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FEATURE. Steklov – Russian
temple of pure thought

COPING WITH TRANSITIONS

**PETER WEISS. ANDREI
PLATONOV. RAGNVALD
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VON WRIGHT. ADAM
MICHNIK. SLAVENKA
DRAKULIĆ.**

Sixty pages

BETRAYED GDR REVOLUTION? / **EVERYDAY BELARUS** / WAVE OF RELIGION IN ALBANIA / **RUSSIAN FINANCIAL MARKETS**

Memory and manipulation. Is anyone's suffering more important than anyone else's?

"IF YOU WANT TO START a war, call me. I know all about how it's done", says author Slavenka Drakulić with a touch of gallows humor during "Memory and Manipulation: Religion as Politics in the Balkans", a symposium held in Lund, Sweden, on December 2, 2010.

This issue of the journal includes a contribution from Drakulić (pp. 55–57) in which she claims that top-down governance, which started the war, is also the path to reconciliation in the region.

Balkan experts attending the symposium agree that the war was directed from the top, and that "top-down" is the key to understanding how the war began in the region. Leaders of various stripes were driving separatist movements and fomenting hatred between groups by emphasizing differences and reviving historic wrongs. Religion was exploited as a political weapon to create antagonisms. Historiography was used as a strategy to manipulate the people.

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY Evelina Kelbetcheva, of the American University of Bulgaria in Sofia, emphasizes the gap between a scholarly understanding of history, and public perceptions of history. History is constantly being falsified and revised to fit contemporary needs.

"Some people think there is too much digging into Balkan history and that this opens old wounds and provokes new conflicts. Others believe we talk too little about history. We must spread accurate knowledge in order to understand what happened and why", says Evelina Kelbetcheva.

"The knowledge that has to be conveyed to the people is how they have allowed themselves to be manipulated by those who believe they have exclusive rights to the interpretation of history", says Slavenka Drakulić. She stresses that we should not believe that national and ethnic identities are fixed: "A lot of people believe national identity is as unchanging as the color of your eyes. Identity, language, religion: they are all constructions."

How, then, should the traumatic memories of the people be handled? How can people reconcile with those who have perpetrated crimes against



Evelina Kelbetcheva of the American University of Bulgaria in Sofia, at a Lund seminar.

them? And perhaps even more difficult, how can they reconcile themselves to the crimes committed by their own groups?

Dzenan Sahović, lecturer in political science at Umeå University, believes that there is currently widespread postwar mourning on three levels: the individual, the collective, and the political/national.

IT IS HARD TO SEE the suffering of others when one's own is so all-encompassing. When memorials are set up to honor the memory of a vulnerable group victimized in the war, it immediately sparks resentment among other groups, who believe their suffering was the greater. That everyone suffered, but also inflicted suffering, is a truth few people see.

It is for precisely that reason that Dzenan Sahović believes the peace process and reconciliation must be directed from the top down. Conversely, the EU and the UN often insist that peace must be built from the grassroots level. Dzenan Sahović emphasizes that this approach confuses building a democracy and overcoming injustices between groups. Attempts to bring attention to the suffering of various groups are more likely to have the op-

posite effect: old wounds are reopened and conflicts flare up.

The moderator of the symposium, Sanimir Resić, associate professor of East and Central European Studies and head of the Centre for Languages and Literature at Lund University, sums things up:

"We would probably need at least ten Nelson Mandelas to reach consensus in the Balkans." ❌

Corrections

In a review in the last issue of BW (vol. III: 4), Bernd Henningsen's name was misspelled in a few places. In addition, in Anna Storm's article, letters and diacritics in the Lithuanian place name Sniečkus, as well as in Lake Drūkšiai, were lost. The editors apologize for this.

Transliteration. Art and science – and then some

Transliteration is both art and science – and, in many cases, politics. Whether *царь* should be written as *tsar*, *tzar*, *czar*, or *csar* may not be a particularly sensitive political matter today, but the question of the transliteration of the name of the current president of Belarus is exceedingly delicate. First, and perhaps most important: which name? Both the Belarusian *Аляксандр Лукашэнка*, and the Russian *Александр Лукашенко* are in use. (And, while we're at it, should that be *Belarusian*, or *Belarussian*, or *Belarusan*, or *Byelorussian*, or *Belorussian*?) BW does not want to take a stand on the merits of the "Russianism" of Lukashenka/Lukashenko, so, for the time being, we will give our authors leeway here. This might at times lead to inconsistencies, but Shakespeare himself spelled his own name at least a dozen different ways, so we take ourselves to be in good company.

Have thoughts on the language of Baltic Worlds? Write to the head of our language team: brian@balticworlds.com ❌

Conference

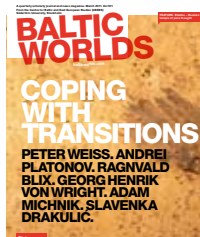
June 12–15, CBEES (Södertörn University) will be hosting the Ninth Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe: "Transitions, Visions and Beyond".

The conference seeks to bring together representatives of academic communities who share an interest in exploring the Baltic region from multiple perspectives. Baltic region studies is considered to be a particular historical, political, linguistic, social, cultural, and ideological contact zone where the meanings of identities, languages, and relationships are renegotiated.

In 2001, the conference "Baltic States and Societies in Transition: Continuity and Change" was held in Tartu, Estonia. So it is high time to gather and examine the developments in the Baltic region since then, and see what challenges we now face.

More information at www.sh.se.

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Many paths to reconciliation



he outcomes of the general elections in a number of former socialist countries in 2010 were highly varied.

In the two most populous states after Russia, the presidential campaigns were influenced to a great degree by relations with that

very country to the east. A Polish-Russian detente came about before the election of the head of state in Poland, but without the country’s liberal orientation and place within Europe being questioned. With the election in Ukraine, relations between Kiev and Moscow were normalized, while – as a result of the liberal debacle – interactions with the West appear to have become frostier. However, while Poland was bullied under the Kaczyńskis, with Ukraine, under Yanukovich, this has not (yet) happened.

IN THE HUNGARIAN PARLIAMENTARY elections, both the purely conservative elements, with a blissful mistrust of the rule of law, and the extreme right, with an aggressively xenophobic theory and practice, were strengthened, while the reform-minded forces of various hues were marginalized. In Slovakia, however, ultra-nationalism in its anti-Hungarian guise was pushed back, and there, as in the Czech Republic, the moderate middle consolidated its positions. But while organized communism is elsewhere wiped out or greatly reformed, it retains a certain popular appeal in the Czech Republic. The permanent state of emergency that is Belarus cannot be interpreted exclusively in ideological terms. Is it not simply a matter of a frightened elite defending itself with desperate methods?

YET SHOULD CENTRAL AND Eastern Europe’s fragmented political map surprise us more than that of Western Europe, where the traditional leftist parties have of course found it difficult to assert themselves over the last few years. (And was the New Labour of Blair and Brown really a genuine left? Was the previous Hungarian government a left-wing government in any ideological sense?) The EU system has given rise to party coalitions in the European parliament, but not to any grassroots European parties that span state borders. The political life of Europe continues to be split, and elitist. Italy is still a mafia state.

It might well be that this general fragmentation now makes it pointless to speak of Central and Eastern Europe as unified, distinctive entities, if indeed they even were that. But aren’t they still suffering from the legacy of failed communist experiments? Without a

doubt. But how long can such “exceptionalism” be maintained? Germany (and the people of other countries) had been tormented by the Nazi atrocities. Yet after two decades, the Federal Republic was an integrated part of a democratic, European state community. In a way that could be offensive, past wrongs were set aside in the interests of reconciliation. There was a strong need to integrate, and to normalize.

IT CAN BE ARGUED that the historical “burden” lies even deeper in former Soviet Bloc countries, that it is rooted in a socio-economic and political-cultural backwardness that stretches back to the pre-modern era. But is the gap between East and West really deeper than the gap between North and South on the European land mass? Than that between the Baltic and the Mediterranean? If one looks at the responses to the recent economic crisis, absolutely no Western or Eastern European patterns can be discerned. Estonia and Poland have mastered the situation far better than Latvia and Hungary; the Northern European countries, only one of which adopted the euro, have been more fortunate than the euro countries Ireland and Spain.

Here, it is difficult to contend that constellations of political groups or traditions have been decisive. What one can hope is that the will of the people, as a disruptive factor, continues to have an equalizing effect. Democracy can take on many forms – just like dictatorship. Which is also true of the reconciliation with the past. ✕

A EUROPEAN RUSSIA OR A RUSSIAN EUROPE

BY **ADAM MICHNIK**

Is Russia part of Europe? Russians answer this question in different ways. For many of them, Russia is not Europe but Eurasia, which is an alternate unit of civilization. I do not share this opinion.

FOR ME, RUSSIA IS AN irremovable component of Europe, just like Poland, Ireland, or Portugal. Can one imagine European culture without Pushkin and Dostoevsky, without Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich, without Sakharov, Brodsky, or Solzhenitsyn? The Russian dreams of the future also inscribe themselves in the European model: right wing and left wing, conservative and liberal. Russian Bolshevism is a European product in the same measure as German Nazism.

I.

Several years ago, I participated in a conference in Berlin that was devoted to Russia's relationship with the European Union. One of the speakers, a known Russian democrat, and also a colleague of mine, presented a brilliant lecture on the subject of Russian-German relations over the course of two centuries. It struck me that in this lecture he made no mention at all, not even one word, about Poland or Ukraine.

Later, as we talked and drank beer for several hours, I tried to persuade my friend that it was not possible to truly understand the history of Russian-German relations without mentioning Poland. I think that I did indeed persuade him. He, however, was a noble-minded Russian democrat who, moreover, today has been pushed to the political margin. The great Russian nationalist or imperialist-loyalist sees Poland as simply an annoying obstacle to good relations between Russia and Germany or France. He is not alone in this. I would be interested in the views on this subject of former Chancellor Schröder, who, as

Chancellor, negotiated with Russia the understanding on the question of the Germany-Russia Baltic pipeline in order then to become the beneficiary of the negotiated contract. Hiding within this is a symbol of one of the variants of Russian policy: it is no longer necessary to threaten the European partner; it suffices to corrupt the partner. What can a Pole think about this matter? Perhaps, in the first place, he may detect in this a reversion to policy of the Rapallo type, that is to say an understanding between Germany and Russia achieved at the expense of Poland. Perhaps that Pole may see in this a scheme for Russia-EU relations that are being shaped today in offices within the Kremlin.

In Moscow, I heard the words "Russia, which rose from its knees" after the breakup of the USSR, "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century". These are words that provoke serious reflection. Thus, the greatest catastrophe was not the world war unleashed by Hitler, nor the triumphs of Stalin's totalitarian empire, but the ending of that empire. These words may also indicate a return to imperial rhetoric and policy.

During the Boris Yeltsin epoch, a joke was related in Moscow concerning an airplane flight taken by the President of Russia together with Leonid Kuchma, the President of Ukraine. Yeltsin asked Kuchma which nation would lament more if a catastrophe occurred: the Russian or the Ukrainian? Kuchma immediately answered that it would be the Belarusian nation, because Lukashenka was not on the plane.

Since those years much has changed. Yeltsin was not Lukashenka. He was stubborn, authoritarian by disposition and a destroyer of the legacy of commu-

nism. Yeltsin did this with the grace of a Russian bear or a bull in a china shop. On the other hand, Vladimir Putin followed Lukashenka's path. He acted gradually, annihilating the independent media and the independent administration of justice, disabling political parties, and establishing Ramzan Kadyrov's police regime in Chechnya. Then he could announce to the world that Russia had risen from its knees. And so today Russia can dictate the conditions for its cooperation with the European Union.

The gist of these conditions would be as follows: Help us with the modernization of the economy and we will pay you for this with good money. Chancellor Schröder will explain to you that this is really good money, so say the people from Putin's circle. Others, from President Dmitry Medvedev's circle, speak differently. They say that the modernization of Russia is not possible without a consistent de-Stalinization, without a struggle against "the reigning juridical nihilism" and against the corruption, and without a rational and controlled political democratization. Unfortunately, judging by the recent, second trial of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, these "others" are losing. It is therefore worth repeating two known Moscow bon mots. "A new economic theory has been invented, Putinism, which not only ties up loose ends but also one's hands." Whereas, after the verdict against Khodorkovsky, I heard that Ivan said to Peter, "They say that Putin broke his hand." Then Peter asked, "Whose hand?"

It is worth keeping in mind these jokes, since Russia-EU relations depend on the internal condition of both partners. Lenin – the degraded classicist of Russian policy – said that foreign policy is a continuation

Russia: with Europe or separate from Europe? Wrong question.



ILLUSTRATION: RIBER HANSSON

Original and copy. The Russian bear and his mask.

of internal policy. Therefore, since internal policy is indicative of the cooperation with respect to modernization, the matter appears obvious: Russia requires a thaw in relations with the democratic world. However, nothing is obvious here.

The Russian elites are faced with two different challenges. First, how to make the Russian economy competitive and resistant to crises, and set in motion economic growth, since one cannot count on perpetually high prices for oil and gas on the world markets. Second, how to strengthen and consolidate their power over Russia so that nothing would threaten it. (And also how to rebuild the imperial status of Russia.) These two challenges are potentially contradictory. Modernization and cooperation with the democratic West eventually lead toward political freedom and pluralism, while the strengthening of authoritarian power and the return to empire is a presentiment of a new type of Cold War. Can these two objectives be harmonized? This is possible only under the condition of an actual breakup of the European Union.

II.

This is not an unreal scenario. The European Union is stuck in a manifest crisis. Behold Greece on fire, where the answer to indispensable internal reforms comprises strikes, demonstrations in the streets, and setting fire to automobiles. Behold Ireland, so very recently the Celtic Tiger and now mired in an economic crisis. Waiting in line is Portugal. Behold Italy, where Silvio Berlusconi was able to become master of the State by means of big money, building his own media-information empire, and mastering the public media. Berlusconi has become the symbol of the infantilization and primitivization of politics in a democratic state.

Behold the financial crisis in the EU and the sad renaissance of national egoisms.

Behold the heated problem of immigrants from Islamic countries, whose emigration was spontaneous, unplanned, and devoid of control. Obviously, Europe should remain open; however, Europeans say that immigrants should be directed to productive work and not encouraged to avail themselves of public benefits, and that the ideologues of fundamentalism who thunder against the “rotten West” should be extradited. Everybody indeed should behave in accordance with the obligatory law, with the values and norms of European culture. Weakness and yielding concessions are

not a proper response to Islamic fundamentalism.

In turn, in countries of Central and Eastern Europe, there has appeared a new wave of authoritarian tendencies: the language of nationalism and myopic egoism. Meanwhile, the EU can only become a real partner with Russia when it learns to speak to the Kremlin with a single voice and develops a common political strategy for these discussions. Otherwise, the results of such talks may be baffling. If Russia’s foreign policy is an extension of its internal policy, then it will become a trend towards the vassalization or else – according to the terminology of another epoch – the Finlandization of Europe. In this perspective, it is worth analyzing the policy of Russia with regard to Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus, and also to the Baltic States.

Putin, in my opinion, does not believe in democracy in Russia. Nor does he believe in democracy in Europe, or democracy in general. He is indeed no exception in this matter. The temptation to authoritarianism accompanies democratic countries like a shadow. It appears under different political banners from Chavez and the Persian ayatollahs to Putin and Yanukovich, and further to Lukashenka and Orban. In Poland, we have seen this spectacle in the epoch of the governments of the Kaczynski brothers. A specific feature of authoritarian tendencies is the replacement of political activities by the operations of special services. The final result of such operations produces activities that “the winged words” of present-day Russia designate as “drowning even in the lavatory”. Degenerations of this type occur everywhere, but in the world of authoritarian governments they become the norm.

III.

Today, Russia is not a totalitarian but an authoritarian state. It is even a fairly liberal authoritarianism. Simply visit a Moscow bookshop, where one finds on the shelves books the possession of which, during the epoch of Leonid Brezhnev, led straight to jail and a labor camp. Or take even Russian films with their bitter truth about the past and present of Russia. It is even enough to listen to public debates in Moscow or in Petersburg. Russia is an authoritarian state, the intellectual elites of which are permeated with a democratic spirit. Therefore, the future of Russia is open.

My friend, the well-known Russian writer Viktor Erofeev, calls Russia “the merry hell”. “The main enemy of Russia is its inhabitants”, he writes. “Russia, over the course of its entire history, has always tyrannized and oppressed its peoples; it has persecuted them. Shielding itself with tsarist or communist ideological doctrines, it has consciously destroyed its peoples in apocalyptic measure – by wars, hunger, epidemics, purges and repressions. Furthermore, it has forced its inhabitants to show their love of the Russian state, to shout incessantly ‘Hurrah!’. Today Russia is affected by vertigo. It has huge reserves of oil but its production of goods is low. It has nuclear weapons but also horrible roads. It insists that it is powerful. However, which of its closest and more distant neighbors perceives its attractiveness? This huge country is afraid that it will break up into pieces.”

Making allowance for Erofeev’s literary rhetoric, I could rejoin his sentiments by noting that the greatest chance and hope for Russia are its inhabitants and their talents, their virtues of intellect and character.

Can they lead their country toward democracy? Or, on the other hand, can Europe help Russia, for which yesterday has passed and the shape of the future is not clearly drawn?

IV.

Russian political and business elites are looking at China. In this country, governed by the Communist Party, “dissidents” selectively find their way into prisons, but the economic growth is truly impressive. Present-day China is the subject of dreamy sighs from all of the authoritarian dictatorships on all of the continents. Everywhere there is talk about the Chinese model, which comprises growing wealth, a continually improving quality of life, and a tough authoritarian government. The European model is completely different. The European Union arose as a negation of totalitarian dictatorships full of cruelties and barbarism. European values are humanism and tolerance, equal dignity of all citizens, freedom of the individual, solidarity with the weak, and political pluralism. Europe can bring such testimony and such a system of values to the world. However, will such a Europe come to terms with Russia? Will such a Russia come to terms with such a Europe?

I count myself among the careful optimists. Russia has a need for Europe. Europe is neither a military nor an economic threat to Russia. Furthermore, it needs Russia as an important economic and political partner. Culturally, Russia has more links with Europe than with Iran or China. (So speaks rational reflection.) We know, however, that in history, the logic of reason often succumbs to the logic of blind fanaticism, imperial stupidity, and egoistical myopia.

In Russia, there are political environments – and by no means marginal ones – in which participation in political life is treated as the creation and hunting down of enemies, both internal and external. Following Konstantin Leontiev, a nineteenth-century conservative, these people stubbornly repeat: “One must freeze Russia so that it does not stink.” And so it is that they continue to say that maintaining Putin’s regime is necessary for the salvation of Russia. I have heard identical opinions in Peking and Shanghai from adherents of the “tough” policy in China.

The Chinese political elites profess a far-seeing strategy of the incorporation of Taiwan, following the example of Hong Kong. The Russian “tough guys” are certainly thinking in a similar manner about the whole post-Soviet territory, especially about Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia. Perhaps they also have similar thoughts about Poland, Bulgaria, or Slovakia?

I do not know whether they think in like manner about Western Europe, whether Berlin and Paris appear in their dreams in the form of Taiwan and Hong Kong. These questions, however, are worthy of consideration. ❌



Bely. The man who lived Dostoevsky. The battle between Good and Evil.

One hundred years ago, in November 1910, symbolist Andrey Bely read a paper in Moscow entitled “The Tragedy of Creativity in Dostoevsky”. All the Russian philosophers of religion were seated in the auditorium, along with Bely’s friend and colleague Alexander Blok, and the very young, as yet unpublished Boris Pasternak. Last spring, this lecture, of paramount importance in the understanding of symbolism, was translated for the first time into a foreign language, Swedish, by Irina Karlsohn (in *Psykoanalytisk Tid/Skrift*).

Bely’s theme seemed the more natural, since the symbolists, in connection with the revolutionary outburst of 1905, had *lived* Dostoevsky, had stepped into the fictional world of his novels, and to a certain extent had created the roles of his protagonists. With the advent of the new century, they had tried to shape a new religious consciousness beyond the petrified dogma of the church. They had wrapped themselves in the grandiloquent historical drama of Russia with its exalted expectations of a new world order – a New Jerusalem built on Russian soil. But the revolution had been beaten back; they had crash-landed into a bloody reality and descended into crisis, regret, and resignation, and in isolated cases into spiritual darkness.

The symbolists had – as Bely saw it – become playing fields for the battle between Good and Evil, between God and Satan, which Dostoevsky said was fought in the human heart. In the years 1905–1907, they had experienced an inner abyss, a Russian precipice, and caromed between a cult of violence and terror and fervent piety, raptures and excesses, visions and torments. They had attempted to incarnate the God Man within them, but instead tended gradually to elevate themselves to Man Gods. The biographical, the artistic, the philosophical, and the political had in a remarkable way become intertwined: this was an authorial generation of boundary crossers and genre switchers.

Bely was not alone in talking and writing about Dostoevsky around 1910. In 1909, several leading figures in the symbolist movement had come to terms with their revolutionary fantasies via commentary on the works of Dostoevsky in *Guideposts*, a polemical anthology of papers. In yet another assault on boundaries, their analyses in several instances approached pure literary



ILLUSTRATIONS: MOA FRANZÉN

Continued. The battle between Good and Evil.

scholarship. This early exploration of the depths of the major novels can be termed a precedent to modern Dostoevsky scholarship. Mikhail Bakhtin learned from this and eventually expanded on ideas first born in the minds of the symbolists.

Two conferences were recently held in Moscow with a total of 115 lectures and wide international participation. These conferences shed additional light on the interplay between Dostoevsky and symbolist culture. They began with three days at the Library of Russian Philosophy and Culture (the Losev House) devoted to “Dostoevsky and the Silver Age”, and continued with a weeklong symposium on Andrey Bely, at the time of the 130th anniversary of his birth, held at the Bely Museum. Both conference venues, practically enough, are within walking distance of each other on the historic Arbat in the heart of Moscow, the center of today’s unbridled commercialism, a clamorous pedestrian street that contrasted with the in-depth explorations of the Russian thought-world. Such is the Janus face of the new Russia: surface and seriousness, kitsch and culture, in coexistence.

In one lecture after another at the Losev House – named after the last of the great philosophers of religion, Aleksei Losev, who died at the age of 94 in 1988 – the readings and perceptions of various Silver Age writers were concretized. There were Bely, Blok, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Vasily Rozanov, and Lev Shestov. But lesser lights were also discussed, such as the radically minded priest Mikhail Tareyev, who in 1911 discussed freedom, conscience, and guilt in Dostoevsky and concluded that everything in Dostoevsky’s oeuvre, regardless of the collective sensibility of orthodoxy, is related to the individual and the choices that determine the individual life course: Dostoevsky as existentialist.

Fyodor Dostoevsky had begun as a revolutionary. After his imprisonment in Siberia, he changed his stance and initiated a violent polemic, as both novelist and publicist, against the young rebels who were soon to shake the nation to its foundations, and finally, only days after the great author’s death

in 1881, succeeded at their main mission: to blow the Tsar to smithereens. It soon became apparent that these bomb-throwers had conspired in the apartment next door to Dostoevsky – this had occurred while he was actually contemplating plans to lead the brothers Karamazov to regicide.

Dostoevsky had contrasted the socialist utopia with the Heavenly Rus-

sians, he wrote, are always drawn to extremes. As materialists, they are falsely secularized religious maximalists. This is why he believed the revolutionary idea was so dangerous, since it would inevitably be driven to the extreme, with unpredictable consequences for morality and mankind. With his past, he could understand these young fanatics and their dedication to justice

from the inside, which is why his polemical pathos became so vehement. He fought with voices that resonated within: Should the Kingdom of God be established in Heaven or on Earth? The dreamers and fantasists of 1905 never really differentiated between the two – this was the new approach.

Several speakers pointed out the purely physical proximity of Dosto-



ILLUSTRATIONS: MOA FRANZÉN

evsky and the symbolists. Vladimir Solovyov, philosopher and poet, who died at the turn of the century in 1900, became their role model and most important source of inspiration, alongside Nietzsche. He had also been Dostoevsky's friend, and academics still squabble about whether he walks again mainly in the guise of novice monk Alyosha Karamazov with his ardent beliefs, or his coldly reflective rebel brother, Ivan. Dostoevsky himself, it was said, had become enamored of the demon in Alexander Blok senior – the elusive figure who came to play such a central role in the poet's life, the subject of his showdown with his father in the poem "Retribution".

Vasily Rozanov's empathy with the Master was so great that he, as a young man, married Apollinaria Suslova, his senior by more than 20 years and Dostoevsky's former mistress. He was well aware that both Nastasya Filippovna in *The Idiot* and Grushenka in *The Brothers Karamazov* were partially modeled on her. He quite simply married into Dostoevsky's life and work. Apollinaria was a strong and independent feminist – the marriage was destined to be a reprise of Dostoevsky's drama. Sergei Bulgakov and Alexander Volzhsky-Glinka pursued another avenue, making personal contact with Dostoevsky's widow, soon gaining her trust and exclusive access to manuscripts and drafts of novels.

Bely's lecture may be seen as the first step towards his formidable prose venture *Petersburg*, begun in the autumn of 1911 after an eye-opening journey to the Pyramids of Egypt and the Tomb of Christ. Among its 60 lectures, the Bely conference delivered a number of new perspectives on this inexhaustible text. In its depiction of the revolutionary autumn of 1905, *Petersburg* melds three Dostoevsky novels: *Crime and Punishment*, *The Possessed*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. It is set – like the first of these novels – in the mainland core of the capital city of Tsarist Russia and focuses on a deeply philosophical young student. It tells – like the second – how revolutionaries are engaged in hiding conspiracies beneath the cracking facade of society. It revolves – like the third – around the prelude to patricide with strong symbolic connotations. Raskolnikov's axe has become a ticking bomb in an oily sardine can intended

to blow the oppressive father and all of old Russia to bits. The terrorists preparing all of this are actually disguised symbolist mystics and metaphysicists: they want nothing less than a global transformation.

Bely becomes a Dostoevsky for the 20th century. He stretches the limits of Dostoevsky's symbolic language and opens his psychology to astral spaces – under the strong influence of Rudolf Steiner's particular cosmology. He gives even greater scope than his predecessor to hallucinations and nightmares, he opens all passages to the unconscious; the novel becomes satirically effective, to say the least. It was a kind of sophisticated intertextuality – in the meaning with which Mikhail Bakhtin would (surely not without the influence of the text chameleon Bely) eventually imbue the word. In no way does Bely conceal that Dostoevsky (albeit in some competition with Pushkin and Gogol) is his starting point.

In connection with the conference, a new edition of the play was presented based on the novel that Bely wrote in the 1920s, which was successfully produced on the experimental stage of the Moscow Art Theatre by Anton Chekhov's nephew Mikhail (who also delivered a brilliant performance as the calcified father). Mikhail had learned from Freud – one day he would play the old psychoanalyst with a Viennese accent in Hitchcock's "Spellbound", starring Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck. At that point he had ended up in Hollywood. His perspectives on drama are now garnering increasing attention.

At a grand exhibition in connection with the conference, which was opened by the Russian deputy minister of culture, the walls were covered with Bely's colorful images of his spiritual evolution: his constantly renewed attempts to come to terms with himself and Russia, to reconcile rationality and chaos, control and eruption. In one sketch, a line bends sharply; Bely is listening to Rudolf Steiner in June 1914 in "Nord-Chopping" (the Swedish industrial city Norrköping) and is strengthened in his presentiments of a European collapse. There was certainly no skimping on words during the birthday festivities: in the celebratory speeches, the creator of *Petersburg* was characterized not only as a "great author", but also as a "great

cultural philosopher". That notion also seemed to underlie several lectures that made an attempt to look beyond Bely's fiction.

We now more clearly understand the religious aims of Bolshevism. We know that it led straight into the depths of an inferno that reaped unimaginable numbers of human victims. Bely, supported by Dostoevsky, foretold the disaster and warned of unparalleled historic convulsions and orgies of violence. The subsequent relatively widespread popular support of a brutal Bolshevik minority must probably be seen and understood in light of the genuine Russian need that existed at that time for global transformation and global declarations.

Despite his Cassandra calls, Bely himself could not resist Lenin's appeal. His answer to the October coup was the poem "Christ Has Risen" in the spring of 1918. It was written shortly after Blok's epic verse, *The Twelve*, in which the impervious vision of Christ leads the marching Red Army soldiers through the snowstorms of Petrograd. Someone is seen – fruitlessly – shooting at Christ, in an echo of Dostoevsky's story "Vlas", interspersed in the text of *The Writer's Diary*, where the blasphemy is taken to such a pass that the Eucharist is made the target of revolutionary guns.

There was a palpable female presence at the conferences, and two dynamic women were ultimately behind the comprehensive events: Elena Takho-Godi at the Losev House and Monika Spivak at the Bely Museum. Their

efforts are deserving of the highest encomiums. An eventual anthology of the conference papers is expected. While the flow of books about Dostoevsky never stops, it is also the case that right now we are seeing a downpour of volumes, both glossy works and serious studies, on Bely, one after the other. Berkeley professor Olga Match's long-anticipated examination of the city and the novel has just been published. ✖

magnus ljunggren

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PLATONOV'S CHEVENGUR: THE AMBIVALENT SPACE?

BY NATALIA POLTAVTSEVA

Platonov is a kind of half-hidden writer for aficionados who took the risk of trudging through the narrows of his phraseology and an even greater risk of taking an interest in him during the period of what was once known as "Soviet 20th-century literature". Readers are all doubtless familiar with the famous text by Joseph Brodsky that served as an afterword for Platonov's *The Foundation Pit* since it is now almost a classic of the genre. In that work, Brodsky is not so much the philosophizing critic, pondering style from the perspective of a philologist, poet, and literary scholar, but the social anthropologist. When discussing Platonov's phraseology, he refers to the inversion of his language as the main principle permitting him to shift away from the use of abnormal, non-standard literary language in order to describe the abnormal and non-standard situation in the country that gave rise to such language:

[Platonov's] language fails to follow his ideas and suffocates from the overuse of subjunctive forms and supratemporal categories and phrases, with the result that even the simplest nouns lose their meaning in a cloud of conditionality. His prose reveals an anti-utopia in the language itself.

And the logic of Brodsky's further reasoning boils down to the conclusion that Platonov resigned himself to the language of the epoch, the language of a dead end and surrealistic political consciousness. And by surrealism he meant – in spite of the classical traditions – the rebellion not of a solitary fragmented consciousness, but of a mass that has no language of its own, that has merged itself with the state, absurd in its very existence and social ignorance. According to Brodsky, fortunate is the country in which translations of Platonov are forbidden, where there is no language that befits the language of Platonov. In essence, he tries to comment, as a poet, on the anomalous inversive character of Platonov's language by relating it to the anomaly of the

country itself, its culture and the resulting surrealistic situation.

With all due respect for Brodsky's position, it should be noted that there are other viewpoints. I believe that what is most interesting in the phenomenon of Platonov is that, while he is a person who has made himself the instrument of the attitudes – both conscious and subconscious – of his time, he also proved interesting for everyone, not so much (and not only) because he was a Soviet writer in the fullest sense of the word – that is to say, a part of Soviet culture, a fact of Soviet culture, an expression of Soviet culture – but something more than that: because, for the world, the interest in the phenomenon of Platonov is not simply in his depiction of the values, problems and situations of the Soviet period.

Another scholar, English sociologist Thomas Osborne, said that Platonov has very rare qualities, that his prose is surprisingly anthropological. That is why in Osborne's opinion, in contrast to that of Brodsky, people's attraction to Platonov is of another kind:

His originality is more than literary, however. It is anthropological in the widest sense of that term. His work captures aspects of the utopian impulse that may remain opaque to either the projectively utopian human sciences or speculatively utopian modes of literary imagination. It does this because Platonov sends back dispatches not from some imagined non-place or from a dystopic or even anti-utopian place, but from what we shall call actually existing utopia.

And it is understood that Platonov achieves certain universal and symbolic principles of an imaginary reality – a certain symbolism of human existence as yet unexpressed in literary "fictionalism". This seems to me much more important and interesting, and to some

extent explains why he won such acclaim as a universal writer, as we have witnessed for quite some time. Because, beginning in the 1960s, Platonov, with increased confidence, has occupied his own quite definite place as a world classic – and not only for scholars of Russian culture. He has become a writer through whom and because of whom one may understand and see the Russian situation in the 20th century. The same Thomas Osborne wrote:

Few can have known more about the meaning of utopia in the 20th century than the sublimely gifted Russian writer Andrei Platonov. For Platonov, utopia was not just something one thought or dreamed about; it was where one had to live. And, no doubt, more or less inevitably where one had to die [...] Platonov showed us an "anthropological" dimension inherent in the utopian impulse, that we are, so to speak, "utopological" beings.

There was a period of good fortune in his life when he was successful at everything: studying at a technical university, launching his career as a journalist – a huge number of Voronezh newspapers and magazines published articles of his. It was at that time that a certain range of topics for his early works was formed. And one of his favorite themes was about unclear consciousness and emotions, which Platonov attributed – in precisely the same spirit of the classical Enlightenment ideology of Habermas's modernism – to the lack of penetration, of sanctification, of the new idea in the culture of society.

This new idea of his corresponds perfectly, on the one hand, with Solov'ev's revolution of consciousness, perceived largely in a symbolist way, by means of symbolist rhetoric and metaphor, based on a range of ideas that will later become known as Russian cosmism. On the other hand, his rhetoric and metaphor are rooted

Platonov's linguistic realism exists in a realized utopia. Real-time all the time.

in the typical Enlightenment idea that technological progress, science, reason, and Enlightenment will transform the realm of dark and uninformed feeling into a reign of consciousness. Such was Platonov's radical left version of Solovev's concept of the triumph of a "revolution of the spirit". And Platonov is happy, as long as life does not make him see these ideas – tested in the laboratory of reality for their viability – fall apart at the seams, disappear, submerge and disperse; as long as he does not have to work in the backwoods of the Voronezh region as a water supply and irrigation engineer. Perhaps it was one of the few periods in Platonov's life when he was at peace with himself and the world. And he is fine until such time as he sees the tragic contradiction between the desired ideal – the world of harmony and happiness, the great utopian dream of popular archaic mythological, folk and fairytale notions of a land of milk and honey – and the reality of implementing the revolutionary social project and building a new state.

But then the "light of reason" begins gradually to dim under the pressure of something Platonov perceives as a swamp – the domain of feeling unilluminated by conscious awareness. And the typical conflict in Platonov arises between cold, rational consciousness, and a feeling of being unilluminated by awareness. What emerges is a modernist "couple" that establishes, on the one hand, the main conflict of his prose, his world outlook, and philosophy, and, on the other, the eternal movement and ambivalence of the problematic situations to be found throughout Platonov's entire life and oeuvre. In essence, Platonov was always one who learned well from his technical education. His designing and engineering mind does not allow us to think that he was an intuitive writer of myths, who wrote badly because he lacked proficiency in the Russian language. On the contrary, his prose is well constructed, well adjusted, very rational, one might even say rationalistic.

The genres that he often turns to in the early 1920s include both science fiction, where certain ideas are always played with in a test lab environment, philosophical stories, novelettes, and prose. As early as the late 1920s – early 1930s, it was an idea emerging from the current situation that was subjected to the laboratory test. Quite often, this was the idea of revolution, the idea that happiness is possible under socialism/communism, the same idea of universal harmony – neither from Vladimir Solovev nor Nikolai Fedorov – but the transcription and translation into reality of what was declared by the country and the state as a particular ideology.

It is then that the next feature emerges, which is most important for understanding and realizing the meaning of Platonov's works. This feature concerns the correlation between ideology and utopia. I once dealt with this problem when I used a work by Karl Mannheim on ideology and utopia in order to identify the correlation between these two basic elements: the utopian and the ideological in Platonov's *Chevengur*. What happens when Platonov's characters – whom he endues with murky consciousness and lack of feeling – are forced to face the enormous problem of the consequences and meaning of the Russian Revolution, the predominant theme of his creative work, and the problem considered first and foremost by Platonov

himself, and all those who study him? It is that same anthropological quality that enables man to look for the necessary harmony and balance between fiction and what we would conditionally call reality, and what Frank Ankersmit called the "correlation between historical experience and memory".

And here, as we discuss the correlation between utopia and ideology, it is probably timely for us to turn to those features linked to Platonov's idea of a revolution as the perfect space where the collision between ideology and utopia is most graphic. The following are just two quotations from Andrei Platonov's notebooks; one dates from the 1920s and the other from 1935: "Let the Revolution advance until it stumbles; and when it stumbles, we'll help it to its feet." "The Revolution was devised in dreams and was initially implemented to achieve the most unrealizable things." And I repeat here, along with Mannheim, that in the work of Platonov several ideas collide which refer both to the objectives and to the time of the Revolution. If we recall Mannheim's thesis regarding the distinction between utopia and ideology, we will understand that utopia differs fundamentally from ideology in that it does not protect reality; it is precisely for this reason that its ideal symbolic image of the necessary ideal future succeeds in transforming the existing historical reality.

A rather paradoxical situation results. The ideology on which the social and state structure rests cannot, however, be implemented. But a utopia with its idealism of reaching the Pillars of Hercules has every chance to affect the course of history. A furious struggle ensues for the right "to redefine the symbolic situation", as sociologists might say. The definitions of ideology and utopia depend on the approach of the one who sees it, and how he sees it; that is, who evaluates what. For Platonov in *Chevengur*, what is utopia and what is ideology, and what is the position of the writer himself? How can one pinpoint the correlation of the ideological and utopian with the concept of revolution as an ever-recurring secular event, a secular counterpart to Christ's resurrection, to some extent reproducing the mythological context, and repeating itself over and over again? With Platonov, this particular event is presented as one in which the first stage of the Revolution exists fully in the realm of utopia. Then follows a sort of ideological expropriation, such that in the subsequent mutual discourse the uncompleted event passes from hand to hand, all the while continuing to form its subjects in acts of survival and subsistence. Seen in this light, Platonov's *Chevengur* is an attempt to describe the relationships between utopia and ideology, as seen through the eyes of a participant observer.

NOW I WOULD like once again to return to the approach of Thomas Osborne when discussing the basic distinction between Platonov's storyteller and those committed to a rather conventional narration, those who, like Soviet writers, described the Revolution using the language of reality as a tool to polish their personal literary style. Thomas Osborne viewed writers such as Bulgakov, Leonov, and Babel as people who worked with the language, but who do so in the manner of intellectuals. Platonov was not a writer in the conventional sense: he was neither a man of letters, nor a storyteller. He was not interested in making his literary plot entertaining,



ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

ANDREI PLATONOV (1899–1951), originally Klimentov, was born in a suburb of Voronezh in southern Russia. Even in his youth he was deeply engaged politically. With a degree in engineering, he participated in the electrification of the country, and contributed to technological improvements in agriculture during collectivization. Though an occasional member of the Communist Party, it became difficult for him, starting in 1930, to continue his literary work begun during the previous decade. During World War II, he worked periodically as a correspondent on the front.

Aside from a publishing ban, he was not subjected to any harder forms of repression during the Stalin era. Platonov died a natural death, of tuberculosis. Many of his works were not simply unpublished but also unfinished, such as *Chevengur* and *Happy Moscow*. With the Khrushchev thaw, a careful publication of his works began – those that hadn't yet been published, as well as older works in new editions.

The editing problems involved in the creation of a definitive edition of Platonov's collected works have been considerable, since the manuscripts exist in various versions, at times with corrections by the author's own hand.

The Foundation Pit, mentioned in Natalia Poltavtseva's essay, is a novel set in real time, 1929–1930, during the economic optimism of the first five-year plan. But in Platonov's world, instead of things going according to plan, there is social chaos. It is difficult to get sight of any fighting spirit; resignation and fatalism are widespread among the workers being sent out.

The novel *Dzhan* [Soul], which, like *Happy Moscow*, appeared in 1934–1935, takes place in Turkmenistan. It reflects a remnant of a people in a state of extreme need, who are going to be "rescued" by Sovietization – after having been incorporated against their will into the creation of the communistic state. The young special commissar, himself from the region, works in hopeless opposition from an ungenerous nature and traditional lifestyles. Existence is at once absurd, and unbearably accessible. ❧

fable-like, or imaginary. With his ego, his body, and his writer's imagination, he tried to reproduce the event itself. And in this very reproduction he – according to Osborne – differs from all the other representatives of Soviet literature. And I agree with Osborne.

Yes, Platonov uses the same material, but sets different internal objectives. What matters for him is the “problematic” itself, which every now and then treats the Revolution as a clash between live, musical, and enduring “Kairos” time and ritualistic, frozen, “Chronos” time, the time of ideology, the time of the state, grand epics and expansive narratives claiming universality and absoluteness, the time that equates itself with ideology. Consequently, in *Chevangur*, when the communards try to turn the sun around, it does not mean that they are struggling with Chronos for power. It is simply proof of the profound naturalness and unsophistication of the people of utopia who desire power over the crucial element of their world, the element that sets the life cycle and determines the tempo of existence. An enduring theme in Andrei Platonov's own notes is that of a dark, black sun, emerging like a sign of the state of the world, not of the social world, but the one that is part of naturalness and sociality, but remaining all the while a “murky consciousness”.

Another digression is necessary here to deal with Platonov's idea of the “murky consciousness” of people at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s. Until a certain point in time (possibly before *Chevangur* was completed), these people were for him a mass in need of influence, of remodeling, of fundamental transformation, of experience in their new capacity as a majority, one that was not merely an aggregate subject of history. But after the completion of *Chevangur*, when the philosophical trilogy made up of *Chevangur*, *The Foundation Pit* and *Dzhan* came out as a single text, dealing with the same subjects and, contemplating the same ideas, the characters in its second and third parts (these are my conditional divisions) become a sort of peculiar expert group for Platonov; they are the people of Husserl's “life world”. In the words of one of his characters, these people “are not the objects of history; they are its subjects, damn it!” So from the point of view of this commonplace consciousness, of these people of the “life world” – seen previously as a kind of natural “morass” for Platonov and described in rougher terms in some of his earlier newspaper articles – the process of redefining and reinterpreting the symbolic situation begins.

If we examine *Chevangur* closely – the text is crucial for this transition – for the correlation between the ideological and the utopian, between rational, state, Enlightenment modernist thinking and the utopian; between the somewhat anarchical and popular ideas about a shift, a turning point, a revolutionary transformation – then we will see that *Chevangur* turns for Platonov into a central, mythological place, a space where the reality of Russian history and the potential of this history created by utopia meet each other, as if crystallizing the popular dream of the possibility of a perfect world order, a sort of folkloric “Belovodie”, the Eternal City on the White River.

Chevangur proves to be a sacral point from the perspective of the ancient myth of the first creation, in which the act of creation takes place. Here is where the center of the world, the sacral space, the mythological

navel of the universe, is connected to the beginning, i.e., sacred time. The version of the myth in *Chevangur* includes the motif of the creation of the world by the Word, by demand, as in one of the most common myths about the first creation, the statement in the Bible: “In the beginning was the Word (Logos)”.

But in our case, it is clearly due to the influence of ideology on the free utopian principle. The first creation myth is treated by Platonov as the myth of communism, being created by the word out of chaos in compliance with all the canons of mythology, and following the sequence of all cultural stages. This is why there is no main character in the novel, no protagonist, just as there is no classic, plot-based, traditional storyteller. Sasha Dvanov is sometimes referred to as the main character. But this character serves only to minister to the true main character: *Chevangur* as the place (topos), and as the idea or ideology. *Chevangur* unites everything around itself; so after the wreck of his perfect topos as the idea and ideology, the destiny of all the other characters is terminated. For Platonov, whose whole life was a tragic conflict between myth and history, between utopia and ideology, the possibility of building a utopia represented the point of convergence and the possibility of answering these questions. The ancient popular dream and the modernization project of Soviet statesmanship converged at this point. That is why, both in its structure and content, *Chevangur* is a story of the collapse of the first creation myth and of the model of the perfect state; it is also a story of a live utopian impulse allowing the Revolution to survive as a lasting and symbolic event.

IN THIS SYMBOLIC event, Sasha Dvanov appears like a metaphorical, metaphysical orphan who has three fathers and loses them all: the first is a fisherman who drowns because of his curiosity in the city of Mutov; the second is Prokhor Abramovich, who banishes Sasha from his home; the third is Zakhar Pavlovich, who continues to search for Sasha after the latter leaves him. In terms of mythological interpretation, all of them represent different stages of man's attempts to overcome the chaos of the world, the powerful and sluggish force of attraction to first matter. How do they attempt to accomplish it? Prokhor Abramovich attempts it through the endless breeding of children and successors with whom he wishes to populate the world; but they are poor in both body and spirit. The fisherman who aspires to otherworldly life seeks transition from the later patriarchal world to the earlier matriarchal world, and is surrounded by its symbols: mother, water, earth, a hut, a cave, death, a grave, a mother's womb – all attempts to overcome chaos by merging with it. Last is the artisan, Zakhar Pavlovich, who initially tries to conquer nature by means of technology and culture, a kind of “modernizer” and “cultural hero”; but he becomes disillusioned and bored, and returns to the older stage – his family, his unloved wife, and his foster son. In Platonov's novel, Sasha leaves all three fathers; he first gives up his ancestors' barren efforts, then loses earthly communion and support, and finally relies on the idea of communism as a “substitute” for a father in an attempt to go on his own “Telemachean journey” to the Eternal city of Chevangur, the “New Rome”. And the Chevangurians hold a symbolic vigil for Sasha, who

is to enlighten them and who signifies with his presence the rightness and authenticity of Chevangur: clearly, they are awaiting the Messiah, the advent of Christ as the main event in history, an event which always comes about from European revolutions – this time in a kind of secular version. But Sasha departs from here too, having failed to find the “right” ideology; he returns to the rightness of his old heart and soul, to the maternal element of water.

I include here a rather long passage from *Chevangur* which makes it possible, basing oneself on Platonov's poetics, to try to capture the way the revolution is perceived by the author himself in the novel:

The revolution passed as if in one day: the shooting subsided for a long time in the steppes, remote districts, in all of the Russian periphery, and the roads of the troops, horses, and all the Bolshevik foot-travellers ran wild little by little. The plains and countryside lay empty and silent after giving up the spirit, like a mown cornfield; a late afternoon sun drifted lonely and languid over the heights above Chevangur. Now there was no one riding a warhorse over the steppe: some of the murdered and dead still lay undiscovered, their names forgotten; others restrained their horses, and were leading the poor in their native village forward, not to the steppe, but to a better future. And if someone did turn up in the steppe, no one cared, as it was only some harmless, quiet person passing by, minding his own business. After he reached Chevangur with Gopner, Dvanov saw that in nature there was none of the earlier fear, and in the villages by the roads there was no danger or misery; the Revolution was gone from these places; it had released the fields into a peaceful boredom and left no one knew in which direction, as if finding refuge in the inner darkness of man, and feeling tired of the distances covered. The world was as if sunk in evening, and Dvanov felt that the evening was setting in on him too; it was a time of maturity, a time of happiness, or sorrow. On just such an evening of his own life, Dvanov's father, wishing ahead of time to see the next morning, disappeared forever into the depths of Lake Mutevo. Another evening was now beginning, perhaps the day had already been lived whose morning the fisherman Dvanov had wanted to see; and now his son was living through the evening again. Alexander Dvanov did not love himself so deeply that he sought communism for his own life; but he kept on walking forward with everyone else because they were all walking and he was afraid of being left alone; he wanted to be with people because he had no father or family. On the contrary, Chepurnoy was tormented by communism just as Dvanov's father had been tormented by the mystery of the after-life, and Chepurnoy could not endure the

mystery of time and shortened history, so he urgently established communism in Chevengur, just as the fisherman Dvanov could not endure his life and turned it into death in order to experience ahead of time the beauty of the other world.

A thorough reading reveals a few important points. For Platonov, the Revolution was, like the people, a natural phenomenon. It comes and goes like the time of day. Consequently, in Platonov's poetics and metaphysics, it has no spirit, no idea. The Revolution is carnal and sensual, created by carnal and sensual people, people with a murky consciousness, ignorant, and uninitiated, to use the terminology of the first Christian communities. The theme of Millennialism and Chevengur as counterpart to the medieval Christian communities has been elaborated in sufficient detail in literary studies (particularly well in the work of Hans Günter). It is in marginal sects where the non-traditional coming of a Messiah is treated from the perspective of Christian utopianism.

Chevengur is a protected reserve for the Revolution where it "laps like a lake, lying in the low places of the watersheds". It is into this "lake-revolution-Chevengur" that the main character plunges at the beginning to overcome orphanhood and solitude. After Chevengur is defeated both as topos, place, city, and as an ideology, Sasha enters the same river. Once again, he follows the path of his father, plunging into Lake Mutevo, then returning simultaneously into the mother's and the father's womb, into the water, as the primal chaos out of which demiurges and gods emerged in the first creation myths, creating cosmos out of the chaos.

Preliminary outcomes appear as follows: the demiurges and gods of revolution were defeated. Chaos triumphed, and the foundational myth was never replaced by the anthropomorphic world, the world of the cultural hero. All the "local demiurges" of Chevengur became aware of the absence of life, warmth, and happiness in the revolutionary world they were creating. There is one more analogy that emerges in Platonov's *Chevengur*. Chevengur may also be treated as the domain beyond the grave, of life after death. There is a resonance here with what Brodsky says about utopia being a dead end, as that part of paradise where everything ends, where there is no time. And Chevengur represents the attempt by mortals to experience ahead of time the beauty of that world. One could draw a parallel with the mythologem of Freud's "sensual/maternal", where mother is simultaneously the mythological birth-giver and destroyer. And in the context of different metaphors, one may recall another maxim from the period of the Great French Revolution, about a revolution eating its children. (And much has been eagerly written about the myth of the Apocalypse and the Last Judgment in the novel.)

Now let us try to consider, in the light of the proposed interpretations of utopia and ideology "according to Mannheim", how we might interpret the final scene of Chevengur, about which there are already so many different versions and interpretations. Here is my version, probably somewhat oversimplified, identifying two aspects: the utopian and the ideological. The utopian is linked to the time of the Revolution, as alive,

lasting eternally, and generating a Nietzsche-Blok-like musical orchestra of history and the involvement of the participant in events as an "aggregate subject of history". The time of ideology is the time of grand epic or narrative, the time of the state and of rituals. It is the time of a rationalistic "Enlightenment" sequence, an arrow flying forward since the time of the Blessed St. Augustine. Then it becomes possible to suggest that the secret detachments that smashed Chevengur are "bandits" only as perceived by the Chevengurian utopians. They might have been detachments sent by the government to wipe up the anarchic wild rebels distorting the "revolutionary idea".

In the final analysis, it is an attempt by ideology to deal with the popular utopian and mythological version of a revolution perceived as an eternally lasting and repetitive event. In fact, this is to some extent what was described by Pitirim Sorokin in *The Sociology of Revolution* in 1925:

A society that does not know how to live is unable to develop through gradual reform; therefore, putting its faith in the melting pot of the Revolution, it has to pay for its sins with the death of a good share of its members. And this is the price forever demanded by the almighty sovereign.

And this is the finale, as Sasha – who started by testing and creating a utopian reign of new ideas, a new Eternal City – ends in defeat. The Revolution has no Father; it is natural and sensual, and therefore reasonless, immoral, and unjust. Besides, it comes to an end, echoing the statement that a "revolution eats its children"; this could be worded differently as: "ideology devours utopia". What follows from this? Obviously, what follows could be formulated as follows: once a revolutionary idea becomes the property of the state, it destroys the popular idea, the utopia of the revolution. Such was Platonov's understanding of the correlation between the ideological and the utopian. In essence, that is precisely what *Chevengur* was about: it was Platonov's "watershed" novel. The laws of social mechanics are inexorable, and Andrei Platonov, being a writer with a metaphysical and transcendent vision, and an engineer by education, could not help but understand it. The writing of *Chevengur* coincided with the end of the 1920s; Chronos time had come, for the time being at least, because a revolution is an eternally repetitive and symbolic event.

WHEN DEALING WITH the correlation between history and the past, ideology and utopia, examined via the theme of revolution, Platonov came to understand that he began to perceive the past not as history written in chronological time, but as a certain experience: the experience of the same aggregate subject of history, the same people of common consciousness who were previously uninteresting for him. For his youthful pathos, in his early Enlightenment-inspired modernistic project, in line with the state ideology, these correlations served only as material for alteration. And as time went on, he kept drifting further and further away from such a position. And the further away he got, the more the experience of these people that incorporate living in

a utopian space driven by ideology becomes increasingly relevant for Platonov. Both the tragic confrontation of his earlier ideas that happiness can be reached through reason, structure, rationality, Enlightenment, and the experience of the life of the majority of people drives the writer to a dead end. He was quite unhappy because the tragic contradiction between the desired and the real, between the available and the appropriate was lived by him not as a separate philosophical problem but as the substance of his own, private, daily, momentary, personal life. Maybe it is here that the idea emerges that Platonov's language is a tool; it is the "prison of language" (Ankersmith's expression borrowed from Nietzsche) which allows the experience of daily life to gain access to the broad arena of history. It is the language of inversion, the language for discussing the collision between epic and rational philosophical prose, ideology and utopia, myth and logic.

For Platonov, this language, infused with breaks, shifts, joining, and inversions, became both a fighting weapon and a painful burden carried throughout his life. If we compare the language of his journalistic articles and that of his prose, we see two completely different versions of the same Russian language. And this is most important, because people reading his prose sometimes get the impression that he writes this way because he thinks this way. On the contrary, it is the result of a rather consistent and difficult effort. He needed this inversion in the same way that the futurists needed to create an atmosphere of cultural shock and scandal. He needed to knock the reader out of his familiar, normal, cozy linguistic comfort, because one's surrounding life does not assume such comfort. As a consequence, within Platonov's work with the language, one finds simultaneously his peculiar writer's achievement and, at the same time, his service and burden. I do not know what other lofty words to use.

Besides all that, it is in the language that we can see the traditional idea of beauty being implemented, "shifted", with the old aesthetics being replaced in reality by something we could call presenting life in elevated categories. This is what actually happened in the 1930s. And much has been written about it since then. In particular, there is a very good article by Catherine Clarke in *The New Literary Review* in which she discusses this phenomenon in the light of the unique, internal, very strong and as yet insufficiently studied revision of Enlightenment trends that originated in the 18th century, within the Age of Enlightenment as presented, for instance, in the works of Edmund Burke. Clarke states that while the aesthetic is infused in life, no aesthetics are required in art.

In the aesthetics of Soviet life of the 1930s, the "grand heroic deed" called on the elevated feeling rather than that of beauty. The daring deeds of polar explorers, Mukhina's sculpture, Soviet films, and Lebedev-Kumach's songs created the atmosphere of the time. It was the situation of the period, one which is also reflected in Platonov's language and in his idea of the disappearance of the kind of artistic literary strategy in which the Romantics – the vanguard poet, the rebel, the hero, the innovator – committed breakthrough feats and heroic deeds. In their place appeared an entirely different pattern of behavior and artistic strategy, in which the heroic becomes the elevated, and, like

the earlier romantics, suffused into life; everything requires that one make extraordinary heroic efforts, and the notion of the “hero”, or “individualist hero”, disappears as such.

This is a most strange, complex and peculiar phenomenon of Soviet life, from which will later emerge the “cliché” character of socialist realist art in its depiction of mass culture, and the extraordinary deeds of look-alike heroes. It should be noted that in order to live in the Soviet reality one did need to be a heroic person. To this day, people struggle with everyday, grassroots heroism, living in the wake of problems that are not normal for human beings. But the perception of life as the ongoing heroic deed of a vast mass of people linked by collectivities of living and ideology certainly contrasts with the utopian idea, the kind of heroism that comes from the epic, from fairytales, myths, and legends, which required a “cultural hero”, and also from a romantic standpoint. A new, “tragic” version emerges in Platonov’s writing also, because his character Nazar Chagataev in the novel *Dzhan* is one who does not have the pathos of a romantic hero when he goes to the desert to find the Dzhan people and restore them to new life. He goes there with the pathos of his recognition of their mass “grassroots heroism”.

I would remind the reader of “The Hot Arctic” essay written by Platonov during his first trip as a writer with a group of Soviet authors to Turkmenistan. He wrote that the Central Asian deserts, the ruins of ancient Iranian and Turanian cultures – the echo of Solovev here is not accidental – serve as an extraordinarily vast space for making transformations, both for extracting old cultural values and for creating the new ones. Essentially, it is the oxymoron of a “hot Arctic”, where the everyday, grassroots, multidimensional, collective feat of polar exploration is being achieved. The exploration of Central Asia has the same appeal.

But along with this type of journalism, quite Soviet in spirit and content, we may refer to Platonov’s own notebook. There the theme of Asia is presented in a much more profound and tragic way, as an eternal, incomprehensible, exciting, inconceivable, and in fact utopian and sensual principle: Asia inside a human being; Asia as the nature of the senses; Asia as the realm of unconquered human nature, permanently aware of itself; Asia as something that tears one away from the bosom of the rational; rather, something simple, enlightened, elevated, something that can be overwhelmed by a mass-scale heroic effort. It is in this Asia that Platonov’s philosophical tale of *Dzhan* is set. There is no feat by a solitary hero here. There are analogies with what happens to heroes in epic fairytales, to the one who stands on the path of salvation, the path of messiahship in another, biblical version of the myth. However, a much more important and powerful idea of Platonov’s is present in the background: the idea he expressed in the second version of the ending, the one not censored by the editors. In the liberal version of the 1960s, the story was given a more desirable version, shall we say, of the finale. The second version of the finale contains a much more Platonov-like idea, which is consistent and honest: no one may make decisions for anyone else. No matter how good one’s intentions are, one cannot make people happy against their will. One cannot decide how to give happiness to anybody.

People may not be returned to happiness by obligation, against their will, as in a penal colony, a kind of Gulag. Happiness is not in a Gulag; it does not stem from personal choice alone, it also stems from the right to decide to make this choice – whether to gather together, or not. After the Dzhan people get together for a second time of their own free will and their own decision, it is possible for Nazar, by this very act of free assembly, to release himself from the yolk of messiahship and heroism, and to set forth to live a simple private life.

PROPERLY SPEAKING, the motion of Platonov’s prose goes from the destruction of the “big narrative” to the quiet, modest and very important life of a common man, going beyond the limits of a state epic to the limits of Chronos, to the limits of ideology. Utopianism begins to be treated as the achievement of happiness on earth through love. And, once again, when he speaks of the loss and destruction of the family – either from war or from the destructive passions in the heart of a human being – Platonov speaks of the eternal conflict between the desired and the real, of the impossibility of harmony and the absence of harmony.

And he did manage the attempt to choose a situation where it would be possible to find, if not harmony, then at least a brief moment of his relatedness to the world at the moment of creativity. It is two moments: the childhood of man and perfect poetic work. For him, such “dwelling places” of transient happiness were thus childhood and, for instance, the “Pushkin text” of Russian literature, when Pushkin became a utopian retreat, a “dwelling place of happiness” for Platonov. Why? Because – and here we return once again to Platonov’s idea of the inversive function of language – both children and genuine great poets are the first discoverers of the world for it is they who first apply the word to everything. It is they who assign names to things; it is they who, like the first Adams following the Creator, accomplish the act of naming things. Children do this during the brief period of living in the bosom of Kairos, and poets do it when they treat language as if it were some kind of free matter, but they nevertheless manage to keep control by using a strategy of their choice. And in this equalization of the child and the poet Platonov used the model of the old Romantics from the earlier period of sentimentalism, and then honed to perfection by classical Romantic philosophy with its cult of naïveté, simplicity, and childishness as possible detached views of the world. Platonov’s child text offers a somewhat different view, again the utopian space where childishness is compared to creativity not only as the time of happiness, but also as the time of work and experience.

And here we should once again turn to Ankersmith’s reflections on historical experience. Ankersmith tries to determine why we keep returning to the past every now and then, and what it is about the past that is so significant for man and for humanity. Perhaps, by addressing this subject, I will be able to complete my discourse on Platonov, because it is in Ankersmith that we see the attempt to examine the mechanism we use to actualize that which attracts our interest.

The actualization occurs because a person, when entering the realm of our historical experience, first causes the Gestalt shift from the timeless present to the

world composed of the past and the present. This leads us to a world seen as an unveiling of reality which exists in us. This reality has broken loose from the timeless present, and here is the particular moment of loss. All this is in Platonov’s work. And he is at once the same moment of loss for us that we try both to hang onto and to overcome.

However, historical experience tends to restore the past in order to overcome the barrier between the past and the present. And this could be referred to as the moment of desire, or the moment of love; that is why the description should be placed into a space embraced by complementary motions that are reciprocal, ambivalent, so to speak. This unveiling – the loss and restoration of the past – is done with the help of love, and together they constitute the realm of historical experience.

Throughout, Platonov makes these complementary motions of love and loss, thus all the while reproducing the personal at the level of the general, human, anthropological experience; and this is what makes him so significant and interesting. So the fact that we turn to him as a phenomenon of 20th century culture is surely linked to the fact that, for us, he is already part of this elevated historical experience. ✖



ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

THE
SIGNIFICANCE
OF THE
HOLOCAUST
IN

DIE ÄSTHETIK DES WIDERSTANDS

BY ANJA SCHNABEL

“Since early Oct. 71, ideas for novel. At the same time worked on *Hölderlin* after experience in theater.”¹ The first entries on *Hölderlin* in Weiss’s notebooks date from April, 1970. The two-act play makes no mention of the Holocaust, but contains two minor passages on death in war, and numerous sections on the theme of violence and death. Several forms of death occur continually in these sections, including beheading, stabbing, shooting, dismemberment, and crushing.

While editing *Hölderlin*, which had premiered in 1971, Weiss began, in March, 1972, to draft the first outlines of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* (ÄdW), which would become an amalgamation of passages illustrating violence, war, and the Holocaust. The immense importance of this theme is further underscored by the fact that there is not a single natural death in the entire ÄdW: death in this novel always occurs by violence.² Political universalism, which Weiss had advocated and practiced since his speech “I Come Out of My Hiding Place”, becomes secondary in ÄdW to a plot that mainly examines the European state of affairs. The themes of violence, war and the Holocaust are dominated by the Second World War, the menace of its approach, and the monstrous events and incomparable atrocities that accompanied it.³ In the first volume of ÄdW, published in 1975, those unfathomable events appear only occasionally. Although Weiss describes the war scenes in particular detail compared with the subsequent volumes of ÄdW, racial persecution remains largely in the background – but is nonetheless forcefully described.⁴ Thus, at one point for example, Weiss describes several “men in black” who “drive prisoners before them”.⁵ Their brutality – doubtless that of SS men – is expressed in the blows they administer “with

an iron rod”, in their mercilessness towards the victims who lie “torn, blood-drenched, thrown in rows, in heaps, on the ground”.⁶ Anti-Semitism also appears in another passage in the first volume of ÄdW, namely in the arrest of the anarchist Marcauer. She is the first to be arrested and eliminated because of critical remarks about the decisions of a political party. It can be no coincidence that she is of Jewish origin.

The identification of the narrator’s mother with the Jewish people, which is crucial for subsequent plot events, is no less striking. For “after she had been called a Jew several times because of her dark hair, [she had] now declared herself a Jew”.⁷ The mother’s adoption of the Jewish fate becomes her destiny. As early as 1937, the first-person narrator experiences the consequences of her choice during one of his visits in Warnsdorf:

At the edge of town [...] I heard the cries and laughter of a group of children and adolescents. At first I thought they were playing war, and I walked past them slowly, but then I noticed that a person lay between them in the gravel, emitting rasping sounds, and as I came closer I saw that it was Franz Eger, who was derided as a village idiot or a yid, a harmless, mentally retarded day laborer. He rolled with cramps, his face covered in blood, foaming at the mouth, back and forth between the adolescents, who kicked him and hit him on the head with sticks. Pushing his tormentors apart, I picked him up and carried him to the nursery [...], where help came. He died, as I later heard, from his injuries.⁸

The narrator only later becomes aware of the significance of this pogrom, when he observes developments in Germany from Denia, Spain: “Only now, from the outside, did we understand that the disfiguring sores of a plague had at once penetrated deep into the people’s being.”⁹ The murder of Franz Eger becomes a synonym for a grim future, evidence that the “plague” of fascist racial ideology is relentlessly deforming people.¹⁰

The second volume of ÄdW was published in 1972. Compared with the first volume, its treatment of war is less intensive in quantity, but similarly concentrated in quality, although new thematic elements are added.¹¹ In particular, Weiss focuses on the following themes: As in the first volume of ÄdW, the Spanish Civil War plays an important part, followed by the artistic representation of death in war – in this case, in Brueghel’s “Dulle Griet” and “The Triumph of Death”. A new theme is death in war in connection with Brecht’s *Engelbrekt* adaptation, which is also examined in regard to its historic associations and sources. In the second volume of ÄdW, Weiss places the whole theme of war, which he calls an “apocalyptic storm”, more and more in the context of the Second World War, which is at first only foreshadowed, but eventually breaks out. Although at first he calls attention only to the German arms industry and its mass production of weapons, and to the impending “war of annihilation” that this suggests, as the hostilities begin and progress, Weiss points to the many casualties of the Finnish–Soviet War, as well as to the great human losses incurred in the German occupation of Scandinavia.

The Shoah on the other hand is portrayed more abstractly than in the first part of the trilogy, almost as ambiance. By repeatedly mentioning the persecution



of the Jews, discussing in detail their life-threatening situation, even in neutral Sweden, and continually using terms such as “Kristallnacht”, “mass murder” and “concentration camp” in the text, Weiss communicates an image of the anti-Semitic mood that is dominant on the eve of the Second World War not only in the Third Reich, but everywhere in Europe.¹² The reader receives a lasting impression of the mortal danger that is omnipresent for Jews, and also for other “non-Aryans”. Weiss makes the pogrom-like mayhem and racist allusions concrete, lending an aura to the victims of Nazism, only once: in the first-person narrator’s febrile delirium, he condenses the expression of the unutterable – the Holocaust – in the figure of the narrator’s mother.

I didn’t know where my mother had gone, just now she had been holding my hand [...] a terrible uncertainty arose about where I might have lost her, maybe she had been taken away, I only heard cries and wailing, people hurried past, there was a crash as if windows had been smashed, the crowd drove a woman before it, they had hung a sign around her neck with the legend Jidd, in Hebrew-style lettering, maybe it was my mother, I fought my way through the press, but the woman was no longer in sight.¹³

The narrator not only internalizes the mother’s voluntary Jewishness, which was already mentioned in the first volume of *ÄdW*, but goes a step further: through the use of alarm words like “taken away” (“verschleppt”) and “cries and wailing”, and by suggesting violence (“windows . . . smashed”) and race hatred, visualized in the form of the “Jidd” sign, the narrator underscores the danger of murder that any Jewish identification brings with it, and the uncertain fate of his mother in his delirious vision foreshadows the catastrophe of the Jewish people. Weiss’s description of the defamation and persecution of Jews, set against the sinister atmosphere of fear evoked by numerous associations suggesting mass murder, symbolizes the genocide perpetrated against the Jews.

The narrator also links his own fate with that of the Jewish people. Thus he recounts a few pages later: “I ran anyway [...] until I found a wagon with a sign that told me my destination [...] it had already been determined where I was to go; I had merely forgotten the name of the city.”¹⁴ The allusion to Auschwitz as the “destination” (“Bestimmungsort”), a term Weiss had used before in *Meine Ortschaft*, demonstrates how strongly the author associates autobiographical details with his first-person narrator. In the third volume of *ÄdW*, it is not the narrator, but his mother who foresees the destruction of the Jewish people. Weiss anticipates this scene in the notebooks: “But my mother had another power that I was not able to describe at this time.”¹⁵ And the notebooks contain clearer, more drastic descriptions of the Shoah. Weiss recounts, for example, the brutality of a Catholic priest who beats Jewish children seeking help; the expulsion, expropriation, torture, and murder of Jews from Poland and Czechoslovakia; and victims forced to “dig their own graves”.¹⁶ At the same time, Weiss presents the first

precise characterization of the narrator’s mother: her sensitivity and prudence, her integrity and rationality, her lifelong struggle against social injustice and political delusions and the related desire “to preserve a kind of purity”, her solidarity with victims, her deep resignation in the face of the overwhelming Nazi terror.¹⁷ The narrator’s mother suffers a psychological shock, becoming physically numb and mute, as described in detail as a central theme of the third volume of *ÄdW*. This effect follows a conception that Weiss anticipated in his notebooks:¹⁸

My mother’s face, big, blunt, worn down by the images hammering against it, a brittle, crumbling, eyeless, stone mask – where had I seen it – this silent cry, these outstretched hands beside it, just a lump, without fingers, protruding from the earth – her son fell under the snake’s bite –¹⁹

His “mother’s face” reminds the narrator of the frieze on the Pergamon Altar, of the Earth-mother goddess Gaea, and of her dying son Alcyoneus. In the “stone” face of the gigantic goddess, the narrator discovers the reflection of his mother and a revelation of her premature, unexpected death. Her departure from chronological time – her paralysis, which connects her in a symbolic way with the mythological Gaea – reflects an inner petrification that begins to express itself outwardly:

Seeing mother again. She stares straight ahead blindly. Eyes wide open, mouth open. Face of shock. She sees one great catastrophe – no words for it yet.²⁰

The mother’s will to live is overcome by the unnamable “catastrophe”, which is inconceivable in words or in rational thought, although its facts are identifiable with the atrocities of the Second World War, and also with the genocide of the Jews. Her petrification – her complete withdrawal from life – becomes a metaphor for the capacity of communication that is lost in the face of horror.²¹ The mass annihilation that is systematically connected with her character especially in the third volume of *ÄdW* makes her a symbolic figure “that bears all of human suffering, and is broken by it”.²²

Suffering, death and mortal fear, pain and destruction especially dominate the third and last part of *ÄdW*, published in 1981. Of the three volumes, the third describes most forcefully the destruction of war, its terrible devastation and countless victims. In the third volume of *ÄdW*, Weiss develops the subject of war in a very different way, as a survey demonstrates: In one detailed passage, he defines the history of humanity as one of death and war in which progress means more modern ways of dying. Weiss further underscores the recurring theme of death in war and its accompanying devastation by mentioning numbers of war victims. Calling the war a “massacre”, he also sets it in relation to the First World War, which he characterizes, like the Second, as a “war of annihilation”. The high losses in the Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union, already mentioned in the second volume of *ÄdW*, are again the topic of political discussions. The descrip-

tions of war culminate and end in the explosion of the atomic bomb over Japan, which magnifies the notion of death in war exponentially.²³

The Holocaust theme too is developed most forcefully in Volume III – mainly through the character of the narrator’s mother. Weiss takes up the thread of the plot that was closely intertwined with her character in the first two parts of the novel, and continues it, stylizing the mother into a medium for the representation of violence, death and destruction, and presenting the perfectly organized mass murder to the reader indirectly, through her dying visions.²⁴ This significant association originates in the mother’s identification with the victims of expulsion and persecution, which is the initial event of her seven-day imprisonment in a jail in Ostrava during her flight through Eastern Europe:

My mother felt the dense warmth, she was one of these sweating bodies, she gripped one of the hot hands, grasped its fingers, and as the hands clutched each other, her face pressed against a damp cheek. Arms, breasts, hips, shaggy beards, a mass of limbs, pounding hearts, rushing breaths, and the fact that she was amidst them gave her strength. The foul emanation was a flourishing to her, she drew in the smell deeply, she lived in this organism, she would never want to leave this enclosure, a separation would be her downfall, her destruction.²⁵

Die Ermittlung contains a precursor to this passage in *ÄdW*. There Weiss tells of a girl who is pulled out of a heap of bodies by a male prisoner. Asked why she is lying among the dead, she answers, “I can’t be among the living anymore”.²⁶ The parallel between the narrator’s mother and this young woman is evident: both feel closer to the dead than to the living.

However, the narrator’s mother’s “separation” from the “sweating bodies” is predetermined; her security is transitory. While the Jewish merchants and tradesmen, women and children are deported to a camp, her German ethnicity saves her from the gas chamber. The mother’s feeling of belonging, and most of all her quality as an eyewitness to the industrialized killing, evoke a feeling of impotence, grief, and shock in her: “She had been a witness [...] she had seen how they [the Nazis] counted on their fingers, ever faster, how their hands made signs, all through the night.”²⁷ The genocide, ceaselessly advancing, taking on inconceivable dimensions, is recorded not only with bureaucratic correctness, but also with mathematical precision. The ever faster counting on fingers is no longer sufficient for the tremendous “numbers that so confuse [...] with their inexhaustible quantities, these numbers of people who, across all the landscapes of the earth, migrated towards their death”.²⁸ The knowledge of the endless genocide, the incessantly rising numbers of victims that remain abstract because they “became more shapeless [...] than millions”²⁹ weighs so heavily on the mother’s psyche that she can only process what she has experienced – her unique, traumatic experiences of inconceivable horror – as a vision, in a kind of “psychic mimesis”³⁰:

[L]ittle mounds were thrown up everywhere and burst, and heads popped up out of them, and shoulders, and torsos, out of which arms stretched upward, drawing hips and legs after them, she [the mother] wept over all of this, over the countless people who, as far as the eye could see, rose up out of the earth, [...] the faces pale, the skin torn, often not distinguishable whether it was flesh or cloth, and all of them were alive [...] who rose up into the air out of the inside of the earth, who had removed themselves, all these exposed or barely clothed women, these naked children with their protruding ribs, their thin little legs, the men full of black spots, their rags fluttering around them.³¹

Their state of their bodies and clothes suggests that the people described here are concentration camp prisoners who were gassed to death. In the hope of divine justice, the narrator's mother sees in her hallucination the resurrection of all the victims of senseless murder, the return to life of all the victims of persecution killed in malice. She who had seen fascism from the beginning as a deadly "plague"³² cannot put the Holocaust into words. It is this fact, the Holocaust that cannot be verbalized, that leads to her death. That the consequence of her silence can only be death is clear if we recall Weiss's text "Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Sprache", in which he writes: "To be outside a language meant to die."³³ After her death, the narrator confirms that his mother was aware of the danger of Nazism early on: "One day it would be possible to describe what had happened to my mother, she saw it all coming, while we only experienced her falling mute, she must have known already what was in store for us when the masses were cheering the murderers."³⁴ As the genocide casts its spell over the mother, making her literally "speechless" and hence a successor to Hölderlin, the genocide itself becomes the "unspeakable".³⁵ Weiss himself indicates in the notebooks that Hölderlin, silent in his tower, can be seen as a precursor of the narrator's mother.³⁶ The mother's lapse into silence – in the mental disorder that Weiss had previously conceived in his notebooks³⁷ – is revealed as an alternative to the verbalization of terror, as a counterexample to Dante. Whereas the wanderer in Hades survives unharmed the confrontation with the terrible, and even sets his experiences down in writing, the narrator's mother is paralyzed in speechless horror after her ingenuous look into the face of the Medusa – a human reaction often portrayed in Brueghel's paintings.³⁸ Like the writer Karin Boye, the mother is overwhelmed by pain; she cannot stand the inconceivable horror; she cannot accept her own failure. In Boye's case, "failure" refers to her initial enthusiasm for Nazism; for the narrator's mother, the unbearable failure is her powerlessness, the fact that she did not help the victims of persecution, did nothing to save them when it was possible.³⁹ In the face of horror, Boye and the narrator's mother remain steadfast in the sense that they do not switch off their consciousness, but in confronting the ultimate experience of death they lose their anesthesia. Like the painter Géricault, who gave up the "cold" vision that

was necessary for his aesthetic production, Boye and the narrator's mother also succumb to what they observe, and they too die a delayed death. In the political context, the delayed moment of death allows a remembrance of those who died before. The last moment before the catastrophe, held and drawn out to eternity, is saved from oblivion. The postponement of death can thus be seen as an artistic technique employed in support of Mnemosyne.

The character Lotte Bischoff also knows the "pain of parting"⁴⁰ and loss. Unlike Géricault, Boye, and the narrator's mother, Bischoff resists the terror and takes action to interrupt the continuity of the catastrophe. Her resistance symbolizes hope; her survival guarantees remembrance: thanks to her memory, the dead are not forgotten. The narrator too wants to commemorate all events and all of his departed friends, namely through the novel he plans to write. Towards the end of the third volume, he outlines the project in more detail:

They [the fallen resistance fighters] had concealed themselves using codes and assumed names. If I were to describe what I experienced among them, they would retain that obscurity. In writing, I would try to make them more familiar to me. [...] By my writing I would make them speak. I would write what they never told me. I would ask them what I never asked. I would given them, who went in secret, their true names again. [...] Day and night they would accompany me.⁴¹

Thus, in contrast to his mother, the first-person narrator deals dynamically and practically with his memories. She stops, mute, freezing her memories, but he practices remembrance actively in the form of literature. In doing so, he also becomes a bearer of remembrance, analogous to Lotte Bischoff. Yet the two main characters cannot be the medium that illustrates the Shoah, since they would then be destroyed by it. And they must survive – like Dante in the *Divine Comedy* – to bear witness to their experiences. Hence Weiss assigns the part of suffering and dying to the narrator's mother. By splitting the experience of death, so that the narrator evokes the aspect of anesthesia while his mother evokes the aspect of empathy and compassion, Weiss illustrates Dante's "method of duality".

The memory bearer Bischoff keeps all the names and dates of her comrades-in-arms in a little "notebook that she always buries again under the raspberry bushes"⁴² to keep it safe from the war and the Nazis. Like the memorial plaque that Bischoff imagines, which would list all the names of those murdered to save them from anonymity, the fact that she wants to work as a teacher after the war in order to teach her students about the full meaning of the murdered resistance fighters, to anchor them in the students' memory, underscores yet again her functional significance in Weiss's work of remembrance. For Bischoff, Mnemosyne has a positive value, as the knowledge of the past is a fundamental requirement for a better future: "But if she wanted to face the past, she wanted to do so of her own volition; she didn't want to be half senseless and overwhelmed."⁴³ Bischoff remains free in spite of her sinister memories, whereas the narrator's mother is absorbed by her

memory to the point of physical paralysis.⁴⁴ Thus Weiss lets two very different female characters bear the main burden of his literary work of memory: Lotte Bischoff, the unassuming communist who keeps the memory of the murdered political activists alive, and the narrator's mother, dying under the shock of what she has witnessed, who recalls and remembers the Holocaust and its victims in her visions. These two protagonists transform ÄdW into the author's intended space of memory. Yet it is only Lotte Bischoff, not the narrator's mother, who benefits from the "rescuing" function of memory – a conceptual construct that Weiss borrows from Walter Benjamin.⁴⁵ The mother's memories of the dead, based on her identification, become a trauma. The closeness of the connection Weiss feels to the narrator's mother, the extent to which she embodies his own responses to the Shoah – horror, shock, grief, incomprehension – is illustrated by Weiss's reaction in an interview with Burkhardt Lindner in which he refuses to give further information on his conception of the characters: "To me, the character of the mother and that of the father are figures that I don't want to analyze at all."⁴⁶ Withdrawal is an expression of deep compassion, and after all, Weiss projects into his female protagonist the same emotional ties to the victims, the same identification with the Jews that he had been unable to attain. In this way, the narrator's mother allows Weiss to achieve two things: first, a deferred identification with his own Jewish heritage on a literary, fictional level, and second, a written form of the "cold" view, manifested in the representation of the Holocaust.⁴⁷

Although Weiss's mental engagement with the Shoah finds expression primarily in the narrator's mother, ÄdW also contains numerous other passages that describe the genocide, sometimes intensively and in detail, sometimes superficially and selectively. For example, Weiss repeatedly drops the names of concentration camps and death camps,⁴⁸ mentions the "annihilation of people" and "mass murders"⁴⁹ in the East, and the anti-Semitism that has persisted since the Middle Ages.⁵⁰ Occasionally these passages refer simply to "the camp" without further geographical information, or use the Polish place name "Oświęcim" for the Auschwitz death camp. More detailed passages deal with the persecution of the Jews and their treatment during the transport:

[N]ow, on a Sabbath, soldiers rounded up the Jews, the Rabbi did not interrupt his prayer of consecration, the soldiers knocked the Torah out of his hands, he went on singing, the men's broad-brimmed black hats were knocked off, they were dragged to the ground by their hair, and the singing went on, they were thrown onto a truck, men and women, old people and children.⁵¹

Another passage that forcefully describes the maltreatment of the Jews reads as follows:

The inhabitants had indifferently turned away from their victims, who were being driven onto the trucks with rifle butts, these worried victims, with their miserable bundles, these bewildered old people, these

women's white faces, these children who no longer dared to cry, and the indifference had never looked to him [the Swedish engineer Nyman, who is recounting his experiences in Germany] like apathy, but only a sign of a general convention.⁵²

Overnight, the victims become the "lowest of the low, [...] robbed of any claim, of any dignity, existing only in a world of loading yards, transport routes, transfer points and transit camps",⁵³ they go unsuspecting to their destruction, subjecting themselves to that murderous, contemptuous violence that defies all rationality, all logic. Their complete subordination to the situation – leaving aside some exceptions – their lack of resistance to the Nazi killing machinery "that divided them up, separated them from one another, counted them, destined them to slower or faster elimination",⁵⁴ is particularly fatal in that it scars them, mentally and physically. In the eyes of the perpetrators they have "already become numbers"⁵⁵; in the face of their fate they become dull both inside and out:

These people, who still carried with them memories of their own lives, were already beginning to stumble like blind people, in the eyes of hidden observers they were nothing more than a herd to be slaughtered off as cheaply as possible. These streams that advanced, creeping, shuffling eastward through the flourishing landscapes [...], rolling [...] towards the flood.⁵⁶

In a few sentences Weiss communicates an impression of the change taking place in the Holocaust victims. The loss of their earlier lives, their identities, their concept of the world, even their memories, which they conserve at first, before they fade after a short time through the experience of death and torture – their loss leads to a dehumanization of unknown proportions that shapes day-to-day life in the Third Reich. The eyewitness report of the engineer Nyman, who has returned from Germany to Sweden in 1941, illustrates the shock with which outsiders react to the racism that is tangible everywhere and expressed without restraint:

The division between the perpetrators and their acts was most clearly visible to him, he said, when he met one of the outcasts who was walking along like a sleepwalker, the identifying sign over his heart, staring straight ahead, below the curb, dragging his own death along with him in a wave of indifference; he felt as if the earth must open up, but everything went on as usual, on the pavement [...] they all stuck together, didn't let anything disturb them, this one person wandering around here was just a shadow, nothing to do with them.⁵⁷

The years of harassment wear the victims down until they await their own death, their impending liquidation, indifferently. The inconceivability of the fate that is reserved for them transforms them into fatalists incapable of action, into living dead.⁵⁸ In his notebooks,

Weiss explains how a large part of the Jewish population was transformed into living dead as follows:

[W]hen one has been so degraded, deprived of oneself, of everything that was of value to one, when one is so worn down, so utterly fatigued, then one not only longs for death, then one no longer asks, then one only follows the last, the very last impulse, finally to come to rest –.⁵⁹

In the character of the writer Karin Boye, Weiss illustrates how non-Jews "cannot fully grasp how far the persecution of the Jews goes".⁶⁰ Her incomprehension in regard to the effect of the anti-Semitism propagated by the Nazis is based on the conviction "that a racial idea cannot attain dominance over people's thinking to drive the majority into senselessly hounding a minority."⁶¹ Only later does she recognize the danger that the fascists and their racial doctrine represent.

Finally, Weiss's most detailed and most forceful treatment of the Holocaust is his description of the mass murder carried out in assembly-line fashion. Here again, he presents the events as reported by the Swede Nyman. Having learned of the mechanical "extermination [...]" of the Jewish race" from Count von Seydlitz,⁶² the engineer Nyman becomes a medium, like the narrator's mother before him, transposing violence, death, and destruction. Nyman's resolute account of the details entrusted to him, the bluntness of his almost ruthless description of the smoothly functioning genocide, recalls the execution scenes in Plötzensee:

[T]hey are led into sealed wagons, after their clothes have been taken from them [...]. The people stand in them packed together [...]. Their faces stretch upward, where a little hatch is opened. Close together, these white, upturned faces, their eyes wide open in fear. The children hang on their mothers. [...] The can [of poison] is emptied over them. A cloud of gray dust. They begin to cough, clutch at their throats, gasp for breath, they climb on one another, claw at the walls, a press of bodies, turned blue, in convulsions, splattered with vomit, with excrement, that goes on for up to five minutes, another quarter of an hour is allowed, then the ventilation begins, they lie so entangled that they have to be broken apart with bars.⁶³

Unlike the mother's dying visions, Nyman's account is extremely concrete. He presents his listener – and the reader – the minute details of the gassing process, elucidating the infernal system that has replaced the previous "random slaughter",⁶⁴ making a genocide possible on a scale beyond anything that has gone before. We already know from the play *Die Ermittlung* that mortal fear and the physical suffering of the victims plays a key role: in that work Weiss already focused sharply on the victims' state of mind just before their death. Indeed Weiss seems to have taken the text of the play as his guide in writing Nyman's account, for he mentions both the gas Zyklon B, developed by the "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Schädlingsbekämpfung" (German

Pest Extermination Company),⁶⁵ and the connection between mass murder and industry, which went hand in hand in the Third Reich. Most of all, the "industrial" genocide, for which the whole society is responsible, is incessantly shocking to Weiss. Accordingly, his treatment of the Holocaust closes with this theme:

Krupp, IG Farben, and many of the largest industrial firms had built factories beside the camps in which those inmates who had strength left were to be utilized right up to the end. They were integrated in the national economic plan in that everything they had, even their hair and their gold fillings, was taken from them.⁶⁶

Motivated by his half-Jewish status, Weiss begins to examine his Jewish roots in his autobiographically tinted writings. From the beginning, his interest is in a secularized Jewishness; he is never really interested in the religious issue. *Fluchtpunkt* contains Weiss's first explicit declaration of being Jewish, yet without truly feeling like a Jew. Although the images and writings presented above bear witness to an inner discussion and evaluation both in regard to his own Jewish identity and in regard to his general relation to Judaism, this inner debate leaves no deep artistic traces until 1961–1962. The author does not document his own position until *Fluchtpunkt*. After a visit to Auschwitz, Weiss realizes that no identification with his Jewish origins is possible. The text *Meine Ortschaft*, written shortly after the tour of Auschwitz, becomes a literary testimony to a failed attempt at belonging. In the knowledge that he does not belong, and driven by his universalist political commitment, which has begun in the intervening years, Weiss modifies the aesthetic agenda of his representations of the Holocaust. From this point on, the focus is on the continuity of the fascist structures in post-war German society and the industrial exploitation of the victims. From *Inferno* to *Die Ermittlung* and *ÄdW*, Weiss denounces economic interests behind the mass murder again and again. His descriptions of the agony and torture associated with the genocide against the Jews, of the survivors' experiences of violence, death and war, contribute substantially to breaching the taboo of the Shoah, and hence to coming to terms with the past. Yet without the poetic method of Mnemosyne, Weiss's historic treatment – in particular *Die Ermittlung* – would have been unthinkable. By invoking the dead through memory, making them speak and thus overcome death in his works, the author confronts his guilt complex and mortal fear.⁶⁷ The mnestic technique is thus a concealed focus of Weiss's artistic concept, as a technique of representation that serves to pass on history, that fosters the verbalization of the "cold" gaze, and that gives the victims their names again:

These dead leave no written testament, and rarely a name; we cannot pay them our last respects, we cannot console their widows and orphans. [...] We can only finish dreaming their dreams.⁶⁸ ✖

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R 1

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St II/2

Stücke II, vol 2: *Hölderlin, Trotzki im Exil, Der Prozeß*. Frankfurt [1977].

¹ Nb II, p. 41.

² On death in war, see St II/2, pp. 335, 389. On death by violence, see *ibid.*, pp. 279, 287, 291ff., 295, 327, 342, 364, 368, 370, 377f., 385. On Weiss's *Hölderlin* notes, see Nb I, pp. 723-733, 739-777; Nb II, pp. 10-13, 20, 27ff., 32-36, 39.

³ This essay is devoted specifically to a detailed examination of those passages that refer to the Holocaust. Space does not permit an analysis or interpretation of all passages on the theme of violence. A separate study would be necessary to deal adequately with the great number of such passages. The passages on war in *ÄdW* are likewise so numerous that they can only be mentioned summarily in footnotes.

⁴ The war scenes in the first volume of *ÄdW* can be classified as follows: Besides general observations on death in war (pp. 43f., 48, 72, 329), death in the Spanish Civil War is mentioned most frequently (pp. 156, 206, 234, 245, 269, 279, 281, 285, 300, 304, 306, 320). But Weiss also includes descriptions of death in war as represented in works of art, such as Picasso's “Guernica”, Rousseau's “War”, Goya's “Execution of the Rebels”, and the Arezzo frescoes (pp. 84ff., 332-337, 340, 345 f, 348f.). There are analogous passages in the notebooks which mention or supplement the passages in *ÄdW*: For general statements about death in war, see Nb II, pp. 52, 54, 163. On death in the Vietnam War, see *ibid.*, pp. 90f. On death in the Spanish Civil War see *ibid.*, pp. 129, 333. On representations of war in art, such as Rousseau's “War”, Vereshchagin's “Apotheosis of War”, and the Mamayev monument, see *ibid.*, pp. 184, 345, 356f. On the war dead in Russia, see *ibid.*, pp. 354, 358f., 378.

⁵ *ÄdW I*, p. 94.

⁶ *Ibid.* The passage ends with the words: “No denial could dissolve the heaps of dead on the field” (*ibid.*, p. 95).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 189. Magnus Bergh sees the mother's voluntary Jewishness as a central motif: “What in reality was a concealed Jewish heritage on his paternal side is transformed in the novel into an affirmed Jewish maternal heritage – and one that results from a free, existential choice” (Magnus Bergh, “Die Kristalle von Peter Weiss: Ein verborgenes Muster in der ‘Ästhetik des Widerstands’ und in den autobiographischen Texten”, in Michael Hofmann et al. (eds.), *Peter Weiss Jahrbuch*, vol. 12, 2003, p. 61). Michael Hofmann interprets the mother's solidarity will all the victims of persecution as an alternative to the narrator's father's rational-universalist concept. As the principal female character, the mother illustrates, in Hofmann's words, “that the memory of the Shoah must be fashioned not by the means of rational, didactic

discourse, but by the poetic, literary realization of existential experiences” (“Antifaschismus und poetische Erinnerung: Überlegungen zu Peter Weiss' Ästhetik des Widerstands”, in Rainer Koch et al. (eds.), *Peter Weiss Jahrbuch*, vol. 3, 1994, p. 126). For Gwang-Hun Moon, the fact that the narrator's mother identifies absolutely with all the victims of persecution is the most prominent evidence of her “moral-ethical” character (Gwang-Hun Moon, “Schreiben als Anders-Lesen”: *Avantgardismus, Politik und Kultursemantik in Peter Weiss' Roman ‘Die Ästhetik des Widerstands’*, Frankfurt 1999, p. 245).

⁸

Ibid. A notebook entry indicates how incomprehensible anti-Semitism is to Weiss: “What are the Jews really? I have no idea. Differences from others are attributed to them” (Nb II, p. 58). In this context, Berthold Brunner correctly states: “Again and again the author, as the notebooks show, examines what the attribute ‘Jew’ means; Peter Weiss has never really adopted the appellation for himself” (Berthold Brunner, “Peter Weiss und das ‘Inferno’: Über ein unveröffentlichtes Stück, die ‘Ermittlung’ und das Verhältnis zu Nachkriegsdeutschland – eine Auseinandersetzung mit den Interpretationen von Christoph Weiß”, in Michael Hofmann et al. (eds.), *Peter Weiss Jahrbuch*, vol. 11, 2002, p. 71).

⁹

Ibid., p. 301.

¹⁰

At the same time, it deforms the terminology of their language. On the effects of Nazism on the German language, see Nb II, p. 72.

¹¹

In the notebooks, Weiss mentions the theme of war – while writing the second volume of *ÄdW* – in only one relatively unimportant passage (Nb II, p. 409), in which he briefly summarizes the experiences of a war veteran.

¹²

These passages are found on the following pages in *ÄdW II*: On the persecution of Jews, pp. 55, 90f., 113f., 136, 320; on the situation of Jewish families in Sweden, p. 91; on the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, p. 90; on “mass murder”, p. 55; on “concentration camps”, pp. 250, 324.

¹³

ÄdW II, p. 76. Drafts of this scene are also found in the notebooks: see Nb II, pp. 474, 478. Magnus Bergh shows that this dream is a covert allusion to the Rue des Rosiers in Paris, and sees that “Jewish street” as a “concealed center” of the first-person narrator (Magnus Bergh, op. cit., p. 62). See also Magnus Bergh, “Wofür wir keinen Namen hatten: Der geheime Teil von Peter Weiss' Autobiographie in der Ästhetik des Widerstands”. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 4, 2000, p. 4.

¹⁴

ÄdW II, p. 77.

¹⁵

Nb II, p. 403. On the mother's voluntary Jewishness and her feeling of belonging, see *ibid.*, p. 597.

¹⁶

Nb II, pp. 459, 566, 600. Weiss includes some of these notebook entries in the third volume of *ÄdW*: see *ÄdW III*, pp. 15f. In this connection, Weiss's comments on the very different treatment of the Nazi period in East and West Germany are also interesting: see Nb II, p. 642.

¹⁷

Ibid., pp. 576f.

¹⁸

Julia Hell argues persuasively that the physical effects of the narrator's mother's experience of the Holocaust are a representation of historic experience: “The mother's knowledge is a bodily knowledge produced in an act of identification. [...] What Weiss establishes here is [...] a nexus between writing, body, and voice whereby the body of the Jewish mother functions as the site of authenticity, as the very guarantee of authentic historical knowledge.” Julia Hell, “From Laokoon to Ge: Resistance to Jewish Authorship in Peter Weiss's Ästhetik des Widerstands”, in Jost Hermand & Marc Silberman (eds.), *Rethinking Peter Weiss*, New York 2000, p. 35.

¹⁹

Nb II, p. 568. A very early note dates from 1972: “The mother ends up in severe psychosis, imagines she's a Jew, in the concentration camp, dies insane” (*ibid.*, p. 163). On the development of the narrator's mother in the notebooks, see Michael Hofmann, op. cit., p. 130ff.

²⁰

Nb II, p. 596. As early as February 1975, Weiss writes from the point of view of the first-person narrator of *ÄdW* about the narrator's mother's physical state: “Earlier, my mother used to succumb to apathy at times” (*ibid.*, p. 403). Because the narrator's mother – in spite of her aphasia and paralysis – oc-

asionally communicates by a minimal form of body and sign language, Gwang-Hun Moon sees her body as a “memorial” and “reflection” of the traumas she has experienced: see Gwang-Hun Moon, op. cit., pp. 238f., 250-254.

²¹

In her study of the play *Die Ermittlung*, Marita Meyer finds that the mimetic reaction of silence, falling mute, is a behavior specific to women, which Weiss developed – according to Meyer's plausible thesis – in *Die Ermittlung* and later perfected in the figure of the mother in *ÄdW* (Marita Meyer, *Eine Ermittlung: Fragen an Peter Weiss und die Literatur des Holocaust*, St. Ingbert 2000, pp. 70ff., 170). Jens Birkmeyer very aptly compares the mother's speechlessness with the attitude of Laocoön: “Like Laocoön, the mother has given up her voice under the crushing burden of the outward dangers, yet the stifled cry of desperation is preserved in the silent, deathly world of images” (Jens Birkmeyer, *Bilder des Schreckens: Dantes Spuren und die Mythosrezeption in Peter Weiss' Roman ‘Die Ästhetik des Widerstands’*, Wiesbaden 1994, p. 284).

²²

Nb II, p. 635. To Gwang-Hun Moon, the narrator's mother not only develops “into a symbol of humanity suffering under fascism, but also of oppressed women, who have been destroyed for millennia by the violence of the patriarchal system, and hence for the whole ‘history of humanity’ as ‘a history of murder’” (Gwang-Hun Moon, op. cit., p. 248). For Ingeborg Gerlach, it is primarily the women in *ÄdW* who realize the “full extent of the terror” (Ingeborg Gerlach, “Über die politische Verbindlichkeit von Literatur: Die Kontroverse zwischen Weiss, Enzensberger und Johnson, und was daraus wurde”, *Diskussion Deutsch*, 15:79 [1984], p. 513). Alfons Söllner sees the death of the narrator's mother as a logical consequence. Because the Holocaust “cannot be expiated, the rescue of the mother cannot succeed; her later death functions as a vicarious, symbolic act of atonement for real crimes that cannot be atoned for” (Alfons Söllner, “Kritik totaler Herrschaft: Rationalität und Irrationalität in Peter Weiss' Ästhetik des Widerstands”, in Christa Bürger (ed.), *Zerstörung, Rettung des Mythos durch Licht*, Frankfurt 1986, p. 191). In the diary text *Gespräch in einem Raum*, the mother of the protagonist Jörn also dies a postponed death. The process of her death is strongly reminiscent of that of the narrator's mother in *ÄdW* (Peter Weiss, “Gespräch in einem Raum”, in Michael Hofmann et al. (eds.), *Peter Weiss Jahrbuch*, vol. 7, 1998, p. 15ff.). On the function of memory as “memory of suffering”, see Ulrich Engel, “‘Gedenke dessen, was sie dir in Auschwitz angetan haben’: Peter Weiss' Oratorium ‘Die Ermittlung’ und Luigi Nonos Komposition”, in Michael Hofmann et al. (eds.), *Peter Weiss Jahrbuch*, vol. 12, 2003, pp. 94f.

²³

There are sections in the notebooks that recall, augment or, as in the case of the Vietnam War, anticipate the themes of these passages in *ÄdW*: on numbers of war victims, see Nb II, pp. 658, 816, 867, 894; on the war of annihilation in Vietnam see *ibid.*, pp. 822, 826, 830, 832f.; on death in the war see *ibid.* pp. 856, 894. The notebook passage illustrating death in war (Nb II, p. 856) is used in a modified form in *ÄdW* (*ÄdW III*, p. 130).

²⁴

The narrator's mother's dying visions reflecting the Holocaust are thematically associated with sand and snow, elements of death: see *ÄdW III*, pp. 7, 10f., 18, 124. Weiss describes the mother's illness, her mental disorder and her accompanying physical deterioration in detail and through multiple points of view, including those of the first-person narrator, the father figure, Hodann and Karin Boye: see *ÄdW III*, pp. 7-22, 129-134.

²⁵

ÄdW III, p. 12. On the initial experience of the narrator's mother in Ostrava, see also Nb II, p. 763. Michael Hofmann attributes primary importance to the warmth that the narrator's mother feels among the victims of persecution. He sees the physical experience as the expression of a “sensual experience”, namely one of belonging: “[T]he mother identifies herself physically with her fellow sufferers, and links her own existence and identity to that of the other members of this group” (Michael Hofmann, *Ästhetische Erfahrung in der historischen Krise: Eine Untersuchung zum Kunst- und Literaturverständnis in Peter Weiss' Roman ‘Die Ästhetik des Widerstands’*,

- Bonn 1990, p. 245).
- ²⁶ E, p. 40.
- ²⁷ ÄdW III, p. 130. On the narrator's mother as witness, see *ibid.*, p. 32. Martin Jürgens and Peter Kamp see the "labor of remembering", as performed for example by Lotte Bischoff, the narrator's mother or the narrator himself, as an expression of a "capacity for perception" that remains "irreconcilable" in ÄdW because of the horrors described in the novel (Martin Jürgens and Peter Kamp, "Der spanische Bürgerkrieg in Peter Weiss' Ästhetik des Widerstands", in Internationale Peter-Weiss-Gesellschaft (ed.), *Ästhetik, Revolte und Widerstand im Werk von Peter Weiss: Dokumentation zu den Peter-Weiss-Tagen in der Kampnagel-Fabrik Hamburg* [November 4th-13rd, 1988] Mit Ergänzungsband, pp. 141, 150). Marita Meyer states: "What has mortally wounded the mother in innermost being is, even more than the suffering of the victims, the inhumanity of the perpetrators. These perpetrators take pleasure in causing suffering" (op. cit., p. 84).
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14. Hodann later discusses the generally "incomplete" numbers of victims (*ibid.*, p. 246). On numbers of victims, see also Nb II, pp. 684, 790.
- ³⁰ Söllner, Alfons. "Widerstand gegen die Verdrängung; Peter Weiss und die deutsche Zeitgeschichte", in Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss & Jürgen Schutte (eds.), *Peter Weiss: Leben und Werk*, Frankfurt 1991, p. 272.
- ³¹ ÄdW III, p. 36. On the mother's vision of resurrection, see Ulrich Engel, *Umgrenzte Leere: Zur Praxis einer politisch-theologischen Ästhetik im Anschluss an Peter Weiss' Romantrilogie „Die Ästhetik des Widerstands“*, Münster 1998, pp. 267f. On the narrator's mother's apathy caused by the confrontation with terror, see also Nb II, p. 792.
- ³² *Ibid.*, pp. 15f.
- ³³ R 1, pp. 182f.
- ³⁴ ÄdW III, p. 135. On the narrator's mother's prescience, see also Nb II, pp. 763, 782, 793, 808, 855.
- ³⁵ ÄdW III, p. 19. On the "unspeakability" of the genocide, see *ibid.*, pp. 32, 148f.
- ³⁶ Nb II, p. 790.
- ³⁷ See the remarks on the second volume of ÄdW above.
- ³⁸ The speechlessness and shock of witnesses in the face of horror is apparent in Brueghel's painting "The Massacre of the Innocents at Bethlehem".
- ³⁹ ÄdW III, pp. 28, 31. In regard to Boye and her early error in cheering Nazism, Christa Bürger writes: "This alone, the fact that it also recognizes the suffering of those who had been seduced, indicates the importance of mourning in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*" (Christa Bürger, "Arbeit an der Geschichte", in Karl Heinz Bohrer (ed.), *Mythos und Moderne: Begriff und Bild einer Rekonstruktion*, Frankfurt 1983, pp. 503). On the relation between Karin Boye and the narrator's mother, see Carol Poore, "Mother Earth, Melancholia, and Mnemosyne: Women in Peter Weiss's 'Die Ästhetik des Widerstands'", *The German Quarterly*, vol. 58:1, Winter 1985, pp. 73f., 81, and Manon Delisle, *Weltuntergang ohne Ende: Ikonographie und Inszenierung der Katastrophe bei Christa Wolf; Peter Weiss und Hans Magnus Enzensberger*, Würzburg 2001, pp. 155ff.
- ⁴⁰ ÄdW III, p. 231. The full passage reads: "For this parting [i.e. from loved ones] there was no consolation. And at this parting, no fault, no guilt could endure. Only the pain remained."
- ⁴¹ ÄdW III, pp. 265f.
- ⁴² ÄdW III, p. 223. On the stone memorial plaque and its mnestic function, see Alexander Honold, "Das Gedächtnis der Bilder: Zur Ästhetik der Memoria bei Peter Weiss", in Alexander Honold & Ulrich Schreiber (eds.), *Die Bilderwelt des Peter Weiss*, Hamburg 1995, pp. 107f. On the significance of Lotte Bischoff as a conservator of memories, see Dietmar Ebert, "Die 'Divina Commedia' in der Ästhetik des Widerstands: Eine neue Kultur an der Grenzscheide zweier Epochen?", in Internationale Peter-Weiss-Gesellschaft (ed.), *Ästhetik, Revolte und Widerstand im Werk von Peter Weiss*, p. 92. On the importance of names and lists of names in ÄdW, see Marita Meyer, op. cit., p. 31; Stephan Meyer, *Kunst als Widerstand: Zum Verhältnis von Erzählen und ästhetischer Reflexion in Peter Weiss' "Die Ästhetik des Widerstands"*, Tübingen 1989, pp. 195-198; Karen Hvidtfeldt Madsen, *Widerstand als Ästhetik: Peter Weiss und Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, Wiesbaden 2003, pp. 166-169; Jörg Drews, "'Echte Trauer: Was ist das?' Die Namenlosen, die Namhaften und die Unnennbaren in Peter Weiss' Die Ästhetik des Widerstands", in *Protokolle*, vol. 1, 1987, pp. 107-113, 121, 124f.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 71. On Mnemosyne, the "mother of the arts", see ÄdW I, p. 77; ÄdW III, p. 134.
- ⁴⁴ The following statement by the narrator illustrates how oppressive the memories of the Shoah are for the narrator's mother, and how different these memories are from "ordinary" life experiences: "[M]y mother drifted through images that were unable to elicit from her even a sound of dismay, so remote was she from the memory of ordinary things" (ÄdW III, p. 16).
- ⁴⁵ Benjamin develops his historical definition of "memory" in his theses on history, and in particular in Thesis VI on page 695 (Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte", in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, I:2, Frankfurt 1974, pp. 691-704). See also the essay "Erinnern" by Detlev Schöttker, in Michael Opitz & Erdmut Wizisla (eds.), *Benjamins Begriffe*, Frankfurt 2000, pp. 206-298.
- ⁴⁶ "Zwischen Pergamon und Plötzensee, oder Die andere Darstellung der Verläufe: Peter Weiss im Gespräch mit Burkhardt Lindner, Mai 1981", in Rainer Gerlach & Matthias Richter (eds.), *Peter Weiss im Gespräch*, Frankfurt 1986, p. 279.
- ⁴⁷ Note that this identification is a literary, fictional one, not the emergence of a Jewish consciousness. As Irene Heidelberger-Leonard writes, it cannot be called an "act of his own choice" in the direction of Judaism, for Weiss had excluded the possibility of a Jewish identification since his text "Meine Ortschaft". In view of Weiss's forsaken Jewish identification, the narrator's mother is not an alter ego of the author; she does not function as a proxy (cf. Irene Heidelberger-Leonard, "Peter Weiss und sein Judentum: Die 'Ermittlung', die ihrer Ermittlung harrt", in Michael Hofmann et al. (eds.), *Peter Weiss Jahrbuch*, vol. 11, 2002, p. 48).
- ⁴⁸ ÄdW III, pp. 12f., 55, 144, 197, 229, 232, 237. Berthold Brunner sees the "regular arrangements of the camps and their barracks" in Angkor Wat as architecturally related to the Nazi concentration camps: in his opinion, the parallel is based on a totality that is inherent in the two systems (Berthold Brunner, *Der Herakles/Stahlmann-Komplex in Peter Weiss' Ästhetik des Widerstands*, St. Ingbert 1999, pp. 364f).
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 240, 244.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16f.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 14. On foreign attitudes towards the anti-Semitism that was dominant in the Third Reich, see Nb II, p. 806.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.* The numbering system of the Nazis is reflected even in the dressing rooms before the gas chambers: "Outside, numbered benches, for taking off their clothes and shoes" (*ibid.*, 120).
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118. The "identifying sign over his heart" (*Merkmal über dem Herzen*) refers to the yellow star that Jews were required to wear.
- ⁵⁸ Michael-Joachim Kanning characterizes the narrator's mother too as one of the living dead. In regard to her physical condition she may well be so described, yet her mental state is by no means comparable with the that of Heilmann or the other Plötzensee prisoners sentenced to death since, overwhelmed by the experience of death in the genocide carried out against the Jewish, she has no will to resist death. Her voluntary acceptance of the Jewish fate, which was not assigned to her, also distinguishes her from the Holocaust victims (Michael-Joachim Kanning, "Das Todesmotiv in der Ästhetik des Widerstands von Peter Weiss", in Internationale Peter-Weiss-Gesellschaft (ed.), *Ästhetik, Revolte und Widerstand im Werk von Peter Weiss*, pp. 195-199).
- ⁵⁹ Nb II, p. 806. The entry closes with the prahse: "were already

living corpses" (*ibid.*).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* In another passage, Weiss again emphasizes Boye's ignorance of the Nazis' plans for racial annihilation (*ibid.*, p. 31).

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 119f. Weiss has his first-person narrator state just a few pages later that the reports about the victims' agony are almost unbearable (*ibid.*, p. 125). Christian Bommert explains the "paralyzing" effect of Nyman's report on the narrator's mother (Christian Bommert, "Die komplementären Erkenntniskräfte Verstand und Phantasie (ratio und imaginatio)", *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift*, Vol. 36:3, 1987, p. 371 [Alltag-Kunst-Proletarische Subjektwerdung, Kolloquium über "Die Ästhetik des Widerstands", anlässlich des 70. Geburtstages von Peter Weiss, 11./12. Juni 1986 an der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena]).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* See also Nb II, p. 889.

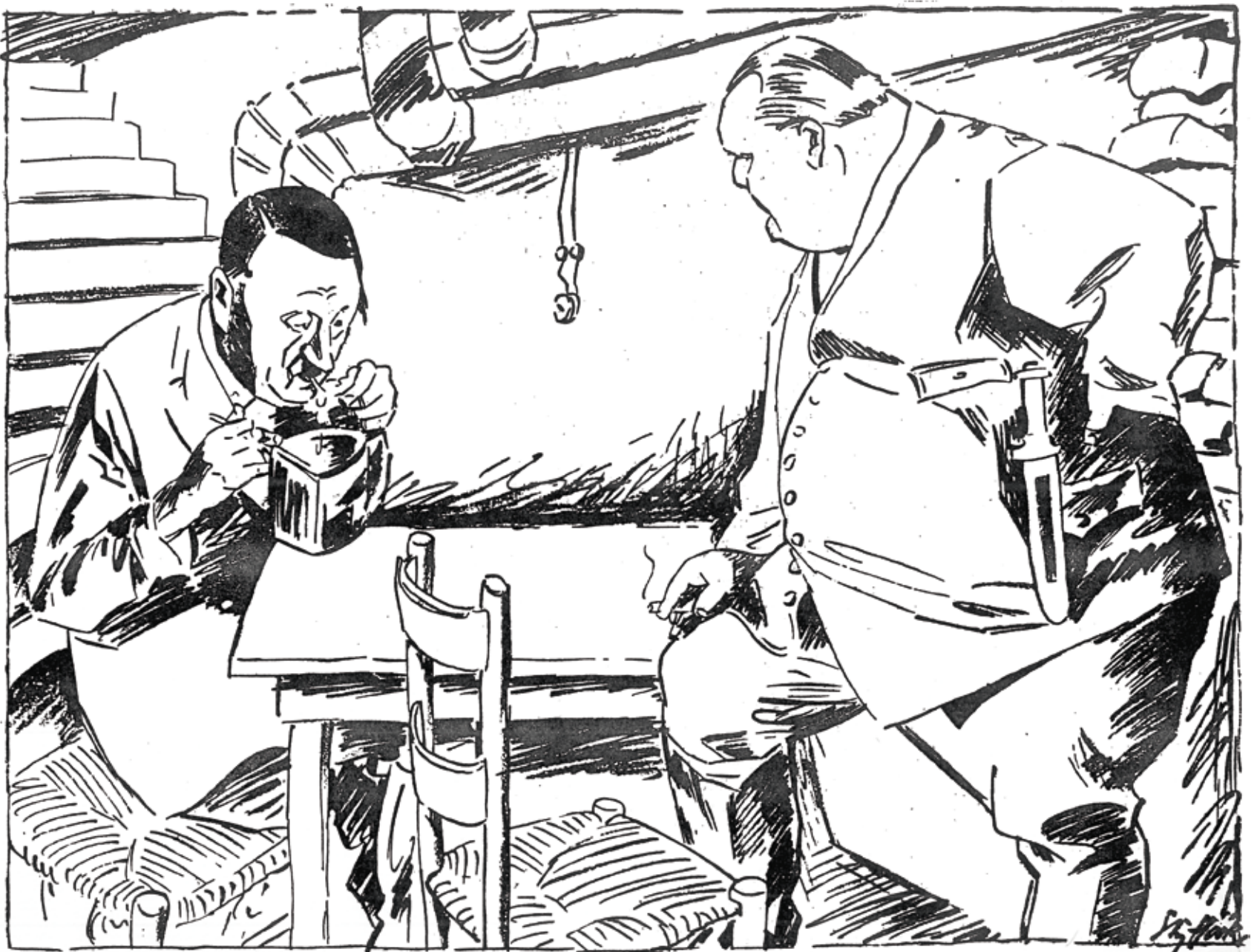
⁶⁷ For Weiss, commemoration of the dead is closely connected with his guilt complex. He invokes the dead in his literary works in order to encounter them and, if possible, to ask them for pardon. On the reconstruction of the dead in literature, see Marita Meyer, op. cit, p. 90.

⁶⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Nach Auschwitz: Essays und Kommentare*, vol. 1, Berlin 1989, p. 142.



RAGNVALD BLIX. THE CARTOONIST WHO CHALLENGED HITLER

BY RIKKE PETTERSSON



“**B**lix’s drawings show how clearly people overseas could see behind the façade of the Third Reich. They reveal the official propaganda of Nazi Germany”, wrote Dr. Wieland König, former curator of the Dusseldorf City Museum, in connection with a Blix exhibition in 1986.

Ragnvald Blix was born in Christiania, now Oslo, in 1882. His father Elias Blix was a liberal church minister in the liberal government of Johan Sverdrup, a professor of Hebrew, and an author of hymns.

From an early age, Blix was able to see the antagonisms in society and took his gentle, right-minded father’s side against conservative hypocrisy. By the age of twelve, he had already shown evidence of his talent and published a cartoon magazine he called *Peik*, which featured caricatures of teachers and school-mates. Three years later, he and his best friend Einar Skavlan, later editor-in-chief of *Dagbladet*, published *Brage*, a magazine whose motto was “to criticize and to mock”, written by Skavlan and illustrated by Blix.

After graduating from high school, he became the editor of a Norwegian satire magazine, *Tyrihans*, succeeding Olaf Gulbransson, who had just emigrated to Munich to draw for the world-renowned German satire magazine *Simplicissimus*.

One year later, Blix left for Paris, where he made contact with the Scandinavian artists’ colony, drew cartoons of them, and published *Karikaturer: Nordiske Forfattere* [Cartoons: Nordic authors], Copenhagen 1904. The cartoons caused quite a sensation. Danish writer Herman Bang never forgave him; Georg Brandes was offended at first, but he and Blix later became good friends. He wrote about Blix’s drawing style: “His lines appeal to the eye because the man has the ability, unusual for a cartoonist, of being able to draw. The drawings are amusing because they are witty without the usual gross exaggerations used so that the semi-educated will understand.” In and of itself, the satanic cartoon of Brandes is a modern breakthrough in cartoon art. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson thought the other cartoons were good, but that the one of him was poor. Blix replied: “That’s what everybody else says.”

Blix stayed in Paris and worked for French periodicals like *Le Rire*, *L’Assiette au Beurre*, and the daily newspaper *Le Journal*, which put him on permanent staff, a huge honor for a twenty-two year-old cartoonist from Norway. In a profile interview written by Christian Krogh for the Norwegian newspaper *Verdens Gang* in 1905, Blix declares his manifesto: “To be a good cartoonist, you have to be cold as ice in the face of all ideas and all persons. Sympathies and antipathies do not exist. First and foremost, you must have no respect for authority, tradition, or anything else in Heaven or on Earth, or even for anything in Hell.”

This was the golden age of French satire and cartooning, typified by cartoonists such as Jean Louis Forain, Theophile Steinlen, and Caran d’Ache. Blix outdid them all in disrespect by making the first caricature of the Mona Lisa, long before Salvador Dalí. The drawing was exhibited at the “Salon des Indépendants” in 1905 along with several other of his restatements of works hanging in the Louvre, including Rembrandt’s “Saskia” and David’s “Madame Récamier”. The irreverent cartoons elicited enormous public attention.

There were tumults in front of the drawings and people howled with laughter. Blix wrote: “I didn’t actually set out to be a comedian. But Rousseau, who was also exhibiting, gave me a friendly pat on the back. He said ‘People stand and smile at my paintings too, and that’s worse, because that wasn’t my intention.’” All of Paris was talking about the young satirist from Norway.

The editors of *Simplicissimus* discovered the cartoons and published a great many of them. Mark Twain saw them and asked the magazine to keep publishing the Louvre cartoons, whereupon Blix was immediately offered a job at *Simplicissimus*. In the meanwhile, Mark Twain tried to persuade Blix to come to America. He sent a photograph of his house in Connecticut captioned “My house is your castle”, and in a later letter he wrote: “I have always had an aversion for Mona Lisa before, but this one is just a darling.”

America or Germany? Blix asked Forain what he should do. Forain told him that 95 percent of French cartoonists would envy him if he went to *Simplicissimus*. And Blix himself remarked: “I thought about it so long that M. T. died. And so I ended up at *Simplicissimus*. Mark Twain gave me enormous confidence and the prestige required to be acknowledged by the world-famous authors and artists who sat in Munich like popes and allowed no one new inside the walls. I refer to the poet Ludwig Thoma, the editor, and the members of the staff: Frank Wedekind, the brothers Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Herman Hesse, and others.” Blix was at that time only 26 years old. Some of the other artists working at *Simplicissimus* were Eduard Thöny, Heinrich Zille, Käthe Kollwitz, Olaf Gulbransson, and Thomas Theodor Heine. As the new century began, *Simplicissimus* was at the height of its power. A Chinese diplomat visiting Germany at the time wrote after arriving home that there were two major powers in contemporary Germany, the Kaiser and *Simplicissimus*. Blix stayed with *Simplicissimus* for ten years, which is where he received his training in the strategy and techniques of satire. In the early years, he illustrated Ludwig Thoma’s texts: proletarian and petty bourgeois vignettes written in authentic Bavarian. His early work was impressionistic, in muted colors, with social motifs in the manner of Heinrich Zille. But he later went over to a pure line, à la Thomas Theodor Heine, accentuated by a bright color field, a form determined by the limits of printing. He also followed Heine’s political path; systematically and with pinpoint accuracy, they both targeted the ludicrous, hypocritical, and vulgar Kaiser Wilhelm II, and this at a time when the upper classes of European society considered it an honor to entertain the Kaiser and his court. Blix, a Norwegian citizen, was threatened with deportation several times and Heine had already served six months in prison in 1898 for lese-majesty.

Blix drew a cartoon in 1912 called “Der kranke Zarewitsch” in which Death is reaching out for the son, who is hiding behind his father’s back. The Tsar asks: “What is your business here? Haven’t I given you enough to do in the Balkans?” The cartoon was published on the cover shortly after Russia had provoked the Balkan countries into a sanguinary war, which led to the banning of *Simplicissimus* in Russia. This was a considerable financial loss to the magazine, “but I



1905.



Vor dem Ziel. February 12, 1918.



Ragnvald Blix was both a cartoonist and an author.

got a pay raise”, Blix related.

“The fight against German militarism was a common theme running through the magazine. When the First World War came, Heine soon wanted to shut it down, but Thoma protested. He got the others behind him; they all had to make a living, of course. And so *Simplicissimus* went from being an international organ for the struggle against authorities to a national trumpet of war and they believed for a long time that Germany would be victorious”, wrote Blix. But as the fortunes of war turned, the old pacifist attitude rose again. Blix drew “Death in Flanders” in 1917. The cartoon shows Death sitting on a pile of fallen soldiers, his head buried in his hands. He says: “Stop it people – I can’t take it anymore.”

Early in 1918, Blix was assigned to illustrate the cover of *Simplicissimus*: “Der Deutsche Michel is climbing a mountain – now he had only one last grasp to reach the top. But I did not have the rock-solid faith of the Germans, so I was cautious and drew the peak as unattainable. The drawing was called “Vor dem Ziel” [Almost to the top] and was published on February 12, 1918. There was no time to draw another one, and the magazine could not be published with a blank cover. But I had never before, nor have I since, had less success with a drawing”, wrote Blix.

Blix went to Norway the following year and started a satire magazine called *Exlex* (“Lawless”) that was meant to be a Nordic equivalent of *Simplicissimus*. The first issue was published on February 11, 1919. The head office was in Kristiania. Nordic artists including Anton Hansen, Robert Storm Petersen, Adolf Hallman, Oscar Jacobsson, and Gustav Ljunggren contributed. Literary contributors included Knut Hamsun, Georg Brandes, Johannes V. Jensen, Martin Andersen Nexö, Ludvig Nordström, and Erik Lindorm. Danish poet Tom Kristensen debuted in *Exlex*, which also published poets such as Herman Wildenvey and Emil Bønnelycke. Texts were published in the original languages. Blix was the editor and usually illustrated the cover, which, like *Simplicissimus*, was a full page in color, with a clean outline, bright color field, and Blix’s own captions. “Never before or since has any Nordic publication gathered so many talented, not to say out-and-out gifted, contributors; it simply had to go wrong”, wrote Arve Solstad, former editor-in-chief of *Dagbladet*.

One year later, the head office moved to Copenhagen. Thomas Theodor Heine wrote that *Exlex* was one of the best magazines of its kind in the entire world, and that Blix had developed into one of the truly great cartoon satirists.

One of the most memorable cartoons in *Exlex* is “Revolution?” which shows Norwegians fighting about how the word revolution should be spelled. Another is “When the Socialists Come”, which refers to the days when Sweden’s first Social Democratic cabinet ministers were to take office. The cartoon shows the interior of the Royal Palace in Stockholm with King Gustaf in the foreground. A servant in uniform decorated with gold announces the arrival of the new cabinet members and asks whether he should admit them. Queen Victoria answers: “Certainly, but through the servant’s entrance!” Blix’s attitude toward politicians is clear in “The Agreement”. In this cartoon, the Devil is sitting

BLIX WAS ONE OF THE FIRST FOREIGNERS TO LITERALLY CATCH SIGHT OF HITLER. THIS HAPPENED IN MUNICH IN 1922.

in Hell waiting for guests to arrive from Earth. He says: “Here come the politicians, so I suppose there is peace on Earth again.”

But *Exlex* was forced to shut down after two years; there was not a large enough audience in Scandinavia able to appreciate what people like Blix and Heine were trying to do with their magazines: sharp, personalized criticism of everything and everybody.

Sigurd Hoel asked Kyrre Grepp, chairman of the Norwegian Labor Party, to secure the publication of *Exlex*. Grepp responded: “Blix is a great cartoonist and he is an agitator. But he refuses to take direction, and if we are going to put money into something, we want to make decisions as well.”

After *Exlex* folded, Heine wanted Blix back at *Simplicissimus*. But problems acquiring a residence permit and housing stood in the way and Blix started working mainly for three Nordic daily newspapers: *Dagbladet* in Norway, *Berlingske Tidende* in Denmark, and *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning (GHT)* in Sweden. He delivered one captioned cartoon per week for the rest of his life, except during the war years, when he worked only for *GHT* under a pseudonym.

Blix was one of the first foreigners to literally catch sight of Hitler. This happened in Munich in 1922, the year before the failed coup. Blix describes it thus: “An Austrian housepainter appeared in Munich. Since the posters said that Jews were not allowed, I got curious and went there one day. I was received with tremendous courtesy and a couple of uniformed gentlemen led me through the full auditorium up to the platform so that I could sit, so to speak, at the master’s feet. Finally, he arrived. An ordinary, unhealthy looking man with a brachycephalic head atop a dirty raincoat, which he kept on during the talk. The hairy bit under the nose seemed to be rooted to the upper teeth, only the lower jaw was in motion. It was as if he wanted to emphasize an underbite he did not have. A charmer he wasn’t. And he was not a good speaker either. He stood with his nose in the script and read aloud the entire time. At any rate, he was not the illiterate I at first took him to be.” The editors of *Simplicissimus* wondered whether there might be any point in drawing Hitler, but they concluded that they could not get involved with those kinds of “trifles”. However, that changed a few years later, when Blix had serious reason to address the “trifle” and began to attack Nazism in Germany. Hitler was an obvious target, just like Mussolini and Fascism in Italy. Nor were the Communists ignored: Lenin and Stalin were included in the portrait gallery. The war in Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War, and the advance of Fascism, the passivity of England and France – there was plenty of material.

On February 3, 1933, three days after Hitler took power, *GHT* editor-in-chief Torgny Segerstedt referred in his “Idag” [Today] column to a Blix cartoon called

“Caricature of Mussolini” published a few months earlier. It shows Mussolini standing in the midst of a beautiful Italian landscape with a severe, somewhat thoughtful expression on his face, saying: “I can certainly enjoy a good caricature of myself, but Hitler is an insult.” Segerstedt wrote at the end of the column, “Forcing global politics and the global press to have anything to do with this figure is unforgivable. Mr. Hitler is an insult.” On February 7, Segerstedt got a telegram from Reichsminister Hermann Göring which included the following: “I object most strenuously to the remarks about the German Chancellor published in your newspaper on the third of February. As a true friend to the people of Sweden, I see in such filthy statements a serious risk to a warm and friendly relationship between the two peoples”. Torgny Segerstedt remarked on February 8: “The amiable feelings of the Swedish people for the German people as a whole will probably withstand even the rigors of the darkness that has covered that unhappy land. We hope that it will, without excessive trials, be able to raise itself from its humiliation. Nor does anyone blame the German people for the peculiar behaviors with which these temporary leaders are diverting the world. We do not take these gentlemen seriously. However, we consider it a grave matter that they are exercising the powers of government in Germany.”

Blix’s cartoon “Germany Then and Now” was published on March 11, 1933 in *GHT*. The cartoon is split down the middle. In the left-hand panel, there is a row of portraits of Goethe, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Schiller with the caption: “Das Volk der Denker und Dichter”. The right-hand panel shows an executioner holding a basket laden with decapitated heads. One arm bearing a swastika on the sleeve is reaching out and strangling a man, another arm is shooting a man in the head, while in the background people are being arrested by police wearing swastika armbands. The caption reads, “Das Volk der Henker und Richter”. The cartoon elicited diplomatic protests from the Nazi regime. When it was to be printed in *Berlingske Tidende*, the presses were stopped after a couple of thousand copies had been printed. This cost the newspaper 6,000 kronor and Blix 100 kronor.

There were once again diplomatic protests from Germany on July 8, 1933, this time provoked by Blix’s cartoon “Captain Hindenburg” in *GHT*. Dressed in a captain’s uniform, Hindenburg is sitting on a ship in a storm. Hitler is at the helm and Göring and Goebbels are gripping the compass. The caption reads: “We dare not throw him overboard. If it all goes wrong, we have to have somebody left who can be the last man on the bridge.” When Hindenburg died on August 2, 1934 and Hitler was proclaimed his political heir by the Nazis, Torgny Segerstedt stated in both the editorial and his column that the “last will and testament” was an arrangement that would enable the Nazis to feed on the former president’s national authority. A ban on *GHT* in the German Reich was issued effective August 14, 1934, to February 15, 1935. The ban was extended on February 14, 1935, and was not lifted until May 1945.

In the meantime, Blix continued ridiculing fascism, Nazism, and communism in his satirical cartoons. By 1936, his freedom had already been restricted in *Berlingske Tidende*. Of the complaints received from

Italy and Germany, 99 percent had to do with Blix's cartoons.

However, there were no objections to Blix's "Stalin's Conspirators", also from 1935, which shows Stalin at the dinner table with his wife and children, with the following dialog: "All of my best friends are dead for my sake." "Are you sure about that?" "Of course, I hanged them myself!"

Blix's cartoons provide a variety of glimpses into German society under Nazism, such as "German University" from 1933, in which we see two older professors discussing who the policeman with a swastika around his arm might be: "What is the policeman doing here?" "Hush, that's the one who took over Einstein's professorship." In another, "New German Court" from 1934, the dialog is: "Are you not a jurist either, my dear colleague?" "No, no, I have no inhibitions of any kind." And then there is "Nazi Growth" from 1933, in which Goebbels is talking to a group of women, who are listening with downcast eyes: "We ask of you women only one thing, that you make more of us!" "The Revolver President" was published on August 11, 1934. In this cartoon, the people are saluting with both arms when they catch sight of Hitler, who wonders: "What is this? People have started to raise both arms when I go out in public." The cartoon alludes to the terror Hitler struck into the hearts of the people after the purge within his own party, when he had ordered the execution of a large number of former SA leaders accused of plotting against him.

Blix was dismissed from the staff of *Berlingske Tidende* in January 1940. His last drawing in *Dagbladet* was published on April 6, 1940, before the occupation of Norway.

Blix and his wife managed to get themselves to Gothenburg by their own devices a couple of weeks later. When Blix asked whether he would still be allowed to draw for *GHT*, Segerstedt answered: "Yes, please do; just make sure I don't end up in prison!"

On November 7, 1940, Blix wrote to Segerstedt: "Here is the first cartoon, which I hope can be printed in the Saturday edition. Since, as a foreigner, I am not permitted to meddle in politics in Sweden, I have changed my name and am calling myself Stig Höök. I hope it will not betray me as disgracefully as the cartoons do!" He had found the name in an obituary. Blix adapted to the prevailing situation and often submitted two or three captions to choose among. In the first cartoon, called "Quislings on the Hunt", three men of the "hird", the political militia of the Norwegian Nazi Party, are walking abreast, jackbooted and with swastikas on their sleeves, looking rather sheepish. They say: "Our miserable democracy has kept Norway down in such poverty and destitution that even the Jews have stayed away – there is actually not as much as a single Jew to exterminate here!"

Nazi complaints about the Swedish press, and especially *GHT*, came to a head in 1942. The Coun-

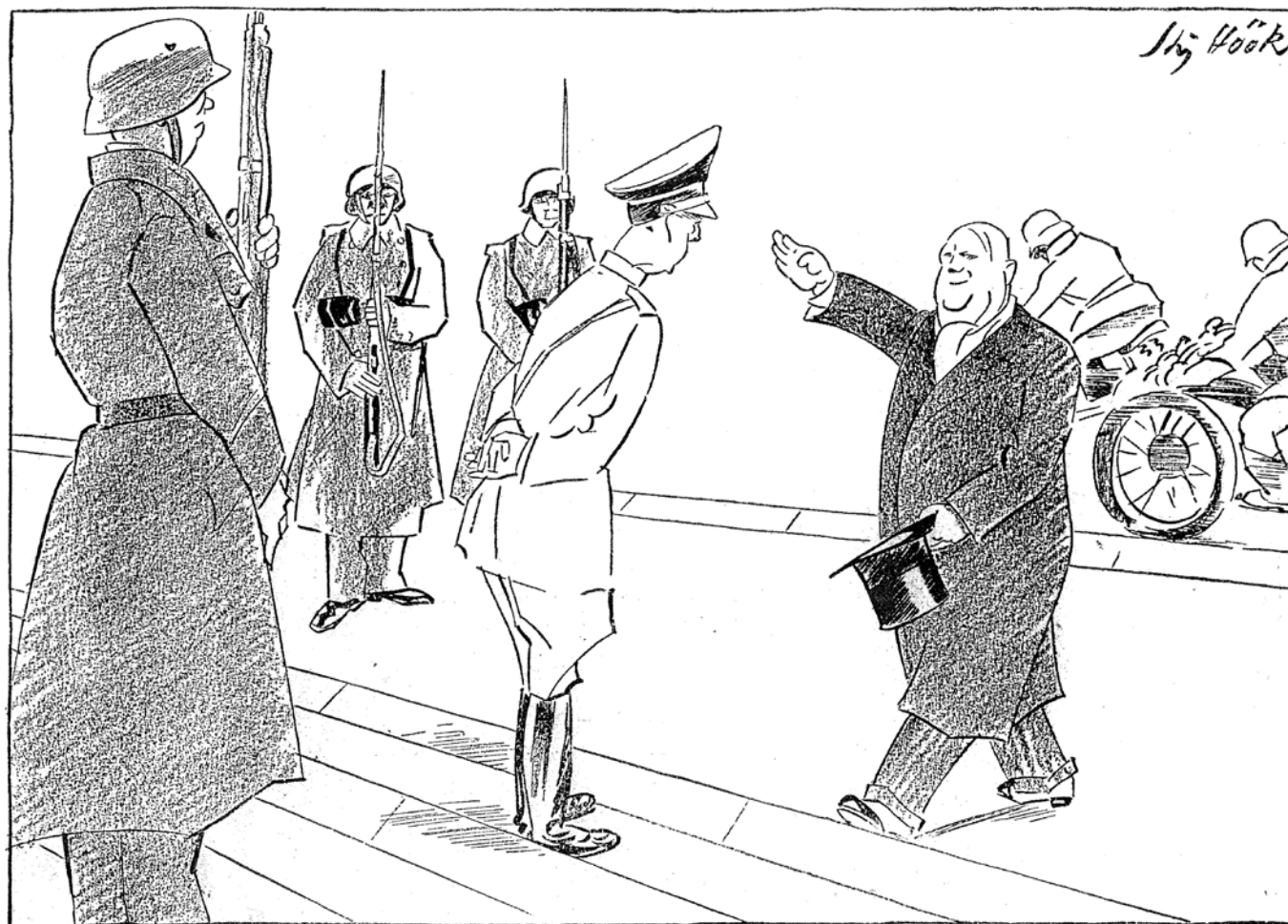
selor of Legation, Mr. Dankwort, the German chargé d'affaires, reported in a telegram to Berlin on May 23 that the Swedish foreign minister Christian Günther had informed him that the hostage systems, that is, a number of new death sentences pronounced upon Norwegians taken as hostages, had caused rising concern among the Swedish people and damaged public opinion of Germany.

In Stig Höök's cartoon "The Hostages Shall Be Executed", a group of Norwegians are lined up facing several rifles. Death stands in the foreground wearing a uniform coat and preparing to put on a blindfold. He says: "If I must manage this as well, I will have to wear a blindfold!" It was published in *GHT* on July 18, 1942. The German minister in Stockholm, the Prince of Wied, immediately lodged a protest with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and demanded that the edition be recalled. A couple of months later, the German legation requested that *GHT* be confiscated entirely. However, this did not happen.

"Quisling's Christmas Boat" was published on December 5, 1942. It shows Quisling sitting and writing a letter. Through the window can be seen several members of the "hird" hitting people over the head with batons and carrying them off to a large boat. The caption reads: "I am sending you a boatload of Jews as a bit of encouragement in these ill-fated times. I hope it arrives before the Christmas tree is lit ...". The drawing alludes to the persecution of Jews in Norway, which culminated in the monstrous deportation by boat to



Stalin's conspirators. 1935.
– All my best friends are dead for my sake.
– Are you sure about that?
– Of course, I hanged them myself!



Audience with Hitler. 1944.

— I am Quisling!
— And your name, Sir?

Note. Vidkun Quisling (1887–1945) was a Norwegian politician who began his career as an army officer. As assistant to Fridtjof Nansen, he organized the international relief efforts in the newly born Soviet Russia. In the years 1931–1933, he was defense minister in the Norwegian Agrarian Party government. The following year he founded his own party, Nasjonal Samling (“National Gathering”), which would go on to welcome the German occupation of Norway from 1940 to 1945. During parts of the occupation, he was also prime minister. After the occupation, he was sentenced to death and executed as a traitor. “Quisling” has since become an internationally recognized word for traitor. (The play on words in the caption is cleaner in Scandinavian languages, which, unlike English, do not require an article before many nouns.)

German concentration camps in November 1942.

Blix’s good friend Thomas Theodor Heine was Jewish and had fled Munich for Prague in 1933 after his colleagues at *Simplicissimus* had repudiated him and claimed that it was Heine the Jew who had misled them into taking their critical attitude towards Hitler. Heine managed to flee to Norway in 1939 and was rescued from the persecution in December 1942 and taken to Sweden. He was received in Stockholm by Blix, who had organized the flight with the assistance of Einar Skavlan, a Norwegian resistance organization, and Christian Günther.

Criticism of German policy continued in *GHT* despite various attempts to quash it. As early as 1940, King Gustaf V had in a personal conversation tried to persuade Torgny Segerstedt to stop publishing articles and illustrations critical of Germany, but to no avail. For the duration of the war, *GHT* continued reporting freely about the war, publishing Stig Höök’s cartoons, and writing articles about the Swedish appeasement policy, despite constant threats of confiscation.

Blix remained in Sweden throughout the war. He lived in Stockholm during the winters and at Guö in the province of Blekinge during the summers. His cartoons were distributed by illegal channels to the resistance movements in Denmark and Norway. *Håndslag: Fakta og orientering for nordmenn* [Handshake: Facts and orientation for Norwegians], a newspaper in a small format the size of a hand, was one of the most popular underground periodicals in Norway. It was

started in May 1942 by the Stockholm office of *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*. The first issue came out on June 1, with Swedish writer Eyvind Johnson the publisher of record. Most of the articles were written by the Norwegian journalist and author Torolf Elster, and Willy Brandt, who later became Federal Chancellor of Germany. Stig Höök usually illustrated the cover. The last edition was published in June 1945. Circulation was sometimes as high as 16,000 copies, which were distributed in virtually every corner of Norway. The people who distributed the paper often had the Gestapo hot on their heels and were sometimes caught red-handed, with very grave consequences. “All told, there might have been about a million Blix cartoons spread in Norway during these years. He was not paid a penny for them, but only tremendous satisfaction”, wrote Torolf Elster forty years later.

The periodical *I dag: Fakta og orientering for danskere* [Today: Facts and orientation for Danes] was sent illegally to the Danish Resistance. Bengt G. Carlsson was the editor and publisher of record. Torgny Segerstedt wrote many of the articles and Blix illustrated the cover.

Two selections of Stig Höök’s *GHT* cartoons were issued as albums in Sweden: *Stig Höök Anno 1941* (after Judas) published by Axel Holmström, and *Stig Höök 1942–44* published by Bonniers. The 1942–44 album was published in May 1944 and was very favorably reviewed in about twenty Swedish newspapers, even though the war was not over. A few of the

headings were: “It is not the war in pictures ... but the reality behind the war”, “An album about the great madness”, and “The Segerstedt of the Drawing Pencil”. Under the heading “Political Propagandist”, one reviewer wrote “... Stig Höök has been and remains one of the most dangerous enemies of Nazism in this country”.

The 1942–44 Stig Höök album was published illegally in Denmark. It was printed on cheap paper and the profits went to the Liberation Movement. Stig Höök’s perhaps most famous cartoon, “Audience with Hitler”, was printed in that edition. It was previously published in *GHT* on January 29, 1944. It shows Quisling on his way in to see Hitler, his arm lifted in a Nazi salute. He says “I am Quisling!” and the guard asks “And your name, Sir??”

Through his weekly cartoons in *GHT*, the illegal publications in *Håndslag* and *IDag* and the Stig Höök albums, Blix became one of the most famous and significant shapers of opinion in Sweden during the war and an aid and inspiration to the resistance movements in Norway and Denmark.

On the 11th of May, 1945, a Stig Höök 1942–1944 cartoon album was returned to Blix by post from Denmark, bearing the following inscription:

Göteborg, May 8, 1945

Dear Stig Höök,
My son Ib would have been so happy to meet you in order to personally thank you

for the invaluable help you gave the Liberation Movement in Denmark by allowing the “1944 paper” to publish your magnificent, powerful pictures, which raised a great deal of money, all of which went to the Liberation Movement. He fell to a German bullet on the 23rd of April.
Yours truly,
Ernst Christensen

The first cartoon once again signed Blix after the 1945 surrender was printed in *GHT* on May 19, 1945. It has neither title nor caption. Himmler and Death are standing next to each other, Death’s arm draped over Himmler’s shoulder. Both are wearing uniform caps. On Himmler’s cap, there is a badge with a death’s head. Death, whose cap bears the badge of Himmler, looks at Himmler with a worried expression. The cartoon later became known as “Himmler and Death”. Another unforgettable cartoon is the one showing Göring during the Nuremberg Trials wearing a pair of old, patched trousers and a collarless shirt, trying to wriggle out of the verdict to the very last, when the judge asks: “And perhaps you were not a Nazi either?” The answer is: “It must have been while I was under the influence of morphine; now that I am off the stuff, I am almost liberal.”

In his description of the German people, Blix was not led to believe that a German was the same thing as a Nazi. Blix points out the suffering and need of the German people. There is, for example, the cartoon of child soldiers at the end of the war being visited by Santa Claus, and the cartoon of bombed-out Berlin in which Goebbels comfortingly says: “Yes, yes, of course it is difficult. But we must rely on the Führer. He has promised to personally draw up the plans for the new Berlin.” He made the leaders comical, but never forgot they were dangerous. Goebbels, for example, whom he drew a great many times, was never depicted with a clubfoot, which he had, and never as shorter than he was. “Everything could be read in that face with its strained features. The dwarf who wanted to be a giant, the clubfoot who wanted revenge.” According to Norwegian writer Sigurd Hoel, Blix has only one contemporary competitor as a satirical cartoonist, David Low, but Low used coarser stuff. During the critical interwar years, he depicted Hitler and Goebbels as merely ridiculous; Blix never forgot their malevolence. Due to Blix’s political grounding as a cultural radical with a healthy, ingrained skepticism of every form of authoritarian government, he was able to keep a cool head, maintain the high standards of his contributions, and not allow himself to be impressed by the leading politicians of the world. He always saw the underlying causes.

Blix was both a cartoonist and author. “A lot of people ask me whether I write the captions myself. They might as well ask me if I do the drawings myself”, remarked Blix.

The drawing and the text are all of a piece. His simple lines are distinctive and precisely character-

istic. The drawing is pared down to the rudiments. The form of the artwork is determined by the limits of printing. The text, which is also distilled, quite often a subtly humorous line taken from an imagined context, completes the picture, takes it further. The likeness and the meaning are crystal clear. The text and the drawing as a whole are meant to entertain and to worry.

After the war, Blix and his Danish wife returned to Copenhagen and he continued delivering one captioned cartoon a week to *Dagbladet*, *Berlingske Tidende* and *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* until a couple of months before his death in May 1958.

His post-war cartoons are just as acerbic as before. He became one of our first atomic bomb protestors, a stance expressed in cartoons such as “Triumphs of Science” from 1948, in which Nils Bohr says to Einstein: “Don’t worry about the atomic bomb – it’s already obsolete”, or “Hydrogen Bomb” from 1950, in which President Truman is sitting and fishing and says: “No, no, I dare not take responsibility for the future”, and is answered “There won’t be one, Mr. President.” In “Adenauer’s Nightmare” from 1951, Blix addresses the return of former Nazis to the Federal Republic of Germany. Adenauer is lying in bed with the covers pulled up to his nose. Large, black rats with swastikas on their backs are climbing into bed with him. “Since the Americans have let them out of the

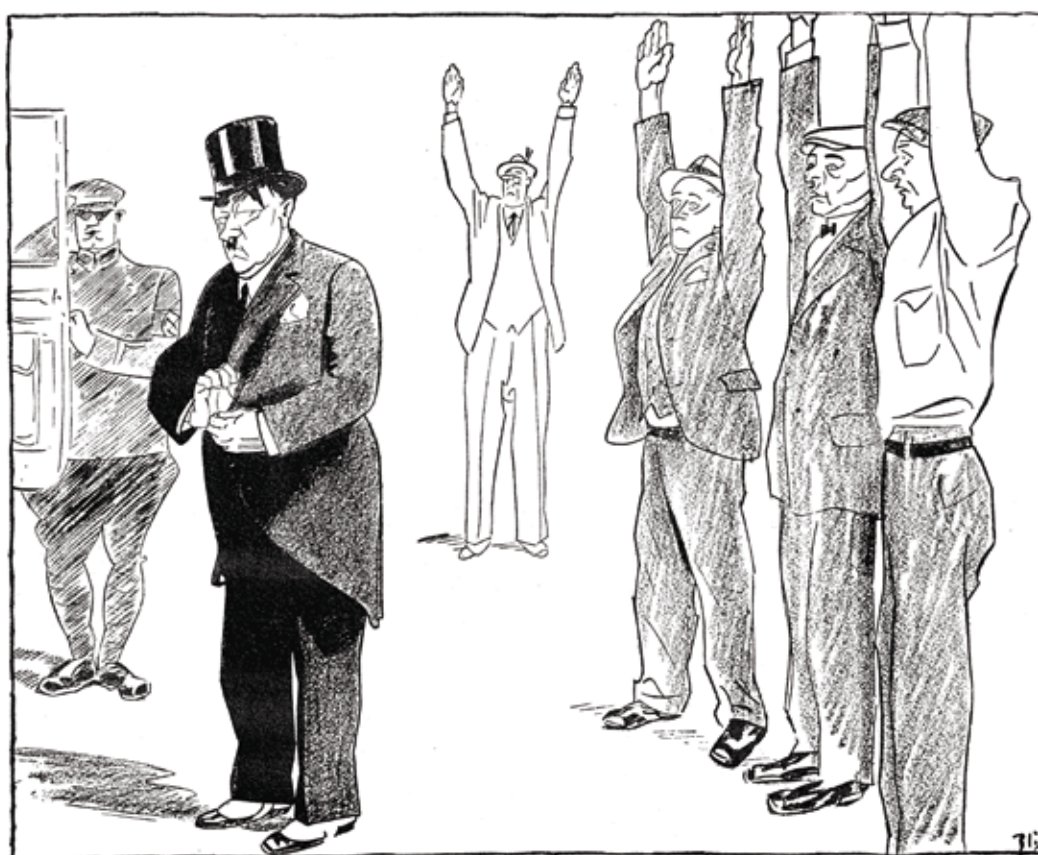
trap, I cannot as a good democrat reject them”, he says.

Blix received several honors for his work, such as King Christian X of Denmark’s Medal of Freedom, and the Norwegian state artists’ stipend. When the Norwegian Academy was founded, he was invited to be a member, as the only visual artist. His cartoons are in the collections of institutions including the Gothenburg Museum of Art, the Swedish National Museum, the Norwegian National Gallery in Oslo, the editorial offices of *Dagbladet* in Oslo, the National Gallery of Denmark in Copenhagen, the Dusseldorf City Museum, and the Munich City Museum. In recent years, they have been shown at exhibitions in several Scandinavian countries, Poland, and Germany. ✕

Note. References to this article can be found in the book where it was originally published, *Vilja frihet, motstå våldet* [Desiring freedom, resisting violence], Göteborg 2009 (Stiftelsen Torgny Segerstedts minne).

The Revolver President. 1934.

— What is this? People have started to raise both arms when I go out in public.



Into the reflected sheen of swivel chairs. Europeanness as a dichotomous experience

What hidden meaning exists in the designation “Land of the Setting Sun”?

Lars Dencik, professor of social psychology at Roskilde University, posed that question as moderator of an evening of discussion at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm on the theme “Who is European? – What is European?”.

The seminar was held in connection with an ongoing exhibition on Bruno Schulz and Franz Kafka at the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, co-arranged by groups including the Goethe Institute and the Jewish community in Stockholm. It was held two days after International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and actors read texts by Hannah Arendt, Schulz, and Kafka – three authors subjected to the horrors of Nazism who have, in the eyes of posterity, become intellectual Europeans par excellence – which illustrates how the Jewish experience is intertwined with the European experience.

THIS PART OF THE world, Europe, was called the “Land of the Setting Sun” (Ereb) in Akkadian, a dead Semitic language, and this might be regarded as an allusion to our dark heritage: colonialism, the concentration camps, the major wars, the terror of Stalinism – events and phenomena that in some cases are so recent that we cannot yet come to terms with them. Martin Pollack, author and former editor of *Der Spiegel*, spoke about his personal reckoning with the dark side of Europe. His father was head of the Gestapo in Linz, and the immediate family was full of dyed-in-the-wool Nazis.

“We Europeans have been shaped by violence, and I find it hard to believe, as with regard to the cruelties in the Balkans, that we can separate ourselves from it”, emphasized Swedish author Agneta Pleijel during her talk. “We have our rationalism, our engineering arts, our welfare states, and our belief in human rights – along with our other, malignant side. The European nature is dualistic.”

“To be a European is to house this sense of duality within us when it comes to language and identity, something Kafka and Schulz knew a lot about. To me, both are typical Europeans; both belonged to a minority during a period of destructive nationalism”, she said.



On stage: Martin Pollack, left, Agneta Pleijel, right.

“We tend to talk in exclusive terms about those who have no place in Europe. Those who are too fanatical, too cruel, and so on. But the evil side of the coin, the battlefields and Auschwitz, are also part of Europe”, Martin Pollack remarked. “When people come to us and we say they are not democratic enough or are too fanatical, we should be more generous.”

ACCORDING TO POLLACK, we often equate the EU and Europe. Even though we do include Norway and Switzerland, we do not do the same with the former Soviet republics: “We should not think of Europe as a closed fortress. I would like to see an open Europe that includes Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus.”

Karl Schlögel (interviewed in BW II:2), professor of Eastern European history at European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), also insisted on the view of a single Europe that incorporates even racism and colonialism.

He said, “I am convinced there will be no European self-awareness that does not embrace that experience. I hope there will be a public space where we can tell stories that are paradoxical, dichotomous, that we cannot figure out. We have to find a language for that experience.”

The question of who is European is a matter of identity, which makes it more difficult to answer than the other question of the evening: What is European? “Such questions usually come from someone else, which makes them discomfiting. Those who pose this

question have a tendency to answer the questions themselves”, said Richard Swartz, author and journalist.

I have heard from my mother – though I have never bothered to check it out – that my great-great-grandmother was a Russian Jew. I once mentioned this to a Jewish classmate. “Oh, then you are Jewish”, she said, and referred to the Mosaic laws that Jewish heritage is matrilineal. I explained that I had grown up without the slightest element of Jewishness and that if there ever had been anything like that in the generations before me, it had long ago fallen by the wayside. Since my father is from Ostrobothnia and I was a Finnish citizen until my late teens, I have also been told by Swedes that I am a Finn. Meanwhile, in Finland I am a “hurri” or “hurrare”, which is the derogatory term for Swedish-speaking Finns – a stranger who is constantly shouting “Hurray!” at odd times of the day. I think I am a very typical European.

Richard Swartz continued: “Seeking identity, whether in nationalist terms or not, has done more ill than good. We must try to find out who we are, but I would be more than happy if we defined our identity more in terms of democratic values than our roots and distinctive national character.”

The identification criteria we use –

often nationalist and sometimes downright racist – spill over into integration problems, not only when it comes to things like the deportation of Romany EU citizens from France, but also in how our communities are structured, with closed ethnic enclaves outside the city centers, and social discrimination.

“We complain that we have parallel societies in our countries. And we do so most vociferously when it comes to Muslims, many of whom arrived as guest workers in the seventies. We expected them to work for us and then go home, but things did not turn out as we planned”, said Martin Pollack.

★

The evening at the Royal Dramatic Theatre was itself an illustration of the divided Europe, of Fortress Europe. Identity-creating markers typical of the educated European upper middle class were everywhere. The vocabularies of the speakers, the classical music – Staffan Scheja played Beethoven’s last piano sonata and the Arietta Quartet played Anders Hillborg’s string quartet “The Koongsgaards Variations” – the leather swivel chairs on the stage reflected in the glossy black floor, the women in their patent leather court shoes, the men in their black jackets. The audience were eager conversationists and wine lovers with incomes presumably well above average.

The village deep in the Belarusian countryside, the ethnic enclaves in the suburbs, the favela outside Belgrade, felt strangely far away. Instead, yet another picture of the European dual nature emerged in the homogeneous audience’s agreement with the talk about the need for integration, borne up by the economic muscle required to build a welfare society – with the assistance of non-European guest workers and marginalized Europeans from the former Eastern Bloc. ✖

michael nyhaga
freelance journalist

A discriminated elite

Excerpts from an interview with Friedrich Dieckmann in *Lettre International* (90)

“You could read the story of that unfortunate job application in the magazine section of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* not long ago; there was also a reference to the research of the sociologist Raj Kollmorgen, who has evaluated investigations and also carried out his own into the extent to which Germans from the eastern states can be found among the German elite – that is, the leaders in politics, economics, law, culture, media, and administration. According to his findings, whereas they form about 17 percent of the population, only 5 percent are to be found among the elite of Germany as a whole, and 30 percent among the elite of the eastern part of Germany. That means that in the five former GDR states, 70 percent of all leadership positions are held by West German specialists – “Kader”, as they were called in the socialist state. Kollmorgen, who has been researching this topic for a long time, will soon publish a book that contains a complex account: it turns out that the East Germans in those delegation elites “which are selected by a combination of democratic delegation (election) and appointment” in the eastern states “are, at almost 90 percent, in the clear majority”. “In all other sectors”, according to Kollmorgen, “East Germans are in the minority, almost always making up between a quarter and a third of the total number”. His conclusion: “In pivotal areas of power in the Federal Republic – in politics, economics, and mass media – . . . it is evident that there is widespread exclusion of East Germans, even twenty years after the reunification process was begun”, and there is no sign of improvement. And why is this? According to Kollmorgen, “You have no way of knowing how trustworthy and effective someone is when nobody knows him, when he has neither an origin in the region, nor education, nor previous superiors and mentors in common with those who are making the appointments”; he doesn’t have “the biographical, communicative, and other customary characteristics of power”. There is no evil intent behind the bizarre disproportion; it just happens automatically, because elite groups tend to “reproduce themselves”, especially in Germany. In the GDR, one might add, that was planned; in the new Germany, as we know, it happens all on its own.

The eastern German states, which sometimes go by the name of East Ger-



Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin, playing Friedrich Schiller.

many, sometimes “new states”, as if it were not the case that all German states are very old, or were founded by the victorious powers after the war – this region that joined the rest of the country in 1990 has within just a few years been de-industrialized by a crazy economic policy, which resulted in the concurrent disappearance of its population through emigration and a drop in the birthrate; looking into the future, one can speak of prospective depopulation. All levels of management have come in from the West; this was encouraged, even provoked, by the imposition on the region of a completely new system of law. Six years ago, in an interview with the *Berliner Zeitung* on August 27,

2004, Wolfgang Schäuble, an important negotiator at the time, said that the way that happened was a mistake he was unable to prevent.

For this new structuring of management echelons in the eastern states sociologists coined the term “*Überschichtung*”, the creation of a higher stratum, analogous to the “*Unterschichtung*”, the creation of a lower stratum, used to designate the taking over of hard manual labor by European, then later Turkish, migrants. One can’t speak of “colonization”, a West German sociologist working in Dresden explained to me; colonial powers typically allowed the native elite to continue to work under their sovereignty, as long as the sovereignty

was recognized. In the case of German reunification, he said, this had happened in a different way, in a manner that was historically unique.

In 1990 Ralf Dahrendorf, the German-British liberal, writing about the monetary union, called reunification “one of the greatest economic-constitutional experiments ever”, adding, “and the citizens of the GDR are the guinea pigs”. At the end of his new book, Christian Meier, the important Munich expert in ancient history, talks about the fact that the revolution in the GDR was not only non-violent but also unselfish – he is referring to the various changes in ownership of property that the Unification treaty and its precursor of June 1990 set in motion at many levels. The regulation “*restitution before compensation*” constituted one of these levels; it delayed reconstruction in the eastern states considerably. In this connection, Alfred Grosser once pointed out that Louis XVIII had received better advice on his return to France. Nevertheless, the GDR was successful in the contract negotiations, and then also in the years that followed, in largely safeguarding the positive changes that came about from the agrarian revolution of the postwar years; George F. Kennan had recognized as early as March 1949 that if the question of unification arose, the contestation of these changes could be a serious stumbling block for German unification. It was strange enough that people reproached the agricultural cooperatives of the GDR, which the new order had forced to become limited companies, for their successful new formation in the West when it turned out that they were competitive.” ✕

Note. Friedrich Dieckmann, writer, living in Berlin, Schiller expert, from 1972 to 1976 dramaturge at the Berliner Ensemble. The book by Christian Meyer referred to is *Das Gebot zu vergessen und die Unabweisbarkeit des Erinnerns: Von öffentlichem Umgang mit schlimmer Vergangenheit* (Munich 2010).



LIVING UNDER LUKASHEN



Dean C. K. Cox grew up in a divided Germany, on the western side of the wall. He always wondered what was on the other side of the wall – a curiosity that he was able to satisfy after the events of 1989. Since then, he has traveled through many of the former communist countries with his camera, including Kyrgyzstan, Romania, the Czech Republic, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Belarus. He has taken it as his mission to document the people, environments, and living conditions that he has encountered.

“In Belarus, where I have been many times – although I am now black-listed and not allowed in the country – the people and life in general seem to be stuck in a time capsule. The remains of the communist Soviet system are well preserved here.”

He seeks to depict reality as it is, even if it is not always easy to gain access to it. He matter-of-factly relates that he has illegally entered off-limits areas in Belarus four or five times to photograph the damage of the Chernobyl disaster.

“Most of the fallout was over Belarus, even though the disaster happened in Ukraine. This year, it has been 25 years. We’ll have to see whether I manage to get in there again.”

He has taken pictures in homes for the mentally ill and in orphanages, pictures that show a reality that not even his fellow photographers in Minsk knew existed.

“They rarely travel outside Minsk – their risks are simply greater than mine. The worst that can happen to me is that I am transported out of the country and denied re-entry – which has now happened. They, on the other hand, risk beatings and imprisonment.”

Cox is frustrated that he was denied permission to enter the country when the election was held. He would have liked to have been there with his camera to document events and support his friends in the struggle for freedom of expression.

But he does not take pictures to change the political reality. He wants to tell stories of everyday life, which is often a matter of simply making it through the day, one day at a time. He has returned to the same places several times during his travels in the former Soviet republics.

“I realize that I discover something new every time. I see more, because I know more: about the culture, the people, and how they live. But I also return to document the changes. I go to the Baku oilfield every three years – there is an environmental disaster of huge proportions going on there.”

Cox’s pictures from Belarus published here are part of his exhibition “Living under Lukashenka”, which is currently traveling around Europe. Starting with 16,000 pictures, he narrowed the selection down to 2,000, then 900, and finally to some 200. He has now

Workers sort by hand through heaping piles of harvested rutabagas at the Pobyeda (Victory) collective farm in the village of Ivanovka on Oct. 28, 2009.



The Budgusain family in the village of Bereztseye on the Pripjat River in southern Belarus make a toast with homemade vodka before sitting down for a mid-day meal of traditional countryside dishes, including salo (thick slices of salted pork fat), sausages, and cabbage on April 2, 2006.



A butcher helps a customer select from his cuts of the day at a meat market in Hoiniki on Oct. 25, 2009.



Boys play football in a wide open field near the village of Ivanovka on Oct. 28, 2009. Landlocked Belarus is 207,000 square kilometers of generally flat agricultural land and some marshes.



Regina Buiko, 66, holds a handful of wild cranberries she is picking next to a lake near the border with Lithuania on Sept. 18, 2009. Buiko, who belongs to the Catholic minority in Belarus and speaks a mixture of Lithuanian, Russian and Belarusian, spends most of her days gathering mushrooms, berries, and other natural food items because she and her husband cannot survive on their monthly government pensions.

LIVING UNDER LUKASHENKA PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEAN C. K. COX

collected these pictures in a book that he hopes soon to get published.

"There is not a lot of money in it, but I want to get the book out, the pictures that tell the story of everyday life in Belarus. I want people to know."

How do you hope people will react?

"It is up to every viewer to decide whether what they are seeing is good or bad. Some want to keep collective farming; others do not believe it is true that they live without running water. Those are surface reactions. But I want them to be able to relate to what they see and put themselves in the picture."

He wants those of us who are looking at the pictures to experience what it feels like to sit there in front of countless piles of turnips on the collective farm, or to wait at a bus stop in Minsk on a typical autumn day. Day after day, this is how life goes on in Belarus. This is what Cox wants to show – and perhaps he also wants to pose the question of whether life has been frozen in time according to a clock Lukashenka has chosen to set.

Have you exhibited your photographs in Belarus?

"No, that is not a realistic possibility. I have friends

who have tried to have exhibitions about everyday life, and the exhibitions have been taken down by government representatives. They clearly seem to engender fear, these pictures of reality." ❌

ninna mörner

* More pictures are available at <http://deanckcox.photoshelter.com/gallery/Diktat-Living-Under-Lukashenko/G0000ZBtVAjisayQ/>

* See <http://balticworlds.com/category/elections/> for commentary on the election in Belarus and several interviews and reports from the opposition.



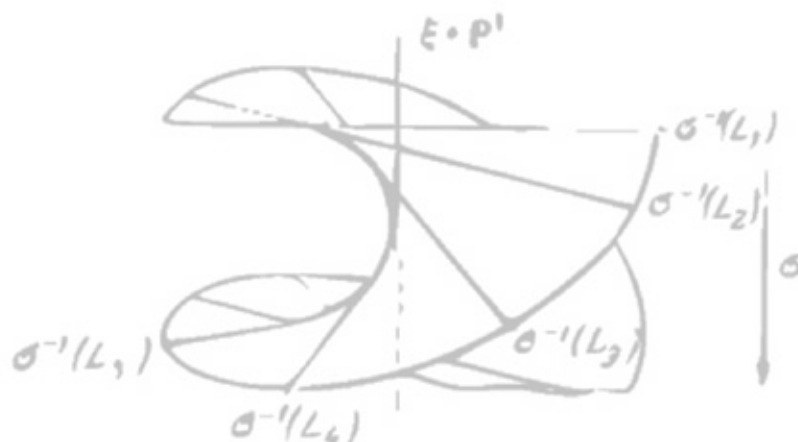
A man stands next to a ticket counter at a bus station in Bobruisk on April 5, 2006. Compared to Western Europe and North America, public transportation is relatively cheap and reliable – but slow.



A woman holds a conversation with a man living in a typical postwar apartment building in the city of Stari Dorogi on April 20, 2006. Most of the buildings in the larger cities of Belarus were destroyed during World War II, and during the Soviet era prefabricated concrete blocks were erected everywhere to house the masses. Few modern buildings, such as those now found in Moscow, Kiev or even Almaty, have been built since the country's independence.

...при некотором, но при надлежащем выборе L в левой части получается любая точка из $\xi \times \mathbb{R}^{n-1}$.

При $n = 2$ можно наглядно представить себе отображение $\sigma: \Pi \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$ и его действие на прямые L : прямые



THE STEKLOV LEGACY



$\sigma^{-1}(L)$ пересекают прямую $\xi \times \mathbb{R}^1$ в точках, которые зависят от того, как L поворачивается в \mathbb{R}^2 вокруг ξ . Таким образом, Π выглядит похоже на один вихрь вката (рис. 10).

BY **ULF PERSSON**

Russian excellence in the performing arts is legendary. Russian chess players have dominated the scene for almost a century. But that Russian mathematicians have inspired awe among their Western colleagues may not be generally known. A second-rate Soviet mathematician was usually considered first-rate by Western standards.

In 2009, the Steklov Institute celebrated its 75th anniversary. That puts its founding in 1934. Russian mathematicians from all over the world came to participate. Glossy booklets to document the event were produced. The Institute was considered the flagship of pure mathematics in the Soviet Union. To Western mathematicians it was fabled and distant, as if situated on the far side of the Moon.

The Steklov Institute is situated in Moscow, close to the Academy of Sciences of which it is a part. Physically it is on the right bank of the river, within a short stroll from the Akademicheskaya metro station. Its actual physical location has changed over the years from

one building to another. Its present site is next to its old one, set off a little from Vavilova Street, its former street address. Trolleys ramble along the icy street as I make my way to the Institute, which now occupies a modern building of nine floors. There is still a guard at the entrance, but he will not stop you as long as you look like you know what you are doing. In the old days, a stranger walking in from the street would have had to produce some proof of a right to enter, usually known as a “propusk”. Having entered the building, you are now free to roam around. The bleak impression which you no doubt would have had twenty years ago is gone; instead, you can easily imagine yourself at a Western institution. You feel comfortable.

I knock at the door of the deputy director, Armen Sergeev. He is a short man with long gray hair speaking in a hoarse voice. He first came to the Institute thirty years ago. At that time it was still headed by the formidable Vinogradov. While important visitors would have been seated close to Vinogradov’s desk, someone like young Sergeev would be relegated to a corner of

the room to sit on the edge of a sofa. The present director is away and a secretary supplies the keys to let us into the inner sanctum. The old furniture is still here; Vinogradov in fact brought it from its original location in Leningrad, when the mathematical section split off that year, 1934, and moved to Moscow. There was solid and plush leather furniture, green in color, art deco, probably produced in the ’20s.

The Institute is small. Vinogradov wanted the number of appointments to be kept low. When some department simply threatened to become too large, it was split off. That happened to the department of computer science.

Vinogradov was a recipient of the Stalin Prize and the title Hero of Socialist Labor. He was born in 1891 in provincial Russia. His father was a priest. He studied at the University of St. Petersburg and became a professor there in 1920. He made his reputation on what is known as the circle method in analytic number theory closely related to the work of the legendary mathematicians Hardy and Littlewood at Cambridge. Physically

The Russian mathematical miracle is resistant to the system. Like the Bolshoi, indeed even the Mariinsky.



Vladimir Steklov 1864–1926.



Newton's Principia – first edition.



The Steklov Institute's own socialistic flag.

he was short, bald, and of extraordinary physical strength. He was an Academician. He also, one may be tempted to conclude, was an apparatchik, a power monger toeing the official line. However, the situation is a bit more complicated.

He prided himself on not being a member of the Communist Party, thus implying that his power was due solely to his scientific standing. Supposedly, he was of a Conservative Orthodox religious conviction. If so, maybe as a consequence, he did not particularly care for Jews, and acquired a reputation for anti-Semitism, and for trying to keep the institute “Judenfrei”. One should keep in mind, though, that many distinguished mathematicians who happened to be Jews were members.¹ Vinogradov served as its first director for almost half a century, with the exception of the war years, when it was physically removed beyond the Urals, and he was replaced by Sobolev. Sobolev, a well-known analyst, was, unlike Vinogradov, a member of the Party. After the war, Kolmogorov and Alexandrov intervened and wrote a letter to have Vinogradov reinstated. Kolmogorov, the founder of modern probability theory, may have been the most distinguished Soviet mathematician ever.

Vinogradov died at his desk in 1983. Since then the Institute has already had a succession of four directors.

Sergeev proudly shows me the treasures of the Institute, such as the cupboard of Chebyshev, who, along with the pioneer of hyperbolic geometry Lobachevskii, may have been the most distinguished Russian mathematician of the 19th century. The cupboard is tall – so tall, in fact, that it no longer fits in this modern room. At its previous location, the ceiling was higher. Now the top has been removed and placed at its feet. Chebyshev was of the gentry, and his monogram is prominently carved on the top. There are tentative plans to set up a little institute museum in this very room.

There is a lot of paraphernalia. My host unfurls the tasseled Institute standard. In Soviet times, every institute of note had to have a flag. At the moment, a new department for the promotion of mathematics resides in the office. I am made a present of various educational toys, as well as being treated to the workings of a walking machine designed by Chebyshev, and recently reconstructed using his written instructions. But the real heart of an institute is its library. The head

of the library is summoned and the most precious of its treasures are sought out. There you find the first and second editions of Newton's *Principia*. You are allowed to handle them. As with old books, the quality of the paper is very good, far superior to more recent ones. In fact, the entire mathematical libraries of old Russian mathematicians have been preserved in toto, and you may inspect the volumes that once graced the shelves of a Chebyshev, or a Markov, or some other Russian mathematical luminary of the past. The journals are housed in another section of the library. The Institute has a complete run of *Crelles Journal*, which was founded in the early 19th century as the first mathematical journal ever. It was jump-started by the contributions of the young Abel, a Norwegian genius of mathematics, whose life was cut tragically short. There are also complete runs of the Russian journals *Sbornik*, *Uspekhi*, and *Izvestiya*, stemming from the mid-19th century, testifying to an already vibrant mathematical culture.

On the top floor, you can enjoy a view of Moscow, except that in recent years an unsightly skyscraper has been erected next to the premises of the Institute. Here you also find the large lecture hall. Three years ago, I attended here the meeting celebrating the 70th anniversary of the eminent Russian mathematician Arnold. The sight of slightly disoriented mathematicians earnestly discussing with each other, reveals that some other conference is going on at the moment. I spot a bust of Vinogradov in a corner as well as a glazed portrait of the original founder of the Institute or rather its precursor – Steklov, who was a mathematical physicist. Along the walls, one may view photographs of distinguished members now deceased. They present a “Who's Who” of recent Russian mathematical history. There are in particular two photos that catch my eye, namely those of Andrei Tyurin (1940–2002) and Vasilij Iskovskikh (1939–2009), two algebraic geometers, whom I have had the opportunity to meet in person. To Tyurin we will have occasion to return. Iskovskikh was a larger-than-life figure, tragically addicted to bouts of drinking, but of an inexhaustible vitality, liable to keep his hosts up all night regaling them with old Russian songs. It took the combination of a heart attack and being hit by a car on an icy December day to do him in.

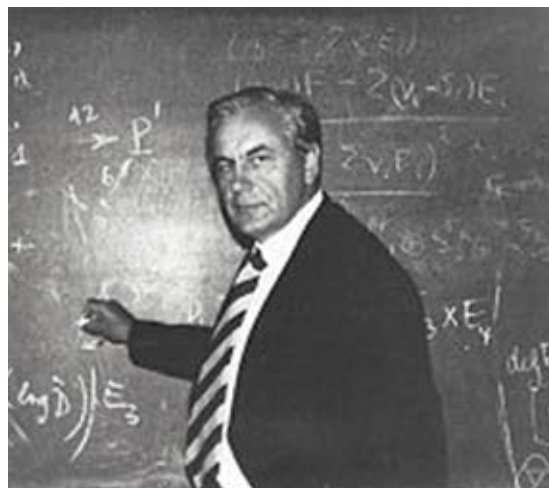
But the most legendary algebraic geometer of them all is Igor Shafarevich. It was he who founded

the school of Algebraic Geometry at Steklov. His photograph is not on the wall. He is still alive, if old and in frail health. My mission is to be able to meet and interview him.

WHAT DOES AN educated Westerner know about Russian history? In general not much, and what is known can easily be summarized.

There are the hazy beginnings involving Viking waterways, Tartar invasions, and Ivan the Terrible of the 16th century, who casts a long shadow as an archetypal barbaric Russian despot. Peter the Great brought under his dominion the Baltic States, and thereby opened up Russia to the West, bringing it out of its medieval slumber. He built a new futuristic capital to rise out of marshes that were still part of Swedish territory. And as a capital, it would, for another two hundred years, in many ways still be located outside Russia proper. He directed affairs among German states and had his progeny married to German royalty. As a consequence, many years after the death of Peter, a young German princess would move to Russia, adapt to it, not to say adopt it, becoming its ruler as Catherine II, also known as the Great. She is a lady who captures the imagination of a reading public. She has her husband murdered (sort of), takes on many a lover, and is a groupie of the Enlightenment, corresponding not only with her relatives and similar heads of states such as Frederik the Great of Prussia and her despised cousin Gustavus III of Sweden, but also with the likes of Voltaire. The Academy in St. Petersburg had been founded by Peter I with the support of Leibniz. It flourished under Catherine, and is now located in Moscow. Not only did she invite French encyclopedists such as Diderot and d'Alembert, but more significantly, great mathematicians. One thinks of the Bernouillis but above all the Swiss mathematician Euler, whom she regaled with the highest honors, and who lived a large part of his life in Russia, dying there in 1783. Euler was astonishingly productive, and is considered to be one of the greatest mathematicians ever. He can be said to be the father of Russian mathematics, if only in a formal sense. Did he ever learn to speak Russian? It did not matter; the Academy was a showcase, a brilliant illustration of the division of the Russian society. That society consisted of a very thin veneer of European culture – in which foreign nobility, especially the Baltic Germans, played a significant role – and an inar-

Vinogradov – an apparatchik who was not a Party man. One wonders whether they might also be resistant to the system.

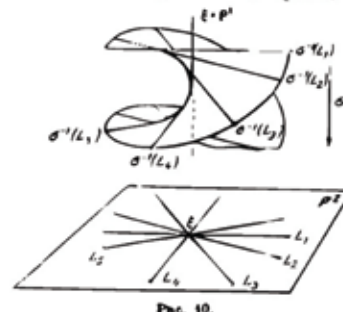


Igor Shafarevich.



Ulf Persson (left) and Armen Sergeev in front of the cupboard of Chebyshev.

Мы же видели, что при надлежащем выборе L в левой части получается любая точка из $\xi \times \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$.
При $n=2$ можно выгодно представить себе отображение $\sigma: \Pi \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ и его действие на прямые L : кривые



$\sigma^{-1}(L)$ пересекают прямую $\xi \times \mathbb{P}^1$ в точках, которые изменяются по мере того, как L поворачивается в \mathbb{P}^2 вокруг ξ . Таким образом, Π выглядит похоже на один из тех виллы (рис. 10).

Igor Shafarevich's basic algebraic geometry.

ticulate mass of peasants, who in the 17th century had been turned into serfs.

Two dates stand out in Russian history: 1812 and 1917. They mark off what we could call a Russian Golden Century. Initially there was the defeat of Napoleon under Alexander I.² By that deed, Russia became the de facto liberator of all of Europe, and would for the rest of the century play a leading part in its politics. However, she was not fated to exercise her influence to the full extent warranted by her initial achievement. Her peripheral position made it difficult, and her ambitions were further thwarted diplomatically, first by Metternich, later by Bismarck.

Fascinating as this subject may be, it is peripheral to our concern; it suffices to remind us of the theme of insecurity. The Russians may have been barbaric, and may have suffered from a certain inferiority complex, but they certainly tended to overcompensate for it. Who could speak French with more aplomb than a highly educated Russian? Who could perform classical music better than the graduates of Russian conservatories, and for that matter who were to be the true heirs of classical music, if not Russian composers? It prompted a running debate on national identity, with the two warring camps of Westerners and Slavophiles: those who wanted Russia to become modern and assimilate into the West, and, more interestingly, those who wanted to keep that special mystical Russian character and stay apart. The debate was radical and romantic. It caused the formation of the intelligentsia, with the special Russian touch of wide interlocking interests combined with deep passion. The central issue politically and morally was the freeing of the serfs, which took place in 1861 and had momentous consequences. All of this provided the soil for an unprecedented cultural flowering, especially in literature.

1917 and its aftermath was a disaster for Russia. It meant in practice an eventual retreat into medieval isolation, combining the worst features of both the Westerners and the Slavophiles. Remarkably, however, it did not spell the end of Russian culture; it was still able to flourish, if in more indirect forms. It certainly did not spell the death of mathematics, on the contrary, the 20th century turned out to be a Golden Age for Russian mathematics. Why?

TOGETHER WITH MY gracious host Sergeev, I enter an Irish pub close to the pedestrian mall of Arbat. My

host appears to be well known here and we are directed to a reserved table. He suggests some delicious starters, recommending in particular a fish native to Lake Baikal.

How was it growing up in the Soviet Union? The picture we had in the West was of an oppressive society, where everybody learned to watch their tongue, and be mistrustful of their neighbors.

"It was not at all like that. I grew up in the neighborhood of Arbat. It was very different then of course, no pedestrian mall. As to watching your tongue, it was not that different from learning rules of good behavior. You learned from your parents what was appropriate or not. That is surely the same in all societies. In fact as a child, I was convinced that I lived in the best of all possible worlds, that the Soviet Union was the best country in the world. I was happy. And as to relations with your neighbors, they were much, much livelier in my childhood than they are today. You instinctively learned whom to trust and whom not to trust. In fact, this involved a deeper personal interaction with people. Something that may be waning to some extent now."

When did you start to doubt that the Soviet Union was the best country in the world?

"Probably around the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Something did not really jibe. In fact, the first foreigner I ever met was back in the '80s. He was a French mathematician. He invited me to his hotel. True to my ingrained habits, I did not show up. Then of course later I met Americans. I am very favorably impressed by them. They are very outgoing, friendly, and frank."

A vibrant culture always has a basis. The tenor of a general education system is usually the clue. It does not have to be universal; it is enough that it involves a critical mass. It has often been noted that mathematics plays a special role, even in primary education, in Russia, and doing well in mathematics carries with it high status. A good education system tends to be elitist in the sense of seeking out, identifying, and celebrating talent regardless of race, ethnicity, and class. This is of course not the primary goal of education, but an inescapable consequence of making demands on the students and expecting them to deliver.

The first modern education system was instigated in Prussia in the beginning of the 19th century. It was all-encompassing, involving everything from primary education to the visions of Wilhelm Humboldt concerning the role of the university. It certainly exerted a wide influence and there is no reason not to think that it also shaped the Russian education system, especially in light of the close political and cultural connection between Russia and Prussia during most of the 19th century. How did the Soviet ideology mesh with the education system of the old regime? In fact, an elitist system based on merit fitted well. One should not forget that in the '30s workers were paid according to their productivity. When it comes to hard science, ideology is confronted with a reality test. The Soviet Union had to survive. To do so it had to modernize and industrialize, if for no other reason than to provide the basis for a strong military force. The somewhat paradoxical situation arose that in isolated Siberian communities of defense research, substantial internal freedom of discourse ensued. It might not be surprising that many of the dissidents came from such backgrounds, as exemplified by Sakharov.³ A growing emphasis on science and technology was already present in late Tsarist Russia, as the classics were retreating all over Europe, despite concerted efforts to stem the tide.

There was no reason why the Soviet regime would try to reverse this trend, rather than welcoming it. As expected there was pressure to have pupils of humble backgrounds come to the fore. Petrovski, a well-known Russian differential equation man, may have this to thank for becoming the rector of Moscow University. He had given well-appreciated math courses to people who later would rise and become important and influential engineers, and would remember him fondly.

I try to press Sergeev on his educational experience. Yes, it was very demanding; there was an emphasis on science and technology. Although his father was not a scientist, he himself was very much pressured into becoming one. We are contemporaries; we grew up in the aftermath of the Sputnik. My own experience with my own father was very similar.

I have commented above on the elitist character of Russian education surviving in Soviet times. It may be instructive to make a digression on a small Eastern European country – Hungary, which, during

Under Stalin, mathematicians fared better than poets. There are those who believe that mathematics is poetry.

a few decades a hundred years ago, produced an amazing number of distinguished mathematicians and scientists, the most luminous being perhaps John von Neumann. It too benefitted from an elitist school system, in which mathematical competitions played an important role. The tradition of mathematical competitions was taken up in a systematic way by the Soviet Union after the war, and by the late '50s, they culminated in what was called Mathematical Olympiads. Initially it only involved the countries of the Soviet Bloc, nowadays it has become worldwide.

Personally, I had the privilege as a high school student of watching this close up as a participant. That was in 1968 at the height of the Brezhnev years and during the deep freeze of the Cold War, giving me my first and hence most memorable encounter with Soviet reality. I remember Moscow as a bleak and Asiatic city, with wide avenues along which trucks raced with no concern for pedestrians. (Leningrad on the other hand made a much more congenial impression on me.) We were housed in dormitories scattered haphazardly on what I imagined to be steppes surrounding the city. The food was bad, there was no toilet paper, and postcards were given as prizes. I was touched by the latter. It may have been a bit hard on spoiled Western youth, who all experienced a big relief when returned by train to Helsinki. But my deeper emotion was that of fascination. No matter what you think of it, the presence of an independent and alternate world is reassuring, it makes the world bigger.

Mathematical competitions fit very well with the idea of chess tournaments, sports, and competitions among young performing musicians or acrobats. And the Soviet Union devoted many resources to sports during the postwar years. Incidentally, the emphasis on sports is also very much prevalent in modern Western societies, and is, ironically, the only educational arena in which competition is considered politically correct. The Soviet system took this a few steps further, by also setting up special schools for gifted pupils, be it for mathematics, physics, or some other intellectual discipline. But while in sports and chess, competition is essential – without it they would not exist – in mathematics it is incidental. What this structure really provided was a forum for extracurricular mathematical education. What my colleagues, who may or may not have excelled in competition, really appreciated was the wide exposure they were given to mathematics even at a young age. It may thus not be surprising to find out that the average Russian mathematician is much more cultured than his Western counterpart, and not only in mathematics.

We continue eating in silence. I pour some tea and sip on a sweet liquor made of honey produced by bees feeding on heather.

In the old days, science and industry worked very well in the Soviet Union. There was an inner core of pure mathematics and theoretical physics. Around it, there was a bigger ring of applied science, which in turn was surrounded by industry. Nowadays, the government tries to meddle too much. I remind Sergeev that there is the same problem in the West. There is also a lot of corruption. It may have existed, to some degree, in the communist era, but it was generally strictly curtailed by the Party. Now there are no such constraints in the system. Medvedev supposedly is very concerned about it, but the question is what will

he be capable of doing personally? Russia is a very rich country; the problem is that it suffers from a lack of wise investments.

But to return to mathematics.

Mathematicians, along with similar segments of the population, were hit especially hard. But mathematicians had a way out. They were in demand. And the mass diaspora of Russian mathematicians followed. Twenty years earlier there had been a select diaspora of Jewish mathematicians, many of them of world renown. The mass diaspora was different. They went everywhere, even to obscure places such as Swaziland. Rare was indeed a Western math department that did not have at least one Russian on its staff. Commonly, Russian mathematicians formed minor colonies, and sometimes ran seminars in Russian. Many of them never bothered to learn local languages. And even if the case of outright emigration was not an issue, Russian mathematicians found it not only expedient but also necessary for survival to spend a month abroad every year earning enough to see them through the rest of the year.

The solidarity of the worldwide mathematical community is very much appreciated, my host assures me. It was great for the individuals, but it spelled disaster for Russian mathematics. It was almost impossible to attract new talent. The present demography of mathematicians contains a lacuna of about twenty years. But Russians seem to have a hard time adjusting to life abroad, surprisingly much more so than people of many other ethnic communities. Maybe this means that they will eventually return home? In fact, they have been able to appoint some young members to the Institute. They can nowadays offer reasonable salaries. Something like 1000 euros a month. It is not great. Moscow is a very expensive city; to that, I can attest. But it is sufficient for survival. Sergeev informs me that in the past, he saved as much as possible when he was abroad. Not any more. What he gets, he spends. Salaries are not the big problem, but apartments are. Buying an apartment in Moscow is prohibitively expensive; unless you already have a foothold in the city, it is out of reach. They were lucky, though, to be able to arrange something for their new young appointment.

I ask him about Shafarevich. In the late '80s he became known outside the mathematical community through his essay "Russophobia".⁴ It generated accusations of anti-Semitism. The American Academy of

Sciences, of which he was a member, put pressure on him to resign.⁵ An official invitation to Germany was aborted for fear of controversy. That was all shameful. Recently a thesis on him written by political scientist Krista Berglund was defended in Helsinki; it involved an attempt to exonerate him.⁶ This is a hopeless task, the notion of anti-Semitism simply being too fluid. Some of his students were deeply embarrassed by his rhetoric. Yet even those who were most adamant in damning him as an anti-Semite still hold him in high regard, pointing out that he never sought any personal advantage from his position, nor did it affect his support of his Jewish students. His greatest crime might be his close associations with people such as Vinogradov and Pontryagin, they argue. Personally, I see him writing in the old Slavophilic tradition, inevitably stepping on a lot of toes, not only Jewish ones. But Sergeev does not know much about the Shafarevich circle. Although he knew Tyurin well, he only found out at his funeral that Solzhenitsyn's widow was in fact Tyurin's first wife.

This I had known for thirty years.

ALEXIS RUDAKOV WAS a student of Shafarevich. He is a tall, handsome man, with a slight limp, and a faint resemblance to Sean Connery. We have dinner at a Japanese restaurant. I ask him whether he felt that he lived in the best of all possible worlds when he was young. No, he has always been of a very observant nature, even as a child, when he kept asking questions about adding two and two and finding that it did not always equal four. He had some secret religious education as well. To have a Bible for private use at home was not forbidden, but to show it to others was. He was grateful that his relatives trusted him to keep secrets. Yet of course he was proud of his country in the Sputnik years, and he believes that the defense industry was very strong.

He has many memories of Shafarevich he is willing to share. Shafarevich was a dissident in the circle of Solzhenitsyn. The latter had, in the late '60s, urged academicians to take a more active interest in society. Shafarevich had heeded the call. His activities as a dissident got him into trouble. Like most members of the Steklov Institute, he had a joint appointment at the State University of Moscow. Such appointments were temporary and as a matter of course renewed from year to year. Yet what would be more convenient than

Мы же видели, что при надлежащем выборе L в левой части получается любая точка из $\xi \times \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$.
При $n=2$ можно наглядно представить себе отображение $\sigma: \Pi \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ в его действии на прямые L : прямые

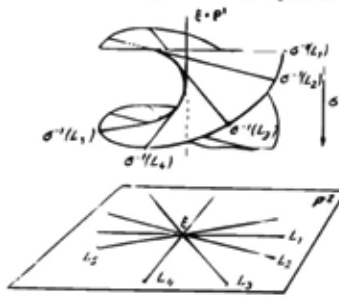
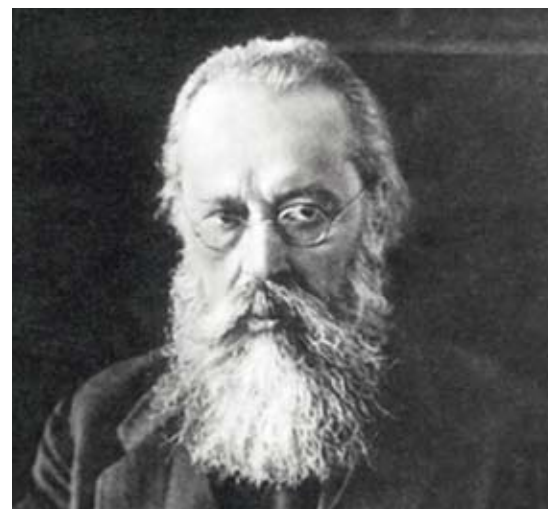


Рис. 10.

$\sigma^{-1}(L)$ пересекают прямую $\xi \times \mathbb{P}^1$ в точках, которые исчезают по мере того, как L поворачивается в \mathbb{P}^1 вокруг ξ . Таким образом, Π выглядит похоже на один листок бумаги (рис. 10).



not to renew it to show displeasure? As an Academician and a member of the Steklov, he was not touched.

It was in the mid-seventies. Suslin in Leningrad had proved the Serre Conjecture. This was a remarkable achievement. Everyone was excited. He came to give a talk. The seminar room was filled to the brim, it was standing room only for late comers. It was the Shafarevich seminar, but since he had been deprived of his position at the university, he was no longer allowed to head it. Instead, Tyurin acted as his deputy. A political commissar looked in. He was suspicious. So many people, what was going on here? Who is in charge? He looked at Shafarevich, who, sitting in the front, obviously seemed in command of the scene. Shafarevich shook his head, referring to Tyurin. Where is Tyurin? There he was, waving, sitting in the back in a window smiling happily. The commissar still was very suspicious. And next year Tyurin was not allowed to head the seminar.

It was not so easy to publish. To publish in an international journal was out of the question. Starting in the '30s, with few exceptions, everything was to be published in Russian. Many Western mathematicians learned Russian as a consequence, while most relied on regularly appearing English translations of the best Russian articles. But even publishing in Russia was not trivial. Rudakov and Shafarevich wanted to have a paper published. They needed a signature from the dean. Rudakov approached him. They had a polite interchange. He presented the document to be signed. But instead of putting pen to paper immediately, there was an extended silence. Then it was explained that the matter deserved more consideration and consultation and he was asked to return later. They decided to have it published under the auspices of the Steklov Institute instead. Vinogradov saw to that.

Shafarevich was something of a prodigy. He had made a stir in the '40s by proving a well-known conjecture. According to legend, the distinguished German mathematician Hasse came to visit. He was impressed. It was a German problem, only a German could have solved it. Did Shafarevich have any German blood? Shafarevich denied it. The story sounds a bit fishy. Yet Shafarevich knows German very well and read a lot of German literature when young. Some even believe he had a German nanny. I guess I will find out.

Soviet mathematicians were physically isolated from the West, but news of what was happening reached them in various ways. Shafarevich might be sent a preprint, and if it seemed interesting, he would assign someone to talk on it. But Soviet mathematics was self-sufficient: people could approach him with an idea for a talk, and if the idea was good, Shafarevich would accept. People would come from Kiev or Leningrad to give talks. In the long run, the list of topics would make up an exquisite selection bearing the stamp of Shafarevich's taste. During the talks, he often made comments, occasionally proposing related conjectures. Afterwards there were informal discussions, during which he may or may not have been present.

Another student refers to his manly intellectual face and intelligent green eyes endowing him with a magnetism further enhanced by his tall stature and powerful torso. Speaking to him, you felt yourself to be in the presence of a sage – a man of a deep and original mind, highly cultured and with broad visions. Invariably polite, unlike the more ebullient Gelfand, he

always would keep a respectful distance. His mathematical comments invariably went to the core, and not surprisingly, as a lecturer, he was unsurpassed. Even in his eighties, he dominated seminars by his quick mind and deep comments. His dissident activities during the Brezhnev years did not exactly detract from his nimbus. No wonder he attracted the best minds. In geometry and number theory, he belonged to the supreme circle, not only in the Soviet Union.⁷

The Shafarevich circle was a close-knit group, and they also met privately. Their excursions were legendary: hikes in the summers, cross-country ski trips in the winter. In his memoirs,⁸ the GDR mathematician Koch particular refers to the Sunday hikes around Moscow. There was a meeting point but no advance commitment on the part of the participants. Once only he and Shafarevich showed up. They walked a long distance at a very fast pace. Mathematics was not an exclusive topic of discussion, on the contrary – as noted, the Russian intellectual is known for his wide-ranging interests. Shafarevich was a very fit man until recently. Like many mathematicians, he had a passion for rock climbing, an interest shared by several of his students. I recall a meeting in Rome in the spring of 1996; I sat next to Tyurin at a boring lecture. He shared with me, drawing on a piece of paper, an adventure he had had in the high mountains. There had been an avalanche; they were buried in snow. They were rescued by a helicopter. As a consequence, he had to have some toes amputated.

I believe that this also had happened to Shafarevich, at this or maybe at another occasion. I will definitely ask him.

What about Tyurin's first wife? The connection to Solzhenitsyn is intriguing. They met when they were very young and married. Soon afterwards, they got divorced. They were always on good terms. She had started out studying mathematics, but had been sidetracked, since Kolmogorov had become very interested in mathematical applications to language and run a seminar on it. She had literary interests. She had contacted the widow of Bulgakov and received from her an original uncensored manuscript of *The Master and Margarita*. She typed four copies of it. Four copies was just about all you could manage with carbons. Tyurin was given a copy. The whole activity was of course very dangerous. Did he, Rudakov, ever meet Solzhenitsyn? Only once, through Tyurin. He suspects that Tyurin saw him more regularly, but it was all very secretive, so there is no way he would know. He never talked to him about it afterwards. I am curious about Shafarevich and Solzhenitsyn.

How does he like life nowadays in Russia? He spent many years abroad in Norway before returning. Rudakov admits that he likes very much the travel that has now opened up to him. When he was younger, even going to the GDR seemed out of reach, and he was very lucky that he was finally given the chance in 1986 during the early Gorbachov years. His first visit to the States in 1989 was a revelation. But living in Moscow is different now. In former times, it was after all more egalitarian, now you as a mathematician may feel yourself to be on the lower rungs of society. Mathematicians lived reasonably well in Soviet society. They did not suffer from want of money, nor – perhaps almost as important – were they distracted by its surplus, since there was little opportunity to spend it in a so-

ciety which was not consumer-oriented. And if you were a member of the Academy such as Shafarevich, you would be netting 900 rubles, with possibilities of adding to it, which should be compared to an average monthly income of around 200 rubles.

The year 1991 was a disaster. The value of money plummeted overnight; savings became worthless. This was known in the West as shock therapy. To add insult to injury, a system of vouchers was introduced. It only benefitted a few of the nomenklatura and great fortunes were made. The transition to a capitalist economy was more abrupt, if less bloody, than the transition to a socialist economy had been in 1917. After all, Lenin had allowed capitalism, at least temporarily, in through the back door. No such re-admittance was given to socialist economy. End of History.

ISAAK LEVITAN WAS a Russian landscape painter of the second half of the 19th century, a contemporary and friend of Chekhov and his brother. A retrospective of his art is being exhibited at the New Tretyakov Gallery. With the aid of a very limited vocabulary, one is able to read all the captions of the paintings. They are very good, some of them truly exquisite. How come I have never heard of him before? After all, I pride myself on being quite educated on art. My mobile rings. It is Sergeev. He informs me that Shafarevich has been taken to the hospital. He will be there for at least a week. There is no way I can meet and talk to him. ✕

REFERENCES

- ¹ Russian web sites such as http://kryakin.blogspot.com/2010/01/blog-post_31.html and <http://www.mccme.ru/edu/index.php?ikey=n-rohlin> provide valuable information on Vinogradov.
- ² Traditionally this victory has been seen, also by the Russian themselves, as a consequence primarily of Russia's geographical vastness and climatic harshness. Recently, however Dominic Lieven, in his book *Russia against Napoleon* (London 2009), has tried to buttress Russian self-confidence by showing that far from being a result of Russian passivity it was brought about by superior Russian planning and organization, militarily and diplomatically, spearheaded by the very able Alexander, who is the hero of his book.
- ³ One should not infer that scientists were immune during Stalinist repression. In Roy Medvedev's book *Let History Judge* (London 1972), lists of distinguished scientists destroyed are given. As a consequence, charlatans such as Lysenko were given opportunities to rise. Both Kolmogorov and Sobolev, mentioned in the text, fell out of favor and were branded as enemies, but were not shot or imprisoned, and were later rehabilitated. Stalin obviously found the political elite more expandable than the scientific. A further discussion can be found in the recent biography on Perelman by Masha Gessen, *Perfect Rigor*. New York 2009.
- ⁴ "Russophobia", although the most well known for the furor it generated, is just one small part of Shafarevich's political writings, which include books such as *The Socialist Phenomenon*.
- ⁵ To the request to tender his resignation, Shafarevich noted that as AAS had taken the initiative to enlist him, it had the responsibility for ejecting him. When Bush invaded Iraq, Shafarevich faxed his resignation.
- ⁶ Krista Berglund, *The Vexing Case of Igor Shafarevich: A Russian Political Thinker*. Basel, forthcoming, 2011.
- ⁷ Personal communication with Vladimir Popov.
- ⁸ Helmut Koch, "Erinnerungen", h101k@gmx.de.



PHOTO: EVREN ZEYİNOĞLU

1989 AS UTOPIA.

ELSKE ROSENFELD ON POLITICS AND LONGING

it is 1968. a woman is standing outside the gates of a french factory, surrounded by fellow workers after the end of a weeklong strike. i am sitting in an oslo cinema in 2007 and i do not understand her words in french. i do see her despair though, and her rage, i see the mouths of the men trying to talk her down, paternal arms trying gently to push her back into the factory, to her assigned place, to bring her to reason, make her accept the realities of life. the woman shouts and rants and i do not understand a word and yet i understand it all. because her rage and her pain and her reluctance to return to a normality — whose terms she briefly thought she could negotiate or even change, but can't — are mine. it is march 1990 and i lie under my desk with the radio on, listening to reason trying to talk utopia down to the realities of life. and i cry.

Elske Rosenfeld, 2007

In official historical consciousness, and perhaps particularly the consciousness of the outside world, Helmut Kohl's 1990 election victory symbolizes the reunification of the two Germanies. But for the then 15-year-old Elske Rosenfeld, that election result marked the end of a life-changing political emancipation, the end of a political discussion that differed so dramatically both from what had prevailed previously and from what came after that it still has not loosened its grip on her.

Like other children born in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the 1970s, Elske grew up in a system that was already coming apart at the seams, at a time when the ideology that sustained the state had lost its power to convince broad segments of the population. She calls herself and her contemporaries a *Grenzgängergeneration*, a generation that bears the stamp of the system and, in equal measure, of its fall and what came after — the GDR's last teenagers. About the same time as West German young people were covering the walls of their rooms with posters of Madonna, Michael Jackson, Phil Collins, and other pop icons, the students at Elske's school were wearing prominent Gorbachev pins.

We arranged to meet in Treptow, where she let herself be photographed in front of one of the few still intact watchtowers that flanked the Berlin Wall. The tower once served as a "command post" for the East German border guards; today it houses a studio. In the summer of 2010, Elske carried out an investigative art project in this space: *Watchtower/Ghosts: About the (Im)Possibility of Speaking about 89*. She lives nearby, in Kreuzberg, but is currently commuting between Berlin and Vienna, where she is a participant in the PhD in Practice program at the Academy of Fine Arts. We finally end up in one of the many cafés that have sprung from the ground like mushrooms in recent years, all of them decorated like living rooms from the 1950s. Here we laugh together at her remembrance of how the then Soviet president was considered *cool* by the teenagers in Halle, the largest city in Saxony-Anhalt. Today Elske is not certain whether she would describe herself as a typical East German, after having spent so much of her adult life living abroad. She nonetheless believes that there is something that connects them all, particularly those who were there in 1989. It is a capacity and an aptitude to scrutinize how political systems lay claim to being the only normality.

If the East German youth were border walkers, the West German youth were sleep walkers. They never woke up.



It was this wariness that led Elske to leave the reunified Germany in the early 1990s. But let us start before the caesura, before 1989.

“I grew up feeling different from the system”, she replies when I ask her about her childhood. In the next breath, she adds that she does not know whether this phenomenon is typical of the GDR, or whether someone from a left-wing background might perhaps have experienced something similar in West Germany. Elske was born in 1974, into a family that emphasized the importance of children being able to speak freely. There was relative consensus among those around her in the 1980s that the propaganda, the way in which the system spoke to the people, had lost its legitimacy. This fact did not escape the children. Elske describes something that I have heard from other children of the 1970s as well, namely an early awareness that there were two ways to talk and that it was essential to be able to distinguish between them, to know where and when certain things could be said. Obviously it is difficult, in hindsight, to put a finger on how you learned this. A friend of mine said that it was like sex: children know what it is, despite the reluctance of their parents to explain the details. Elske speaks of this awareness as a *skill* that you acquired as a small child, saying that it is an attitude that characterizes a person’s perceptions of the surrounding world.

Her parents sent Elske to a special school, known for its relatively non-doctrinaire structure – a place where no one needed to be afraid of being stigmatized for expressing critical views. Like many other young people in the GDR, she was active in the church, for social and political reasons rather than religious ones. She became politicized early on by the peace and environmental movements, and it is as a member of these critical communities that she experienced the *Wende*, the collapse of the communist system and the dissolution of East Germany. The process of political liberation accelerated during the fall of 1989. Elske got involved, handing out flyers for the *Neues Forum*; in addition, she organized political groups and discus-

sions. At school, it had suddenly become possible to talk to the teachers about their party membership, about the curriculum, about how they wanted to learn – and live – together.

“This was the moment we stopped having two different ‘linguistic worlds’ – one way of talking versus another. This difference simply dissolved into thin air, and talking began to cross over this frontier, in terms of both people and content. In the fall of 1989, we no longer had the feeling that power lay with the Others, that although we could speak, it had no effect. Talking actually took place in public, and under the premise that it could have real-life consequences in the way people live together. That made the feeling very strong. It was this phase that characterizes 1989 for me – and still does today”, she notes.

Elske was 15 when the Berlin Wall came down. She realized that this was the end of the critical discourse that the citizens’ movements had brought to life in the GDR. When the 1990 election results were announced in the media, she cried.

“That this openness was no longer possible after the wall had fallen was a trauma that has left its mark on me – the feeling of political participation and freedom, which for me was absolutely convincing, evaporated very quickly. I remember that my parents were thrilled that there were free elections – although they voted for the citizens’ movement rather than the CDU. For me, though, it was the end of the exciting time. After that, a different phase began, in which the basic feeling was one of being overpowered by the West, as well as an astonishment that now there was another system that, once again, wanted to say what is good and right – yet again a system that works on the premise that it can set itself up as the natural form of social existence.”

Elske left Germany as soon as she graduated from secondary school. She could not stand the paternalistic reeducation which young people were expected to subject themselves to; nor could she stand to watch as the social safety net was torn asunder. In the early

1990s, a sort of gold-digger mentality prevailed among West German investors and businessmen seeking success in the former East Germany. What the 18-year-old fled was a violent metamorphosis to capitalism.

“It was simply a crazy time. I had the feeling they wanted to open up people’s heads to take out the old and replace it with a new story. We were not seen as individuals who had very clearly emancipated ourselves from the state organization. The fact that 1989 was a huge emancipatory experience was underestimated. This misconception, or simply the fact that its importance was not recognized, has stayed with me ever since – also because I still don’t see this as being solved in dealing with ‘the East’.”

Rosenfeld subsequently lived in London, Liverpool, and Edinburgh. She traveled to the US. She sought out the mental images that she had associated with the big, wide world as a teenager in the GDR, the art scene and cultural flows of different countries: Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, the legacy of Woodstock. Hip-hop. Foucault, poststructuralism, feminism. She “repeated 1968”, as she now puts it. And she regained a measure of the self-determination that had no place during the West German reshaping of the GDR in the early 1990s. When she finally did return, she made her experiences in 1989 the focus of her artistic endeavors.

You made the topic of 1989 your professional project – what was your motivation and your concern in doing this?

“I did it in fact because I needed to deal with this experience – however broken-off it was – and not just ignore it. My concern was therefore purely personal. To put it in simple psychological terms, it’s a question of dealing with the traumatization created by the sudden breaking off of this emancipatory experience. Since this situation can’t be restored in the present day, I have to work on the next best thing, in order to get at that energy once again; I also have to try to establish discussions or communities relating to it. I use artistic methods to access the parts of my experience that lie beyond the range of speech.

The freedom that shuts recently opened doors. So that the wind won’t blow straight through.



Therefore I often refer to the image of the French woman on strike in 1968. By means of this picture, I can explain what otherwise takes place on an emotional plane and can't be captured in words. To a certain extent, this woman expresses much more about 1989 than any original document – though I also work with those. However, I have problems defining myself as an artist, or author, or curator, or theorist ... these are all categories that don't apply, because I don't define myself by a profession but by the topic, and I also find my methodology through the topic. My loyalty is not to art but to the topic '1989'."

Among other things, you have worked toward the concept of "Homesickness for 1989" that you created yourself – what kind of feeling is that?

"I coined this concept in opposition to the idea of homesickness for the GDR – for it has nothing to do with that. What I miss is the experience of great political involvement and freedom. The elections of 1990 put an end to this feeling of having an influence on the way society is structured, but the feeling lives on in me as an ideal. And it isn't necessarily only possible to experience it in this special, we might say, revolutionary, situation: it is a utopia in the best sense of the word. For me, 1989 is what communism was, perhaps, for many leftists. But this utopia doesn't represent any political practice – it is not a model for society. It is clear from the beginning that this feeling will be only a short-term condition. What processes a society would have to use to implement it afterward would be an entirely different question."

Do you sometimes wonder: What would I be or who would I be, if it had continued?

"No, funnily enough. It's really over. Perhaps that sounds odd after having said how much its being over so quickly traumatized and shocked me. Meanwhile, however, I think that it was simply too late to achieve anything structural that would have been rooted in the grounding notion of communism. The country

had hit bottom, not only economically, but above all ideologically. If criticism had been able to be integrated into the system in the sixties, then something interesting might have happened. But that was twenty years before my time, twenty years in which the critical voices had themselves become greatly alienated from the seats of power. On the other hand, naturally I am furious about how it happened. Naturally I am furious about the West German government's wheeling and dealing with the leading lights of the SED (the Socialist Unity Party of Germany), excluding the citizens' movements, so as to bring about unity quickly, no matter what. This carried over into the whole economic restructuring. Capitalism was simply established as quickly as possible, by hook or by crook, as it were. And nothing, not even as a corrective measure, flowed, conversely, into the West. That makes me angry – and it was simply straightforward power politics, not a historical necessity."

To what extent did the GDR, or, rather, your experiences in the GDR, shape your relationship to politics?

"On the one hand, it was shaped through the experience of 1989 as an ideal, or utopia. For my generation, or at least for me, there is, in addition, the fact that I must always live with the question: How would I have acted if I had been older? Would I have taken the path of the conformists or would I have chafed against it? Would I have ended up in the clink; would I have gone to West Germany? Associated with this is having to constantly keep a lookout for how I answer this same question for myself in the new system. I still remain really very skeptical about having a career within an institution or getting involved in power structures. But I don't conceive of myself as a wonderful, morally upright person; rather, I see this as a millstone around my neck ..."

How do you feel about the ways in which the GDR is depicted in West Germany today? Do the different depictions create an overall picture that you can identify with?

"They don't paint any sort of overall picture! But there are always new attempts to amalgamate the different pictures to give a unified view. Two themes predominate: one is the Big Brother state with the Stasi, and the other is a nostalgic, rather pretty picture of the GDR. Why are these two models the only ones available for what we experienced? You even catch yourself trying to fit into one or the other. But you keep coming up against experiences that don't fit into either model – that intrigues me. So I find both models of only limited use, though interesting; and of course, both are grounded in reality."

Let's talk about the one type of history, or the one form of memory, the Big Brother state with the Stasi. What do you think about it?

"Up till now I haven't done any concrete work on this topic. First I wanted to work in an area that doesn't get as much attention as this. On the other hand, it's inherently important for everything I do. You can't

think of the GDR without thinking of the Stasi, at least not the latter-day GDR. What would interest me with regard to the Stasi, or the party system of the SED, would be a more concrete investigation. For me, what matters is, for example, understanding why the citizens' movement in the GDR was as limited as it was. Understanding concrete mechanisms interests me more than finding a point from which to try to judge the project of communism. That approach to viewing the GDR skips about 500 steps, in my opinion ... But I also think that, in the interests of a current policy that is dedicated to seeking an alternative to the way we live now, it is essential to understand how structures like the Stasi function, and how they arise. That's my objection to the current discussion about the Stasi. The objection applies as much to the right-wing view of the topic, which would like to build itself up on the basis of this kind of discussion, as to a left-wing disregard of the matter."

So what about the other type of memory, sometimes called "Ostalgia"?

"A large part of what I find really disconcerting is the commercialization of longing. I have no use for this kind of purification of things in order to be able to offer them as products again, whether as comic show or as plastic Trabant. What interests me about Ostalgia is that an enormous sense of dissatisfaction and a strong feeling of not belonging to the state, such as there are in the East, point to a deplorable state of affairs today. What is also interesting, but more complicated, because it affects us personally too, is that the GDR today comes over as so naive or odd. It occurred to me at some point that in all the movies or other depictions of it, it can only be talked about in an ironic tone. They come with a gesture of apology for the fact that it was once taken seriously – 'But today we know better, of course'. This shift interests me. Why is it not possible to relate the history in all its ambivalence? 'That was my childhood', or 'I built my career in this business', or 'I got married here' – through everyday things like these, we were caught up in a system of which today we say, and indeed have to say, that it was truly rotten to the core. Somehow one participated in it, too. Enduring this ambivalence seems tremendously difficult, and I find it interesting to note that people use irony to make it look comical or small."

To what extent is your own perception of the GDR today different from your perception at that time?

"To a very great extent. Certainly, I am just as critical of the system of that time, but ... let's put it this way ... now I see the GDR as the glasses through which I saw the world. And at that time, I didn't see the glasses, because you aren't aware of them when they're on your nose. Today I again have glasses on, different ones, of course, but likewise ones that I can't see. Only, now, at least, I know that they are there." ❌

unn gustafsson
freelance journalist

Nostalgia has often been seen as a medical condition. But there has never been a treatment.



PHOTO: PETER JOHNSON

**MINSK.
KURAPATY.
KHATYN.**



“**T**hey were lined up in front of the pit two by two. Every one of them had a rag stuffed in his mouth, tied with a gag so they couldn’t spit it out. The executioners wore NKVD uniforms. They shot from the side so that one bullet went through the heads of two people. As soon as the shot was fired, two people fell in the pit. Quite simply, they wanted to save ammunition.”

Stalin’s assembly-line murders in a wooded area on the outskirts of Minsk went on from the summer of 1937 to the summer of 1941. No one knows how many bodies are in the mass graves, lying as they fell. According to archeologist and Belarusian opposition politician Zianon Pazniak, at least 102,000 people were murdered here.

It was Pazniak and his colleague Eugeni Smigilau who carried out the first excavations in 1988, a year when the dissolution of the Soviet Union had already begun. They had been interviewing surviving witnesses for several years. One of them was Michola Vasilyevich Karpovich, a soldier from a nearby village who had seen how the executions were carried out.

“Once a group had been executed, they scattered a little sand over the layer of bodies, and then flattened the sand with shovels so that the ground down in the pit was evened out before they lined up the next group for execution. As soon as they had executed enough that the pit was almost filled, they poured sand over the bodies and smoothed out the ground.”

“It was amazing how consistently the conclusions of my analysis of the results of the excavations agreed with what all the eyewitnesses had previously told me”, Pazniak later noted in a new paper.

On average, there were two hundred bodies in every grave – all of these people executed with a bullet through the head.

“If we start from these 200 bodies and multiply the figure by 510, which is the number of mass graves identified so far, we arrive at a figure of at least 102,000 executed people”, Pazniak concluded.

He believes the real number of people executed at Kurapaty may be twice that number, for two reasons. Several mass graves are considerably longer than the ten-meter long graves that have been excavated, and as many as a hundred mass graves may have been destroyed when a ring road was built in the 1950s and when a gas pipeline was laid in the 1980s.

The first wooden cross was erected in 1989 in the woods alongside the highway to Vitebsk, and with Belarusian independence in 1991, Kurapaty became – fleetingly – an official symbol of the Stalin era and communism. Three years later, Alyaksandr Lukashenka came to power and the openness that had characterized the late 1980s and early 1990s was soon lost. Following a re-examination of the material, Oleg Bozhelko, prosecutor general of Belarus, determined in October 1998 that it was impossible to come to any certain conclusions about who committed the murders in Kurapaty. It might have been the Germans, as the communist old guard persisted in claiming.

“All political sides in the dispute interpret the evidence in their own way”, Bozhelko explained. “It is impossible to confirm or dismiss any of these versions”, he asserted. And thus had Alyaksandr Luka-

shenka turned back the hands of time. The truth about the murders at Kurapaty did not fit into his worldview and does not accord with the “state ideology” currently being propagated in Belarus.

Admitting the truth about the murders at Kurapaty, making this place into a public memorial, as President Viktor Yushchenko did with the similar site on the outskirts of Kiev, would contribute to the creation of a new historical memory, a memory that would serve only the democratic opposition. Alyaksandr Lukashenka has chosen another path. And Zianon Pazniak, the man who brought the murders at Kurapaty to light, has now been a political refugee for years.

From Minsk, one takes the number three highway northwest towards the city of Vitebsk. Kurapaty is a wooded area whose name was in the mists of time derived from the local word for the wood anemones that carpeted the forest floor early in the spring.

Alongside the road, on the other side of the barrier, there stands a small sign noting that Kurapaty lies inside the woods. There are no directions for getting there, no indication of where one should turn off the main road. And so Kurapaty is visible and yet hidden.

In the woods, the wooden crosses stand in close ranks. Today, only a single skier has passed this way, along the forest road that leads up to the place where the three large crosses were erected in 1991. The crosses are still crusted with hoarfrost and frozen snow. A frozen carnation. An inscription. A portrait. An endless silence over snow-covered ground that is waiting for the spring and the carpet of flowers. For a truth to reach out across the country and for the people who still don’t know. They are many. Even in Belarus.

The story of Khatyn is different. One continues down highway number three towards Vitebsk. One is informed well in advance that one is approaching Khatyn, and the sign showing where to turn off the main road is obvious. The monument is gigantic. The snow that fell during the night has been carefully removed from the road up to the memorial and from the grounds of the monument.

It was here on the 22nd of March that the German occupiers, in reprisal for an attack by Belarusian partisans on a German convoy in which a German officer had been killed, razed the village to the ground and burned the villagers alive in one of the village barns: 149 people were murdered, including 75 children.

Khatyn is the English transcription of the name of the village. Although it should be spelled “Chatyn” in Swedish, the English “Khatyn” was used in the original Swedish version of this article because it is this transcription which explains why this place was appointed in the late 1960s for transformation into one of the largest World War II memorials in the entire Soviet Union.

Before then, the history of what happened in Khatyn during the war was rarely mentioned in the history books. However, in the 1960s, the truth about Stalin’s murder of Polish officers in an entirely different Katyn, the Katyn outside Smolensk in Russia, began to come to light in Western Europe. A British historian published a book about Katyn, the BBC made a documentary, and Polish immigrants in London and

Stockholm erected monuments in remembrance of Stalin’s murders in Katyn. The politicians in Moscow were irate. Brezhnev and his colleagues made demands to the British and Swedish governments to put the lid on the matter and to forbid the spread of “malicious” propaganda about Stalin in Western countries. The truth about Stalin’s brutal murder of 25,000 Polish officers and non-commissioned officers was among the most secret of the officially secret truths during the entire 70 years of the Soviet Union’s existence. The truth about this Katyn did not fly across the world until the Polish President died in a plane crash in April of last year while on his way to Katyn outside Smolensk in Russia.

The monument in Khatyn in Belarus was an official sleight of hand.

No other country in Europe suffered such grave losses during World War II as the Soviet Union. The Soviet Republic of Belarus was perhaps the hardest hit of all. Millions of people lost their lives. More than five thousand villages were obliterated by the German occupiers. One of them was called Khatyn. A name deceptively similar to Stalin’s Katyn outside Smolensk.

That is why it was here, and nowhere else in Belarus, that Leonid Brezhnev and the Soviet politburo ordered their colleagues in Minsk to transform the then rather modest memorial in Khatyn into a gigantic monument commemorating all the devastation in Belarus during World War II.

The result is impressive. Heartrending. Every house in the village stands as a bricked-up ruin with its chimney pointing to the sky where the smoke from the burnt bodies wafted. On every chimney are inscribed the names of the people who once lived in that very house. Twice a minute, bells ring somewhere in the broad expanse, to remind visitors that every thirty seconds during the years 1941–1945, a Belarusian citizen gave his life to the war. No one can visit Khatyn without being touched. No one can leave Khatyn unmoved. Part of the explanation of the history of Belarus since 1945 is also given here.

But in Khatyn, the truth about the past, the truth about the German occupation and the Nazi murders, is inexorably intertwined with the lies about the history of the Soviet Union, with the lie of Stalin’s innocence of the equally horrific murders in Katyn – the reason the memorial was built in 1969. It was to Khatyn that Western heads of state were taken starting in the early 1970s. Fidel Castro of Cuba and Raul Gandhi of India were brought here – and so was Richard Nixon of the United States.

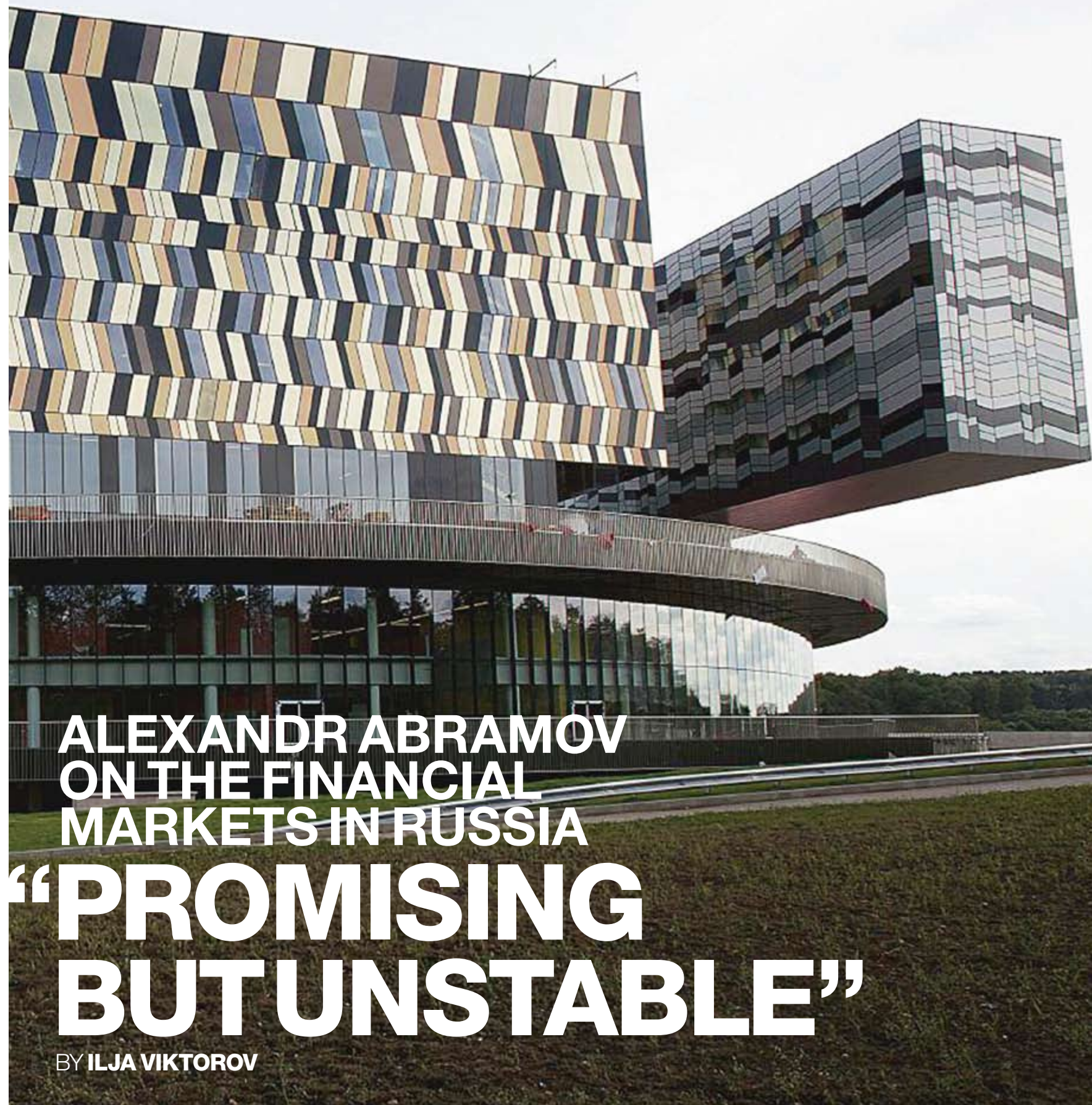
Kurapaty and Khatyn: two places along the same road, the number three highway from Minsk to Vitebsk. Two places that are about history. But also about how history is used. And in Alyaksandr Lukashenka’s Belarus, about the history being enacted today. ❌

peter johnsson

freelance journalist

This may be Europe’s bloodiest landscape. Here, the memories are frozen solid.

interview



**ALEXANDR ABRAMOV
ON THE FINANCIAL
MARKETS IN RUSSIA**

**“PROMISING
BUT UNSTABLE”**

BY **ILJA VIKTOROV**

Russian financial markets have been a completely new element in the Russian post-Soviet economy. The level of development and the character of the financial market institutions in this country can tell us much about whether Russia will succeed or fail in evolving towards a well-functioning market economy. Professor Alexandr Abramov from the Higher School of Economics in Moscow is one of Russia's leading experts on Russian financial markets. Ilja Viktorov from CBEES met him in Moscow to pose some questions concerning developments in the field.

It has already been twenty years since the first stock exchanges appeared in Russia. In the early '90s, many exchanges arose. It was like an epidemic, says Alexandr Abramov. In the beginning, Moscow had only five or six exchanges, mostly for commodity trading. They traded very unusual securities; it would all look very amateurish now. Starting with the "voucher" privatization in 1993, stock exchanges got a new jump start, notes Alexandr Abramov. The voucher, or privatization check, Abramov explains, was a bearer security; it was possible to sell and buy the voucher freely. The foundations of the first serious stock exchanges in Russia were laid by the voucher market. The next stage of money privatization made it possible to buy shares from the population in Russian regions and sell them at exchanges in the capital.

The Moscow Interbank Currency Exchange (MICEX) was established as the first modern exchange in 1993. Since 1994, the second exchange, the Russian Trading System, came into existence as a result of cooperation between the largest brokers. RTS arose as a dealer market; it was like a Russian NASDAQ. The RTS index is the oldest and most famous one in Russia.

Abramov describes the emerging commodity market: "What did the 1990s look like in Russia? There was an extremely profitable commodity market where you could find goods at very low prices set by the state and resell them on the free market at much higher prices. It was a very simple business, but the first brokers profited on this trade. The emergence of brokerage houses like Troika Dialog and Aton then meant that a new, more civilized market appeared. These brokers specialized in securities trading; they were a new generation of brokers with a different mentality. Starting in 1993, the state began to issue and trade government short-term discount bonds, so-called GKO, which involved lots of major banks in the process, like Michail Khodorkovsky's Menatep."

Before the collapse of the GKO market in 1998, a rather dynamic market infrastructure had developed, according to Abramov.

"Of course, the government was too aggressive in using this financial instrument to finance the state budget deficit. It pursued too risky a policy, which in the end resulted in a default of the GKO, which, of course, meant a collapse of the Russian financial market, which lasted for a couple of years. However, the GKO market did have a positive side. It provided a great impulse for the development of the MICEX, where considerable investments were made in the trading system and depositories."

According to Abramov, the GKO market made it possible for many people to be engaged in the financial market industry. Today, these professionals manage the Russian stock exchanges in a rather effective way. Abramov also believes that the GKO market contributed to the formation of new rules and regulations of the securities market, in particular by creating a business environment that enabled companies to survive even the 1998 financial crisis. "After several years the spirit of trust between participants of the Russian financial market was restored – a rather rapid development."

Today Russia has two major stock exchanges. This, explains Abramov, is the result of different centers of influence: "There is one group, a very important participant in the securities market, concentrated around the Central Bank of Russia. It is a main dealer in the Russian state bonds market and it now issues its own bonds as well. Thus, as a major and influential market participant, it arose as an important

player that invested a lot of money in the formation of the MICEX market. Initially, MICEX was developed as a currency market and as a market for the state-issued securities. Only afterwards did MICEX start to develop its stock market."

"Another group, RTS, is based on principals that are more self-regulating; it evolved around major brokers which were beyond the direct control of the state. RTS was founded as a stock exchange for transactions with non-residents, which is an important function even today. It also gradually began to involve other participants, mostly from the non-banking sector. Thereafter, both exchanges experienced a process of democratization in terms of the involvement of a broader circle of participants and owners. Today, most of the Russian financial market participants are engaged in both exchanges. However, some specialization on different

segments of the market can be identified. RTS is more oriented towards foreign participants; most transactions need to be made in foreign currencies, and are not always conducted on Russian territory. The MICEX market is a ruble market only, and all transactions are made within Russia. Historically, it happened that MICEX won the battle over the Russian corporate bond market, and today RTS is not engaged in the trading of either corporate or regional bonds. This strengthens the position of MICEX, because it has greater liquidity. The state-issued securities are traded here, and the currency market as well is confined to MICEX. All of this is organized under the auspices of the Central Bank. This means that the Russian spot market is organized on MICEX. On the other hand, the derivatives market, including options, futures, and some other instruments, is concentrated on RTS. The latter is also trying to compete with MICEX on the equity market with their new project RTS-Standard, which, surprisingly, has been quite successful. At first glance,

only about 5% of the equity market is controlled by RTS. However, if we look at the market transactions, beyond repurchase agreements and so on, we discover that RTS controls about 30% of the Russian equity market. In my view, this is a good example of competition between the two stock exchanges which contributes to the development of both."

Ilja Viktorov: But the government wants to merge them, right?

Alexandr Abramov: The problem is that the decision-making process within the government and the Federal Financial Market Service (FSFR) is not transparent. The process has many unclear aspects. But at the moment, it would appear that the government intends to merge the two stock exchanges, which they believe will contribute to positioning Moscow as an international financial center. Apparently, it is thought that it will be easier to control one stock exchange instead of two. Personally, I do not think that merging the two stock exchanges is a good idea. MICEX and RTS have completely different ownership structures, which would likely lead to conflicts of interests if such a merger took place. MICEX is owned by the Central Bank and other banks that are mainly controlled by the state, while RTS is owned by independent brokerage houses. What should be centralized is rather the infrastructure, namely depositories and clearing houses, not the exchanges themselves.

Viktorov: Could it be that the real explanation of the success of MICEX after the 1998 crisis was the support from the state, which it used to establish its dominant position?

Abramov: To some degree, this factor did play a role, but I do not think it was a



Alexandr Abramov.

decisive one. The major brokerage houses that controlled RTS made a serious mistake in the late 1990s. During this time, a large number of discount brokers arose, like Otkritie or Finam. They offered a more effective Internet-based mechanism of transactions. This made it easier and cheaper for private investors to buy and sell securities. The large brokers rejected this idea, and the Internet-based brokers had to switch their activities to MICEX. This is a key explanation for why MICEX became a leading exchange in the Russian equity market.

Viktorov: As you said, the Russian government intends to create an international financial center in Moscow. Is it realistic, given the short history of the Russian financial market?

Abramov: I believe, with some reservations, that it is indeed realistic. This idea should be approached from the standpoint of manageability. Today we have a very clear concept of this center, with some elements of a business plan elaborated by the Ministry of Economic Development, which has overall responsibility for this program. There is also a governmental group of high officials and business people who are thought to be able to contribute to the creation of such a center. Both stock exchanges in Moscow are positive about this idea as well. Meanwhile, the problem of infrastructure in the city is not so easy to solve. The situation with transport and traffic jams is disastrous; there is not even enough parking space at the MICEX building or the Moscow City business area, to say nothing of taxi drivers who cannot speak English, and will not be able to in the near future. Moscow is quite simply not a convenient place to conduct financial transactions, if you compare it, for example, to Shanghai. And the regime of financial regulation here is too unstable as well. Such problems will not be solvable in the next five to ten years. So I do not believe that the idea of transforming the city of Moscow into an international financial center is feasible. Rather, another option might be more realistic, like creating a local zone in one of Moscow's suburbs, with good infrastructure, convenient connections to airports, and its own administration. It would follow the same logic as the creation of the Skolkovo Innovation Center outside Moscow, in which the government is now engaged.

Viktorov: At a conference, I heard a representative from one of the leading Russian investment companies claim that the infrastructure of the Russian financial market is well developed, in contrast to the Russian economy, which this infrastructure should be serving. "There is nothing to invest in", is how he put it.

Abramov: To some degree, this is true, but I think it is an oversimplification. Yes, the infrastructure of the Russian financial market is quite workable, though not ideal. The main problem is that our financial intermediaries, our brokers and investment companies, have a very weak influence on the economy. Unfortunately, they focus their business activities more on the extraction of short-term speculative profits than on the pursuit of a long-term strategy. They do not transfer capital from non-residents, state institutions, and rich clients into the real economy to supply it with investments. That's why I think that the activities of Russian financial intermediaries should be modernized. Of course, we have a well-developed bond market; there are some initial public offerings (IPOs) that started in Russia. But the fundamental problem is that the Russian population does not trust its money to financial intermediaries. Generally speaking, a household in Russia should earn about 25,000 USD of yearly income to be able to make investments in the financial market. We have about 5.5–6 million such households in Russia. In China there are about 8–9 million such households, and in India about 3–4 million. So, potentially, Russia has a large number of households that could invest in financial instruments – the situation is quite comparable to conditions in China. However, in Russia, only about one million people participate in the market, whereas in China, approximately 220 million are involved in the financial market to some degree, and in India, about 60 million people. To put it simply, the Russian population is not in any hurry to put their money into the hands of financial intermediaries. The main problem of our investment companies and brokers is that they cannot survive and provide effective services for a long time. It is a matter of weakness of the financial institutions in a developing economy like Russia; our intermediaries seem to be

incapable of building up a strategy to support long-term, serious investors. This would mean making considerable investments in the whole chain of infrastructure, which the intermediaries are incapable of doing because of a great degree of uncertainty in the Russian economy. It is not clear how "long" money can be accumulated in the economy. The Russian financial companies do not know whether their investments will yield any returns in the future. For example, the future of the Russian pension system is still unclear.

Viktorov: But the reform of the Russian pension system failed, didn't it?

Abramov: Yes, it failed, but the main problem is that nobody has provided an evaluation of the reasons for the failure and the kind of lessons that should be learned and applied to the creation of a new, effective system. Instead, we are witnessing how the same institutions, almost the same people who were responsible for the previous failed pension reform, are starting to elaborate a new pension reform. This problem is very serious, because a well-functioning pension system is a key element of a developed financial market. That is why the financial institutions do not invest long money in the market. Instead, they are oriented towards making short-term speculative profits, an orientation which contributes to the formation of a thirst for gambling rather than for the cultivation of a long-term savings culture among the Russian population.

Today the future development of the Russian financial market remains at the crossroads. One way forward would be to adopt an approach similar to the American model, where the big financial intermediaries are financed by the pension system and other long-term savings, and where a majority of households are clients of brokerage houses. The second alternative would follow the path demonstrated by China and India where people participate in the financial markets as if in a big lottery and where millions of people have been involved in the process as gamblers. Unfortunately, without solving the problem of pension savings, the alternative of the spread of risky financial operations among the population will be quite probable in Russia as well. There are some troublesome signs of this now, first and foremost a great popularity of the FOREX market, different lotteries, and financial pyramids. Unfortunately, the government does not realize the dangers; the state prefers to ignore this problem. Such risky schemes as FOREX are simply not regulated. The main regulator, FSFR, prefers to supervise traditional, respectable participants in the financial market but does not have the responsibility of implementing a long-term strategic policy aimed at

developing the financial markets in Russia, nor does it have the resources for such a task. And they prefer to ignore the fact that the population is indeed succumbing to the financial addiction. The authorities think they simply have no responsibility over that and lack a systemic vision of the problem.

Viktorov: And in what way, with such an approach, do the authorities intend to create an international financial center in Moscow?

Abramov: Unfortunately, neither the government nor participants in the financial market realize that such a task presupposes more than simply access of foreign securities to the Russian stock exchanges, or the mere invitation of some foreign participants to the Russian market. These steps would constitute a very narrow approach to the problem. An international financial center cannot be developed without a corresponding well-thought-out policy aimed at the development of the domestic financial market. We should understand how the entrance of non-residents, foreign companies, new technologies, new people, and new laws could be used to create competitive Russian structures that, in turn, would be included in global chains of major foreign financial companies. In other words, the domestic market should also benefit from the development of the international financial center. It is against this background that pension saving could play an important role, because these savings potentially could strengthen some Russian financial companies and make them competitive. But for now, the pension money does not work for those who save or invest. The current system is ineffective.

Viktorov: The Russian stock exchanges are not the only ones where the Russian companies make their IPOs. They often prefer to do it on

"SOME RUSSIAN INDUSTRIAL COMPANIES PREFER TO REGISTER THEIR HEADQUARTERS ABROAD, HAVING ALL THE DIRTY PRODUCTION INSIDE RUSSIA"

foreign exchanges, first and foremost on the London Stock Exchange. What's the reason for this?

Abramov: This depends primarily on the capacity of the Russian domestic market. We may develop technology and institutions whenever we can, but it must be admitted that there is much more money in London or Hong Kong. In other words, to be competitive, Russian financial markets need long money to be raised for the IPOs of Russian companies. And creating conditions for this is a difficult task, though not impossible.

There is another alarming tendency that can be observed in the context of IPOs. Some Russian industrial companies prefer to register their headquarters abroad where they keep all their financial assets while having all the dirty production and technological risks inside Russia. The aluminum giant Rusal, which made its IPO in Hong Kong this year, is one example. Other companies follow the same pattern. There are some doubts concerning the degree to which such companies see their future as connected with Russia.

Viktorov: And why does the Russian state apply such liberal rules for capital transactions? Why is it so easy to transfer capital abroad? The Chinese state, for example, maintains much stronger control over such transactions.

Abramov: This question is a difficult one. In my view, the state in Russia is much weaker than in China. The influence of various power and economic groups is much stronger here. So what is unacceptable in China is quite easy to do in Russia. The corporate interests prevail over the state interest; this is the most important aspect. The state in Russia is weak, and China has the advantage of maintaining a strong statist way of thinking.

The Russian government did try to introduce control over currency transactions after the GKO crisis in 1998. About 5 billion dollars was kept in Russia right after the crisis, and the government strived to prevent immediate withdrawal of this money. A special mechanism of "C-accounts" was created for this purpose. I worked at the National Depository Center at that time and have very gloomy memories of these transactions, their effectiveness, and their non-transparency. There were so many exceptions to the rule; some transactions were made after phone calls received from above. Generally speaking, a well-thought-through regime of currency control has never existed in post-Soviet Russia.

Viktorov: You wrote a lot about the carry trade mechanism. How did it contribute to the 2008 financial crisis?

Abramov: If we compare this crisis with the previous 1998 financial crisis, we may come to the conclusion that both crises had a similar mechanism. What happened before the crisis? At first, banks borrowed a lot in foreign currency and invested in ruble assets. Before the 1998 crisis, they invested in the GKO, while in 2008 they borrowed to invest in ruble corporate and regional bonds, as well as in order to provide consumption credits. In both cases, fantastic profits were realized. Then the price of oil started to drop, which made foreign players nervous because they feared a devaluation of the ruble. Even the mere risk of devaluation led to capital flight. In 1998, this devaluation happened in reality, when the ruble was devaluated by about 300%, and the banks faced a very difficult problem. They had enormous liabilities in foreign currency and kept overvalued assets in rubles, i.e. in the GKOs. So, if the 1998 devaluation was about 300%, their assets in foreign currency lost their value by the same 300%. A great imbalance between liabilities in foreign currency and ruble assets arose. This led to a liquidity problem; the banks lacked money and could not pay their debts. And what happened in 1998? The state was poor at that time and lacked money to save banks. It did try to save them by prohibiting bank payments to non-residents; it was an extraordinary measure. At the same time, the state had to place some banks into bankruptcy. These banks pursued too risky a policy. The largest banks of that era disappeared, like Menatep, Inkombank, and SBS-Agro. And the bank crisis occurred because of the devaluation.

The same scenario existed in the 2008 crisis. The difference was that the devaluation was not as strong as during the 1998 crisis. This time the Russian banks had

much greater imbalances between the liability in foreign currency and ruble assets. The banks took a gamble willingly. Even a minor devaluation could cause a great depreciation of the banks' assets. And non-residents started to withdraw their money. Basically, the Russian banks were facing the same crash as in 1998, but during the 2008 crisis, the Russian state had much more money. So, first, the state prevented a dramatic devaluation of the ruble by letting the banks exchange their rubles into foreign currency at a very favorable exchange rate. About 220 billion dollars were spent for this purpose. Second, the state spent about three trillion rubles – in the form of temporary credits, of course – to support the banks so that they could survive the crisis. All these dramatic events were the consequence of the uncontrolled carry trading mechanism. The banks and companies borrowed in foreign currency when it was cheap compared to the ruble, and invested this money in ruble assets. Carry trading can be very dangerous where there is a risk of currency devaluation – not to mention that carry trading kills domestic investment: before the crisis, the inflation rate in Russia was about 9%, while the Russian corporate bond yield was about 7%. Nobody would borrow money at 9% interest in order to invest in ruble bonds with a 7% yield, since this would entail an obvious loss. Those who raised their money in rubles could not buy Russian bonds on the domestic market. On the contrary, those who borrowed in foreign currency at 2% interest under the carry trade mechanism could make huge profits, because even a 7% yield was a lot for them. And this meant that the domestic financial market was not developed, there was no reason for Russian investors to invest in Russian bonds. Fortunately, this time, in 2008, the crisis did not end up in disaster as it did

in 1998. The state could provide guarantees for Russian banks and Russian investors, but the mechanism of the crisis was nevertheless the same. The Russian state was frightened by this situation, and today the carry trading mechanism no longer works. On the other hand, there is no money in the economy. So there are no investments, and the economy is stagnating. It is unclear where Russian companies can get money to provide economic growth.

Viktorov: But the state has money ...

Abramov: Yes, only the state. If you observe the current situation, the only investment programs underway are state-financed. Private money, wherever it may happen to exist, is not invested because of the uncertainty of the general economic situation.

Viktorov: Perhaps economic actors are simply insecure about the stability of the total

aggregate demand in the Russian economy?

Abramov: This plays a role, of course. But, generally speaking, there is no well-thought-out industrial policy, no economic strategy, in Russia. I mean not only with respect to financial markets, but as regards general development as well. There are no clear indications where, in what sectors, future growth may occur. The official Russian statistics are prettified, of course, but Russian businesses do not feel good. This especially concerns medium-sized companies; they suffered most during this crisis. ❌

**“THE OFFICIAL
RUSSIAN
STATISTICS ARE
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COURSE, BUT
RUSSIAN
BUSINESSES DO
NOT FEEL GOOD.”**

1628 revisited.

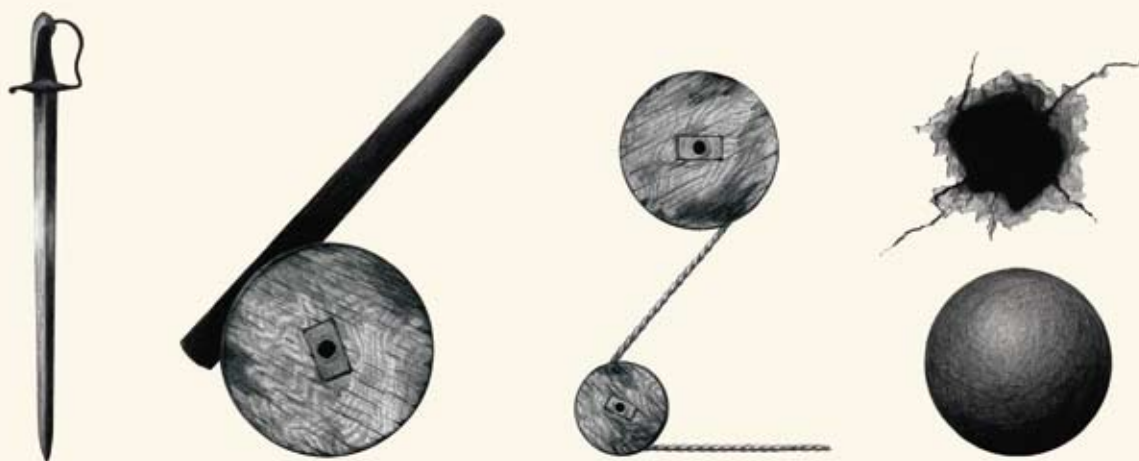
The Swedish solidarity clause and the loss of military capacity

The summer of 2009 saw a revolutionary change in Swedish security policy. Without much debate or analysis, if there was indeed any at all, the Swedish parliament (*Riksdagen*) passed a bill abolishing the traditional Swedish neutrality policy on military conflict in its vicinity. The idea of trying to keep out of European power politics, known as “The Policy of 1812”, introduced after Finland was lost to Russia in 1809, was scrapped. Although the process had already begun when the country joined the EU in 1995, this was the confirmation that Sweden had chosen a new approach to the promotion of national and international security.

The main passage guiding future security policy now reads:

Sweden will not be passive if a catastrophe or an attack befalls another [EU] member country or a Nordic country. We expect that these countries will act similarly if Sweden is affected. Sweden should therefore be able to offer as well as receive military assistance.

There may have been several reasons for this change of mind, the most flattering being that Sweden is assuming its moral responsibility. In the forefront for a long time in the promotion of human rights and democracy worldwide, Sweden is now prepared to help its neighbors defend these values, with military force if needed. A variation on this interpretation could be the desire to make it clear that Sweden takes the solidarity clause in the Lisbon Treaty seriously. A second and slightly more selfish reason might be seen in the fact that a small country like Sweden, regardless of the amount of money it is willing to spend on its military, has neither the economic nor the manpower resources needed to create a credible national defense. It has to adopt a policy where others feel obliged to help in case of a crisis. A third reason, quite interesting and seldom mentioned, could be that Sweden has interpreted the situation in Northern Europe as favorable to a more active foreign and security policy, giving it more freedom of action when it comes to promoting security, and



stability, in the region. To some extent, Sweden might be forced to take on a more active role.

During the last two and a half centuries, the Baltic Sea area has been dominated by Russia and Germany, during the Cold War by NATO and the WP, giving Sweden very little room for independent maneuvering. It had to adapt to the policies of great powers, or keep out of the way when their interests clashed. Today the situation is entirely different. Russia has been pushed back behind its eighteenth-century borders and it has lost the military might of the former Soviet Union; nevertheless, it is becoming more and more assertive when it comes to promoting its interests in its immediate surroundings. Germany has ceased to be a power player in the region, whereas the US is, to a large extent, occupied in other parts of the world. From a historical and security policy viewpoint, this constellation bears a resemblance to the one the Swedish monarch Gustavus Adolphus faced in 1627 when considering whether to engage his army in the war on the continent: a great power wanting to extend its influence in the region, potential allies that individually are too weak to withstand a common enemy, other allies that lack the military assets to engage directly (today the US, then France) and a situation where a Swedish engagement, although limited, could tip the scales.

In 1627, the armies of the Catholic Hapsburg Empire threatened to occupy the southern parts of the Baltic coast, thereby becoming a danger to a fiercely Protestant Sweden. Sweden's potential allies were in deep trouble. Denmark had been partly occupied. The Protestant principalities in Germany were in a perilous situation and there was a significant danger that Sweden would become the next target for the Catholic forces and the Counter-Reformation. After a fierce debate in the cabinet, as well as in the Diet, a decision was reached on January 12, 1628. It stated that "Denmark should be supported, the enemy should be prevented from gaining a foothold on the Baltic coast and that the war should be waged on foreign soil".

Contacts were established with

France to get support, mainly in the form of subsidies to finance the war effort.

The 1628 decision was taken under the pressure of ongoing developments, and it meant going to war. Today, conditions are much more peaceful. Instead of leading to the engagement in a war, the solidarity declaration intends to promote a more stable security environment in the Baltic Sea region. Swedish intentions would be known beforehand and would serve as a deterrent should the situation in this part of the world become tenser. Obviously, these guarantees would pose no threat to Russia. The days are long gone when there was a reason to be afraid of a country like Sweden. It should not be forgotten that it has been many centuries since the defense of Sweden was conducted abroad, but if the worst were to happen, the defense would once again be on foreign soil. A moral justification exists – in 1628 the goal was to protect fellow Protestants in Germany, in our times, to protect common values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. This modern variant of the 1628 doctrine obviously has merits.

There is more to be said about similarities between 1628 and now. In 1628, Gustavus Adolphus initiated a military reform with the aim of setting up an army and a navy suited to implementing the new Swedish security doctrine, thereby laying the foundation for the Swedish military structure that survived up until the end of the Cold War, after which it was abolished in the process of downsizing the Swedish armed forces. This process resulted in a tiny and fragmented organizational structure, more or less incapable of carrying out any serious military assignments. In the same bill that outlined the new Swedish doctrine, a plan for the development of the armed forces was laid down. It states that all units in the new structure shall be capable of participating in expeditionary operations, and be available on short notice. The need to be interoperable with foreign forces is stressed. Altogether, the stage seemed to be set for the return to a modernized version of the policies initially designed by Gustavus Adolphus, with Sweden trying to promote its own security, and

that of its neighbors, by playing an active role in the Baltic Sea region.

A closer examination of the military assets that the Swedish government will have at its disposal for the implementation of the new doctrine raises some doubts. The force structure that is supposed to be in place around 2014 has such obvious flaws that the whole idea of participating in combat operations in the region can be seriously questioned. The reserve units that will form the bulk of the army will need prolonged refresher training before they can be deployed abroad. The artillery function of the army is extremely weak, especially if the limited close air support capability of the air force is taken into account. Army units as well as the navy (and air bases) will be extremely vulnerable to air attacks due to the lack of medium and high-altitude surface-to-air missiles. Also, the functions needed for receiving military help, or for basing foreign forces on Swedish soil, are inadequate. Since any operation in the region will probably be led by NATO, there will also be a need for a time-consuming process of integrating Swedish units, and staff officers, into NATO structures before they can render any useful contributions to a large-scale military operation in the region. All in all, there is an alarming gap between the Swedish doctrine and the capabilities of the country.

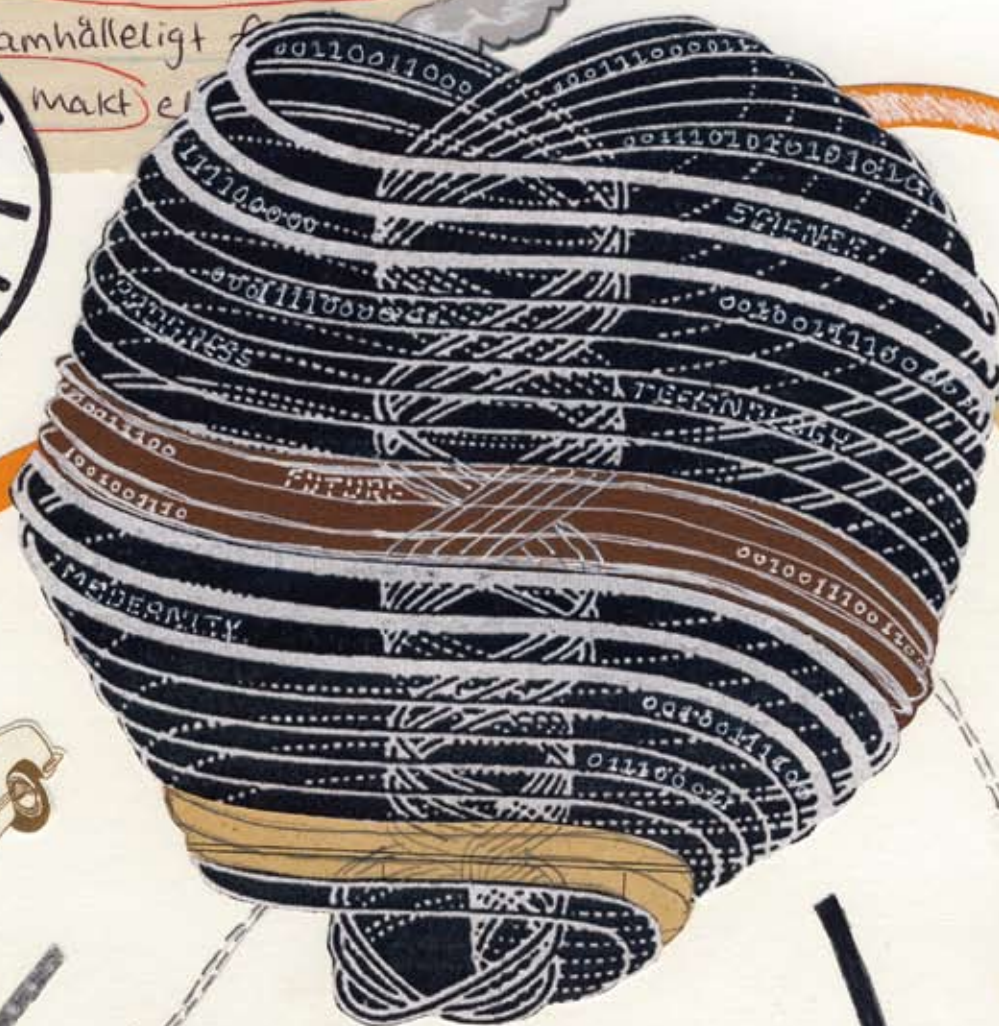
What could have been a serious Swedish effort to promote stability runs the risk of doing just the opposite. It might create unfounded expectations among its neighbors and make other powers (mainly the US) believe that they can count on Sweden in the event of a crisis in the region, which in turn would lead to false planning assumptions. Most probably, however, it will make it clear to anyone who takes the trouble to analyze Swedish capabilities that the government is pursuing an extreme "free rider" policy: not being able to defend itself and not being able to help its neighbors without support from other parties (which it will not be able to receive in an efficient way).

The solidarity declaration is a respectable attempt to retake the country's historical role of creating stability in the Baltic area. Unfortunately, the

government has inherited the defense bankruptcy estate of the turn of the century, which is lacking many of the components necessary to pursue the policy proclaimed. There is much to be done before there is coherence between security policy and defense, which was the hallmark of Gustavus Adolphus' thinking. ✖

karlis neretnieks

Det jag kallar FRAMSTEGSMYTEN är då tanken
att framsteg inom vetenskap och teknologi
leder till samhälleligt makt etc.



...have come into being and have die
no exception from the law of corruptibility that applies to
Humankind will one day surely vanish from the earth an
remember that this day may be closer than we think... For my
especially upsetting...

PESSIMISM AS WORLDVIEW

BY MARTIN KYLHAMMAR

Finnish philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright (1916–2003) is one of the foremost logicians of the 20th century, whose status was truly set in stone when he succeeded Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) at Cambridge. Aside from the action typologies, von Wright's logic is too technical and too much in the sphere of analytic philosophy for me to understand fully. But then it is not as an analytical philosopher that I have read and been moved, since the age of seventeen, by von Wright.

While still in high school, I read his *Tanke och förkunnelse* [Thought and prophecy] (1955), a book about Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky. This reading experience was a watershed for me. Von Wright seemed to be a philosopher who understood that logic alone could not give meaning to life. I felt his gravity. Life became something important.

But I believe it was also von Wright's methods that fascinated me from the start. He framed his thinking with the help of fiction writers, engaged in dialog with them even though they were dead; he knew that Tolstoy and Dostoevsky had experienced fundamental things about humanity's existential being and about history. A humanist philosophy unfurled itself; a way of thinking in which history played a starring role and involved worldviews.

I began my post-graduate education in the late 1970s by reading von Wright's *Explanation and Understanding*. It was not easy. But I still believe it was worth the effort: I have been equipped since then to discuss similarities and differences between the sciences and the humanities. It was fascinating reading for a humanist who had once wanted to be a scientist, but had taken a different path. Today, I am, parenthetically speaking, more interested in looking at scholarship as one culture and not, like von Wright, two. I am keen to emphasize that which unites all scholarly reflection, whether oriented toward the nomothetic (established in law, causally determined) or idiographic (unique, controlled by intention) processes. What they have in common I would call the Seminar.

However, Georg Henrik von Wright is known, read, and influential primarily because of his moralist works in a third genre: criticism of the modern world, written in Swedish, during the last third of his life. His most important critical examinations of civilization are *Humanismen som livshållning* [Humanism as attitude towards life], *Vetenskapen och förnuftet* [Science and reason], *Myten om framsteget* [The myth of progress], and *Att förstå sin samtid* [Understanding one's own time].

Von Wright's books, along with the ecosophical works of his colleague Arne Næss (1912–2009), are certainly the most widely discussed Nordic contributions to the discussion of the value of our form of civilization. It is perhaps no great surprise that two

such “poet philosophers” began their careers in the spirit of logical positivism. That logic is as sharp as a knife, and one might say this is a philosophy made for the technological society – but I do not at all believe that to be true. Næss's *Empirisk semantik* (1961) (English translation: *Communication and Argument: Elements of Applied Semantics*, 1966) and von Wright's *Den logiska empirismen* [Logical empirism] (1943), for example, are still fertile ground for readers who want to develop their skeptical side and soberly scrutinize that which is routinely held to be true. Philosophy and the strict analysis of argumentation here become tools available to everyone – ultimately for the sake of democracy. The new democratic society needs philosophy, as both von Wright and Næss presciently believed, because democracy needs to keep critical skepticism alive. Such skepticism can of course also lead to ecosophy.

In the last ten years of his life, von Wright came to be regarded as a role model, or perhaps more accurately as “the Humanist”. As Wittgenstein's successor and as a world-renowned philosopher, he spoke to us from an extremely authoritative position, and his writing style was characterized by linguistic elegance and superb understanding. What he says in his works of critical examination of civilization is not at all difficult to assimilate – quite the opposite, in fact.

Von Wright thus embodied the humanist, but more than anyone else, he also gave humanism the face of pessimism. Are humanism and pessimism then the same? With both will and feeling, I find it easy to answer yes – and I do not think I would have to look very far to find support for and compatriots in that belief. But for this very reason, I believe it is important to continue debating the intellectual grounds that are the basis of this worldview. Is humanism also pessimism about reason, and not only about will and feeling? Von Wright is probably a better touchstone for this question than anyone else.

Von Wright's pessimistic outlook derives from a highly personal perspective, and not simply from his analytical and philosophical background. I believe the personal here is universal. This became increasingly obvious as well as shocking to me when von Wright's last work, his memoirs, was published. This is why this critical observation on a worldview alludes to his most famous book. And so we proceed to Pessimism as Worldview.

TWO DUBIOUS HYPOTHESES

Georg Henrik von Wright's thinking on civilization can be most easily summed up by saying that he formulates two hypotheses about our time and that on the grounds of these hypotheses he makes two

WRESTLING WITH A GIANT OF BILDUNG

Martin Kylhammar (b. 1954) once wrote an article that he entitled “Aristocratize more!” (Swedish: *Aristokratisera mera*). His argument in that article was that the task of an educator and cultural critic – two roles that he had taken on for a long time – must be to raise the masses to the level of the best educated, not lower the whole society to the level where there is no education at all. For when it comes to education, *Bildung*, there is no contradiction between the elite and the masses: the majority can in fact be the elite; thus, within the realm of education, aristocracy and democracy are not opposites, but are rather mutually reinforcing. Anyone wanting to “democratize more” should therefore “aristocratize more”.

Martin Kylhammar, by profession a literary scholar, with August Strindberg as one of his research focuses – and, like Strindberg, well-versed in the French cultural climate – has now begun examining one of Northern Europe's 20th century giants of erudition, Georg Henrik von Wright. Von Wright was the internationally renowned professional philosopher who became not just a cultural critic, but, over the years, more and more of a “civilization critic”. The works he wrote in the latter genre are mainly composed in his native language, Swedish – one of the two official languages of Finland, his homeland – and therefore not terribly accessible for non-Nordic readers. This latter fact is a very good reason for taking up Kylhammar's intellectual wrestling with his illustrious predecessor in the columns of *Baltic Worlds*.

It is those who have meant the most for us of whom we should be most critical. But note well: criticism is not the same as rejection. To criticize is to weigh every word carefully – on golden scales. Von Wright's criticism of civilization has made a profound impression on Kylhammar, but not in a way that has made him accept the criticism – far from it. He understands the target of the criticism, and that it is not simply drawn from his own fancy. But Kylhammar's own objections have compelled him to formulate an alternative. The book from which this chapter on von Wright, who belonged to a famous Finnish noble family, is taken can be read as a grand attempt to formulate such an alternative. It also binds together, in an interesting and controversial way, the elder and younger von Wright.

highly provocative predictions about the future of our civilization. I will begin with a brief presentation of the hypotheses and the predictions; thereafter, I will consider the risks involved in this drastic thinking, what might be unreasonable about it, and a possible explanation for why von Wright's pessimism is so one-sided.

The first hypothesis: Our culture is dominated by instrumental reason, reason that is technical, oriented toward finding the most efficient method of doing things. According to von Wright, this instrumental reason displaces questions of value, makes them irrelevant. We ask ourselves less and less what the point of change is, what the value of change is. For this reason, change has automatically come to be regarded as improvement, as progress. But it is by no means certain that this is the case; the situation is, in von Wright's view, quite the opposite: progress and belief in progress are a myth that obscures what is actually going on. Progress is, like the emperor in the face of honest common sense, naked.

Modern technology, such as broadband and computers, writes von Wright, is assigned intrinsic value in our civilization. But he personally has discovered that technology disrupts "the natural rhythm of life. The flow of information confuses us. It compels fast decisions and opinions, which perhaps exceed the human being's biologically determined prerequisites for reacting to external impressions. The consequence is frustration, anxiety, and stress." He further maintains that the new technology "becomes an end in itself, whose accomplishment may counteract the purposes information and communication are meant to serve".

I do not know whether this first of von Wright's hypotheses is true, or whether it can be empirically tested. In any case, I find its formulation too categorical. Imagine, for instance, something as pleasant as love. In premodern society, love, or at least its institutional manifestation, marriage, was handled precisely with instrumental reason, as a means to another end. Marriage was a means to achieve other reasonable goals, such as efficient production, greater power, or peaceful social coexistence. Today, love has in many respects, and contrary to von Wright's assumption, been entirely liberated from the domain of instrumental reason. These days, even royalty marry for love. Only marginalized royalist ideologues find it reasonable to demand that princes and princesses sacrifice their personal desires on the altar of instrumental reason.

It seems even clearer to me that instrumental reason has lost ground even within what has become the core of modern politics – education, healthcare, and social services. And with the rise of the welfare states, it has of course become completely unreasonable to maintain, as von Wright does, that the modern, affluent, Western world is incompatible with human biology. It would be more accurate to say that the black death of the Middle Ages or starvation in the most technologically and economically underdeveloped countries of our day is incompatible with our biology.

I suspect that von Wright the philosopher has made a common error, as he seems to presume that technical/scientific modernization has nothing to do with humanist gains, and that cultural modernization – and with it spiritual values – has thus had to take a back seat. In any case, it seems to me entirely legiti-

mate to pose a counter-hypothesis: The modernization process has strongly contributed to the ejection of instrumental reason from areas where it has no place, and modernization has celebrated triumphs where its particular kind of reason truly comes into its own.

The second hypothesis: Many argue that the modern era is shaped by continuous development along a time axis, popularly expressed in the axiom "little by little, in every way, things get better and better every day". Von Wright instead subscribes to a cyclical view of history, rather than a linear one. Such a von Wrightian perspective was probably predominant among our historical philosophers until the 19th century. History was thought to be a matter of gradual worsening and decline – something that followed the pattern of a circle.

Plato argued that our *déjà-vu* experiences were real in the sense that we were actually recalling things that had once occurred. And even more numerous are those who have defended degeneration theories in various guises: In the beginning were paradise and golden ages, when humankind lived in health and harmony, only to degenerate by stages to bronze and iron, to the Fall and pain.

More specifically, von Wright connects his thinking on history to the most extreme and famous proponent of such beliefs, Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) and his book *The Decline of the West*. Von Wright characterizes our time thus:

The present thus seems an end point that one has reached when certain inherent potencies have been drained and the satisfaction given by their realization has begun to mix with doubt and self-criticism, leaving room for a sense of discord and fatigue. We are in such a position now. The West is tired. [...] When the fellowship of values breaks apart and the pressure of tradition is weakened – familiar phenomena in our age – a culture loses its identity, its peculiarity, becomes "vulgar" and wastes away. The disappearance of a culture need not be a "violent death". It may also be a last "whimper", to paraphrase an oft-quoted word by T. S. Eliot.

We will shortly see examples of this – some of the factors that von Wright believes underlie these losses of potency and identity. But on the other hand, I believe that on this point von Wright is not particularly interested in empirical reasoning and evidence for the decline hypothesis. This seems to me more of a notion about the necessary course of history and a translation of humankind's inevitable development from birth to death to the collective fate of humankind, of civilization – a socialization of personal destiny, if you will.

And with that, onward to von Wright's two provocative predictions.

TWO CONTROVERSIAL PREDICTIONS

Von Wright is not often concrete, but his predictions are. The first speaks of our relationship to the natural world. Von Wright, as a critic of civilization, holds that in its technological hubris, Western civilization is destroying the earth with toxins and gases, that the

ozone layer is being depleted, and that we are acting in a way that fundamentally disrupts the ecological balance. This is exacerbated by our reckless exploitation of finite natural resources. He claims that our lifestyle cannot be reproduced in space or time. It cannot be made universal – the resources are not enough. The Chinese cannot have as many refrigerators as we do, Indians not as many rolls of toilet paper, and future generations cannot live as we do and in our material excess. We have enriched ourselves at the expense of the Third World and of our descendants. By extension, we are seeing indications of a hardening global struggle for shrinking natural resources – the final nuclear war that determines the fate of humankind becomes its endpoint.

Von Wright's second concrete prediction is that the earth will be destroyed – and rather soon. He even said, though this he later recanted, that from a cosmic perspective, the destruction "means no more than a pipeful of snuff to me" – in other words: nothing. In *Vetenskap och förnuftet* [Science and reason] he writes:

I believe it is useful to be aware of the realism in the apocalyptic perspective opening before us. Animal species have come into being and have died out. Homo sapiens is surely no exception from the law of corruptibility that applies to all living things [...]. Humankind will one day surely vanish from the earth and it may be useful to remember that this day may be closer than we think. [...] For my part, I cannot find this especially upsetting. Considering how many species humans have exterminated, such a nemesis of nature may seem just.

This prediction sparked quite a commotion. On one level, I can find the reaction remarkable. Obviously, humankind will vanish from the earth and our sun will someday die like other suns. This thought could make anyone sad. Perhaps it was precisely because von Wright is *not* sad that readers were so dismayed. He instead saw the extermination of humankind as a species as just and well-deserved. And he connected the destruction not only to cosmic necessity, but also to the hubris of humankind. In any case, the apocalypse will not occur as a result of the absolutes of nature, but as a consequence of our own actions. Our technological hubris is punished unmercifully by the our nemesis, nature – and for us, it is far too late to repent.

In his criticism of civilization, von Wright discusses two modernization processes: the economic and the scientific/technical. But he has surprisingly little interest in the third revolution of modernity, the cultural. For example, he takes not the slightest notice of the fact that both his hypotheses and both his predictions have been articulated many times and under various conditions in our history. All of his predecessors have been wrong in their predictions (so far). That alone, I believe, should be reason for reflection and deeper analysis.

But first and foremost, von Wright seems virtually uninterested in perhaps the most important element of this cultural modernization, the founding of democracies and the communicative revolution it has entailed. He is, in short, not the least bit preoccupied with analyzing the modernization that is *not* about economic

growth or economism, that is not about science, technology, and instrumental reason, but is rather about greater civil participation, the democratic culture of knowledge, popular movements and general education, enfranchisement and emancipation ...

THE DARK SHADOW OF THE STATE OF EXCEPTION

I do not think it unfair to say that von Wright is an unusually categorical “crisis thinker”. To his mind, civilization is in crisis, reason has fallen into the hands of thieves, modernity has capsized, progress is an illusion. In reality, we are on the edge of destruction, and our political, economic, and scientific authorities are, consciously or unconsciously, hoodwinking us. From this perspective, democracy and equality do not seem the most important issues to discuss. If we are living in a state of exception, questions of democracy become a luxury.

And democracy hardly seems like the solution if you believe yourself to be living in a life-threatening crisis. The opposite is more likely, especially if there is reason to believe that political leaders are ignorant, recalcitrant, and perhaps even malevolent. Democratic decision processes take time, a long time, and one cannot rely on the citizenry being in possession of correct analyses of civilization. Or as von Wright puts it, “the complications of the industrial and technologized society are so great that democratic participation in public decision processes *must* in the end degenerate into an empty formality of either agreement or protest in the face of incomprehensible alternatives”. In my opinion, von Wright’s thinking had much more interesting democratic potential when he was a logical positivist in the 1940s and 1950s than when he became an interpreter of the age in the 1980s and 1990s.

Citizen influence and public opinion are banned in a state of exception – albeit for the (possibly putative) public good. When a factual – not only mental – state of emergency is declared, it is almost always in connection with war, class struggle, or natural disaster. In these cases, one can rather quickly determine whether it was reasonable to declare the state of emergency and whether it had the desired positive result. Things are different in the mental state of exception. It is characterized, I believe, by the “crisis philosopher” representing the present as an acute, life-threatening crisis – but by the citizens generally not perceiving the situation in the same way (which they would in genuine states of emergency). The “discerning mind” demands radical action that citizens feel no need for. I believe it is obvious that it is sometimes reasonable – and has been good – to act on the basis of the minority’s superior understanding of the long-term truth. But to change an entire civilization’s lifestyle, consumption patterns, habits ... on that basis is something else entirely. It is only afterwards that one can ask whether it was worth the enormous risks and costs, it is only afterwards that one can determine whether the future scenario that constituted the basis for the action was reasonable.

I believe one can justifiably criticize “state of exception” thinkers, in general, from the democratic perspective. They constantly risk fomenting movements from which there is no guarantee anything good will

come. They rarely think that the actions they demand – or induce – to prevent disaster also have major, unforeseen, and unwanted consequences, sometimes of a more serious kind than the disasters the interventions were intended to forestall.

Consciously and unconsciously, the disaster scenarist also constantly plays a trump card in the debate that the democrat cannot use: If you do not do as I say, it will all go to hell, and we have no time to hesitate and slowly test the sustainability of your arguments. If you contradict me, I will brand you irresponsible.

I will try to express something particularly important to me in a couple of short sentences. This is an insight seldom put forth (not even in the more intellectual debate surrounding von Wright) and one that never reaches the most influential arenas of the public conversation, but it is one of extraordinary significance to those who hold and communicate this insight.

THE FUNDAMENTAL AFFIRMATION OF THE FUTURE

Apocalyptic visions and states of exception divert attention and strip mundane effort – the ongoing, successive, prudent, and searching endeavor to improve our earthly lives – of its fundamental value. These peaceful endeavors, always performed far from the light of public scrutiny, definitely end up in the shadows when the spectacular exceptions and the more inflammatory battle cries of the urgent, life-threatening crises grab the attention of the public. Compared to the disaster, they are no more interesting than a cup of instant soup.

But even more important, if there can be something more important, is that the disaster philosophers almost always ignore the fundamentals. They lack the imagination and capacity, the will and knowledge, to visualize all the possibilities people of the future will have acquired to manage the difficult issues of the day. The problems and dilemmas of the day will be resolved and managed in the future using methods that are today unknown – avenues created in the permanent revolution that is the purview of economics, science, technology, and culture. Disaster theorists say instead that the race is over, or that tomorrow’s problems must be solved using today’s methods.

Hundreds of years of experience contradict this notion: Science, technology, and culture will release human creativity whose results are today beyond our ken. In fifty or a hundred years, the technical, scientific, and conceptual prerequisites for handling the threats of the day will be completely different from those availability today. Threats will be forestalled, new ones will emerge, others will take on reasonable proportions. Nor do I believe it is unusual for distinguished philosophers (like von Wright) to become temporal egocentrics when they think about the future.

This is the hope, the trust, the optimism: the foundations of everyday values and the importance of personal effort. The understanding that I am contributing to the unknown possibilities of the future is of course particularly worthy of preserving and considering when we talk about future, *not yet* realized crises (such as climate change), although it can also be a source of calm and comfort in ongoing crises (such as the

AIDS epidemic in Africa). It is with deep concern that I see von Wright’s pessimism appearing in the more impactful public headlines. There, the not yet realized possibilities of the future are not even a category of thought.

I believe that Candide, the optimist, and Pangloss, the pessimist, are both wrong and make mirror-image errors: Both the optimist and the pessimist are quite often moralizers. Or to put it more brutally: Candide sees, so to speak, only forcibly sterilized, lobotomized people in the hands of the social state’s eugenics engineers; Pangloss sees only progress-serving scientists who put contraceptive pills in the hands of girls and supply the melancholy with Prozac. Pangloss is preoccupied with our age, which constantly makes it possible to do so many new things. Candide is horrified and talks about the “risk society” that is the consequence of putting sophisticated technology in the hands of imperfect humans. This negative or positive moralizing about the contemporary age is in danger of hiding the essential: Candide does not understand that the human scope of action has always been limited. He condemns the contemporary age – or for that matter history – without asking whether there might really be other, better alternatives waiting in the wings. Pangloss is incapable of seeing the problematic elements of our expanding scope of action. He represents the unavoidable fact that modernization and political action are always accompanied by unintended, negative consequences. *In the first case, today seems worse than it is; in the second, the future seems better than it turns out to be.*

A PERSON IS BEHIND THE ISSUE

As I see it, von Wright’s pessimism thus rests on two dubious and empirically non-testable hypotheses: that instrumental reason has won across the board, and that the notion of progress is a bluff that is concealing the lost vitality of our civilization; and on two controversial and likewise dubious predictions: that natural resources are finite and the struggle for them is going to lead to catastrophic, global war, and that the earth will be destroyed as a consequence of humankind’s technological hubris and unrestrained exploitation of nature.

However, these hypotheses and predictions are so obviously weak and, as we have seen, easy to criticize, even to reject as pure speculation, that one might wonder whether they were not put forth mainly as positive provocation: Look what might happen if we do not listen to reason and more cogently reflect about the course and meaning of modernization processes. This may be so. Some of von Wright’s interpreters have perceived him in this way, as a false doomsday prophet who used his rhetoric to bring humankind to their senses and thus save the world from its fate. But he cannot be understood *only* in this way.

For me, trying to understand another person’s thinking as a manifestation of the person, of the biographical aspects of his or her life, is truly an exception. But sometimes I think there might be something to Strindberg’s view that there is actually a person behind every issue. In von Wright’s case, this person-centricity has generally swollen his influence: He incarnated and still embodies the wise, judicious man.

He gave pessimism a face. And so he came to further reinforce a tenacious construct, one that sees the humanist as a pessimist who doubts human capacity to create a good society – a reasonably peaceful and fair society – and which on extremely few occasions entices people to do *everything* they can imagine and visualize.

But after having critically read his work, it seems obvious to me that von Wright's alienation in modernity is not only based on rational deliberations and cool-headed analysis of the state of the world. I believe his alienation is also connected to an emotional reaction to the communicative revolution, to the breakthrough of ordinary people – or as von Wright could probably have said, in chorus with José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955), to the rising of the masses.

Von Wright's last book was his memoir, *Mitt liv som jag minns det* [My life as I remember it]. It depicts an utterly fortunate and privileged life: the life of the roving aristocrat, of intellectual exchange at the very highest levels, a life in the academic and cultural elite. It is fascinating reading. Von Wright is a sympathetic man and he treats young, gifted doctoral students with great respect and affection. This has – rightfully so, of course – contributed to his fine academic reputation. But the few times he talks about encounters with people outside academia, or reflects over the democratization process, he gives me goose bumps.

I am not thinking primarily about how von Wright found no reason to oppose the Nazi threat, or that he, as an eighteen-year-old youth, could look favorably upon Hitler's new Germany. He says this himself and acknowledges it calmly. On one level, I agree with him that this is not much to get excited about, “a pipeful of snuff” as he used to write: It would be something else to not get involved in the struggle against Hitlerism after Kristallnacht, that is, after the point when no one could misinterpret what was coming and what was happening. While maintaining a cautiously indifferent or quietly hopeful attitude in the years between 1933 and 1936 was certainly not honorable, it was on the other hand completely understandable, since no one knew what was going to happen. But the memoirs nonetheless do not leave me in peace. There is something else that chafes, bothers me, makes me feel troubled and uneasy. His memoirs reflect a seemingly unconscious and unexamined aversion to the advances of the masses. I believe that “the people” are mentioned only twice in his memoirs. Von Wright can no longer defend himself, so I will have to let him speak for himself about the consequences of the rising of the masses.

He travels through Europe in 1946 and notes that travel at the time had its good sides. His reason: “The *lemming migrations* of tourists up and down our part of the world had not yet begun” (emphasis mine). And in 1980, he and his wife stop sailing in the archipelago. “Elisabeth and I stopped sailing in 1980 when we thought the once incredibly beautiful and peaceful archipelago of the sea and fairways around Åland had started to get crowded”. The aristocrat is obviously troubled by democratization and growing equality. It disturbs him. He wants to be alone, unsoiled and untouched by the masses, like Zarathustra on the mountain.

But even more remarkable is that von Wright the

humanist is sometimes prepared to utterly abandon the idea of inviolable human value. Just before the war broke out in 1939, he is sitting and talking to Wittgenstein:

I once asked Wittgenstein whether Europe needed a new major war. “Not just one, but two or three”, he answered. He shocked me and I found his opinion incomprehensible. It was not until much later that I learned to understand it.

Thus, to understand that civilization can and should sacrifice millions of individuals for the sake of a greater thing. Or when he sets out to describe the state of the modern, liberal democratic world, which goes like this:

Naked power now reigns supreme in our world. That it masquerades as talk of human rights and humanitarian actions makes its actions yet more shameful, an affront to humanity.

And so, that is that when it comes to democracies. Von Wright accuses us human beings of perpetrating the worst of crime, hubris. It is to our overweening pride that we should look for the reason Paradise has been lost, that Pandora has released suffering into the world, that we have sold our souls to the devil. I ask myself whether it is not this exact crime he commits in his role as interpreter of an age. He steps forward as a judge, rebuking society and the people, and he visits his punishment on an entire civilization. Personally, I don't like it one bit.

The memoirs continue to trouble me. It is only after a great deal of soul-searching that I understand that my unease is due to identification: Perhaps I could have written the lines that give me goose bumps. Perhaps I carry within me the feelings von Wright expresses there.

KEEPING THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL APART

Von Wright troubles me precisely because he reflects traits I do not like in myself. As a historian and scholar, I am well acquainted with the earth's recurring disasters and the rise and fall of civilizations. I thus find it genuinely difficult to get worked up over the idea that the story of Europe will come to an end, or that future generations will regard our struggles and our doings with the benevolent understanding of the anthropologist. This is, I say coolly, part and parcel of history.

Likewise, I can feel alienated to the point of despair in the popular culture as it is manifested in newspapers, on the net, and on television. Sometimes the inner exile seems the only life choice worth making. It would be foolish not to take seriously the Ibsen who held that the minority was almost always right, or not to be attracted to the Strindberg who believed that true quality of life can only be attained in the realm of the small, in the company of those who have turned their backs on the masses, materialism, and mammon.

It further seems to me that Humanity (or at least a surprisingly large number of people) is not capable of doing everything we can imagine and visualize. This has had appalling consequences during certain periods of our history. Those who have, like me, read about these consequences, and those who have seen them with their own eyes, are struck dumb. Grief, despair, wonder; perhaps the most deeply painful is the empathy with the fate of the humiliated, and the hateful amazement over the degenerate perversity of the executioners. In the best of what fiction writers have written about us, we are capable of doing things of which we do not believe Humanity to be capable. In reality, spaces of possibility are opened to evil, spaces whose doors a living God should have closed. This is another reason optimism is for me an impossible attitude towards life.

Cool distance, alienation, and melancholy in the mundanity of the present are certainly feelings I share with many people in the world of culture and scholarship.

I have been moved by von Wright since the age of seventeen. Perhaps his appeal has been precisely that he made philosophy out of my sense of distance, melancholy, and alienation. But the passion in my reading of him comes from the antagonism, from my *refusal* to make politics out of the distance, the melancholy, and the alienation. It is against this backdrop that I believe his politics, his criticism of civilization, can on one level be met only with personal attack and self-examination, and the passion of my involvement likely stems from my positive experiences of folk high school, amateur sports, and voluntary associations. In light of these experiences, von Wright's pessimism seems, in no small measure, to be an expression of a personality trait, an elitist haphephobia, and a muddled philosophy of history. For these reasons, he sees only decline and threat where “the people” see progress and opportunities: the growing political influence and the radical democratizing effects of technology, science, and economic growth.

The forces to which von Wright is relatively indifferent (the victory of democracy) or those that make him apocalyptically agitated (technology and economic growth) are precisely the forces that have transformed the people from underclass to citizens of the welfare state.

I find it hard to accept the lukewarm interest and relative indifference of critics of civilization in the face of the most powerful result of cultural modernization: the expansion of human scope for action and discussion that democracy brings. And it is hard to understand the fury and the one-sidedness in his criticism of economic and technical/scientific modernization. Personally, I cannot but see this modernization as the best example of how – despite everything – it may be wise to believe in modernity, reason, and progress.

Certainly, pessimism is undeniably a highly understandable and respectable worldview, but humanism, on the other hand, need not be either optimistic or pessimistic. ✖

Note. The author is a professor at Linköping University and member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. The article is taken from his book *Pojken på vinden* [The boy in the attic] (Stockholm 2010).

A FEW “EASY” STEPS TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

BY SLAVENKA DRAKULIĆ



ILLUSTRATION: KATRIN STENMARK

The visit by the Serbian president Boris Tadić to Vukovar in October 2010, where he was met by the Croatian president Ivo Josipović, attracted the attention of the world media. It was, after all, the first time that a Serbian president had expressed profound regret at the destruction of the Croatian town by the JNA (Yugoslav National Army) and Serbian paramilitary forces in the autumn of 1991. By apologizing at the Ovčara mass grave, Tadić showed his willingness to deal responsibly with the past – a remarkable gesture for a Balkan politician.

Josipović – who in the first year of his presidency has visited more mass graves and apologized more than anybody else – then visited the village of Paulin Dvor, where the Croatian paramilitaries killed eighteen imprisoned Serbian civilians and one Hungarian in December 1991. It really did look impressive: two heads of state demonstrating good intentions, symbolically closing the vicious cycle of war. A few days later, the Bosnian tripartite presidency joined in by calling for reconciliation. The new member of the presidency, Bakir Izetbegović, said he apologized “for every innocent person killed by the BH army”.

This recent frenzy of activity at the top garnered a lot of praise, as much from the “international community” (Brussels, Washington) as from ordinary citizens in all countries in the region. Yet not all reactions to the moves to end animosities were positive: some considered it a show put on for the benefit of the world

public. Almost all commentators pointed out, however, that while words and symbolic gestures are a good start, some big questions remain: Where are the lists of disappeared war prisoners? When will the main war criminal still at large, Ratko Mladic, be extradited? When will looted cultural property be returned to Croatia? When will refugees return to Krajina?

It is hard to believe politicians in the Balkans, even when they seem to be acting with the best of intentions. But in order to move on one must start to believe them; one must begin to take their words seriously and assume that their gestures indicate a serious intention to change perceptions and attitudes towards each other’s nations and towards the past. Tadić and Josipović clearly demonstrated their *political will* to move towards reconciliation. A public apology is the first step on that path, and they managed to take that step modestly and gracefully, although they were not the first to do so. The former Croatian president Stjepan Mesić apologized in Belgrade in 2003, and the Montenegrins are not lagging behind. In March 2010, the Serbian parliament passed a “Declaration on Srebrenica”. Although it stopped short of using the word “genocide”, it is a very important document, one that finally acknowledges the responsibility of the Serbian army in the massacre of 8,000 Bosniaks in July 1995.

EVER SINCE THE WAR in Bosnia ended in 1995, there has been much talk of reconciliation – first and foremost from abroad. There has also been a lot of

foreign money spent on various experts, almost as if reconciliation were a branch of rocket science, rather than, as it is defined in the dictionary, a “settlement, understanding, squaring off, compromise” between neighbors. The conclusion arrived at by the endless rounds of international brainstorming boils down to the need for collaboration, with recommendations for different ways to do that. As if the neighboring citizens of Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo needed to be told this. They only need look at the criminals who on all sides cheerfully pursue collaborations dating back to the war: from the smuggling and exchange of petrol, weapons, people and tobacco, to criminal favors such as assassinations. *Biznismen* big and small, of all nationalities and kinds, also collaborate – be it overtly or covertly.

The Slovenes were the first to start selling their products to Serbia, capitalism beating patriotism one to nil. Others were perhaps not so open in their dealings, operating more or less under the radar. Yet when Tim Judah, a journalist for *The Economist* who knows the region very well, published an article about the Yugosphere in 2009, he summoned an almighty storm of protest, especially in Croatia. He wrote precisely about the collaboration practiced at all levels, proving that the former Yugoslavia functions as a single space. Despite the nationalist ideology that condemns such collaboration as “anti-patriotic”, people do work together. Times are hard, wrote Judah, and it is natural for people to try to take advantage of a common lan-

guage, as well as the fact that consumers are used to having certain products. In the last few months alone, wrote Judah, numerous new initiatives have been announced: the funding of a railway company jointly owned by Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia; a meeting between the national lottery companies of Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, with a view to merging; the signing of an agreement about the extradition of criminals between Croatia and Serbia and between Bosnia and Croatia, together with a commitment to more police cooperation in the region; another agreement on military cooperation between Serbia and Croatia ... and much else besides.

It was interesting to note, in the polemics prompted by the article, that it was not so much cooperation itself that caused offense as *the very term "Yugosphere"*. Yet not even Croatian nationalism (which also reviles Slovenes for blocking Croatia's entry into the EU) could deter Croatian businessman Emil Tedeschi from extending his market to Slovenia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia. Tedeschi prefers the term "South-Eastern Europe". Others prefer "Western Balkans" – anything but the prefix *Yugo*! But the language used is an important matter, and this incident reveals the strong predominance of nationalist sentiments and values, regardless of the way the collaboration works in reality.

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE between the efforts at reconciliation made during the past fifteen years and those being made today is that, previously, there was *no visible political will*. The new impulse has come with a new generation of politicians who seem determined to lead their countries into the EU. Having long been a pariah, Serbia has recently managed to join the RCC (Regional Cooperation Council, formerly the Stability Pact), to become a signatory of CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement) and PFP (Partnership for Peace), to negotiate the abolition of visas for the EU, and is moving ever closer to the EU. Although one cannot say that the EU is expressing enthusiasm for Serbian accession, there is an awareness that stability in the region depends on the existence of the perspective that all the countries in it will become Union members one day, no matter how far off that day may be.

If business people collaborate, if Croatian publishers take part in book fairs in Belgrade, if national football teams play each other and if ordinary people visit their relatives across the border without being suspected of treason any longer, is there even a need for an official policy of reconciliation? Or should it be left to spontaneous, bottom-up initiatives, as a few prominent commentators have suggested?

Despite the arguments for reconciliation in Judah's text, as well as the latest political manifestations of a change of attitude, it is still possible in the Croatian press to accuse Tim Judah of "Yugo-nostalgia", to call somebody a traitor because he sold his factory to a Serb, to object to a hotel or a shipyard being bought with Serbian capital. The majority of the citizens of Serbia, Croatia, or Bosnia and Herzegovina are far from being reconciled with the idea that their neighbors are no longer their enemies. Is it not reasonable to believe that, were citizens left to their own devices, reconciliation would take at least another few more generations? Assuming they are looking towards a

common future in the EU, on the other hand, one might say that the sooner they reconcile, the better. However, there exists no systematic *program of reconciliation* to follow up on the symbolic gestures of politicians. That is not to say that Tadić and Josipović are not sincere in their repentance and in their desire to influence their societies with such gestures. They are. But if no program of reconciliation is prepared and promoted at the governmental and institutional levels, then their gestures, however noble, will be condemned to remain mere shows of goodwill, rather than, as is intended, signs of substantial change. In short, they are placed at the mercy of ... spontaneity.

Spontaneity? Well, neither war nor peace happens spontaneously. Both are constructed; both, in a manner of speaking, descend upon people. Wars are the result of political will, prepared by inflammatory rhetoric that constructs the "enemy" and justifies aggression. Whether a war is just or not – that is another matter. The same goes for the peace and reconciliation process. It needs to be initiated and conducted from the top, spreading downwards, actively promoting tolerance and collaboration. If reconciliation between France and Germany, for example, had been left to the citizen, a united Europe would still be a hundred years off.

Reconciliation not only has political and economic aspects. Even more important is social reconciliation, because it has to do with emotions, and emotions are easy to inflame and therefore dangerous. After all, without the whipping up of nationalist emotions, purposefully and with the political will to do so, it would not be possible to start wars. It is only logical, then, that addressing people's emotions is equally important as a way out of nationalism.

THE FIRST, "EASY" step towards reconciliation is visible political determination – not only an act of declarative apology, but an apology followed up by programs affirming new values and encompassing all spheres and levels of society, from governmental institutions to everyday life. It does not mean that one step has to be completed in order to embark on the next one. This kind of visible political determination is a set of different but parallel activities undertaken by institutions and individuals, some with short-term and some with long-term effects.

The precondition for the reconciliation process is justice; indeed justice is the very fundament upon which reconciliation rests. But there is no justice without truth. Without a legal system for trying one's own war criminals – and thereby uncovering facts about crimes committed in recent wars – everything else, every other attempt is bound to fail. This is not a simple task. In Croatia, the real obstacle is the absurd conviction, nursed for nearly two decades, that the Croatian army cannot be guilty of war crimes because it was defending the nation. This has had a very important consequence: that war criminals are regarded as war heroes. For that reason, the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) in The Hague is perceived as an enemy institution – and not one founded and designated in order to distribute justice (albeit symbolic), to uncover facts about the wars and thereby contribute to historical truth. Until the Declaration on Srebrenica, Serbia lived in denial, both at the public and the political levels, of any participa-

tion in the wars. Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, meanwhile, is complicated because of its special status as a divided country – not only administratively, but also psychologically and emotionally: victims and perpetrators live in the same state, the same towns, maybe even the same streets and villages.

Promoting different values means *constructing a different psychological framework*. It is no longer necessary to persuade citizens to collaborate across state borders: they are doing that already. What is needed now is to send out the message that collaboration – visiting, trading, working together, having positive perceptions of Serbs or Croats or Bosniaks – is not only "politically correct" but also welcome; that a writer will not be crucified in the media because of a book they publish in Serbia or a singer for putting on a concert – which, of course, was the case until very recently. But how does a government send out such a message? Indirectly, by supporting common initiatives, from regional agreements like CEFTA, RCC or PFP to smallscale collaborations like singing competitions or school exchanges between Serbia and Croatia. However, even this is not enough: much more direct and visible effort is needed in order to foster reconciliation.

Needless to say, the most efficient means are the mass media. Television is the only way to reach a mass audience today. Every politician knows that the media are the key to success. From there, values seep into everyday life, not vice versa. If the government were to start systematically promoting anti-nationalist values, public TV channels would follow. Not that it would work automatically or even easily – for that the atmosphere that currently exists within the tightly knit party-media-capital conglomerate would need to change considerably. However, it is by no means inconceivable that public TV might accept that the "fashion" of the day is reconciliation, not nationalism and hate speech. Private channels, less prone to propagating nationalism anyway, and with an eye to profits, would follow the tide. Advertising is by no means neutral in small countries like these, because big foreign companies want to be on good terms with the governments of the countries in which they are operating.

Sending out positive signals about neighbors can achieve a lot, but it is still a short-term policy. Another kind of government, another kind of dominant political will, could swing public opinion towards nationalism again – which is precisely what happened in the nineties. In order to really establish different values and encourage reconciliation, there needs to be a push for a long-term institutional approach, with education in history being the most important aspect of this. (Or should this be left to spontaneity as well?) If the process begins by trying war criminals, it needs to continue with historical research and the publication of history books and textbooks. Education in history must be based on fact, not myth and ideology.

READING TODAY'S HISTORY books and textbooks, one receives very contradictory information. For example, 65 years after the end of the World War II, the Croats are still struggling with the sad fact that the only time in history when Croatia was ever independent was when it also happened to be a fascist puppet state (NDH – Independent State of Croatia). Indeed, the first

When justice is done, there is a risk of new injustices. As when amnesty is granted.

president of the newly established state of Croatia, Franjo Tudman, insisted that the state was built on the foundations of the old one. The Croatian constitution, however, says just the opposite: that the new state is founded on anti-fascism – showing that Croatian society is still divided over its past.

IN ALL POST-YU SOCIETIES, people are used to living with such contradictions: during communism, their memory was usually at odds with history. In a land ruled by communist ideology, folklore, myth, remembrance, and lack of established facts, it was easier to produce propaganda. After 1945, it was declared that 700,000 civilians perished in the Jasenovac concentration camp in the NDH, a figure that ended up at a realistic 60,000 some four decades later. As for the tens of thousands of NDH soldiers and civilians executed in Bleiburg just after the war ended, the precise number is still disputed. It was unimaginable that Tito's glorious army, defending the country from enemies, could have committed war crimes in 1945. Generations of Yugoslavians grew up not questioning the "truths" contained in textbooks, while listening to very different stories at home. It was easier not to challenge the dogma.

So far, there has been too little history and too much memory; this is one reason why it was fairly easy to start the wars in the nineties. In any case, history books and textbooks are both a part of the problem, as well as the solution. Historians should, for once, stop behaving like servants of the current ideology and start presenting facts.

The educational process works slowly. However, education in the spirit of reconciliation is about much more than correcting the textbooks. For reconciliation, society needs a consensus. In order to articulate truth and to facilitate acceptance of it, there needs to be a public arena. Facts need to be accepted. A grown-up, responsible society aiming at reconciliation can do that, as Germany did. This takes time, but it can be helped by cultural projects: culture can act as a public arena for such debate.

THE QUESTION IS: How can arts and culture foster reconciliation, while mainstream culture and its institutions – for example the Serbian and Croatian Academies of Science – promote nationalism? Like mass media, culture serves as a vehicle for nationalist propaganda before and during wars. It is impossible to discuss the reconciliatory role of culture and arts as if they were independent of the political will.

The expectations we have of culture tend to be too high; we hope that culture will help us create a better, more peaceful, and more just society. Underlying this idea about the role of culture in the process of reconciliation is the belief that artists and intellectuals, and learned people in general, are beings of a higher moral order: because of their high education, they should know better. However, this is not so. Over and over, history has proven that culture can be efficient in producing propaganda, especially in totalitarian regimes. Why? Because the morals of cultural bureaucrats and artists are no different from those of anybody else. Moreover, in the former Yugoslavia (but also elsewhere), there was a tradition of cultural servility to the regime – there was hardly any other type of culture to speak of. Indeed, there was no other way to survive:

self-preservation forced artists and intellectuals to become state employees. No wonder they were the people who disseminated nationalism in the eighties. Writers, academics, journalists, members of cultural institutions – all cultured people who became cogs in the nationalist propaganda machines. Their task was to create Others in society, to prepare people for armed conflict, for war. They did their job very well.

An emblematic picture to remember from 1993: Radovan Karadzic – a poet, psychiatrist and president of Republika Srpska – standing in the hills above Sarajevo. With him, the Russian poet Edward Limonov, shooting a machine gun in the direction of the city.

When relying on the positive role of culture in reconciliation, we should keep in mind its capacity to produce ideology and propaganda, to manipulate people, to prepare and justify murder. The opposite is most likely also true – if culture can turn into a nationalist propaganda machine, then, in a democracy, it can also enable the free circulation of ideas, which is the key to a long-term reconciliation. In order to achieve that, projects supported by the state need to be free from political abuse. Compared to other activities, the production of armaments for example, culture comes cheap and can achieve a great deal. It usually gets only a fraction of the budget; perhaps it would be worth spending a bit more.

Reconciliation is happening in different spheres of life, sometimes more quickly, sometimes less. Programmatic actions, especially in the field of media, education, and culture, can only be beneficial. Changes are already visible. No wonder: almost two decades have passed since the beginning of the wars and a whole new generation has grown up. But if this new generation is the one to watch in order to measure the improvements and the speed of social reconciliation, then the news is not good. In a recent opinion poll (by the Croatian non-governmental organization GONG) among high-school students between 17 and 18 years of age, only 27 percent think that the NDH was a fascist state, more than 40 percent think that Croats in Croatia should have more rights than citizens belonging to a minority, 40 percent are against prosecuting Croat soldiers for war crimes, 40 percent believe that homosexuality is an illness, and 49.2 percent oppose Croatian entry to the EU. The opinion poll is surely not representative of all Croatian youngsters, but it confirms that nationalist values are still influential. Yet while this miniature portrait of the new generation gives little reason for hope, it does provide strong motivation for a *politically willing* government to act promptly if reconciliation is to be accomplished in this century.

ULTIMATELY, ONE CANNOT but notice a kind of paradox at work in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. First came independence and the dismemberment of Yugoslavia through bloody wars. Tens of thousands of lives were lost: a conservative estimate for Bosnia alone is some 100,000 dead. Hundreds of thousands people were displaced or resettled, not to mention those maimed and orphaned. Between 30,000 and 50,000 women, mostly Bosniak, were raped. Now, a mere decade since this tragedy, all the newly established independent states want to join the EU and live in union with neighbors whom they were killing only yesterday, historically speaking.

Why fight for independence? Why wars? Was it a civil war? Was there only one aggressor? How many victims, and on which side? Answers to these questions are hard to obtain, finding acceptance for them in any society even harder. But in order to succeed, reconciliation programs must deal with them at all levels, and for that, the political will must exist. Again, reconciliation does not come easy and it takes time, but it might take less time and be easier if there is real will and dedication, from the top down. Then reconciliation might start working faster the other way around as well.

One would at least like to imagine that such an approach is worth trying, given the failure of the last fifteen years of laissez-faire to yield much of anything. ✖

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Re-counting victims tends to become a matter of subtraction. And myths about victims are created continuously.

Identity debate in tolerance's place of honor. Or: what political correctness might mean

Albania is one of Europe's most ethnically and linguistically homogeneous countries – and one of the most pro-American. It is also a country where religious differences have played a relatively minor role after the fall of communism, which, in Albania, was equivalent to the fall of the officially proclaimed atheist state. All three major faiths – Islam, as the largest, plus the Orthodox Autocephaly and the Roman Catholic confessions – have striven after religious tolerance and interfaith cooperation ever since the foundation of the Albanian state in 1912. At the same time, the present Western-oriented leadership in post-communist Albania seems to have opened the door to a religious importation of Protestant – especially evangelical – groupings.

THE NORWEGIAN researcher Cecilie Endresen has conducted depth interviews with people in the three principal Albanian faiths in order to better understand the identity debate in today's Albania (*Nordisk Østforum*, vol. 24:4, 2010 [Oslo]). An interesting general observation is that, in this country of religious pluralism and de facto secularism, there is a battle over who, in Endresen's words, "really represents the most tolerant tradition, theology, and practice and who is best for the nation as a whole". Religion is thus perceived as something good in itself, and this might possibly be attributable to the fact that Albania, during five hundred years of Ottoman occupation with Islam as the official religion, did not suffer from the persecution of its religious minorities, namely Christians, who did not even come close to experiencing the brutality shown towards religious deviants in Christian Europe.

All the spiritual leaders Endresen has interviewed explain that religious differences continue not to be a problem. The *ulama* – the Islamic scholars of Muslim law – and, to a large extent, their Christian counterparts do not see any problems with marriages and burial grounds that cross the borders of faith. Muslims, Christians, and atheists "can and should stick together in life, so why should they be separated after death?"

At the same time, there is an expectation from the outside world – at least as perceived by the Albanian leadership – that the Muslim and Islamic heritage should not be overemphasized. This



Tirana's mayor, Edi Rama, chairman of the Albanian Socialist Party, is a former artist, and he decided to brighten the post-communist city by subsidizing paint and ordering a number of buildings painted in bright colors and often strange patterns, giving them a "Lego" look.

could, for example, hamper the much-desired membership in the European Union, just as it apparently has hurt Turkey's chances of achieving EU membership. Thus, there is a clear tendency by the Christians to want to explain away the Albanians' conversion to Islam as something that has never penetrated deep into the soul of the people: it was "superficial" and the Albanians remained "Christians at heart". The conversion was the "result of imperialist coercion by Turkish Muslims". In such a discourse, no account is really taken of how conversion to Christianity often took place with resistance, in connection with violent conquests, in Europe and elsewhere.

BUT THE PRINCIPAL Christian perspective is still that Christianity is deeply rooted in Albania and that Islam is an import, one that becomes a "universal explanation of the Albanians' problems": "Ottoman culture and the influ-

ence of Islam are responsible for all the evil that has befallen the Albanians over the years, including communism, atheism, corruption, poverty, and a lack of culture." Islam was then sidetracked, and Albanians never really became Muslim. Now that the Albanians, the "innocent victims of imperialist policy", have both Ottomanism and communism behind them, it is time to acknowledge that the Albanians have always been good Europeans!

THE INDICATIONS ARE that this is a rational, real-political calculation, even if it does not necessarily have much to do with actual historical events. It is also easy to understand that such pro-Western political correctness doesn't exactly make a favorable impression on Muslim leaders and Muslim elements of the population. There might be a reaction against what they perceive as a "national allergy" to Islam. The transition to Islam is generally seen in these quar-

ters as "a natural, peaceful development in which Islam reinforced all the positive things in the original 'Albanian' culture". Islam is interpreted as a force that maintains peace and builds civilization, and Muslim leaders thus might view with skepticism and antipathy an official Mother Teresa cult in which this figure, by dint of her Albanian origin, acquires the status of an Albanian national symbol.

If the Christian identity politics is primarily focused on showing "Europe" that Albania is not some place filled with fanatical Muslims, Muslim leaders put the emphasis on the principle of the difference between religion and politics. There is little, Endresen summarizes, to indicate that the latter wish to re-Islamize society. ✕

In Albania, the fight over the superstructure continues. The fight over who is most tolerant.

Belarusian testimonies

AFTER THE BLOODY events in Minsk on election day, the 19th of December last year, it became an important task for oppositional and human rights activists to inform the world about what is going on in Belarus, and ask for solidarity in order to help achieve changes in the country's political systems. Peter Johnsson, Baltic Worlds' Eastern Europe correspondent based in Warsaw, was on site to observe the election campaign and subsequent events. His inside report is posted on www.baltic-worlds.com.

Johnsson also accompanied a Belarusian mission that visited a number of European capitals in early 2011. They appeared before the Swedish Riksdag on the 18th and 19th of January and testified about brutality by the police and other authorities. They met with MP Marietta de Pourbaix-Lundin, chair of the Swedish mission to the Council of Europe, and former Speaker Björn von Sydow. They were also received by the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt and his staff. It was important to them to gain support for their efforts to open a political information office in Brussels recognized by the European Union as the official representation of the democratic opposition in Belarus.

Baltic Worlds was one of the organizers behind the Belarusian mission's visit to Stockholm. Members of the mission included Stanislau Shushkevich, the first head of state of independent Belarus (1991–1994), co-negotiator, with Yeltsin of Russia, and Kravchuk of Ukraine, on the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and current member of the staff of imprisoned presidential candidate Andrei Sannikov; as well as former minister Alaksandar Kazulin, former vice-chancellor of the Belarusian State University in Minsk and presidential candidate in 2006, at which point he was sentenced to five and a half years in prison. ✖

Slavenka Drakulić



Croatian writer and publicist currently living in Sweden. Graduated in comparative literature and sociology from the University in Zagreb in 1976. 1982–1992, staff writer for *Start* a biweekly newspaper, the news weekly *Danas* (both in Zagreb). Has written for various newspapers and magazines in many different languages.

Karlis Neretnieks



Major General (ret.), former president of the Swedish National Defence College. Coauthor of *Baltisk säkerhet: handlingsfrihet och försvarbarhet* [Security of the Baltic countries: freedom of action and defensibility] (FOI, 2010). In 2002–2004 advisor to the governments in the Baltic States regarding the restructuring of their armed forces. Fellow of the Royal Academy of War Sciences (Stockholm).

Natalia Poltavtseva



Associate Professor. Reader at the Russian Anthropological School, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow. Senior Researcher at the Russian Institute for Cultural Research, Moscow. Some of her publications: *The Philosophical Prose of Andrei Platonov* (1981) and several other essays on Platonov.

Magnus Ljunggren



Professor Emeritus of Russian literature at the University of Gothenburg. In his research, he has primarily worked on symbolism. *The Russian Mephisto: A Study of the Life and Work of Emilii Medtner* was translated into Russian in 2001.

Ulf Persson



Professor of mathematics at Chalmers University, Gothenburg. Received a PhD at Harvard in 1975 studying algebraic geometry under David Mumford. Former president of the Swedish Mathematical Society. One of the editors of the *Newsletter of the European Mathematical Society*. Contributes reviews regularly to *The Mathematical Intelligencer*.

Anja Schnabel



PhD in German literature (Hanover) on Peter Weiss. Since 2006 German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) lecturer at the Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. Research focuses: fine arts in 18th to 20th century literature, theater, conceptions of memory, literary illustrations of the Holocaust, Peter Weiss.

Adam Michnik



Editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, where he sometimes writes under the pen names Andrzej Zagorza or Andrzej Jagodziński. In 1966–1989, one of the leading organizers of the illegal, democratic opposition in Poland. He is the recipient of many awards, including a Knight of the Legion of Honour.

Rikke Pettersson



Former lecturer in Swedish language and literature at the University of Münster, Germany 1982–2004. Has organized several conferences and presented a large number of Swedish authors, artists, and others for the German audience. Received the Swedish Academy's prize for Swedish culture abroad in 2007. Has translated Scandinavian texts into German.

Ilja Viktorov



Holds a PhD in economic history (2007). Between 2007 and 2010, university lecturer in international relations at Stockholm University. Since then at CBEES. Focuses on economic development of post-Soviet Russia, especially Russian financial markets and Russia's informal economy.



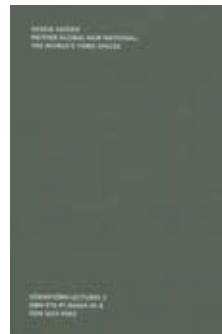
Södertörn University runs a comprehensive program for visiting scholars, and the university has hosted a large number of prominent figures. Visiting scholars are affiliated with one of the university's research profiles.

Södertörn University aims to communicate and discuss major contemporary ideas and create a meeting place for international scholars and the public. This is the rationale for the Södertörn Lectures, a program in which visiting scholars hold special lectures for students, researchers, and the public. These are published in the Södertörn Lectures series, edited by professor Apostolis Papakostas, research leader in sociology at CBEES.

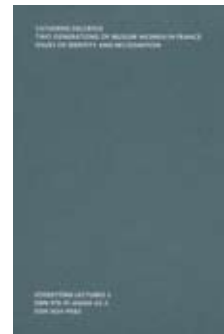
Five publications have been issued in the series so far.



PIOTR SZTOMPKA, professor of sociology, Jagiellonian University, Kraków: "The Ambivalence of Social Change in Post-Communist Societies". Sztompka argues that there are two views of the change in post-communist Europe: either as a liberation bringing modernization and progress, or as a process that has led to poverty, exclusion, and smoldering antagonisms between groups. Sztompka spoke about the ambiguity in both the views, and argued for a balanced perspective in which the merits of both the optimistic and pessimistic stances are highlighted.



SASKIA SASSEN, professor of sociology at Columbia University, New York: "Neither Global nor National: The World's Third Spaces". Sassen spoke about the assemblages of territory, authority, and rights (TAR) that move between the global and national structures and occupy a field of their own. This sphere is growing, Sassen argues, consists of a variety of constellations on different levels, and is creating its own frameworks and rules.



CATHERINE DELCROIX, professor of sociology, University of Strasbourg: "Two Generations of Muslim Women in France: Issues of Identity and Recognition". Delcroix has studied and met immigrant Muslim women who are energetically helping their daughters overcome the barriers of class, race, and gender. The daughters had to relate to their family, culture, and religion while negotiating the prevailing norms in France. They were experiencing a process of change and had a completely different social role from that of their mothers. In this way, Delcroix questions the stereotypical picture of "the Other" in our culture.



ANNE BUTTIMER, professor of geography, University College Dublin: "Bridging Sciences and Humanities: Alexander von Humboldt's Geography (1769-1859)". Buttimer argued that Humboldt's work exemplified international and interdisciplinary collaboration, and that many of his thoughts on sustainability and human dependence on a geographical place of residence remain valid today. She emphasizes the realm of aesthetics and poetry in his discourse on the relation between the environment and humankind.



ROBERT BERNASCONI, professor of philosophy, Pennsylvania State University: "Nature, Culture, and Race". From a philosophical perspective, Bernasconi examines the limitations of the perspective cultivated after the Second World War: that the fight against racism must begin with a distinction between nature and culture. He problematizes this distinction and questions prevailing scholarly definitions of racism.