



7-1-1998

Ground Zero: The Genesis of Voices of Russian Transpersonalism

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Recommended Citation

Shapiro, S. I. (1998). Shapiro, S. I. (1998). Ground zero: The genesis of voices of Russian transpersonalism. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 17(2), 101–102.. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 17 (2). Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol17/iss2/1>



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Ground Zero

The Genesis of *Voices of Russian Transpersonalism*

IN YOUR hands rests the fifth volume of *Voices of Russian Transpersonalism*, a subseries of the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*. I would like to offer, on this occasion, a brief account of the genesis of this unique publishing event.

In 1982 I received a letter from my university inviting me to become the radiological monitor for the building in which my office was situated. Although I declined the offer for family reasons, suddenly the Cold War was no longer an abstraction. In the event of a nuclear attack, my responsibilities would have been to collect and report radiological data and to decide when the occupants of my building could be safely evacuated. In the summer of 1984, just two years later, I received a reprint request for one of my papers from a “T. R. Soidla” at the Biological Institute of Leningrad State University (now St. Petersburg State University). This communication proved to be the start of a long association culminating in our present coediting of the *Voices of Russian Transpersonalism* series.

The first issue, however, was not originally considered the beginning of a series. In 1993, as part of her doctoral studies at the University of Hawai‘i, Denise Lajoie completed a paper about the emergence of transpersonal psychology in Russia. In March of 1994, V. V. Nalimov and Jeanna Drogalina-Nalimov sent an illuminating set of responses to the paper from Moscow. They enclosed a second manuscript which was a synoptic overview of the life and work of Professor Nalimov, Russia’s most widely known transpersonal writer (and a luminous human being). Soon after, there arrived in my mail the first two installments of a transpersonal autobiography by Tõnu R. Soidla entitled “Open Mouth, Open Mind.” With a critical mass of five manuscripts in hand, I was invited to publish them as guest editor of a special supplement to the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, which I entitled “Entering the Light: Voices of Russian Transpersonalism” (Volume 14, April, 1995).

In the summer of 1994, Soidla was appointed a Visiting Scholar at the University of Hawai‘i. His visit here helped set the stage for my journey to Russia the following summer. In the course of many discussions at the kitchen table of my rented flat in St. Petersburg, Tõnu and I agreed to coedit *Voices of Russian Transpersonalism* as an ongoing series, a project approved by Erin Neill, then the editor of the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*.

The bare facts recounted above, however, hardly explain, in any larger measure, the materialization of *Voices of Russian Transpersonalism*—a phenomenon I can best ascribe simply to the realm of “Spontaneity of Being,” to borrow a phrase from the late Professor Nalimov. Although the remarkable transmutation from monitoring radiation to publishing radiant manuscripts remains a Mystery at present, what is eminently clear to me is the sense of fulfillment in helping to give a public, international voice to Russian colleagues so long denied one. In this regard, *Voices of Russian Transpersonalism* also speaks for many other voices—sadly stilled before their time.

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