. Prelik's work was reviewed by Viatcheslav Morozov, Professor of EU-Russia Studies at the University of Tartu and a well-known Constructivist scholar. Together with Petr Prelik, we would like to thank Professor Morozov for his important editorial input. An earlier version of Prelik's thesis was distinguished as one of the five best theses in 2008 in the European Master's Programme.

The second article is by Dorothea Schönfeld. She partly tackles the same themes as Prelik but has less patience with the Russian cultural-relativism argument. Schönfeld has taken a particular rights situation—the relative lack of media freedom in the Russian Federation—and studies its dynamic aspects, *i.e.*, how the situation has been dealt with by European human-rights institutions. The author interviewed Russian journalists and NGO representatives. The result is a passionate *Streitschrift* with the Russian government. Of course, the situation with the media is one area where changes are almost constant. Thus, commentators have recently pointed out that in terms of news consumption, the Internet is increasingly competing with public TV among Russia's urban middle class. In a number of cases, the blogosphere has played a pivotal role in 'breaking the news' when the state media has tried to present an idiosyncratic version of what happened. In December 2011, leading daily newspapers such as *Kommersant* reported on alleged election fraud and on the mass demonstrations that followed in a promisingly transparent and open way. The relative mildness of European responses to systematic violations of media freedom in Russia can be interpreted as the perennial primacy of economic and other pragmatic interests over concerns with the rights situation. Perhaps, too, a silent recognition exists in Old Europe that, indeed, Russia significantly differs from the rest of Europe so that the famous 'margin of appreciation' must be interpreted particularly liberally. The crucial question remains: should the main impulse for more media freedom come from inside or outside a country?

The third article in the Special Issue, authored by Dara Hallinan, deals with religious freedom in the Russian Federation. Religion is a particularly sensitive area of life where one should be cautious with too easy a critique and moral 'interventionism'. Yet, at the same time, freedom of religion is one of the pillars of the Strasbourg system of human-rights protection. If one religion is prioritized over others, religious freedom is *ipso facto* endangered. This problem has particularly interesting aspects in Russia which, during the Communist period (1917-1991), was governed by a militantly atheist ideology. (As all diligent tourists learn in St Petersburg, the Kazan' Cathedral in Leningrad/St. Petersburg was turned into a massive Museum of Atheism during the Communist era.) After the collapse of Communism, Orthodox Christianity returned to fill the ideological vacuum left by the demise of Marxism-Leninism. Whether other denominations of Christianity and other religions are—or can be—truly 'equal' to Orthodoxy has become a

hotly contested issue in Russia. A report on the state of religious freedom in the Russian Federation—prepared by the Institute of Freedom of Conscience together with Moscow Helsinki group and published in February 2012—corroborates Hallinan’s main findings: that the Russian government seems to have a systemic bias in favor of the Russian Orthodox Church.¹⁶ What complicates the matter further is that the very notion of freedom of religion seems to be very much contested in Europe. For example, at the end of 2011, intense debates were carried out about whether the new Constitution in Hungary—among other contested aspects—would effectively restrict religious freedom in Hungary. Here is a field where post-Communist Russia may influence secular Europe even more than the Strasbourg system has influenced Russia. Conservative traditionalism stemming from Russia may yet balance some post-modern and ultra-progressive interpretations of rights in ‘old Europe’. Was it not the dream of the nineteenth-century Slavophiles that Russia would ‘save’ Europe?

The fourth article is a shorter one. It is a reply by Vladislav Starzhenetskii, a scholar and practitioner in the field of human-rights law from Moscow. The idea of including a Russian scholar—among other reasons in order to diminish the dangers of one-sidedness or Orientalism—came from the *Review’s* general editor, Professor William B. Simons. By chance, I had just met Vladislav Starzhenetskii at the annual conference of the Russian Association of International Law in Moscow, already knew some of his work,¹⁷ and was very impressed by his open-minded and well-informed presentation about implementation of European human-rights law in Russia. Starzhenetskii kindly agreed to write a reply to Preklik, Schönfeld and Hallinan. As far as human rights in Russia are concerned, Starzhenetskii encourages one to see the glass as half-full rather than half-empty. He also points out that the authors represented in this Special Issue have been mostly preoccupied with tensions in the relationship between Russia and Strasbourg and less with the progress that Russia has made over the last two decades.

Finally, in the fifth article, I offer the reader a conclusion to the present Special Issue. In such a subjective and normatively charged field as human-rights law and policy, it cannot be the task of the editor to distill ultimate truths. The articles included and arguments made in the Special Issue speak for themselves. Instead of picking and highlighting certain particularly relevant aspects from previous articles, I compare how contemporary Russian scholarly discourse on European human-rights law might enter into dialogue with or differ from, the ‘view from the outside’ as offered in this Special Issue. The interesting thing is that leading Russian scholars themselves—for instance, Elena Lukasheva—have raised the civilizational aspect when explaining the deeper reasons for the situation with human rights in Russia.

¹⁶ See Andrei Kozenko, Aleksandr Chernykh, Pavel Korobov, “Pravozashchitniki dolozhili na sovest’. Opublikovan doklad o svobode veroisповedeniia v RF”, *Kommersant* (8 February 2012), reproduced at <<http://kommersant.ru/doc/1868115/print>>.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Vladislav Starzhenetskii, *Rossii i Sovet Evropy: pravo sobstvennosti* (Gorodets, Moscow, 2004).

When editing this symposium, I finally decided not to compile a common bibliography. On the one hand, it did not seem to add much value for the reader for us to simply reproduce the references that are already contained in the articles of each of the contributors. In any case, the footnotes of the articles represent our collective bibliography. In particular, my own concluding chapter contains references to recent Russian scholarly treatises on international and European human-rights law. The biggest problem for the non-Russian student remains that such works are usually available only in the Russian Federation or, rather, in the best, specialized bookstores of major Russian cities. One reason why I decided not to venture further from the bibliography—already contained in the footnotes—is because I believe that such a bibliography on “Human Rights Law and Russia” should aim at comprehensiveness. For example, the Chechen cases in the ECtHR have generated interesting scholarly commentary,¹⁸ however, these aspects are covered only in passing in our symposium. In this Special Issue, we have discussed a number of ECtHR cases but do not claim that these are the only ‘most important’ ones. In other words, compiling a comprehensive bibliography on “Human Rights Law and Russia” would constitute a major scholarly work in its own right; one that hopefully can be undertaken soon in the future. Even while finalizing the editing of this Special Issue, for example, a new study has been published containing an important comparative collection of how ex-Communist countries in Eastern and Central Europe have been faring in the Strasbourg system.¹⁹

As emphasized earlier, this Special Issue is interdisciplinary, which had a significant impact on the methods chosen. Petr Preklik approaches the field of human rights from the disciplinary angle of international-relations theory, particularly its constructivist branch. This enables a more philosophical approach to the whole subject matter. (Some lawyers would argue that international-relations theory is nothing but good old political philosophy with a fancy new name; this, however, should not diminish its importance for the understanding of aspects that pure legal analysis is unable to enlighten.) Dorothea Schönfeld takes a more policy-oriented approach in that she takes Russia’s non-compliance with law as an already relatively well-established starting point. She then explores the relative failure of Western policy to address Russia’s non-compliance. Finally, the lawyer among the main authors, Dara Hallinan, proceeds from the classic positivist legal method. In his narrative, he establishes what the law is and looks critically at compliance with it. Vladislav Starzhenetskii, the author of a response to all three, also is a lawyer.

¹⁸ See, e.g., William Abresch, “A Human Rights Law of Internal Armed Conflict: The European Court of Human Rights in Chechnya”, 16 *European Journal of International Law* (2005), 741-767.

¹⁹ See Leonhard Hammer and Frank Emmert (eds.), *The European Convention on Human Rights in Central and Eastern Europe* (Eleven International Publishing, The Hague, 2012). The chapter on Russia has been written by Dr. Anton Burkov.

In this way, the chapters are quite different from one other; each of them reflects the personality and disciplinary focus of the respective author. Yet, the idea behind the whole Special Issue project was to put these chapters together so that they would enter into dialogue and speak with each other. This would tear the individual chapters out from their isolation and create a larger forum of ideas where individual chapters too can be seen in a new dialogical light. However, the possibility remains that just as there may be a tension between Russian and non-Russian approaches to human-rights law, there may also be tensions between legal and non-legal approaches.

Upon reflection, the well-known saying that a picture is worth a thousand words can become a source of depression for a legal scholar or social scientist. (After all, aren't we working with words?) However, there is something appealing in the recent trend in scholarly journals of lightening texts up with thematic reproductions of art or photos. Thus, at the encouragement of the general editor of the *Review*, I have chosen as 'visual bridges' some photos that I took when visiting Russia over the last six years or so. Under each photo, there is a short text or explanation.

We would like to express our appreciation for the support of the institutions and funds that have facilitated the research and writing of this Special Issue. The European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation with headquarters in Venice already has been mentioned. It is thanks to the *e.ma programme* that Dorothea Schönfeld, Petr Preclik and Dara Hallinan—three intellectually curious and open-minded MA students from Central and Western Europe—came to study in Tartu. Furthermore, the editing of this Special Issue was supported, in part, by a grant from the European Research Council to study contemporary Russian understanding of international law and human rights and, also in part, by Grant No.8082 from the Estonian Science Foundation.

Finally, the general editor of the *Review*, Professor William B. Simons, has been a wise, patient and generous source of help and encouragement who, among other things, has made me understand how much visible and hidden work is involved in running such an international journal as the *Review of Central and East European Law*.

March 2012



“Aleksander Nevskii monument near Pskov, Spring 2011.”

The monument was unveiled in 1993, the same year that the Russian Federation adopted its democratic Constitution. Alexander Nevskii was the Prince of Novgorod who stopped the invasion of the German crusaders. The idea of vicious attacks from the West, military or ideological, has loomed large in the Russian imagination. See, also, the famous film of Sergei Eisenstein, “Alexander Nevsky” (1938).

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