Editors' foreword

Cathryn Brennan and Alan Wood

Sibirica's bibliogenesis lies in a gathering of a dozen or so British academics who shared a common interest in Siberia and the Russian Far East, at the University of Lancaster, UK, in September 1981. That was the first meeting of what came to be called the British Universities Siberian Studies Seminar (BUSSS). Over the next few years the Seminar met on a number of occasions (Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge – 1983, 1984; School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London – 1986, 1993; University of Glasgow – 1988, 1989; and Kemerovo, Western Siberia – 1991). During that period, membership of BUSSS grew from the original handful to over two hundred individual and institutional subscribers to the Seminar's journal *Sibirica*, in which were regularly published the proceedings of the various conferences, as well as other invited contributions. In all, nine issues appeared, the first five as *samizdat* publications financially subvented by the then Department of Russian and Soviet Studies at Lancaster University, the next two published under the title *Sibirica* (*sic*) by the Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon, USA, and the last two by Ryburn Publishing, Keele University Press, UK.

Despite the hiatus in the appearance of *Sibirica* since 1995, scholarly interest in Russia's vast territories of Northern Asia and adjacent areas in the Asia-Pacific region has continued undiminished. In 1985, the veteran UK scholar, the late Stuart Kirby, wrote: 'The Russian literature specifically on Siberia would fill a large modern library, the non-Russian at most a few shelves.' This is no longer the case, as the number of books, articles, magisterial and doctoral theses and computer websites devoted to various aspects of Siberia's past, present – and future – has multiplied, and as a glance at David Collins's bibliographical update in this issue will confirm. It goes without saying, of course, that our colleagues and experts in the former Soviet Union continue to produce a huge amount of valuable scholarly material based on their firsthand researches and investigations of their own country's history, economy and society. The resulting intellectual cross-fertilisation and mutual exchange of ideas, information and research have greatly enhanced our common understanding of Siberia's intrinsic and extrinsic significance in the wider global perspective.

As far as the present editors are aware, however, after the former *Sibirica*'s

temporary state of abeyance, there is still no other journal anywhere in the world which is exclusively dedicated to the multi-disciplinary study of Russia's hyper-borean empire and those lands which are geographically propinquant to and/or historically associated with it. We are, therefore, delighted that Routledge Journals, Taylor and Francis, one of the world's largest academic journal publishers, has responded to the continuing demand for such a serial by resuming publication of a journal which is unique not only in its territorial focus on Russia in the trans-Uralian, circum-polar, East-Asian and Pacific regions, but also in the pan-disciplinarity of its approach.

In adopting the sub-title, *Journal of Siberian Studies*, both the editors and the publishers of *Sibirica* understand by 'Siberia' that area of the old Russian Empire, the former Soviet Union and the present-day Russian Federation which stretches from the Ural mountains in the west to the Pacific littoral in the east, and from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the borders of Central Asia, China, Mongolia and Korea in the south. It encompasses the Kurile and Aleutian archipelagos, and the present state of Alaska which in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was an integral, though far-flung, part of the Siberian administration of the Russian Empire. Over the centuries since Ermak's conquest of the Tatar khanate of Sibir' in c. 1582 through to the present day, Siberia and the Russian Far East have been a conduit, bastion and outpost for Russia's diplomatic, commercial and military relations with her Asian and Pacific neighbours, and continue to be an important factor in the international relationships of the countries of the Pacific Rim. It is for this reason that the present editors are anxious to encourage contributions dealing specifically with those regions, as well as continental Siberia itself.

Apart from the geographical dimension, in terms of thematic approach *Sibirica* will continue to publish scholarly articles, notes of work in progress, surveys, memoir and travel literature and other contributions which draw on a range of disciplines including history, politics, international relations, strategic, military and naval studies, economics, physical and human geography, environmental studies, sociology, ethnography and anthropology, language, literature and folklore.

Obituaries of two recently deceased eminent twentieth-century historians of Siberia, Professor John White and Professor Leonid Goryushkin, appear in this issue. Between them they represent a generation of scholars in Russia and the West who in their different ways did titanic work in advancing the study of Siberia and the Russian Far East. It is hoped that the new *Sibirica* will do much to continue, encourage and enhance those studies in the twenty-first century.