


# BALTIC WORLDS

15 pages of nonfiction  
book reviews!

A quarterly scholarly journal and news magazine. Oct. 2009. Vol II:2  
From the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES)  
Södertörn University, Stockholm

IRINA SANDOMIRSKAJA

Biopolitics  
of besiegment



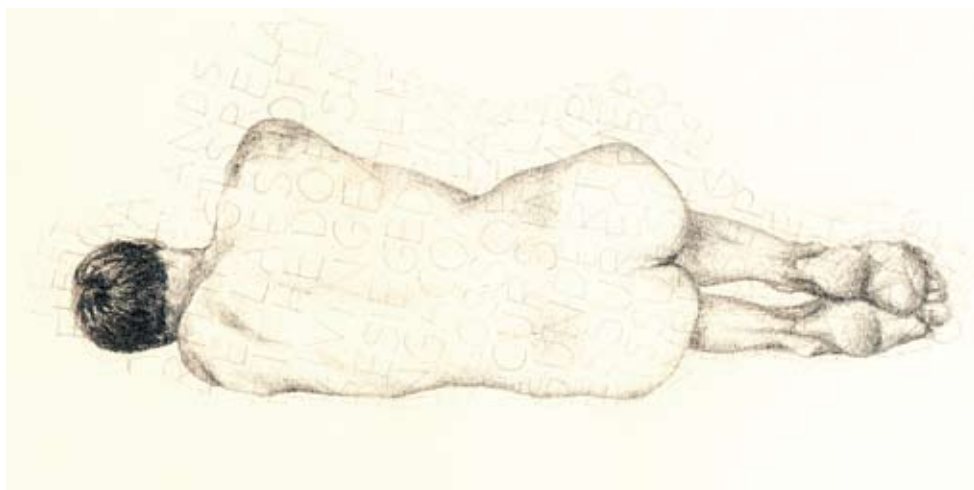
## WOMEN, VIOLENCE, WAR

INTERVIEW WITH KARL SCHLÖGEL

### The return of space

features & commentaries

LATVIA TURNS LEFT? / THE CHURCH IN THE GDR / SVEN HEDIN / STALIN / PEENEMÜNDE / GARRISON TOWNS



## Baltic Worlds. Now a quarterly



The Helsinki-born Linneaus disciple **Peter Forsskål** (1732–1763), whose tractatus *Tankar om borgerliga friheten* [Thoughts on Civic Freedom] was published 250 years ago, was portrayed incorrectly in the previous issue of BW. The editor chose to portray him with an image taken from the Internet, unaware that the only known portrait of Forsskål hangs in Salneck Castle, in the Swedish province of Uppland, over which there happens to be a view from the editor's own study in his summer house.

**AFTER TWO** pilot issues, *Baltic Worlds* has now become a regular quarterly with international distribution. This was the idea from the very start, according to the mission given to CBEES by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Östersjöstiftelsen).

With this, the third issue of *Baltic Worlds*, **Ninna Mörner** joins the editorial board as associate editor. She has an M.A. in economic history from Stockholm University. Professor **Anu Mai Köll**, director of CBEES, shoulders the role of "legally responsible publisher" (an important legal role specified in the Swedish constitution and Swedish law).

In BW there are both papers containing original scientific findings, and feature articles by well-known professional writers. The academic material is peer-reviewed by two expert researchers. All authors have full rights to texts that have been published in BW.

**IN THE FALL OF 2009**, BW will begin the work of developing a website. The idea is that a selection of texts that have been published in past issues will be made available, along with certain supplementary materials of relevance to the Baltic Sea as an area of research.

BW's editorial board welcomes suggestions for articles from the scientific

community as well as from the rest of our readership. For references and citations we apply a modified version of the Oxford System.

Two new, young artists are presented in this issue, **Moa Franzén** and **Irre Lazarescu**, both of whom have had solo exhibitions this year at the gallery and artist collective Detroit, in Stockholm. **Ragni Svensson**, a member of Detroit, has been involved from the start with original illustrations for BW. ✖

## Fifteen years after the Estonia

**FIFTEEN YEARS AGO**, on September 28th, 1994, the MS Estonia sank. One-hundred thirty-seven persons survived the catastrophe; 852 perished. Some of these survivors have, together with victims' relatives and the Swedish Parliament's Estonia Group, decided to commemorate the Estonia by arranging a seminar on events surrounding its loss.

The Estonia Group has recently published the booklet *Estonia's Four Mysteries*. In the booklet's lead article, Knut Carlqvist summarizes controversial issues around the wreckage. His article places emphasis on a wreckage time-line, set up in 2008 by a research group at Chalmers/SSPA, Gothenburg. This time-line is generally considered to be accurate. The next, trickier step is to account for points where the survivors' testimonies differ. Apparently, everybody agrees that the catastrophe began when the bow door loosened from its holders, and that this should have been audible to the people on board the vessel. Subsequently, after a certain lapse of time, the bow door fell off. This, too, should have been heard by those on board. The survivors are almost unanimous in claiming that banging noises and the like were heard only once. Furthermore, they claim that the vessel lurched to starboard only minutes thereafter – that is, before the bow door could have had time to fall off. The survivors' testimonies thus are incommensurate with the theory advanced in the wreckage report of 1997.

**DURING THE FIRST**, dramatic interviews after the catastrophe, Silver Linde, seaman on duty, described how he met frightened passengers on the stairs. These passengers, who came from cabins below the car deck, reported that there was water flowing into the corridors down there. This was later forgotten; it was, presumably, assumed that this was the same water as was flowing on the car deck, and that it had entered the vessel when the bow door fell off.

According to the passengers, there

was water in the corridors at about the same time as the bangs were heard and the vessel lurched. All this happened very quickly. How could there be any water in the middle of the vessel?

Carlqvist uses a multi-factor approach. Negligence, poor maintenance and recklessness have been mentioned as contributing factors. Carlqvist dwells on the large dent on the bow door, which presumably arose when the bow door fell forward onto the protruding bulb. How can this dent have arisen on the starboard side of the stern?

**THE SURVEY** of the time schema for the wreckage points to shortcomings in the original wreck inquiry which, if substantiated, will leave the National Board of Accident Investigation with much explaining to do.

Apart from this lead article, the Estonia Group's *Estonia's Four Mysteries* contains a detailed time-line of key events during the years following the ship's loss, as well as a selection of statements made during Swedish parliamentary debates. ✖

### REFERENCE

*Estonia's Four Mysteries*. Ed. Susanna Popova. The Estonia Group in Sweden's Riksdag, 2009 41 pages.



Sponsored by the Foundation  
for Baltic and East European Studies



## Editor-in-chief

Anders Björnsson

## Editor

Ninna Mörner

## Responsible publisher

Anu Mai Köll

## Editorial advisory board

Rebecka Lettevall,

Board Chair, CBEES.

Sari Autio-Sarasma,

Aleksanteri Institute.

Ole Elgström, Lund

University. Michael

Gilek, CBEES.

Ann-Cathrine Jungar,

CBEES. Anu Mai Köll,

Director, CBEES. Thomas

Lundén, CBEES.

Jens E. Olesen,

University of Greifswald.

## Editorial staff

In this issue: Helene

Carlbäck, Brian

Manning Delaney,

Madeleine Hurd,

Lucette Nobell,

Veronica Nordsund,

Tove Stenqvist,

Hans Wolf.

## Design

Lars Rodvaldr,

Art Director, Oktavilla.

Lena Fredriksson,

Oktavilla

## Illustrators

Moa Franzén

Ragni Svensson

Arvid Wretman

## Printed by:

Wassberg+Skotte

Tryckeri AB, Stockholm.

ISSN 2000-2955

## contents

### essays

- 14 Besieged Leningrad
- 22 Holocaust in Hollywood
- 27 Garrisons on islands

### features

- 4 Political turning point in Riga?
- 19 Female terrorists

### reviews

- 39 Family policy in Russia and Sweden
- 42 Scandinavism reconsidered

### interview

- 30 Between 11/9 and 9/11

### commentary

- 36 Stalinism — popularizing without historiographical skills

### misc.

- 55 Sven Hedin on Eurasia
- 34 Peenemünde

The next issue of BW is scheduled to be published Dec., 2009.

Subscription is free. Send subscriptions and orders of single issues to the editorial office.

BW welcomes commentary and critique. Address your correspondence to [bw.editor@sh.se](mailto:bw.editor@sh.se)  
Phone: +46-(0)8-608 49 70  
and +46-(0)8-608 50 33

## Hubris or humility?



ILLUSTRATION: ARVID WRETMAN

When Gazprom begins construction on its 396-meter-high showpiece at the beach on the Neva River, it will do so on old Swedish soil. Here, in the hundred years preceding the foundation of St. Petersburg in 1704, stood the town of Nyen, with the fortress of Nyenschantz (Swedish: Nyenskans). After the fall of the Soviet regime, private Swedish interests saw to it that a monument was built adjacent to a nearby highway. But now the highway is going to be widened, is the notion, all the way to Gazprom City's 60 hectare-large commercial center in the heart of the city.

The company that has been commissioned to build the corn-cob-like skyscraper speaks enthusiastically about an "Eiffel Tower" that would violate the traditionally low skyline of St. Petersburg.

When the wall fell, towers began to be erected in the Old World — before the towers fell in the New World.

Karl Schlögel, interviewed in this issue, has suggested that these two events, 11/9 and 9/11, emphasize the return of place — a "spatial turn" — in political and social discourse, as well as in the study of history. The conflict between the systems was followed by geographic competition, sometimes called globalization. Globalization does not, however, mean that "the world is flat" (as Thomas Friedman would have it) — there are far too many pitfalls for that, far too many danger zones — but it becomes more important to say where on the map you are.

The way the world is divided up ideologically is no longer functional. Now we must find — or invent — new competitive advantages. Space and architecture have become one. Or have become one yet again.

So things have been built and are being built to the heavens! Old styles and expressive forms are being challenged and placed in postideological shadows. The Turning Torso in Malmö, the Hansabank's high-rise at the mouth of the Daugava, the Gazprom Sky-

scraper: all are reflected in the same body of water; but what else do they have in common? The fight for the initiative, perhaps. Past losses? Possibly. None-theless, it is certain that folk psychology varies not only between but also within countries. Folk psychology has become identity politics. But identities do not join, they separate.

For Dostoevsky, the Glass Palace, modernity, was anathema — the monstrosity of civilization — but wouldn't the poet's own city come to be characterized as the most artificial of them all (Marshall Berman)? Today, it is post-modern buildings that can be irritating and make metropolises ugly, regardless of where they happen to be. When the Western World consisted of growth economies, "small is beautiful" could still be the operative slogan. They were words of protest. When growth abates, or proves to be built on sand, size sometimes denotes drive. Moderation stands for cowardice, or, perhaps we should say, compliance.

In the Baltic Sea Region, no country is peripheral. In the past, people were grouped around a tomb, now people are gathered around an enigma. Perhaps we are talking about a mystery of cosmopolitanism: whether it is possible to be at home everywhere. Can we speak the same language in the cathedral as in the basilica? The answer most certainly may not take the form of silence. ✕

# In crisis Riga turns left

Latvia's deep economic down-turn has brought about a historical political change. A left-wing party has won an election and come to power in Riga. There is even more to this historical change. The local party is dominated by ethnic Russian politicians.

**“T**he crisis broke the barrier”, says Nil Ushakov, 33, who leads Harmony Center and now holds the title of Mayor of Riga.

Ushakov's social democratic party alliance received over a third of the popular vote in the local elections in the Latvian capital this summer. Many ethnic Latvians were stunned, but as Ushakov sees it, the election outcome was logical.

“Social democratic values are in great demand in the crisis.”

Latvia has been facing an economic ordeal. The state has been saved from bankruptcy by a 7.5 billion euro international loan package. But the loans come with tough conditions from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), EU, Sweden, and others. An exploding budget deficit is kept in check by dramatic cuts that take work away from tens of thousands, lower the public sector wages by over 30 percent, reduce pensions, double the cost of health care and close hospitals and schools.

The way would seem to be clear for a party that upholds social values and that, having always been the opposition party, cannot be blamed for the crisis.

But ever since independence the political left has been viewed with suspicion among ethnic Latvians.

“‘Escape Communism’ is their motto. They are afraid of everything that leans to the left. This is a deep reaction going back generations”, says Aigars Freimanis, director of the public opinion research institute Latvijas Fakti.

The left is perceived as closer to the past, to the Soviet Union, to all the terrible things that have occurred.

“But that is, in a way, a schizophrenic reaction. We have seen in the research that many who vote for center

or right-wing parties have social democratic leanings, but they do not want to identify themselves with social democracy.”

So the Latvians vote Latvian, and the right comes into power as a result. However, the crisis changed this. In Riga this year, many crossed national and political barriers.

Nil Ushakov:

“About 70 percent of our voters were ethnic Russians and about 30 percent were ethnic Latvians. Ethnic voting is disappearing.”

Aigars Freimanis does not agree fully.

“At least 90 percent of Harmony Center's votes in Riga came from Russian language voters or from mixed family voters. But some Latvians voted for Harmony Center as a protest (in the crisis) against the right-wing parties, which ‘have given us so much misery’.”

**In the 1990s, Latvia** traded the Soviet planned economy for extreme liberal market values. This was due both to the Soviet nomenclature's seeking a way

**“So when people vote they define themselves as Latvian or Russian. That, more than schools and kindergartens, is what voting is about.”**

to accumulate wealth through privatization, and to the acceptance by Latvian politicians of advice from international market prophets. Had Latvia chosen a less extreme economic model, it would have been possible to avoid the enormous depth of the present economic crisis, contends Anders Alexanderson, who is Vice President of Public Affairs at Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, and works as a consultant in several EU countries.

According to Alexanderson, Finland would have been a good role model. Its history is not the same as Latvia's, but there are many similarities.

“In the beginning of the '90s, Finland succeeded in turning back the worst crisis in Europe since the '30s. One reason was of course the devaluation, but another one was its strong welfare state combined with a good educational system and basic social security. That made a fast restructuring of industry possible.”

Finland is and was an inclusive society, whereas Latvian society, according to Alexanderson, is exclusive.

“The inclusiveness of Finnish society made structural changes possible, because people had unemployment benefits and other social welfare protection. Society took care of people during the transition process.”

Alexanderson points out that Latvia lacked the political strength for necessary reforms during the growth years, reforms such as reducing the number of public sector employees. Had these reforms been implemented, he argues, the labor market would have cooled down and the high wage increase that fueled today's crisis would not have occurred.

Now, the Latvian government is being forced by the IMF and the EU to reform in haste.

“The social consequences will be severe since it is

**Now, people are moving from the free market to social security. One complete cycle, or “revolution”, for Latvia.**



**Fatherland and freedom on the move.** Nationalistic and right-wing Latvia is seeing a new political shift to the left.



being done without proper planning and analysis. The existence of a kind of welfare state in Latvia would have guaranteed some income which generates consumption and in turn dampens the fall in GDP.”

Alexanderson thinks that Latvia chose the wrong role model, Ireland instead of Finland.

“It was stupid. Ireland’s rapid economic growth was built on a number of factors not applicable to Latvia. And although the growth in GDP has been remarkably high in Ireland, the benefits have not been fairly distributed.”

**The crisis broke** the barrier, Nil Ushakov believes. The rest will depend on the deeds of the rulers in Riga. The left-wing mayor has lofty ambitions.

“Most important is that everyone feel that we care, regardless of ethnicity.”

Riga is divided. Walking from west to east in the center of this city of nearly one million is like traveling back in time from the European Union to the Soviet Union. You leave Elizabetes and Alberta streets, where international tourists gaze at beautiful art nouveau

decorations on buildings inhabited mostly by Latvians, and new four-wheel drive vehicles are packed along the sidewalk. “What crisis?” you wonder, spotting the Swedbank skyscraper beaming in the sun on the other side of Daugava River, before you pass through the city’s mixed zone, where Latvians and Russians work together from eight o’clock to four o’clock. Behind the railway and bus stations and the open market you end up in Maskavas Forstate (“Moscow Suburb”), where few Latvians dare or care to set foot. In Moscow Suburb the crisis is ever present in houses that are in a state of near collapse. Russian is the language spoken here, although it is not permitted on the street signs. So someone deleted the Russian text on a dilapidated wooden building on Jersikas iela (Jersikas Street).

The former mayor of Riga was a member of the nationalistic party Fatherland and Freedom. Protecting the Latvian language was one of his main objectives. But on his watch corruption flourished in City Hall, while social decay continued in the quarters along Maskavas iela (Moscow Street). Fatherland and Freedom was vanquished in the elections.

In Riga, more than half of the population is non-

Latvian, and not all of those have voting rights. Of Latvia’s almost 2.3 million inhabitants, about 800,000 are categorized as Russian speakers, and around half of those are still not citizens of the country. They cannot vote in national or local elections. They, or their forefathers, were not citizens of the first Latvian republic, which existed from 1918 to 1940, but arrived in the country during the Soviet era. Therefore they were not automatically given citizenship after the second independence in 1991, but first have to prove their knowledge of the Latvian language.

Vyacheslav Dombrovsky is very critical of the way the Latvian authorities handled the issue.

“Either they should have taken away the voting rights of the Russians altogether, or they should have granting voting rights without restrictions. But they have chosen a middle road, and then you get ethnic voting.”

As a professor of economics, Dombrovsky emphasizes that ethnic division has long been a negative factor in economic development. He refers among other things to research done by William Easterly and Ross Levine, where it is shown how ethnic fragmentation

Riga’s mayor Nil Ushakov represents the left, and anticipates great opportunities in the coming election. He is of the opinion that the financial crisis has led to a situation where many no longer merely vote according to their ethnic adherence.



**Russian is forbidden on Riga’s street signs. In Slovakia it is forbidden to speak Hungarian in official contexts.**

explains much of the social and economic problems in Sub-Saharan African nations.

This is relevant also in the case of Latvia, according to Dombrovsky.

“Ethnic fractioning results in bad government and bad economic outcomes. It stands in the way of economic growth. The other bad thing for Latvia is the government’s connections with special interests. Corruption hinders growth. You get incompetence in the public sector and ineffectiveness in the political system.”

Dombrovsky speaks of “expressive voting”. The Russians are angry because they are not given full rights and so they vote Russian. The Latvians are angry because many Russians have lived in the country so long and have not learned Latvian, and so they vote Latvian.

“Fear and hatred bring out the worst in people. They don’t speak the language. They cannot be trusted. They could reoccupy Latvia. So when people vote they define themselves as Latvian or Russian. That, more than schools and kindergartens, is what voting is about.”

This is the price a nation pays for not giving voting rights to everyone, Vyacheslav Dombrovsky believes.

“And at the very heart of ethnic voting is a deep division over history.”

**That can be seen** in today’s Riga. Not on the surface, where daily life runs smoothly between Latvians and Russians, but in the historical wounds that lie below the surface.

On the left bank of Daugava River stands a huge victory monument with three bronze soldiers carrying automatic weapons. It is a memorial to the Soviet soldiers who lost their lives when Stalin’s Red Army drove Hitler’s Nazi troops out of Riga in 1944. There is an even huger Mother Russia stretching her hand towards the heavens beside a very tall concrete obelisk, so tall that it seems to top the Latvian Statue of Liberty in the center of the city. To many Russians, the victory monument is about liberation, while most Latvians see it as a symbol of occupation.

A few hundred meters from the Uzvaras (Victories) monument lies the old Tornakalns railway station. Here, thousands of people were gathered together in June of 1941 and deported to Siberia. Behind a memorial with the inscription 1941 stands an old boxcar, six meters in length, the kind that carried people into years of exile, cruel captivity, and often death. In June of 1941 over 15,000 people were deported from Latvia, and in March of 1949 over 42,000 were taken away. Tornakalns is the symbol of these detested deportations.

The short walk between the Uzvaras monument and Tornakalns is the longest one can take in Latvia. The distance is almost endless, a distance between two worlds. Many Russians and Latvians will never cross it. They will live and die with different views of history.

**Hope is pinned** on coming generations.

This year’s mayoral election winner in Riga, Nil Ushakov, believes that “Latvian society is maturing”.

In Latvian politics, his party used to be isolated. It ranked high in opinion polls but had no coalition partner. The isolation was broken by an alliance with the center-right Latvia’s First Party/Latvia’s Way, led by the country’s most ambitious and self-confident politician,

**“But if ethnic voting has been the strength of the right-wing parties, it might soon become their weakness.”**

the so-called oligarch, Ainars Slesers. He is now the vice-mayor of Riga. Ushakov and Slesers and their parties have formed what they call a strategic partnership, which will take them into the parliamentary elections in 2010.

Their goal is to form a national government.

“Absolutely”, says Nil Ushakov without blinking at the historical thought of having an ethnic Russian governing nationalistic Latvia.

What are the chances?

“It will be easier to assess them after the winter”, he admits, pointing out that the new city council in Riga faces hard months of crisis ahead with the closing of schools and hospitals and fare increases for public transportation.

All the other parties lag behind Ushakov’s in the opinion polls. The figures are expected to level out though, and Harmony Center will certainly face a tough election campaign with accusations from right-wing Latvian politicians of a “Moscow affiliation”.

The party’s most experienced parliamentarian, Boris Cilevic, is ready for the fight.

“Our position is very clear. We are not a pro-Moscow party. We are an independent party of Latvia. We do not accept the ethnic approach, and we do not accept the manipulation of Latvia in a geopolitical game. But it is stupid, when we have such a huge neighbor (Russia), not to make use of this market. All large companies dream about the Russian market.”

Russia should be criticized but not because it is Russia, says Cilevic. He wants to see a constructive dialogue and points to Finland as a good example.

“We should have cooperation with Russia economically and culturally and in the political field, when we agree. We shall have a frank and open discussion, when we disagree. That is pro-Latvian, not pro-Russian. It is most effective for the development of Latvia”, says Boris Cilevic, who, as a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council, is experienced in European politics.

But he is aware of the difficulty of winning over the support of ethnic Latvians in the coming national elections.

“Ethnic voting has not ended. That is wishful thinking. It has been undermined, but it is still dominant.”

Cilevic is also aware that his party will not be able to liberalize the laws on citizenship and voting rights in a possible future coalition government.

“In the next few years, it is not a realistic goal.”

**But if ethnic voting** has been the strength of the right-wing parties, it might soon become their weakness. Everyone born in Latvia after independence in 1991 has the right to citizenship and the vote, regardless of the origin of their forefathers. Since the voting age is 18, the parliamentary election in 2010 will be the first with a new type of young Russian voter. With each

election, their number will grow, and most of them are expected to vote left.

Latvia’s First Party has read the writing on the wall and formed its alliance with Harmony Center. Now the rest of the right realizes that everyone has to hold the door open to possible cooperation with Ushakov or risk being left out in the cold after next year’s election.

Regional Affairs Minister Edgars Zalans, from the conservative People’s Party, takes time out between two meetings to analyze the new political landscape. Formerly powerful, the People’s Party is now blamed for the crisis and could be wiped out in the coming elections.

“In normal times most people in my party would say no to Harmony Center. But times are not normal”, Zalans admits.

If Harmony Center does well in Riga and can help the country out of the crisis, the People’s Party might have to consider cooperation.

“We can never say never.”

When he formed his government last winter, Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis, from the liberal New Era, was ready to cooperate with Harmony Center. But New Era’s right-wing and fairly nationalistic partner Civic Union said no.

Since then, Harmony Center has won an election and now Civic Union leader Girts Valdis Kristovskis wants to keep the door open.

“We will see what lessons will be learned here in Riga during the coming year”, says Kristovskis, sipping a peach milk shake in the sun on Dome Square, where barriers were built against the Soviet military in January 1991.

Kristovskis has one strict condition for possible cooperation with Harmony Center. It is not about economic policy or social issues. It is about history.

“They have to show flexibility and move away from a platform of evaluating the occupation of Latvia in a positive way. For me this is essential. Half of my family was killed or deported during the first year of the Soviet occupation.” ■

**arne bengtsson**

Foreign correspondent at the Swedish news agency TT and author of two books about the Baltic region

## REFERENCE

William Easterly & Ross Levine, “Africa’s Growth Tragedy: Policies and Ethnic Divisions”. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Vol. 112:4 (Nov., 1997).

**Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Riga has been a divided city. Many Russians do not have the right to vote.**

# FLUID BOUNDARIES

## IMPRESSIONS FROM A BALTIC MEETING



PHOTO: UNN GUSTAFSSON

For so long, we lived apart. What is our life together going to be like now, after this separation?

**For the third time, the Baltic Writers' Council has organized an international meeting with participants from the various countries of the region. Unn Gustafsson accompanied the group during a three day trip to Estonia, on the border with Russia.**

**Actually, we were** supposed to be heading towards St. Petersburg. The sentence echoes silently in my head, more poetically factual than a matter of fate. This We of the trip – writers, translators, poets, critics, researchers – are now sitting in a bus chartered specifically for the meeting, heading towards Narva. It has been raining, but the sky clears up, and suddenly the afternoon seems awakened anew. All around me, the voices of my fellow-passengers rise and fall melodically, I am tempted to let myself fall asleep to this polyphony of discussions in Finnish, Estonian, Swedish, and occasionally Russian. It sounds like soft music. The river on the left seems to stand still in the afternoon sun. A vivid red float, whose resistance gives rise to a V-shaped tongue of foam, is all that reveals that the water is moving. On the other side is Russia.

It was in 1992 that the prelude to the future meetings took place. Approximately four hundred writers and translators from the Nordic countries, the newly formed Baltic States, Russia, Germany, and Poland gathered together on a ship that cruised around the Baltic Sea. One of the primary driving forces behind the “Baltic Waves’ Cruise” was Peter Curman, then chairman of the Swedish Writers’ Union. When he, seventeen years later, summarizes the cruise, he notes that the sea literally became a means through which people could talk to one another. There were disagreements among the passengers – how could it have been otherwise? – but what was most noticeable was a willingness to engage in dialogue. The Konstantin Simonov berthed in St. Petersburg, Tallinn, Gdynia/Gdansk, Lübeck, Copenhagen, Visby, Stockholm, and Helsinki. The seed was sown for two institutions that have pushed the dialogue further since then: the Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators, which was founded the following year by the Swedish Ministry of Culture, and the Baltic Writers’ Council. The Council functions as an umbrella organization for writers’ and translators’ unions in the countries on the Baltic Sea, as well as Norway and Iceland.

In 2005, the Baltic Writers’ Council organized the first meeting, called “Baltic Meetings”, with the city administration in Kaliningrad/Königsberg. It coincided with the city’s 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the assembled writers and translators were received warmly, in particular by representatives of the city. The then chairman, Klaus-Jürgen Liedtke, said in his introductory acceptance speech: “Why are meetings like this necessary? Because at this level there is no European Community, no public sphere – it is we who have to shape this sphere, by meeting each other. Culture is the only tool we have to transcend the limitations of nationalism and provincialism, but we have to start in a limited area, a region that has had something in common throughout its history, building a cluster of our own.”

They had gathered in Klaipeda and crossed the Russian border together, more than forty writers, translators, and artists. From Kaliningrad, with an extensive program that included not only literature but also film and environmental issues, they took a trip to the village of Chistye Prudy. Previously, it was called Tollmingkehmen. Here lived the Lithuanian national poet Donelaitis – who worked as a Prussian-Lithuanian priest. The region contains the common history of the participants, but their memories are divergent. In the texts written in connection with the journey, journalist and literary critic Olga Martynova revives Klaus-Jürgen Liedtke’s question and answers it with a description. Martynova is standing on the empty spot where the Königsberg Castle, the lost city, once was. Next to her stands the poet Richard Pietraß from Berlin. At the beginning of the last century, Pietraß’s father went to school two blocks away. Martynova’s father, however, came to Königsberg with the Red Army. Immediately after the slaughter, he went to look at the castle, where he escaped a bullet from a stealth shooter by a hair’s breadth.

“Pietraß and I cannot hold a real conversation about this. We can stand here and, each individually, think about what is foreign and what is our own. At least this is something the cultural meetings can achieve. And that’s no small feat.”

Myself, I remember subsiding to gale force winds and moderate visibility: SMHI’s marine reports, a daily testimony about negligible geographical distances. The slow voice lulled me to sleep as a child. Now, in self-imposed exile far from the Baltic coast, I get goose bumps when I hear it: “Fladen and Dogger, The Fishing Grounds and South Utsira, Skagerak and Kattegatt, Vänern, Öresund and Bälten, the Southwestern and Southern Baltic Sea, the Southeast Baltic Sea, the central and northern Baltic Sea, Gulf of Riga, Gulf of Finland, the Åland Sea, Archipelago Sea, Southern Gulf of Bothnia, Northern Gulf of Bothnia, North Kvarken, Gulf of Bothnia.” The Baltic Sea is the promised land of my childhood. In the fall of 1989, I was in third grade. I knew about the behavior of the black guillemot and how you can get seals to rise to the surface, how to clear nets and row. But I knew nothing about the other side, the other ports, the inlets, the coastlines. A few months before our departure, I speak with a good friend about this. “Isn’t it strange,” she said, out of the blue, “how our perception of reality has managed to be more or less cut in half for us? As if the entire Eastern Bloc was on the other side of the planet, and not right across the sea.” My memories are genuine; happiness tends to appear that way when looking back. But at the same time directly unaware of what the brackish water connected me to.

The second Baltic Meetings took place in 2007, on Gotland. The program was at least as extensive as the one in Kaliningrad. P.O. Enquist was present, as well as his fellow-swede Kjell Espmark, Sami Rose-Marie Huuva, Steinunn Sigurdardóttir from Iceland, Andrei Bitov from Russia. On Gotland there were lively cultural-political debates. I read the comments in the internal report from the event, and they seem strikingly similar: The culture of the area is poor. Not in spirit, but artists have an existence that is sensitive to economic fluctuations.

It thus feels slightly ironic that the city administration withdrew the official invitation to hold a third Baltic Meeting in St. Petersburg, citing precisely financial concerns. This occurred a few months before the meeting was to have taken place. The financial crisis had grown into a global problem. The administration regretted this most deeply, but found itself compelled to call off the trip. That we nonetheless are sitting on the chartered bus on the way to the border town of Narva is the result of a rescue at the finish line by the Estonian Writers’ Union, which has taken on the role of host, and the Baltic Writers’ Council, which did not give up. It is a Baltic Meeting at the last minute, as they probably also occurred at the time of the Hanseatic League, when the preconditions were suddenly turned around. We come from six different countries and represent even more political and cultural affiliations: we are nonetheless a decimated group. The program is smaller than it was at the previous meetings; the shared traveling is the focus.

**Once we reach Narva** River, the city abounds with the evening sun and the swallows are flying high above. The river divides, at a leisurely pace, the one side from the other, the one nation from the other: a fluid border. It is beautiful, and I realize that I had expected rather something gloomy. Instead, I suddenly remember a metaphor from one of Tomas Tranströmer’s poems: “sweet honey-dribbling June”. We check in at the perfectly acceptable city hotel and, all driven by the same impulse, then ramble along in groups towards the city’s fortress. It is a strange place. Located on opposite sides of the river are two fortresses that now – once again – belong to two nations. Ivangorod, on the other side, is younger and dilapidated by comparison. But when standing in the outer courtyard of the Narva fortress, the river cannot be seen and the gray mass of the two castle arches appears to be a seamless melding into each other. As if everything were one. “An emblem of the rivalry between the Eastern and Western Roman Empire”, as the Narva museum administration calls the historic sight. Today, a symbol of Europe’s, put literally, fluid – yet maintained nonetheless – border with Russia.

I’ve climbed up on top of the coping of the eastern wall and look out over the river and the land on the other side, a Swedish exile in Narva. After the Swedes had controlled the city for about one hundred years, the Russians recaptured it. This occurred right where I now stand, at the fortress’s weak spot: the wall facing the water. The famous engineer Erik Dahlbergh had worked for twenty years to improve its defense – against his better judgment, or at least against clearly impossible odds. I cannot help but think of the character in W.G. Sebald’s novel *Austerlitz*, his melancholy and bittersweet voice describing the inherent irony of the European building of fortresses.

**Wiederholt sei es darum vorgekommen, daß man sich gerade durch die Befestigungsmaßnahmen, die ja, sagte Austerlitz, grundsätzlich geprägt seien von einer Tendenz zu paranoider Elaboration, die entscheidende, dem Feind Tür und Tor öffnende Blöße ge-**

ben habe, ganz zu schweigen von der Tatsache, daß mit den immer komplizierter werdenden Bauplänen auch die Zeit ihrer Realisierung und somit die Wahrscheinlichkeit zunahm, daß die Festungen bereits bei ihrer Fertigstellung, wenn nicht schon zuvor, überholt waren durch die inzwischen erfolgte Weiterentwicklung der Artillerie und der strategischen Konzepte, die der wachsenden Einsicht Rechnung trugen, daß alles sich in der Bewegung entschied und nicht im Stillstand.

Today Narva is part of Estonia, with a population that consists of at least 85 percent ethnic Russians and even more Russian-speakers. I follow the bridge, with my eyes, to the other side, close enough to see the pedestrians, far too distant to make out their facial features. I ponder the irony of the place – if nothing else, it has endured. Later that evening, our Russian colleagues arrive. They cross the bridge.

**The next day we return** for a guided tour of the fortress. In addition, there will be readings. Our guide is a Russian-speaking woman who was born in Narva and speaks educated English and, to our ears, fluent Swedish. Her task, it turns out, is to demonstrate to foreign journalists just how splendidly visitors are received by the museum administration; and, indeed, visitors would appear to be received well. Nonetheless, one gets a conflicted impression when the guide – depending on the interest of the visitor, of course – speaks less about historical facts than the tailored ways of presenting them. Fixed in a place which had been conquered and reconquered again and again, in a kind of perpetual motion machine of border-drawing, doubleness is perhaps appropriate, I think. Finally, we are up in Långe Hermann and peer through the openings and drizzle at the red chimneys that adorn the Kreenholm plant. The guide and the Russian authors are immersed in a lively conversation. When she notices that I'm still there she switches quickly to English and continues to criticize the official history of the city. "Everywhere it says", she says emphatically, "that Narva was bombed to pieces in the war. But it should be that it was the medieval town which disappeared. The new Narva, which emerged during industrialization, remains." She is a pragmatist; a mother with several children and a professional woman who speaks at least three languages. It is not her intention to romanticize the former regime. Rather, I interpret it as a reasonable indignation: the city of her childhood most certainly does exist!

The insight into the river outside, the fluid border with Russia, does not leave me in peace. The place demands a confrontation with history – with people's different histories. But this does not occur. Perhaps this is also a desire of sorts on my part, having been raised at a safe distance from recently healed wounds. If they indeed have healed. In any event, our traveling group remains closed, without an audience or other interactions with the local community. Among the participants themselves the mood is conciliatory, gradually becoming high-spirited. Ilya Fonyakov from St. Petersburg explicitly thanks the Estonians for allowing Pushkin Street to retain that name, a gesture which

he claims to appreciate, the old school poet.

We are gathered in what was once the Narva fortress dining hall. What follows is almost a kind of interactive lyric poetry. Hannu Niklander reads his poetry in Finnish and it is translated – staged – into Russian by Fonyakov. Likewise, Peter Mickwitz in Swedish, Klaus-Jürgen Liedtke in German, Jürgen Rooste in Estonian. Gradually, an interplay arises in the dissonances between the languages and the voices. Just like on the bus yesterday, I am tempted to give in to this peculiar music, to be rocked, swayed in, away. Until Rose-Marie Huuva reads her own poem, translated from Sami into English. In bare sketches, we get a depiction of how the revivalist priest Lars Levi Laestadius collected Sami skulls and passed them on to the Swedish Institute for racial research that existed at the time. Karolinska Institute's skull collection, for example, was "enriched" by the collaboration, which also entailed Sami graves being plundered in the name of pseudo-science. In the form of poetry, Rose-Marie Huuva urgently asks whether it might be time to return the skulls now. I am pulled back to the present and the different political realities that are assembled under the reconstructed medieval chandeliers.

We leave the Narva on the same day. It strikes me that a possible confrontation – the German "Auseinandersetzung" captures it better – also could have involved the Swedish presence. With this I'm not referring to Charles XII and the Swedish lion, which now adorns the artistically folded toffee paper of Narva's candy stores; rather Swedbank and SEB, whose neon signs adorn innumerable facades. They shine faintly in the shadow of the financial crisis. As we now leave the city behind us, I have a feeling of already being on the way back home. As if our journey has reached a silent climax here at Europe's last outpost towards Russia.

**The last night** we spend in Käsmu, or Kaspervik, to use the old Swedish city name. There is the center that the Estonian Writers' Union has established within the framework of Baltic cooperation. Writers and translators come to this wooden house from the turn of the century to live and work. Similar places also exist in Ventspils, in Nida and Ahrenshoop: the fruits of the networking in which the Baltic Writers' Council and others have been engaged.

For many years, the international writer and translator center on Gotland, which was founded after the "authors' cruise" in 1992, was unique. In Käsmu now, the joint center's future is discussed with some concern. It is unclear whether the Swedish Ministry of Culture will divest itself of its responsibility, or maintain it. Many, if not most, of the participants in this trip have already lived and worked in Visby. Now they agree on a call for the preservation of the center's international character. Cultural policy work is thus conducted again.

The journey back to Tallinn goes through Lahemaa National Park. We stop at two country estates that have been turned into museums. Villa Sagadi and Palmse are magnificent baroque buildings, with well-trimmed, geometric lawns and landscaped gravel paths. They reflect not only the relationship between Russia and Estonia; they testify to the presence of a social class that no longer exists. At the end of World War I, in con-

nection with Estonia's first independence, both estates were dissolved and nationalized. After 1940, they were taken over by the Soviet authorities and "functionalized". Palmse, for example, was used for a long time as a convalescence home. Prior to that, they were inhabited by a mixed nobility that was typical for the region: the originally Swedish, then German, family von Fock and the Baltic German family von der Pahlen. For me, both estates seem somewhat unreal where they stand in the middle of Laheema's fleshy foliage. It is like stepping into a staging of Agnes von Krusenstjerna's novel suite on the Misses von Pahlen – obviously a very Swedish association. In furnished rooms that are not occupied but merely observed, a surreal feeling arises. It seems to emphasize the literary character. In fact, however, both Villa Sagadi and Palmse accommodate layer upon layer of fates, stratified like the shale they break in Kohtla-Järve, and our associations probably should point in different directions.

**National and cultural** turning points: these have marked all the Baltic Meetings. "Every problem cries out in its own language", noted Tomas Tranströmer in the 1960s, and given the ambiguity of his choice of words in Swedish, we could also say that "problems also cry out for an expression of their own...." During this third meeting, poetry itself has served as a language and as a common thread, or rather nerve. In particular, the Russian poets, who themselves were not able to attend, have left their mark on our meeting via their translations. Janina Orlov, current chairperson of the Baltic Writers' Council, highlights precisely that when I ask her – that the poem itself was able to be at the center. In contexts such as these it is otherwise easy for a certain distance to arise, ones speaks about the literature. And even if a more formal setting was lacking, an unofficial conveying of knowledge has nonetheless occurred: on the bus, during the shared meals, and in the hotel rooms. The Swedish journalist Ingela Bendt is a board member of the Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators and participated both in Kaliningrad and on Gotland. She stressed that it was very good that we managed to implement this third meeting "in order not to break a tradition". Transnational cooperation of this kind is fragile, almost organic in nature, and continuity is critical. The next Baltic Meeting is to be held in Turku, in 2011, in connection with the European Capitals of Culture (which also includes Tallinn).

This time, the farewell takes place, appropriately enough, on the bus – en route. *Daß alles sich in der Bewegung entscheidet und nicht im Stillstand*, whispers my fictional companion Austerlitz. Klaus-Jürgen Liedtke quotes Tomas Tranströmer (ubiquitous, not just in this text): "Everything sings. You shall remember this. Travel on!" ✖

**unn gustafsson**

Swedish journalist working from Berlin

## Fragmented picture of the Baltic countries

The Baltic Sea Festival (Östersjöfestivalen) has become firmly established in Stockholm, scheduled each year in August between the end of summer vacation and the accelerating pace of the activities of autumn. To achieve this in a city with notorious and historical difficulties permanently placing festivals on the map is a laudable achievement, as is the fact that the event includes more than just the music. Among the festival's satellite events this year was a seminar at *Radiohuset* (Swedish National Radio) on the Baltic countries after the new independence, "Who loves the Baltic Sea?", with Svante Weyler as moderator.

The tone was struck, literally, with an introductory glimpse of a recording from a live Swedish-Estonian radio concert with choral music from both Stockholm and Tallinn in 1988. Maarja Talgre and Jan Mosander, from Swedish Radio, both of whom sat on the panel, had recollections both of that time and of the nervousness that was spreading about the possibility that some inspection group in Moscow would block the broadcast in the middle of the concert. Today, it has become a pioneering effort, the beginning of something new.

**That the fall of** the Wall was unexpected and sudden has of course certain dramatic aspects. At the historic press conference in East Berlin a year later, the GDR Politburo let it be known that free passage through the wall would be permitted. "When?" asked an Italian journalist. "Ab sofort" (immediately), responded the GDR's representative, who didn't get around to consulting his higher-ups.

But in fact, what took place had already been in preparation for a long time. Jan Mosander, who was on-site early at the Lenin Shipyard (now Gdansk Shipyard), felt that the Polish background was not adequately covered. Another member of the panel, Katarina Engberg, a specialist in security policy, pointed out that the roundtable talks with opposition groups began in the GDR, which, according to Gorbachev, had been passed over by time. Today, many visitors to Berlin ask where the wall actually was.

The Sassnitz ferry nonetheless constituted a direct connection between Sweden and the GDR at a time when

there were no ferry connections between Sweden and the Baltic countries. From Helsinki, it was only the daytime-operated ferry MS Georg Ots, named after the famous Estonian opera singer, that could bring Swedish travelers to Tallinn over the Gulf of Finland. History professor Hain Rebas, defense minister for a short time in the newly liberated Estonia, pointed out that this very real isolation actually had a correspondence in an absence of contact internally. In Tallinn, people didn't know what was happening in Tartu.

So it is not surprising that independence for the Baltic countries was followed by a euphoria which also had a real counterpart in an economic recovery; in 1939 Estonia had a GDP comparable to that of Finland, towards the end of the Soviet period, it was less than one quarter of Finland's, and the question is whether even that level corresponded to reality.

**Today, the media** image of the Baltic countries has become significantly darker. The economy is in free fall there with GDP projections showing a shrinkage of around twenty percent in Latvia and Lithuania; Estonia, as *primus inter pares*, has better prospects. Incomprehensible LGBT laws, discriminating against people with divergent sexual orientation, have been proposed in Lithuania. Corruption and oligarchic rule are said to be flourishing. Street violence scares away visitors who otherwise had been so eager to come, in addition to being a threat to the population itself. Discriminatory language laws – misunderstood or not – are adopted.

Here, it really cannot be said that the panel manifested any unity, which is perhaps how it should be with panels. The optimist was Dag Hartelius, former Swedish ambassador to Estonia, and now to Poland. He saw nothing real in this negative image, and argued that the pessimistic outlook leads to our missing opportunities. In any event, data on corruption in Estonia has no support in available EU statistics, and Swedish companies do not encounter corruption in their everyday activities there. Nor is the picture of street violence accurate, he said.

Radio journalist Christer Fridén joined the negativists, but was thinking primarily of Latvia and Lithuania. Contempt for politicians has risen to a level

## There is no Europe. Quotes from Kaplinski's *The same river: A Novel*



PHOTO: RAPHAEL GIANELLI-MERIANO

”

"I, too, hate, I have hated for half my life, and will hate until I die. Germany is the heart and soul of Europe, and Europe itself is a ghost, a zombie, a chimera, which everyone devoutly believes in. In fact, Europe does not exist. Eurasia exists – more precisely, Eurasia together with Africa and Oceania, the great supercontinent of the Old World, where there are many different kinds of geographical and cultural regions. But there is no Europe among regions; Europe, in turn, is divided into regions, the most important of which extend beyond its borders – for example, the Mediterranean area, the Taiga Region, the area of steppes and semi-arid deserts. The southern Italians and the Greeks are closer to the Palestinians and Algerians than to the Finnish or the Dutch."

"But then how did the idea of Europe arise, who created what you call the ghost that is Europe?" he asked.

"The power-hungriness of the Popes and the Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. In their language, *esse* was equal to *subjacere*."

The only ones who existed were those who were subject to their power. Everything needed to be standardized. A uniform Catholic church, uniform laws, one language, one mind. Even people's names had to be made similar – the same Jaanas, Johns, Janises, and Giovanni from the Atlantic to the Urals. Europe's true ideal from the beginning has been totalitarianism, the concentration camp. And the greatest Europeans – the Germans – have now realized that in a brilliant way. And their students are now trying to do the same thing all over the world." ✖

”

From Jaan Kaplinski, *The Same River: A Novel*. Translation into Swedish: Enel Melberg. Stockholm: Natur & Kultur 2009 [pp. 107–8]. Original title: *See-sama jõgi*.

The events in this autobiographical novel take place during a one-year period around 1960.

that has no counterpart in the Nordic countries. Soviet nostalgia is spreading: people would prefer cheap, difficult-to-obtain goods to an expensive diversity. Author Arne Bengtsson believed that what he called the Soviet mentality had survived most strongly in Lithuania, which may seem surprising, given the large number of Catholics and relatively few Russians in the population. Economist Anna Trane, who was the driving force behind the SVT film about Swedish bank involvement in the Baltic

countries, repeated what she presented in the film: the underground economy now seems to be entirely accepted in the wage sector.

Hain Rebas's hopes for a new democratically schooled generation could perhaps be used as the final vignette. ✖

**hans wolf**

Former contributor to Dagens Nyheter (Stockholm)



PHOTO: TIM MEIER

**The myth of Dracula.** The stake that was symbolically thrust into Ceausescu's heart.



# TEACH YOURSELF ROMANIAN

Fourteen stakes are suspended from the ceiling. From these flow streams of red yarn, crocheted so as to suggest flowing, coagulating blood that settles in pools on the floor. Irre Lazarescu has given shape to the myth of Romania, in an attempt to explore her own feelings about her Romanian background and to make them visible to the public – all done to raise interest in, and thoughts about, identity, myths and Romania.

“It would have been impossible to do, had it not been for my Romanian background”, says Irre Lazarescu.

Lazarescu was born in Sweden, but both her parents are Romanians. She was only six years old when Ceausescu died. She remembers the joy and the hope: The dictator was dead. The silence had been broken, the terror had come to an end.

“My father has told a myth – or truth – about the stake’s meaning to Romania, a myth that differs from the one about Count Dracula. He said that the whole uprising started when some people, who had brought along poles or pointed sticks, prodded people in the crowd in order to break the silence. This was how the wave of protest started.” Irre Lazarescu continues:

**I do not know if this is true, but it is certain that if one listens to the tape recordings of the protests against Ceausescu’s speech – as I have done – then one finds that the first screams heard are screams of pain.**

Myths fascinate Lazarescu. The myth about the cultured vampire, Count Dracula, who can die only if a stake is thrust through his heart, is well-known to Westerners. The stake is a symbol of Romanian identity, but it is also a picture that non-Romanians have constructed of the country. Myths can unite, but they can also alienate.

Irre Lazarescu describes herself as a hybrid, as someone who belongs neither in Romania nor in Sweden – but perhaps it is the other way around; perhaps she is equally at home in both cultures? It is exactly this doubleness and dividedness that she cannot get away from in her art; she must explore and develop it.

With the stake installation, Lazarescu, for the first time, has refrained from shielding herself by using humor as a disarming element. Now, her message is more naked and revealing.

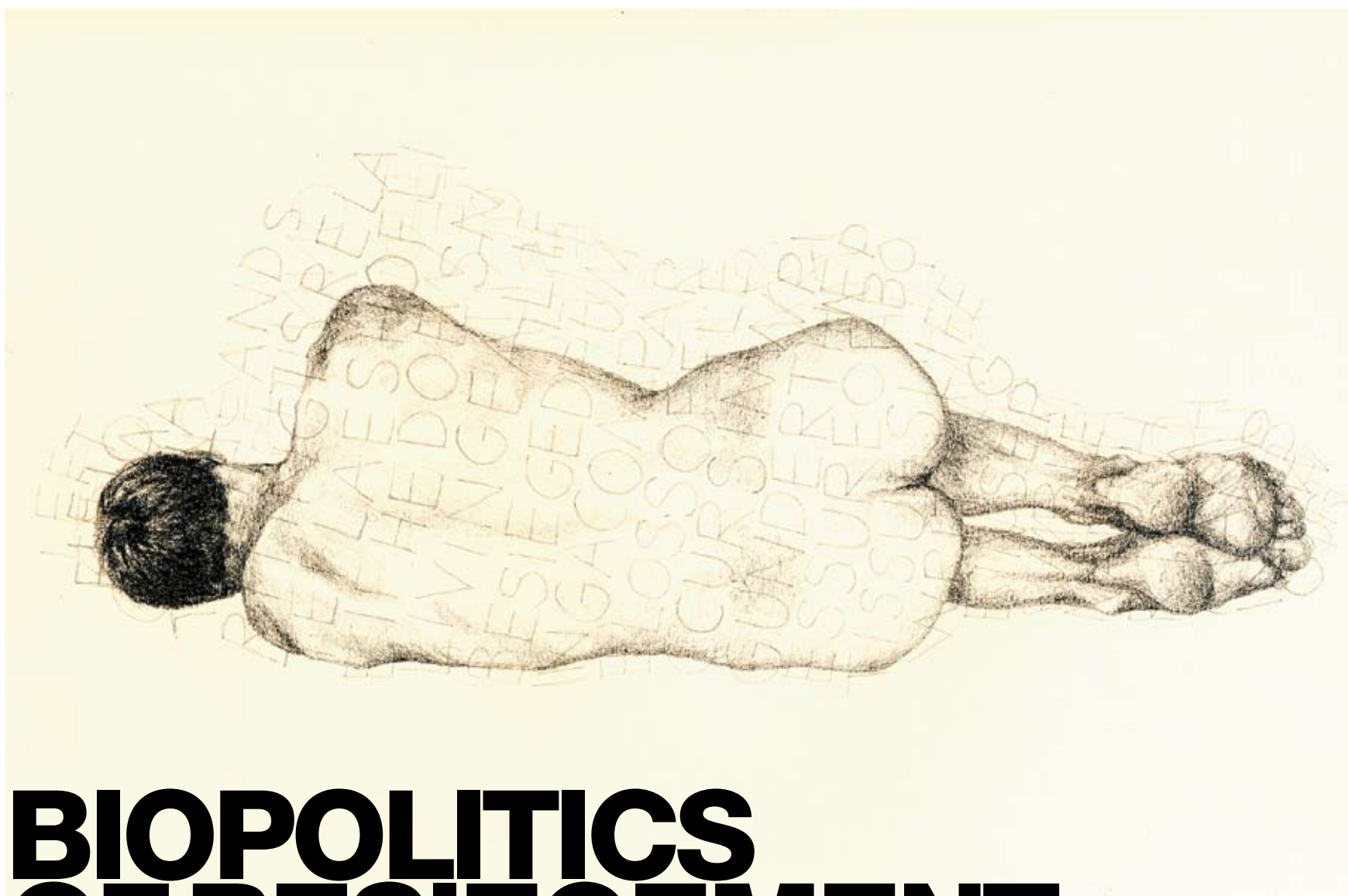
“Never before have I felt as inspired as I did now. It was also a peaceful creative process, almost contemplative. I found the sticks in the forest and used my grandmother’s red yarn for the crocheting”, she says.

She is a little apprehensive about how her work will be received, concerned that some will find it macabre or repulsive. She therefore very deliberately had the stakes point downwards, she chose to work with soft materials and was very conscious of what she did – and why.

How would she like her work to be interpreted?

“Perhaps one might say that the blood flows out of these suspended stakes and that they have now been drained of the brutal or vulgar myth?” ✕

ninna mörner



# **BIOPOLITICS OF BESIEGEMENT**

## WRITING, SACRIFICE, AND BARE LIFE IN LIDIJA GINZBURG'S NOTEBOOKS

BY **IRINA SANDOMIRSKAJA** ILLUSTRATION **MOA FRANZÉN**

The naked human being in a forsaken world. Is it about surviving? Man or monster?

**Lidiia Iakovlevna Ginzburg** (1902–1990) is primarily known to the international reading public as the author of *Blockade Diary*<sup>1</sup>, a testimony from the years of the Siege of Leningrad. Originally given a title which in a literal translation from Russian would be “Notes by a Besieged Human Being” (*Zapiski blokadnogo cheloveka*<sup>2</sup>), this book is one of the most outstanding documents of World War II, describing survival under extreme circumstances which reduce humanness to the “bare existence” (Ginzburg’s term) of a walking corpse; a state of survival in which neither life proper nor death itself appears possible. In this early piece of biopolitics, Ginzburg analyzes biopower as it is imposed by the technologies of mass annihilation in war, terror, and starvation. The uniqueness of Lidiia Ginzburg’s project is its objective of not only narrating but theorizing the Siege as a symbolic economy, with the emphasis on individual strategies of survival, the isomorphism between survival politics and those of writing, and the relations among bio- and thanatopolitics, body, and language.

Ginzburg’s “besieged human being”, however, is a human condition that evolves long before the onset of the Siege of Leningrad in September 1941. It was as early as 1926 that Ginzburg had started her lifelong project of writing notebooks – the lion’s share of which remain unpublished – which she continued until her death in 1990. As we now know them, the notebooks represent analytical and biographical fragments in which the testimony of the current moment is interpellated with historical analogies, structural analysis, character sketches, philosophic generalizations, and aphoristic moral paradoxes. Ginzburg was a literary historian of the younger generation of Russian formalism. After the repression of the formalists at the end of the 1920s she, like many of her colleagues, was struggling to secure a way to continue her professional work. Private notebooks became her intellectual underground while she was employed in auxiliary positions in the Soviet publishing industry. It was one such position, editor at the radio committee in Leningrad during the war, that helped her survive and document the Siege.

However, Ginzburg’s image of besieged humanness relates not simply to the experience of being locked up in the extermination of Leningrad. As her notebooks now gradually appear in full to the reading public, Leningrad acquires a paradigmatic value. In Ginzburg’s historical and structural analyses, body and language, biology and biography in besiegement are not generated *ex nihilo*, but evolve systematically alongside technologies of power and speech strategies in the context of Stalinist modernization. This evolution is not interrupted at all by the disaster of Leningrad but logically culminates in it. Ginzburg’s subject of “20<sup>th</sup> century catastrophes” is always already besieged: the faceless object of biopolitical and ideological manipulation which

responds to it by manipulating, in turn, those scarce linguistic resources that are left as still unoccupied by the unitary language of the state and war machine. The skills in manipulating language determine the subject’s strategies in pursuing quite modest claims “to survive and to live on without losing a human image” (p. 198). The value of Ginzburg’s analysis lies in the fact that, while giving a detailed account of the physiological, psychological, and social effects of starvation under the Siege, she also treats the *Muselmann* of the Siege as an allegory that represents the decline and survival of writing under the threefold pressure of economic necessity, political terror, and total mobilization.

**Starvation disease** (alimentary dystrophy, according to the Soviet medical nomenclature<sup>3</sup>) is characterized primarily by the atrophy and critical loss of bodily tissues. A comparable loss of flesh occurs in writing under the pressure of politically controlled institutionalization. According to Ginzburg, in a writer, life and writing are inseparable: “An author is a human being who is incapable of living a life if he does not write” (p. 147). And another definition: an author is “a human being who writes because he is capable of no other relation to reality.” (p. 111) To be thus means to have a relation to being; the flesh of life is made of tissues of relationships; to live is to participate in relations, and the purpose of writing is living proper. The politics of writing are fundamentally biopolitical, writing being defined as a *sine qua non* of living (for a writer).

Since the author is also “the most accomplished reader of his time” (p. 35), reading and writing constitute one process, reading being the inner speech of writing. Not surprisingly, therefore, in the Leningrad of the late 1920s and early 1930s, “people get banned like books. After which one loses interest in the person thus banned, one stops buying his books and is afraid of putting them where others might see them” (p. 79). “If I found myself on an uninhabited island, I would most probably start writing in the sand”, says Ginzburg to a friend who rejoins, “You *are* writing in the sand” (p. 126).

“An atmosphere”, “a specific inertia of writing” (p. 93), a lifestyle in which reading and writing are inseparable from living itself, is an attitude in which the young Ginzburg had been cultivated under the aegis of her great formalist teachers Tynianov and Eikhenbaum at the formalist Institute of Art History in revolutionary Petrograd. Destroyed in 1929 in an ideological *pogrom*, for Ginzburg it will forever remain an image of a pure *vita theoretica*, a complete fusion of life and knowledge, life and expression; theory elevated into a principle of existence. However, “the gay times of denuding the technique<sup>4</sup> are gone [...] Nowadays [in 1928] it is time when technique should be hidden as carefully as

possible.” (p. 54) The demise of the Institute in 1929 was facilitated by a fierce ideological attack, but the proximate cause of the demise was an internal conflict. Ginzburg’s notes from the late 1920s and ’30s are full of accounts of confrontations with former colleagues who are adapting formalist techniques to the needs of the Stalinist symbolic regime.

While a living relationship in the theoretical community is dying, it is useful connections that come to replace it. The flesh of life (writing is a relation to life and thus equals living a life, as we recall) melts, and soon it is only a skeleton of “connections” that is left. “Connections” are actively sought for pragmatic reasons but are also painful reminders of the relationship that is dead. *Vita theoretica* breaks up into life separated from theory, and writing separated from experience. The writer has to find for himself a source of living in what Ginzburg calls “profession” – reading and writing as applied skills useful for state construction. This is a routine practice that is adequately remunerated by an institution but is not inspired by the presence of a relationship. “Profession” is curse and nourishment at the same time. Life-as-writing and life-as-relationship postulated as an indivisible whole in a writer fall apart.

We write and we know that there can be various situations: the book will be rejected and you will not get paid at all; you will receive an advance, but the book will not be published; you will receive 60 percent and the book will not be published; the book will not be published, but you will receive your fee in full; the book will be detained for a year and a half, or two years, or three years and will never be published. At any event, in the process we will be yelled at, and at any event, there will be never ever any joy (pp. 97–98).

The party respects “profession” and is willing to pay for smoothness in its exercise: formal techniques and routines of literary work, an ability to put words together, and skills in articulating the will of the authorities in an understandable smooth language. Good money is paid for teaching, while those who, notwithstanding, for some reason cannot abandon writing, can feed on “parodic and cheap belle-lettrism in which a beastly lack of consciousness combines with the excessive fatigue of the brain” (pp. 121).

The intellectuals are inventing new methods of working with the “technique”. The gay times of “denuding” are over, but the “technique” has not at all lost its value: instead of divesting, why not invest it? Originally an object of the formalist’s critical reflection, “technique” is evolving into a complicated machine for the production and propagation of ideology, a machine that does not need a creative author and can be managed technologically by a “professional”. Such a “technique” is an attractive commodity. It is no longer the author who writes his work, but the “technique” that “writes” the work and the reality the work is supposed

to “reflect”, including the author himself. In the meantime, the writer finds out that in the process he

**[...] is only responsible for the nimbleness of his own movements. This is a good and not quite unfruitful schooling for those who write because they have chosen the profession of the writer. But this is a horrifying, irreparably devastating moral corruption for him who cannot live a life if he is not writing. (pp. 110–111)**

A pedantically responsible observer, Ginzburg makes a note concerning the practice of producing realities by operating “techniques”. She analyzes the product of her own authorial effort which culminated in her writing “somebody else’s book” (*ne svoiu knigu*). This book, a novel for teenagers written on commission for money, appears to her as if it were miraculously produced by an alien force.

**[...]It is] a book with a pre-determined result and a pre-fabricated attitude towards reality [...]. The main thing, however, is that one feels relieved of creative responsibility. Between the author and his book there arise some intermediate auxiliary series. When the book has passed through those series, it becomes a reflection of those series but never an expression of human being. [...] A person who succeeds in producing such a literary convention breathes freely. It is the State that is responsible for his ideology, it is history that is responsible for the subject matter, and it is the system of genres that is responsible for his literary manner. (p. 110)**

The effect of practicing “techniques” is total travesty. Such writing is always in excess, “words scattering around and flowing into new words and not being able to stop” (p. 126). Verbalization fills up the life of the intellectual as water fills up body tissues swollen by starvation. It consumes time, thought, and attention; it distracts from uneasy thoughts, blocks anxiety, “calms down and refreshes” (*ibid.*). Verbalization serves as a painkiller for the amputated consciousness as it takes over “that line along which thoughts, values, and self-esteem are located in a human being” (p. 107).

A specific obsession developed in starvation is the longing of the patient to recover the wholeness and fullness of the body surrendered to hunger, to become “smooth” again. Ginzburg refers to this mania as an effect of “starvation trauma [...] in the intellectuals of the 1930s” (p. 645). The dystrophic phantasm of smoothness also spreads into language. Punctuated by “the hungry trauma”, verbalization seeks a smoothness of speech trying to fill up the gaping semantic emptiness inside itself by carefully observing the rules of correctness. “Starvation trauma” transforms writing into a totality of self-censorship. Ginzburg meticulously registers every stage of this transformation, partly by observing the metamorphosis of her once free-thinking colleagues into the functionaries of Stalinist literature;

partly by observing her own evolution into an insignificant clerk servicing the ideological machine.

The mania of smoothness provokes a shared anxiety of puncture. It is united by belief in the impossibility of a creative act, acting being reduced to choice, choice restricted by circumstances. Creative or theoretical writing decays, giving way to editing and proofreading. A disciple of the formalists is now perfecting the skill of setting in missing commas: punctuation in control over puncture. These operations produce a totally correct language, ideally coherent and smooth as a mirror. This is a language that is locked inside itself like a city in a siege. Later on, describing Leningrad during the catastrophic months of the winter of 1941, Ginzburg points out the dead city’s “mocking beauty” (p. 619) – such is also the beauty of a frozen and hungry word created through the cumulative effect of trauma, on the one hand, and corrective compensation, on the other. The simulated, carefully engineered and maintained reality of self-censoring writing is by the same token repression and protection. The evil of empty language protects against an even worse evil of complete silence. This experience of simulated authorship fully reproduced itself later on in the daily experiences of the social dissociation of the Siege.

**[R]eality was manifestly appearing in its double function: hostile and protective. All that pressed, rejected, poisoned, and burned – all that also served as protection and as substitute for evil. It served as a physical defense and a shelter from the horror of internal isolation. (p. 617)**

**Awakened from his** daydreaming inside the envelope of smooth writing, the writing subject finds himself in the besieged frozen city, “a mockingly beautiful city all covered with cracking frost” (p. 619). It is the winter of 1941–1942. Leningrad stands besieged since late summer. Bread rations in January and February are calculated at approximately 300 grams of bread per person per day.<sup>5</sup> Already in November, people had started eating cats and dogs. Also in November, the NKVD reports the first case of cannibalism: a widow of a Red Army soldier, a jobless mother of four murdered her baby to feed the elder children<sup>6</sup>. It is unbearably cold outside and inside.

**...People are running across the frosty city trying to cover the distance which all of sudden acquired a reified materiality. Those who are better educated recollect Dante, that very circle of Inferno where cold reigns supreme. (p. 619)**

Hypothermia is still another symptom of starvation disease: the body utterly weakened by hunger is unable to retain warmth. As for Dante, Ginzburg means the last, ninth circle that is populated by traitors. They are submerged in the icy immobility of eternal cosmic cold.

German air raids killed only 10 percent of the hundreds of thousand victims of the first year of the Siege.

How many were eliminated by the NKVD is not clear. The overwhelming majority, still not calculated but assumed to be over 1.5 million people, died of starvation. The city of hunger, an economy of symbolic exchange in dystrophic writing that had been evolving for a long time, all of a sudden became the material reality of everyday life. Here too, life critically depends on techniques of survival; survival in its turn critically depends on the iterability of routines. The daily cycle is filled up with tedious but necessary operations that reproduce in every detail the routines of the day before; an untiring maintenance of trivial automatisms. Taking out the garbage, getting a pail of water up to the 6th floor, waiting for one’s turn in an interminable bread line, struggling through cold and snow on your way to work (those who had work) or to the cemetery to provide a burial for a family member (those who had had family members). Cycle after cycle, day by day, famished life gradually extinguishes itself in an unending repetition of routines of its own maintenance.

**The short diurnal cyclic** intervals accumulate into longer cycles of siege seasons. The winter with its devastating alimentary dystrophy gives way to spring, and the dystrophic patient feeds on grass and exposes the body to the feeble sunshine trying to get hold of and retain at least a minimal resource of energy to survive the dystrophy of the winter to come. This is how dystrophic time is composed of recurring cycles: each one involves the gradual loss of strength, until the patient almost reaches the fatal limit – and then life slowly returns over an interval of more favorable circumstances. If one organizes one’s strengths properly, if the body is able and willing to clutch at life, and if there is a little bit of luck, such cycles can recur several times, each time leading to a deeper decline.

As distinct from the “quick death” of war, the death of the dystrophic patient is slow but “easy” (p. 735), because the patient is not responsible for it. The arrival of death is preceded by a “disease of the will”, when the patient claims for himself “the supreme right to stupor” (p. 738), the right to “die in relief” (p. 735). Besides death, there is nothing that could disturb the clockwork cyclicality of survival, and there is nothing that promises a change. Death, however, does not belong to the dystrophic subject who is morally paralyzed both by hunger and by the exertion of his own struggle for survival. It is alienated from the dying subject: “A death without resistance. A death without surprise: here he was, and here he’s gone.” (p. 739)

What is it that prevents the almost dead dystrophic patient from making the last step into “the supreme right to stupor”? “Life [...] with its remaining desires. The desire to live and the readiness to take deadly risks that glimmered through the stupor.” (*ibid.*) Holding death at a distance, desire returns the dystrophic patient into an infernal reality that endlessly rotates along its orbits of evil. As compared to the “glimmering stupor” of an alienated death, “the circular movement of dystrophic life” (p. 621) is only a relative evil. The barren circular time of the Siege alleviates and anesthetizes a much more evil evil, the absolute evil of non-death in

the ultimate alienation of “bare existence”.

Ginzburg describes survival in terms similar to those of verbalization, counterfeit writing through the automatic exploitation of “technique”. The dystrophy of the body as well as the dystrophy of writing both have a circular shape and a compensational character. Automated words “scatter around” in alienation from their realia, just like the dystrophic citizen of the city of hunger “runs around in circles and cannot reach reality.” (p. 658) Death is as “easy” for the dystrophic patient as automated verbalization is easy for its author. Death is not owned by the dying subject, just like “somebody else’s books” (like the one Ginzburg herself produced in the 1930s) do not belong to their authors.

**Death, survival, and** verbalization all develop under the sign of one overarching metonymy: a lesser evil substituting for a greater one. It is precisely this choice in favor of evil to prevent a still more profound one that determines the self-identity of the “more educated” dystrophic reader of Dante’s *Divina commedia*: death, survival, and writing all unite in the infernal totality of betrayal. Forty years later, looking backward and summing up the spirit of Stalinism, Ginzburg comes forward with a concise formulaic conclusion:

[T]he sign of the time is not terror, not cruelty [...], but betrayal. All-pervading betrayal that no one has evaded – neither those who wrote denunciations, nor those who kept silent. (p. 308)

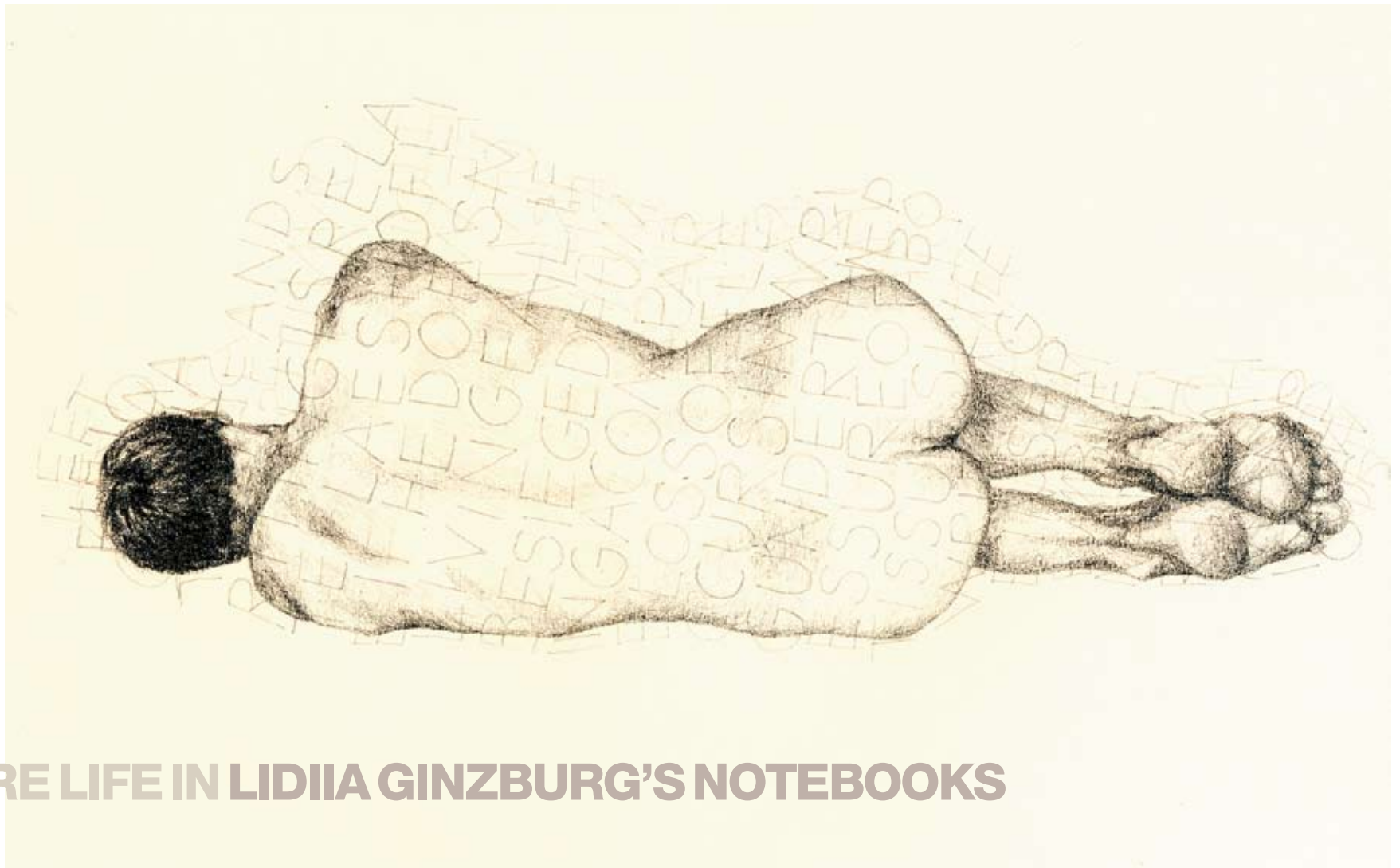
Summarizing the *Zeitgeist* as “all-pervading betrayal that no one has evaded”, Ginzburg uses the metaphors of sacrificial burning: “the unprecedented mutual immolation and self-immolation among scholars and writers” (p. 104).

**The perversity of** the Siege, as the subject recognizes it in Dante’s *Inferno*, lies in the way it eliminates the difference between betrayal and sacrifice. Here, betrayal should be understood as an economic rather than a moral term. Even though almost dead, the dystrophic subject is not by any means relieved of the duty to participate in sacrificial acts. On the contrary, in the city of hunger sacrificial and self-sacrificial choices become a daily necessity. Everyone is included in the pyramid of the distribution of food and everyone participates in the hierarchy of “dependants” and “earners”. The resource of survival in the city of hunger is not sufficient for everybody to survive. In Leningrad’s self-enclosure, there exists an operating hierarchical difference between those who are relatively necessary and whom the city is still prepared to provide with a minimum amount of survival – and, on the other hand, those who are not necessary at all and thus wholly dispensable. Food cannot be properly earned in exchange for work, it can only be *received* in the form of food rations, that is, as a badge of privilege and a token of being a requested citizen. The subject who is privileged because he is usable by the system is surrounded by a group of unusable dependants – old parents and young children, less privileged lovers and friends. The

“dependants” are entitled to no gift from the city, and it becomes the sole responsibility of the dystrophic subject to decide which of them he would share his 300 grams of bread with and, consequently, which of them would die and which of them would get an additional chance. The dystrophic subject, himself standing on the brink of extinction, against his own will, assumes the role of the *oikonomos*, dispensing meager survival to the other. His everyday existence is converted into an unending chain of sacrifices. He sacrifices not out of love, not as a gift, but out of a duty that is imposed on him against his will. Dystrophic sacrifice is no gift and therefore a bad sacrifice, the one that is always already rejected.

Further, a bad sacrifice, says Ginzburg, has significance beyond a tragic episode in the history of a besieged city. It is also something more fundamental than a peculiarity of the Stalinist symbolic economy. Sacrifice is the price of human togetherness in the name of culture, and possesses a foundation in cultural value. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the age of ultimate catastrophes, it is culture itself that demands bad sacrifices and institutes dystrophic subjectivities, because it is culture – not death – that in its very essence negates life, while life negates cultural value:

The lion is courageous, and being prepared to die is part of the lion’s structure. The naked principle of continuing life (any life) and the multiplication of individual pleasures is only logically possible if one negates culture. Because culture is a social factor



and it replaces the category of pleasure by the category of value. Which category, in its turn, presupposes the category of retribution. (pp. 731-732)

This, “in a reality where everything that moves (for example, war) threatens (the individual) with destruction, while everything that is stable and peaceful threatens with emptiness” (p. 144), the threat to life comes first and foremost from value, and value is threatened by life. In the “environment catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”, all orchestrated by military, bureaucratic, and writerly technologies, life (for the writer, again, indivisible from writing) becomes a mere existence “... that is being dragged forward by some forces, and it is not essential whether these forces are understandable or inexplicable. Instead of a free world of ideas, one lives in a suffocating world of total necessity, a world filled with the objective horror of living.” (p. 199). Life becomes ethically impossible, and “art is productive if it explains why the human being still goes on living (it cannot be out of mere cowardice!), art that shows or seeks to show the ethical possibility of life, even in the environment of the catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”. (p. 200)

**Thus, Ginzburg expands** her thinking, and thinks the Siege in such a way as to include Stalinism, and likewise thinks the Soviet experience in such a way as to include modern European history. In her generalization, she repeats that expanding gesture by which Walter Benjamin in 1933 folded the whole of the European civilization into the “us” under the sign of radically impoverished experience:

[N]ever has experience been contradicted more thoroughly: strategic experience has been contravened by positional warfare; economic experience, by the inflation; physical experience, by hunger; moral experiences, by the ruling powers. The generation that had gone to school in horse-drawn streetcars now stood in the open air, amid a landscape in which nothing was the same except the clouds and, at its center, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body.<sup>7</sup>

Benjamin refers to a community whose “hallmark” is “a total absence of illusion about the age and at the same time an unlimited commitment to it”.<sup>8</sup> This is a definition to which Ginzburg would have probably subscribed.

Ginzburg’s “bare existence” is that threshold towards which life and language move, incapable of living under the conditions of the Siege but equally incapable of dying because of the necessity of survival. In the construction of bare existence she seems to echo Benjamin’s other conception of poverty: his notion of bare life (*ein blosses Leben*).<sup>9</sup> The similarity between these two poverties lies not only in how bare existence or bare life are opposed to life as such, but also

in the way both are determined ethically. Benjamin’s bare life as he discusses it in his *Critique of Violence* is not the outcome of violence as such, nor the result of the imposition of external conditions which make life impossible. Bare life is life facing its violent divine Creator, a life before life, only preparing itself for “ethical possibility”. Indeed, the term *ein blosses Leben* in Benjamin’s writing occurs invariably with one and only one attribute: that of guilt, or debt (*Schuld*). It is the *Schuld* alone that determines the difference between life and bare life, and the bareness of bare life itself: it is a life bared of any other predicates but *Schuld*. This presupposes bare life’s potential development towards a life as such, a “good life” (Benjamin), or an “ethic possibility” of life (Ginzburg).

A “good life”, Benjamin says in an earlier fragment, is a life that is immortal – i.e., to express this in Ginzburg’s terms, a life that is ethically absolutely possible. For Benjamin, the immortality of human life is not the eternity of nature, but the infinity of a life that is unforgettable: “it is a life that is not to be forgotten, even though it has no monument or memorial, or perhaps any testimony. Such life remains unforgettable even though without form or vessel.”<sup>10</sup> The unforgettable life of Prince Myshkin lies wholly in the realm of freedom from necessity, in unrestricted ethical possibility. Ginzburg would have probably also subscribed to this understanding of a good life, as opposed to “bare existence”.

Thus, it is only unforgettableity – an attribute of life that precedes memory in those who do not forget – that is capable of resolving the bareness of bare *Schuld*, of relieving the bare guilt of necessities in the name of survival, Ginzburg’s “all-pervading betrayal that no one

has evaded”. Why am I writing all this, Ginzburg asks herself at the end of her notes from the Siege. The Siege goes around in circles, and so does destruction, the logic of survival offers no exit either into living, or into death. It is in these circles that life suffocates and transforms into the guilt of “bare existence”, the betrayal. Describing such a circle, Ginzburg says, might help to break it up and thus to give bare existence a fraction of ethical possibility. Breaking up circles is a duty towards the unforgettableity of (betrayed) life – and only secondly is it a piece of testimony, a service to the memory of those who are supposed to remember.

Here, however, language makes another circle, and the ethical possibility of life, almost established, once again becomes a specter. *Opisyvat’ krugi* – in Russian, “describing circles” – also means walking around in circles, aimlessly and sometimes in despair, without an exit. What is, indeed, Ginzburg’s project of witnessing and theorizing survival – is it a gesture of resolving the circular logic of dystrophy, or is it a gesture of resignation to dystrophy’s forgetfulness, its bad eternity?

Indeed, I cannot say. ✖

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Lidiya Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, London 1995. (Note: Ginzburg’s given name, Лидия, is transliterated in different ways by different publishers, thus the variation in the English spellings seen in books translated into English.)
- <sup>2</sup> The fullest edition, Lidiia Ginzburg, *Zapisnye knizhki. Vospominaniia. Esse*, St. Petersburg 2002. Page numbers after quotations in this essay are given in this edition.
- <sup>3</sup> M. V. Chernorutskii, *Alimentarnaia distrofiia v blokirovannom Leningrade*, Leningrad 1947; S. V. Magaeva, “Fiziologicheskie i psikhosomaticheskie predposylki”, in *Zhizn’ i smert’ v blokirovannom Leningrade: Istoriko-meditsinskii aspekt*. Eds. J. D. Barber & A. R. Dzeniskevich, St. Petersburg 2001, pp. 141–185; V. B. Simonenko, S. V. Magaeva, V. G. Simonenko & Iu. V. Pakhomova, *Leningradskaia blokada: Meditsinskii problemy – retrospektiva i sovremennost’*, Moscow 2003; N. Iu. Cherepenina, “Golod i smert’ v blokirovannom gorode”, in J. D. Barber & A. R. Dzeniskevich, op. cit., pp. 35–80.
- <sup>4</sup> Ginzburg refers to Viktor Shklovskii’s 1916 concept of “denuding the technique” (of writing) (*obnazhenie priema*) as the central critical procedure in the formalist interpretation of text.
- <sup>5</sup> G. D. Barber & A. R. Dzeniskevich, op. cit., p. 56
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 48; N. A. Lomagin. *V tiskakh goloda: Blokada Leningrada v dokumentakh germanskikh spetsluzhbi i NKVD*, St. Petersburg 2001, p. 169.
- <sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Experience and Poverty”, in *Selected Writings*. Vol. 2: 1927–1934, Cambridge, Mass. 1999, p. 732.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 733.
- <sup>9</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence”, in *Selected Writings*. Vol. 1: 1913–1926, Cambridge, Mass. 1996, pp. 236–252
- <sup>10</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*”, ibid., p. 78.

With a pistol one has one shot, max two, if the pistol is double-barreled. With a revolver, five to ten. Vera Zasulich shot the governor of St. Petersburg one January day in 1878, and this is usually seen as the beginning of the wave of terrorism that washed over Europe until the outbreak of World War I.

# THE FACE OF TERRORISM

## ACTING LIKE A STATE

**Zasulich used a** British Bulldog, a small, powerful revolver that had recently come on the market. Would she have taken the shot if she had had just a pistol? Would she have made the same attempt with only a knife? Mats Fridlund is a historian of technology and science, associate professor at the Centre for Advanced Security Theory at the University of Copenhagen. One of the things his research focuses on is the significance of technologies for the emergence of modern terrorism.

“Zasulich is a very good example of how the specific form and function of weapons matter. She already had a gun, a large military revolver, but chose to acquire a new, powerful pocket revolver that fit under her shawl. She was a member of the social-revolutionary group Country and Freedom. They trained with weapons, but at this point in time no one was prepared actually to go out and shoot someone. Zasulich takes that step. I wonder whether it was precisely this new revolver technology that made that possible.

“The counter-factual question that guides my research is: what would have happened if the revolver had been invented 20 years later? Would we have had this wave of political violence? The question can of course not be answered. In the political violence that followed the attempted assassination by Zasulich, most have used the revolver or dynamite, and it is interesting to see what role these new technologies played.”

Vera Zasulich needed two shots to hit the governor, the first was a misfire. After a preliminary examination of terrorism in Europe, Mats Fridlund observes that many terrorists have suffered the same technological mishap. Often two, three, or more shots have been required, something that would have been disastrous with a pistol.

“What is the significance of having an extra chance? Can we go so far as to say that the new technologies provided radically new possibilities for new types of political activity, in this case, terrorism? So far, this notion seems to be true. Many other things were of course important for the establishment of terrorism, but the technology resulted in the new political strategy, known as the ‘Russian method’, receiving attention and spreading internationally. Similar arguments have been proffered in the case of the role of radio and the fax machine during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the Internet today.”

**In 1878, when Zasulich** shoots the governor, the word *terrorism* is not yet established in Russia, but this changes quickly. Previously, it had been used to describe the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. Then, however, what was meant was a justified terror used by the state against its own people. Now, the word and the practice had been redefined. Terrorism is directed against the state. Ideologues in the Russian social-revolutionary movement describe terrorism as the only just form of revolution. In an ordinary revolution, there is a risk that the people fight against the people – revolutionaries against the soldiers – but with terrorism it is only the real powers that be, the real culprits, who are affected. Previously, the social-revolutionary movement had worked hard on educating and enlightening, on reaching out to the peasantry with the message of social justice and revolution. It ended in mass arrests.

“During the 1880s, terrorism began to be seen as a more effective method for stirring up the people. The attacks are combined with the printing of pamphlets

explaining why the actions are being taken. Terrorism is actually a violent form of communication. It uses violence as a medium for spreading its message.”

It is precisely in propaganda that choice of method and technology plays a major role. It is here that dynamite makes its entrance.

“For the social-revolutionaries, dynamite was not just any tool of violence, it had a symbolic value. For example, in a discussion where people are thinking about how to assassinate the Tsar, someone suggests using a knife or a pistol. But the others want to use dynamite to show that there is something new, a new politics, not just the classic, old regicide.”

In dynamite, the explosive nitroglycerin is mixed with other substances that make it stable and safe to use. When Alfred Nobel invented dynamite in 1866, it was intended for use in construction and rock-blasting.

“Social-revolutionaries saw themselves as progressive and rational, they talked about the new human being, the new woman. They represented the future, science, and development. Dynamite was nothing less than a modern rational product that had been developed by science, a gift from science to the people. A gift that gave people power.”

**Different kinds of** dynamite-based bombs would soon become the classic tool for anarchists and other terrorists. But it was the faction People’s Will (*Narodnaya Volya*) that began developing the technology. With dynamite, you can build small bombs, basically hand grenades. To get the same effect with gunpowder a whole cask would be required. On its seventh attempt, the People’s Will succeeded in killing Tsar Alexander II

**Weapons are chosen in accordance with intent and the perpetrator. Dynamite for tsars, aircraft for the superpower.**



in a bombing in 1881. At this point, the Russian Tsar had been traveling in an explosion-secure cab, and both bullet- and knife-proof vests had been developed.

The bombs that the People's Will constructed were also dangerous for the user. Here we can see how the ideology has an impact on the choice of technology used.

"It was important that as few innocent people as possible be affected. So the People's Will made bombs with a very small burst radius. There was a high probability that the person who threw the bomb would himself die. On the other hand, they knew that they probably would be arrested and executed, which indeed happened. They can be seen as early suicide bombers."

Another major terrorist group at this time, the Irish American Fenians, chose a more terroristic use of technology. They placed time bombs in the London Underground. The attack failed, but many civilians were placed in danger.

"For the Fenians, whose goal was nationalistic, who it was that died wasn't very important, as long as it was Englishmen. All Londoners were seen as complicit. Dynamite itself makes possible a more terroristic form of violence. Those using a time bomb give up their control and accept that innocent people can perish. In this way, technology affects politics. Today, as well, a dominant perception among many terrorists is that no one is innocent."

**The Russian** social-revolutionaries received great international attention. That they were selective as to who was attacked, and manifested a willingness to die for their cause was part of the success. The use of new technologies and the fact that many of the revolutionaries were women also made the attacks more spectacular. But Mats Fridlund does not see any connection between technology and the high proportion of women in the movement.

"No, we can make a comparison with the Irish American Fenians, who were traditionally Catholic. There, I am not aware of any women. According to the Russian social-revolutionaries, everyone had the same obligation to do something for the people – in the official ideology and practice, at least, they were equal. It's possible that there was a certain predominance of women at the secret printing presses."

**In his research,** Mats Fridlund has chosen to focus on the earliest historical phases of terrorism.

"This is in order to show that the discussion that came after September 11, that terrorism would be different now, does not hold. Terrorism has always been modern in its form, one might say hypermodern, since it makes use of modern technologies and its practitioners are often engineers. At the same time, it is not new. It has a long history in both the U.S. and Europe. Terrorism is not something abnormal, pathological, or unfamiliar. Despite how cruel and horrible it is, it is a human product, a product of human creativity and emotions."

From a technological perspective, the history of

terrorism is not so revolutionary. Ideologies come and go, while the technologies that make terrorism possible prove to be more or less the same.

"It is often emphasized as a major threat that terrorists might release a weapon of mass destruction. It sends a stronger signal to say that we are going to invest several million in order to prevent biological terrorism than, for example, car bombings, which are by far the most common form of terrorism. It is the spectacular forms of terrorism that we feel we must do something about, that are seen by the state as a greater threat. The fact is, when chemical and biological weapons have been used by terrorists, the effect has not been very lethal."

**Few historians conduct** research into terrorism and even fewer on the link between technology and terrorism. Mats Fridlund believes that this primarily stems from the fact that the concept of terrorism has long been seen as something that states have constructed in order to justify their violence against movements of liberation.

"Attitudes have changed since the 1990s, and more people are now seeing terrorism as something interesting in itself. As a historian of technology, I want to find out how technology is politically formed, in which ways one can see technology shaping policy. The development of technology has lent certain features of various ideologies more credibility. Just as dynamite reinforced the self-image of social-revolutionaries as rational and progressive, access to powerful military weapons, previously reserved for states, has given terrorist groups the opportunity to see themselves as being on par with states and their armies. In order to see yourself in your and others' eyes as a legitimate alternative to a state, you must also be able to act like a state, and equip yourself like a state."

An additional step in the research is to figure out the significance engineers have had for terrorism. The Russian social-revolutionaries were often university graduates. Many of the women had studied in Switzerland, which had opened its universities to both sexes.

"Work was also done to popularize the bomb technologies and make them available to everyone. In the past, the role played by engineers and engineering in terrorism wasn't highlighted very much. Of course, it is extremely important to study the political ideologies and motives behind terrorism. But a strong ideology isn't enough without the possibility of realizing the ideas materially." ❌

**tove stenqvist**

Journalist at the Sydsvenska Dagbladet (Malmö)



**V**era Zasulich was acquitted even though she was caught red-handed after shooting the St. Petersburg Governor Trepov in his audience chamber. Trepov survived, but was seriously injured. Zasulich claimed that she planned the attack alone. Today we know that she was part of a conspiracy. Her friend, Masha Kolenkina, was to have shot a prosecutor on the same day, but failed. When Zasulich was brought to trial, the Russian judicial system had recently been modernized – juries had been introduced. According to the law, it is not enough to prove that someone had committed a crime. Intent was very important to the ruling. Zasulich had been charged with murder, but her lawyer successfully argued that her intent had never been to murder Trepov. Instead, the picture he painted was of a young, innocent, isolated woman who was gripped by strong emotions and attacked a brutal tyrant. Her goal was said to have been to call attention to Trepov's abuse of a political prisoner six months earlier. Trepov had imposed corporal punishment. Despite the acquittal, Zasulich fled to Switzerland, since a new arrest was ordered. Later in life, she renounced terrorism as a method.

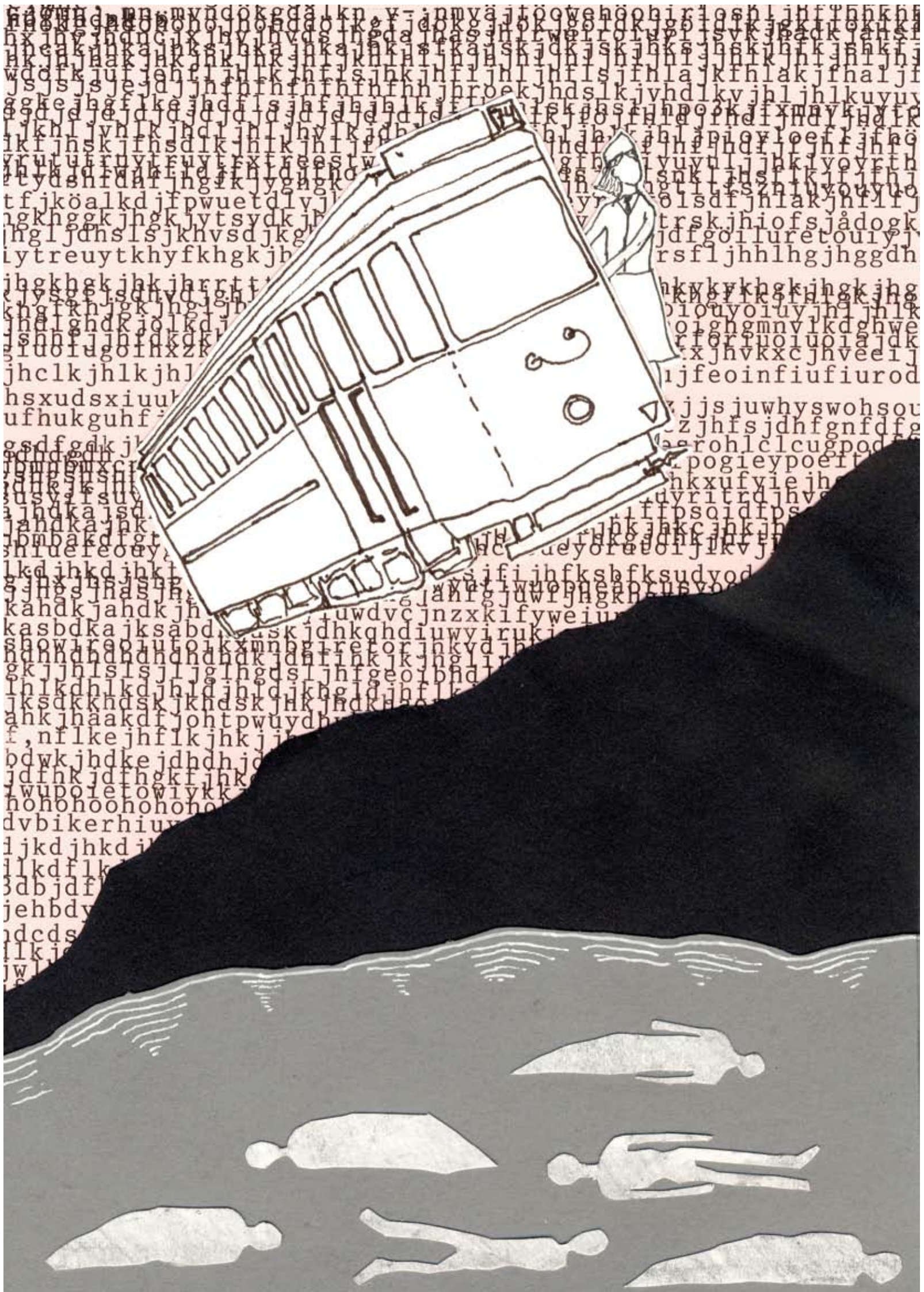
## REFERENCES

Barbara Alpern Engel & Clifford N. Rosenthal, *Five Sisters: Women against the Tsar*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1975.

Mats Fridlund, "New Women's Work, Women's New Terrorisms: The Material Practices of Female Terrorists during the First Wave of Modern Terrorism" (*Women in the World of Violence: Wars, Revolutions, Terrorism and Extremism*. Stockholm, 2009.04.03).

Mats Fridlund, "Helvetesmaskiner: Terrorismens teknologi från giljotinen till videokameran" [The Infernal Machines: The Technology of Terrorism from the Guillotine to the Camcorder], in: *Terrorismer* [Terrorisms], Per Vingaard Klüver, Helle Møller, Espen Kirkegaard Espensen, & Anne Sørensen, eds., *Den jyske Historiker* [The Jutland Historian] (2007).

Lawyer Petr Akimovich Aleksandrovs (1838–1893) defense of Vera Zasulich. [http://vivovoco.astronet.ru/vv/papers/ecce/zass/zass\\_a.htm](http://vivovoco.astronet.ru/vv/papers/ecce/zass/zass_a.htm).



# FLIRT WITH A HOLOCAUST CRIME

## STEPHEN DALDRY'S AND DAVID HARE'S FILM THE READER

BY **ANTJE WISCHMANN** ILLUSTRATION **RAGNI SVENSSON**

Bernhard Schlink's novel *The Reader* (*Der Vorleser* 1995; in Swedish, *Högläsaren* 1997) is an international best-seller and is often included in the curriculum of German public schools. The book is considered a didactic example of how conformist thinking on moral issues can be avoided: a perpetrator's background story may turn out to be complex and even tragic, while, unexpectedly, a victim may turn out to be, in some sense, blameworthy.

But this emphasis on similarities between Holocaust victims and perpetrators comes with an ethical risk, if emotions take over – the overwhelmed audience is supposed to be gradually prepared for the perpetrator's redemption.

While Daldry's previous film *The Hours* (2002) – about Virginia Woolf – did not carry the earmarks of a typical Hollywood movie, his most recent production *The Reader*, which was shown at the Berlinale 2009, alludes back to the Hollywood canon and to the particular segment of popular culture that deals with Germany and the Holocaust. In particular, the assemblage of famous Hollywood stars – all of whom, by their presence, refer to other well-known films (Kate Winslet was in the *Titanic*, Ralph Fiennes in *The English Patient*, Bruno Ganz in *Der Untergang*) – makes the film differ from the novel in a striking, even provocative, manner. Might the film function as a commentary on the book, by shedding new light on Schlink's juxtaposition of trial by love and trial by a court of law? Is it not true that the female perpetrator is presented from an Orientalist perspective? Does the main character, the reader,

in fact suffer from a German post-war depression and sexual neurosis? The film may ultimately reveal the revisionist notion contained within Schlink's novel.

### THE STORYLINE

West Germany in the late fifties: Hanna Schmitz, a tram conductor, and 15-year-old Michael Berg become lovers. Michael is a schoolboy with an upper middle-class family background. While the two are dating, Michael reads aloud to Hanna, who rewards him with her love. Their summer love affair comes to a sudden end, but seven years later they meet again: Hanna as the accused in a Holocaust crime trial and Michael as a law student. It appears that Hanna has been a concentration camp guard. She was involved in the process of selecting prisoners for deportation. In this capacity, she would force prisoners to read aloud to her. In return, the prisoners would win a temporary reprieve from deportation.

Hanna is charged with 300 cases of murder, because she and four other guards refused to rescue prisoners from a burning church. Hanna explains their failure to assist the prisoners by referring to her duties as a guard.

At the trial, Michael, alone among all the members of the audience, suddenly realizes that Hanna is illiterate. Over the years, she has had great difficulties keeping up the pretence of literacy and has had to change jobs whenever an unwanted promotion threatened to reveal her handicap. Under no circumstances does Hanna want to be exposed as an illiterate, even though

the discovery of such a handicap might lead to a lighter sentence. Is illiteracy associated with greater shame than mass murder?

According to his own logic, Michael is guilty in two respects: he was “in bed with the German Holocaust”; but he also abandoned Hanna because he felt suppressed in the relationship.

While Hanna is in prison, Michael sends her tapes with recorded readings of literary works. He cannot stop reading aloud to her, but he never speaks or writes to her in person.

In prison, Hanna gradually learns to read and write. The interplay between the two turns into sort of a platonic correspondence course.

After having spent 18 years in prison, Hanna commits suicide – one day prior to her scheduled release.

At the end of the novel, Michael looks up the surviving people who were involved in the church murder. He also visits Hanna's grave.

The book's storyline is highly intricate. It intermingles aspects of shame, guilt and love in a manner that places the focus on particular circumstances rather than on universal norms. It is an example of intimate, passionate extremes being construed as the standard situation. This paradoxical construction has particularly great impact on the book's political message, as it suggests that fair judgment is virtually unattainable.

The movie trailer sequence clearly brings to mind a psychoanalytical case study. Michael Berg speaks to a person whom the spectator might intuitively suppose to be a female therapist, but who turns out to

**A relation encumbered by guilt between an illiterate female prison guard, and a man with an Oedipus complex. A Hollywood drama?**

be a Holocaust survivor. She is one of those who survived being locked up in the burning church, and she identified Hanna in court. In the therapist setting, the survivor, who is wearing a white dress, offers Michael absolution. She turns down the money that Hanna has left her, but she accepts an old tin box that reminds her of her own childhood. By placing this tin box next to a photograph of her family, the survivor grants Hanna redemption. The perpetrator Hanna and the victim are no longer opposites; Hanna becomes almost a distant relative of the group of victims. The crime is finally, somehow, forgiven.

## MICHAEL BERG – THE CRISIS OF THE “GERMAN PATIENT”

To compensate for his feelings of guilt, Berg has to develop – from being a “reader” to being a “Holocaust story teller”. He finally passes on his life story to the next generation. In the film, Berg’s confession to his daughter takes place in the cemetery where Hanna is buried.

The choice of the church as location for the film’s sentimental ending is striking. The film emphasizes Michael’s position and reduces Hanna to an eye-catching, foreground antagonist. The masculinity crisis, which is transformed into a male, post-war sexual neurosis, can be healed if Michael comes to terms with the impact that the Holocaust has had on him as a person. The film thus risks falling into the same revisionist (mis-)understandings that are already to be found in the novel.

In the screenplay, Kate Winslet plays the role of a common, uneducated lower class Nazi perpetrator, whereas actors Ralph Fiennes (Michael as an adult) and David Kross (Michael as a boy) represent the academic middle class. Through a strategy of Othering, the criminal activity becomes localized in an illiterate female person. Her social subordination is associated with vital and undistorted sexuality, a very common literary trope (see also the maid, the shop assistant, the waitress and so on). From this point of view, we may draw two possible conclusions. First, Hanna’s illiteracy makes her easy to manipulate, and possibly explains her character defect. She joined the SS in the fall of 1943 (!) because she did not know any better. Second, evil is associated with the “primitive” female, the mysterious and inscrutable being, the unsolvable riddle. This may be a strategy aimed at projecting Holocaust guilt, at banishing it to the realm of the irrational.

The story purports to interweave the educational and the erotic processes. For Hanna, meeting Michael is the beginning of an educational process. For Michael, their relationship is an Oedipal drama.

Until Hanna has completed her education in the prison, she is more afraid of being revealed as an illiterate than as someone who has committed crimes during the Nazi era. Only as an educated person can she truly regret what she has done. In Schlink’s novel, Hanna’s remorse is enforced by her reading material: books written by Holocaust survivors, scholarly literature on the Third Reich – for example, Hannah Arendt’s book

on Eichmann (p. 193) – and last but not least, research on female perpetrators in the Third Reich (p. 194).

In contrast to the book, the film does not give this insistently moralistic account of the educational project and the reading of German classics. Hare and Daldry emphasize more entertaining aspects of the narrative: young Michael, for example, reads Lady Chatterley’s Lover aloud while in the bathtub, and even reads aloud from the comic strip Tintin. Hare also lets Hanna write a short letter from prison: “Send more romances.”

According to both the novel’s and the film’s story line, Hanna was “forced” to join the SS and become a prison guard, as a promotion at Siemens threatened to reveal her illiteracy.

In accordance with her limited conception of the world, she wants to fulfill her duty and, as the novel occasionally stresses, she is, in spite of her shortcomings, not without social ambitions.

After Hanna has become an educated individual in the prison, it dawns on her that her feelings of shame and guilt should be proportionate to the seriousness of their causes: the feelings of guilt over the murders must take first place, not the egocentric embarrassment caused by an insufficient education. But it is noteworthy that Hanna never reaches the state of being a full citizen. She remains deficient and is therefore never completely responsible for her actions.

The fact that Hanna eventually does reach a state of maturity is expressed rather cynically in the film: it is as an individual subject that she arranges a number of books in a stack on her prison-cell table, climbs on top of this stack and hangs herself. This scene does not occur in Schlink’s novel. Is the film making a comment on Schlink’s motto: thank God for a literary education, now Hanna is capable of judging herself? Hanna’s ugly feet, which graze the book jackets and make smacking noises when she moves, is a highly ambivalent comment on her vigilantism. To some extent, the film accentuates the humanistic dogma that informs Schlink’s novel, the naive belief in humanistic refinement. The prison is staged as if it were a convent where a refined but aging Hanna is waiting for Michael. In Hanna’s and Michael’s former relationship, her age had given her an advantage over Michael; it had led to his subordination. Now, her aging becomes a measure of her loss of power, and of the impossibility of crossing the threshold that separates the two. In the film, more clearly than in the novel, Michael’s rejection of Hanna appears to be the main reason for her suicide.

## SHARING THE BED OF AN ILLITERATE: TRANSFORMING A TABOO

What is Michael, the German patient, actually afraid of? In the beginning of the film, a lot of attention seems to be drawn to Hanna’s conductor’s uniform, especially to the black leather straps that cross on her back. In a broader sense, the fascination with women in uniform alludes to Michael’s fear of being sexually deviant. The narrator of the novel *Der Vorleser* is conscious of Michael’s Oedipus complex and openly cites a comment made by a female psychoanalyst who recommends

that the adult Michael reappraise his relationship to his mother (cf. p. 166). The Oedipus constellation can be used, primarily, to invoke destiny. In Michael’s case, however, the Oedipal dilemma develops into a two-fold sense of guilt: first, the feeling of guilt caused by being in love with a mass murderer, and second, guilt associated with a sexual deviation, which may be incest (or some other desire, which is encoded in incest and which the protagonist experiences as threatening):

**I had not just loved her, I had chosen her. I tried to convince myself that, when I chose her, I had no knowledge of what Hanna did. I tried to convince myself that I was in a state of innocence, like that of children loving their parents. But the love for one’s parents is the only kind of love for which one cannot be held responsible. (p. 162)**

Hanna combines the caring character of the mother with erotic attraction, as well as with control and discipline. In the film, this is exemplified by her almost obsessive washing of Michael’s body. She is a watchful guard, a caring nurse and an experienced lover. The obsessive manner in which Hanna washes Michael brings to the fore the pathology of their relationship, but it also reveals her motherly feelings towards him, as does the nickname for Michael, “Jungchen” (kid). The novel’s adult narrator admits that as a child Michael’s greatest pleasure was to be washed by his mother in a warm bathroom (p. 29). In the novel, Hanna’s vigorous washing of Michael perhaps encodes the erotic delight of the young Oedipus and shrouds his shameful desire for the mother.

Actually, Daldry and Hare decide to demonize Hanna’s washing, as they associate it with Third-Reich hygienic measures (the care for the “Volkkörper”?). Hanna’s undistorted sexuality coalesces with the idea of the healthy, disciplined body. At the same time, the film conveys a notion of hysterical, compulsory washing: views of public bathrooms in concentration camps and of gas chambers are integrated in the film’s story line.

Hanna’s taboo is the receptacle for Michael’s taboo of Oedipus. A generation of fathers was accused of being weak, of being easily influenced, of lacking a distinct attitude and active approach to Germany’s recent past. According to the popular psychoanalytical interpretation, Michael does not want to get rid of these fathers because of their ignorance. Rather, he seeks to abolish them because they are his rivals. He longs for the mother, or an embodiment of her.

When Michael sees Hanna standing accused in court, he is confronted by his own fascination with a dominant partner. He explains the recent cooling of his feelings towards Hanna by referring to the intoxicating influence of his work in court (the Frankfurt Trials) and with German post-war apathy. Michael is becoming injured to violence. He morally condemns this apathy and considers his whole reaction emotionally deviant.

Of course, the Holocaust setting is more than just background decoration. Still, the psychological focus on the female taboo of illiteracy does indeed reduce



the seriousness of the debate on the persecution of Holocaust crimes.

In the novel, the narrator (the “I”) brings up the young Michael’s fantasies about women clad in black uniforms and wielding riding crops, though he admittedly categorizes these props as image-clichés (pp. 140–142). In the process of dealing with the past, Michael is encoding Hanna on a third level, no longer as the Other in terms of class and gender (the vitalistic underdog, pp. 77 and 185), no longer as a nurse-mother-guard, but as a metonymic part of the necessary reflections about coming to terms with the German Holocaust. The images become obscene when they consist of clichés.

**I knew that these imaginations [women in uniform-fantasies] were poor clichés. They did not do justice to Hanna. Despite this they had great power. They fragmented the memory imaginations and combined them with the pictures from the concentration camp I had in mind. (p. 142)**

This may be a self-reflecting comment on Schlink’s humanistic educational project and his work on the process of remembering. It illuminates the embarrassing power of shameful “dirty popular culture” and alarming desires. The film ignores these aspects, and willingly integrates popular reading.

To some degree, the film confirms and strengthens the novel’s Freudian theme: When Hanna is in prison, and therefore less of a threat to Michael, he is given a chance to suppress the memory. The novel’s narrator describes this interim period in Freudian terms: instead of the “I” there is an “IT”: “Es, was immer es sein mag, handelt [...]” (It, whatever it may be, is acting ...p. 22). Michael reaches the position of the “I” when the reader, at the end of the novel, turns into a storyteller and a writer.

The fact that “judging” and “understanding” are incompatible (p. 152) gives rise to a dilemma, which runs through the novel as a moral red thread (referring to some key words in Arendt’s works). The author, Schlink, has in fact been a judge. To describe the dilemma in words corresponds to a gendered view: according to Schlink, one cannot at the same time judge and understand, and even the male and the female order have to be clearly distinguished.

It is a “sin” to cross the borders, or to confuse the concepts. This sin even overshadows the Holocaust crime. For Michael, Hanna’s death is a final release, because the Oedipus constellation vanishes. In the film, his destiny is storytelling, or oral history. In the novel his professional future is, on the one hand, that of a judge and, on the other, that of an educator and a writer.

## ARE YOU CHEATING ME?

The film reinforces the novel’s manipulative potential, but at the same time it provides a novel critique of Oedipus’s blindness in the book. The audience is lured into giving a sentimental answer to the question: is it not time to forgive this most pitiful of perpetrators?

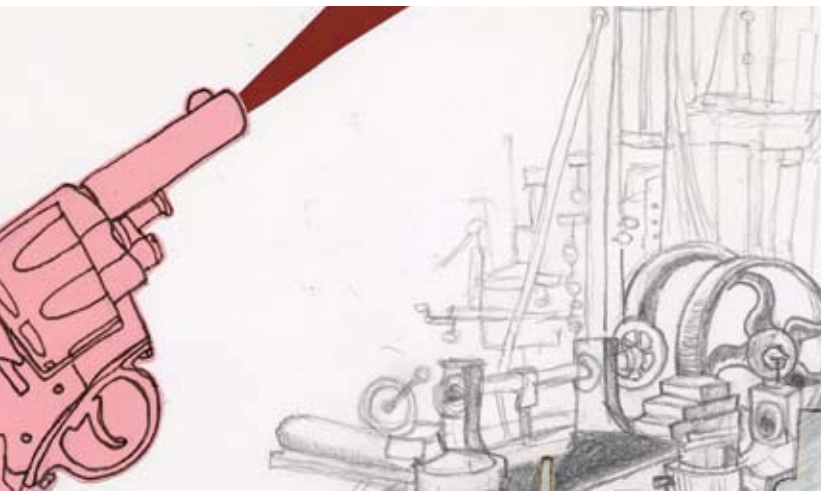
Hanna’s shame places her outside the common rules of society, she personifies the exceptional perpetrator. Therefore, perhaps, even her punishment seems too harsh. We can call this an “Orientalist” strategy “towards war criminals”.

The particular, tragic aura turns perpetrators like Hanna into exceptional cases. Their crimes and their consequences lose significance – a scenario with clear revisionist undertones. Somehow the film, more than the novel, continues to mete out the sort of lenient, helpless and compromising sentences that characterized the Frankfurt trials.

According to both the film and the novel, it is impossible to evaluate the complicated, individual case. For this reason, entering into a political debate about confronting the past hardly makes sense. Even the moral chaos and the hopeless dilemma confronted by the judge, who cannot simultaneously understand and judge, may serve as arguments for a reconciliation. It simply seems to be a flirt with a Holocaust crime. ❌

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> In the novel, Michael sends his own manuscripts to Hanna as well. In prison, Hanna functions as his muse.
- <sup>2</sup> This cemetery belongs to a church Michael and Hanna once visited on a bicycle trip. Hanna was overwhelmed by the music (sung by a chorus of children) and perhaps by memories of the burning church on the *Todesmarsch*. A spectator in the audience may interpret her passionate crying in the latter as an allusion to the mass murder, if he or she has previously read the novel or seen the film.
- <sup>3</sup> Perhaps Schlink is overdoing it here: According to an agreement reached by Michael and the female Holocaust survivor, Hanna’s money is to be dedicated to the Jewish League Against Illiteracy. The threat of an illiterate state of mind seems to be generalized here, perhaps strengthening a metaphorical dimension of “illiteracy”. Does Hanna’s endowment intimate that any “illiterate person”, irrespective of class, ethnicity, gender or religion, can be seduced by totalitarian temptations?
- <sup>4</sup> Hanna’s decision to leave Siemens in 1943 in order to join the SS and become a prison-camp guard was also caused by a promotion. It is interesting that Siemens, although “morally better” than the SS, was producing weapons used during World War II and used forced labor (*Zwangsarbeiter*). In the novel, there are some references to the deforming effects of institutions, which allows the individual to plead “doing one’s duty”, i.e. the “subaltern agency” pattern. The narrator stresses that even the judge is a public official, formed by an institution, and is constructing his own patterns of fulfilling duty as best he can.
- <sup>5</sup> Amazingly, another kind of guilt seems to be overlooked – Hanna is not ashamed of having slept with a schoolboy. In the film, the reading of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* gives Hanna’s blundering seduction of minors an almost humorous twist: Hanna criticizes D.H. Lawrence’s novel loudly as indecent but then, curiously, asks Michael to go on reading!
- <sup>6</sup> On the balance between entertainment and education see Micha Ostermann, *Aporien des Erinnerns – Bernhard Schlinks Roman Der Vorleser*, Bochum 2004, pp. 98, 108.
- <sup>7</sup> I think an important parallel can be drawn to the sentimental ending of the film *Das Leben der Anderen* (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006) and the exceptional case of the one good guy among all the evil STASI perpetrators.



# WOMEN IN THE WARS, REVOLUTIONS, TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM A CONFERENCE REPORT

**The idea for a conference** on the situation of women during wars and other conditions of extreme violence took shape during discussions between a doctoral student and her advisor concerning a thesis on the political terror movement in Russia at the turn of the nineteenth century. How does one approach the problem of "women and violence", when women are perpetrators and actors rather than passive victims?

The conference "Women in the World of Violence: Wars, Revolutions, Terrorism and Extremism", which took place in early April 2009, thus became a forum for discussions on how to conduct research on women's active participation in violent extremist movements, war, and revolutions – a novel theme, as research on violence has, traditionally, been relegated to men's history.

Researchers from Sweden, Finland, Germany, Denmark, Great Britain and Hungary participated in the conference, which, in fact, opened with a bombshell. Mikael Nilsson, from the Swedish Military Academy, provided an evolutionary-biological explanation for men's allegedly sex-linked pattern of aggressive and war-like behavior – a statement that led to a heated exchange of views. The subsequent presentations offered historical perspectives with a broad chronological scope. Viktoria Barone and Elena Braun, of Moscow's Russian University for the Humanities (RGGU), discussed women and violence in medieval France and England. Their subject was women in combat during the Hundred Years' War, as well as the rather unpleasant fate of the "Queen of Politics and War", Margaret d'Anjou. Elena Gordeeva, also of the RGGU, described the underground, woman-dominated pacifist groups of the late Soviet era. These precursors to today's Russian "Soldiers' Mothers" faced opposition both from those who opposed the peace movement per se, and from those who disliked feminist groups.

**The presentations,** as is evident in the conference's contributions to this issue of *Baltic Worlds*, tended to center on two time periods: World War II, and the turn of the nineteenth century (that is, Tsarist Russia). Nadezda Petrusenko, a student at the Baltic and East European Graduate School (Södertörn University), offered an analysis of twentieth-century historical accounts on women in Russia's early terrorist movement. She demonstrated how gender stereotypes had complicated historians' interpretation of archival sources

and biographical accounts. It goes against the grain, it seems, to view women as perpetrators of calculated acts of violence. It is easy to ascribe rational motives to men's violence; but women are, supposedly, motivated not by rationality but by emotions. As a result, a man's decision to become a terrorist is attributed to political motives; women, it is assumed, join terrorist movements for emotional reasons.

**Twentieth-century gender** history shows that women have been granted access to the male sphere only when great wars made their participation necessary. Melanie Ilic of Birmingham University has looked at the journals published during the 1930s by the Soviet civil defense agency *Osoaviakhim*. She is interested in delineating those service branches that most attracted women and in assessing the impact of female participation on Soviet gender roles. Rifle shooting, motor-sports and aviation were the most popular branches. The most glamorous and best-covered group of women was "the flying heroines", with their long-distance flights and world record in women's piloting competitions. Contemporary women's journals were, indeed, fond of artistic portrayals of women parachuters. Women made up almost 20 percent of *Osoaviakhim*'s members, and contemporary newspapers published activists' complaints that the female membership was not properly reflected in the composition of the leadership. At the same time, however, there was a marked lack of critical discussion concerning the insufficient adaptation to women's physique of, for example, the weight and size of weaponry. At the highest political level, it was considered politically correct to promote women's entry into previously male-coded fields. However, many of the highest leadership's decrees seem to have met with quiet obstructiveness at the local level. This created contradictions both in Soviet politics and Soviet society as whole, as images of women who had penetrated male territory fought for discursive space in a gender arena filled with images of mothers and traditional female virtues.

**Several lectures focused** on war memories as historical sources. Kirsi Kurkijärvi, University of Tampere, shared the results of her research on women's experiences of war. Her sources were Russian poetry,

literature, prose and interview narratives, produced during the half-century between the end of World War II and the collapse of the Soviet Union. There were, during these years, variations in the official politics of memory, which enjoyed highest prestige during the Khrushchev thaw and during Gorbachev's perestroika. The first forum for women's war memories was created in the late 1980s – memories that included the violence to which the civilian population was subjected when nations were attacked by hostile, foreign powers, the violence constantly threatened by the home state, and the occurrence of terror. Such violence could be inflicted on all citizens, but women's recollections provide evidence of a particular, gendered war experience.

Sabine Grenz, from the University of Gothenburg, also discussed women and war-time violence. Her presentation was based on German diaries written towards the end of the war and in occupied Germany. Grenz focused on the attitude of female authors towards sexual encounters with foreign soldiers – including prostitution, rapes and (imaginary) love trysts. The diaries reveal a complex attitude to sex with non-German males, one which combines vestiges of pre-modern assumptions about women's sexuality as integral to men's honor with the modern idea that women's morality mirrors that of the nation. Grenz also found that her authors' sexual encounters with non-German men was, occasionally, motivated by the need for diversion and intimacy after long years of war. This finding challenges research which interprets prostitution, and other sexual encounters taking place in certain gender hierarchies, exclusively in terms of sexual violence against women. In this, she adhered to a central theme of the conference: women as actors and agents – a viewpoint that offers an alternative to the idea of women as passive victims. ✖

**helene carlbäck**

Associate professor of history, Södertörn University

Both Irina Sandimirskaja's and Antje Wischmann's essays were presented at the conference. Another contribution, by Andrea Petö, on women in the Hungarian Arrow-Cross movement, will be published in the next issue of BW.

**The woman behind the weapon. Extreme feminists, or just terrorists?**



# GARRISON TOWNS IN THE BALTIC SEA AREA

BY BEATE FELDMANN

Islands are symbols of both pleasure and danger. Their function in surveillance and defense has influenced people's daily lives for decades. The historian John Gillis has illuminated how Alcatraz and Robben Island, two of the best-known examples of historically controversial island landscapes, have been transformed into attractive sites to visit and explore. I, myself, have chosen to focus on some arenas connected with threats and unease in the Baltic Sea area – Gotland, Rügen, and Saaremaa. Large areas of land on these islands were cordoned off for long periods because of military activity, and it was only after the end of the Cold War that they became available for foreign visitors – when the islands' geographical location in the center of the Baltic Sea no longer represented a military-strategic borderland. Gotland's role as a Swedish outpost to the east was greatly diminished when the island's four large regiments were phased out. Because of Estonia's independence from the Soviet Union, the military bases that existed on the island of Saaremaa were dismantled. For Rügen, the structural changes meant that the island was no longer a part of the Eastern Bloc, but now belonged to the reunified Germany.

Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Fårösund, on northern Gotland, was a community centered mostly around the lime quarries and ship-piloting operations. In connection with the Crimean War, Fårösund had become a strategically important location as the English and French fleet base that was used against Russia. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Swedish Armed Forces bought up land in the area, and in 1938 a coastal artillery division, KA 3, was set up. In 1941, Estonia's largest military base was built next to one of Saaremaa's larger lakes on the northwestern part of the island, on

land that would have belonged to the Balto-German Baron von Buxhoevden. Dranske is on the northern part of Rügen, and has a history both as a center of fishing and as a military base. After having been, during the First World War, a fishing village with only a minor military presence, a "garden city" for German military personnel and their families was built between 1936 and 1941. In the 1960s, the garrison town was once again transformed, when the East German *Nationale Volksarmee* built a large number of homes for both the army families and civilian inhabitants.

Islands are dynamic landscapes. They have mutual interaction with the mainland as well as with other islands, while they also shape and are shaped by the life playing out in people's everyday existence. The position that islands have as borderland areas in the Baltic Sea has been highlighted by social anthropologist Ina-Maria Greverus. From a mainland perspective, these islands have a peripheral location. But if the perspective is oriented towards the sea, the dual position of the islands emerges: as national outposts, and as central nodes in the Baltic Sea:

**Insularity is the synthesis of particular collective experiences which draws from all the domains where humans shape their lives and judge the future, based not only on the present, but also on the past.**

**I have chosen to call** these small communities garrison towns. The military presence has affected all three places both physically and culturally and has gi-

ven them urban values and ways of life. What, then, is a garrison town, and what kind of infrastructure can be called "military"? According to ethnologist Aida Hachaturyan-Kisilenko, this specific type of town or municipal construction includes guarded border areas around a military base with residential blocks, schools, daycare centers, commercial activities, and some kind of hospital or smaller healthcare center near the base. The Soviet garrison town from between 1950 and 1980, she writes,

**constituted a specific urban mode of life-style, the task of which was to guarantee the military and their families safe and satisfactory conditions of life.**

The importance of the military activity in the communities manifests a clear continuity – in the case of Fårösund, starting with the Crimean War in the 1850s, in the case of Dranske, starting with the First World War. But it is the world-historical events of the 1930s and '40s that most strongly came to characterize all three communities in matters of urban planning and everyday life, and this occurred in similar ways. After the Nazi takeover in 1933, Rügen was seen as a strategic bridgehead for Baltic Sea domination. Gotland's position in the middle of the Baltic Sea, equidistant from the Soviet coast and the Swedish mainland, meant that the island came to be in the immediate line of fire, and it thus strengthened its readiness when, in 1941, Germany attacked the USSR on all fronts. In 1939, Saaremaa prepared itself fully with the arrival of Soviet troops, when thousands of soldiers were stationed in newly built garrisons around the island.

**No island is sufficient unto itself. They are all dependent on one another and the mainland.**



The expansion of the Luftwaffe at Bug, a peninsula adjacent to Dranske, began in 1934, and, during the next five years before the start of the war in 1939, resulted in, among other things, five hangars, ten barracks, a large swimming center with 50-meter lanes, an officers' casino, and housing for unmarried officers. Up to 3,000 soldiers were active on these 500 hectares. Along with the expansion, there were plans for a sweeping physical and cultural change in Dranske. The local population, which for the most part consisted of fishermen and farmers, were informed that the existing buildings (thirteen single-family houses and four detached homes) would be demolished – without any possibility of appeal, and with minimal compensation. In 1936, construction of a garden city that would be inhabited mainly by the dependents of military personnel began. As art historian Bernfried Lichtnau has shown, 31 semi-detached homes in tradition-bound style – including the garden designed to help make self-sufficiency possible – were soon ready for occupation. Up until 1940, Dranske's town plan, guided by National Socialist ideology, was expanded with an additional nineteen two-family houses, three eight-family houses, and one four-family house.

Town planning was affected both physically and socially by the military hierarchy, and there were clear instructions about who would live where.

Five years later, life in Dranske changed radically yet again with the end of World War II. The military population fled and the military facility at Bug was destroyed or dismantled. Shortly thereafter, a new era in the history of Dranske commenced when around a thousand refugees, mainly from Pomerania, Sudetenland, and Prussia, moved into the vacant homes during the final weeks of the war.

**This pioneering spirit**, with a military infrastructure of both a physical and social form, arose in roughly the same time period in both Fårösund and Dejevo. Because of a national defense resolution in 1936, the coastal artillery defense on Gotland was enlarged with “permanent defense establishments” in Fårösund. According to the leadership of the Swedish Administration for Naval Equipment (*Marinförvaltningen*), the number of existing dwellings in Fårösund was sufficient for the military personnel, which the first head of KA 3, Gösta Möller, contested. It was Möller's firm view that the best placement for the new dwellings was not next to the barracks area, but together with the built-up areas of the community. Negotiations with the Administration for Naval Equipment about building officer housing in Fårösund ended up taking much time and en-

ergy, but in the end result was the construction of some 60 houses with 125 apartments in the years 1939–1941, both in the community and next to the regiment area. The architecture was later described as functionalist in a way that fit the period, with a design that possessed a civilian character. In addition to creating flight hangars, airfields, and a swimming center, the establishment of the regiment attracted private investors to the community. Among the major business establishments, a modern cinema center, together with a gathering-place, was opened in 1940. In an article in *Gotlands Allehanda*, a local newspaper, from the fall of 1940, we find a description of the bustling activities underway in Fårösund at the time:

**When it was made known at that time that Fårösund would be the location of an air and coastal artillery, people began to prepare the community to accommodate the new settlements. And it is still not complete, although housing construction almost doubled over the past few years. Most of the residential buildings are finished, but the painting and various installation work remains to be completed. In addition, new construction projects will arise later.**

With an area totaling 110 hectares, KA 3 came to be the largest employer in northern Gotland. Ten years after the start of construction of the garrison town of Fårösund, Bunge Parish reached its highest population ever, with over 1,650 inhabitants. An inventory of culturally and historically significant buildings in Fårösund that was conducted in 1986 shows that KA 3 had 360 employees in 1970, while the population statistics of that same year show almost 1,250 inhabitants in the parish. However, the population would gradually shrink to 925 people in 2000, when the regiment was finally phased out completely.

The same year that the town plans for Fårösund began to be implemented, the Baltic German officer Wilhelm Aleksei Joa received a request from Stalin's government asking whether he would want to take responsibility for the construction of the garrison town and training area for the Red Army at Karujärve Lake, on the island of Saaremaa. In his unpublished notes, Joa describes how he took on this task with some hesitation, since he, like many Baltic Germans in Estonia, had intended to flee to Germany. Construction of “Städtchen Karujärve” commenced in the fall of 1940, and, according to the contract, would be completed nine months later. When Joa arrived at the site, 3,000 people were busy constructing a military base with

housing for an estimated 6,000 soldiers in four stone barracks, along with six two-story buildings for 1,000 officers and their wives. The plans included, in addition, canteens, stables, ammunition storage facilities and roads. Electricity, telephone lines, and running water had already been set up – a house in the vicinity of the lake with three beds, a kitchen, and a toilet was already there, presumably put there by the von Buxhoevden family. Whether or not these plans were fully realized cannot be determined. According to information in the Estonian newspaper *Meie Maa*, almost 240 women and children lived in Dejevo as late as when the rocket base was closed in the 1990s, and in a conversation with Marko Trave at the Estonian Forest Agency, RMK, it was revealed that the total number of soldiers, officers, and dependents of Dejevo should have amounted to around 2,000 at most. Several informants on Saaremaa state that, besides the military operations in Dejevo, there was also a school with three classrooms, a nursery, and two shops. Later, the Marat textile factory was set up in one of the barracks for the manufacture of underwear – the purpose was to address the need for jobs for women in Dejevo. During the 1950s and '60s, around ten houses for officers and their families, along the road to the base, were also built.

**While the garrison towns** of Fårösund and Dejevo largely retained the city structure that was established during World War II, and which remained until the closure of the garrisons approximately 60 years later, Dranske ended up undergoing yet another major transformation, when the NVA appropriated the community and the Bug peninsula for military activities in 1965. The massive expansion of the naval base at Bug meant increased demand for housing. From 1965 to 1969, eight high-rises were built in what at the time were the outskirts of Dranske, a built-up area which, over the years, until 1989, was made into a city district in socialist style, with fifteen modern high-rises, shopping centers, schools, and daycare centers. It was mostly dependents of the military who lived in the high-rises, and for them, the district came to represent the modern East German community, in contrast to the older, traditional garden city, which for the most part was populated by civilian workers and peasants. From having had about 1,500 inhabitants in the 1950s, the population increased continually in the years between 1965 and 1989. At the time of the termination of the military presence, nearly 4,000 people lived in Dranske, a figure that shrank by almost 75 percent during the ten years that followed.

Today, just over 1,300 people live here. Nine of the 15 residential blocks that were built in concrete (*Plat-*

# GARRISON TOWNS IN THE BALTIC SEA AREA



tenbau) in the 1960s and '70s have been razed. Among those living here, despair is mixed with the hope that, in the future, Dranske will be able to attract international tourism because of its location on the Baltic Sea, and thus also attract new residents who could support themselves in the district. In the fall of 2007, a planning workshop took place in Dranske. The aim was to gather ideas and suggestions, in cooperation with residents, local politicians and planners, about the sustainable development of Dranske. The result was a vision for the future centered on the restoration of the place as "eine Gartenstadt am Wasser".

The vision implies, interestingly, an unproblematic look back at the townscape that was formed by the Nazi military hierarchy in the community at the end of the 1930s. The plan is just one in a series of previous proposals for Dranske's cultural and economic survival. An earlier example is "Bug Baltic Sea Resort", a holiday resort with luxury hotels and water sports facilities, which was intended to be Germany's largest tourism project.

**In Dejevo, a more or less** total dismantling of the military buildings is being planned. Only a few people are still living in the area; the Russian name Dejevo has been changed back to the Estonian Karujärve. No new housing will be built; it is rather the vision of the remains of the rocket base in the landscape, as a hilly terrain in a future recreational area, which has left its mark on the plans for the area. One of the bunkers has been preserved, and can be rented as a space for parties. What will happen to the dilapidated officers' housing along the main road towards Dejevo is still unclear. Perhaps the location at Lake Karujärve can attract buyers looking to renovate the houses and use them for summer homes.

In Fårösund, the previous KA 3 area, as well as the training area at Bungenäs – like Bug peninsula in Dranske – were bought up by private investors after having been owned and developed by the state housing corporation, Vasallen. The former regiment area was now called Kustparken and the construction of fifty or so coastal row houses and apartments was begun. Here, there are visions of a "vibrant Fårösund, with more people and more business activity than we see today".

The entire regiment area and several military buildings are protected by historical building legislation, and thus designated as part of the national cultural heritage. In February 2008, the new owners, Diös and Kuylensstierna AB, held a kick-off release for special guests, where the development plan DK2020 for Fårösund and Bungenäs was presented. Nine months later, the

plans had been put on ice. According to CEO Joacim Kuylensstierna, this was because of "the unwieldy building permit bureaucracy". That claim is contradicted by the Housing Committee President, who interprets the shelving of the plans as a sign of the ongoing economic downturn. For the approximately 960 residents of Fårösund, the situation is precarious, with threats of school closures and cuts in social services. Although there is hope for the future, the confidence and trust in the private investors, compared with the previously existing trust in KA 3, is relatively weak. Several informants manifest an awareness that the responsibility of the survival of the area depends, to a much greater degree than before the closure of KA 3, on the residents themselves.

**The communities** I investigate in my dissertation work can be described as small places with strong memories of major world events. The ways in which the past is highlighted and pushed aside in visions and decisions about the future of these small communities, as parts of the new order of the Baltic Sea Region, is part of the debate about the politics of memory and community planning in the new Europe in which I want to engage. Which stories about the Cold War fit into the history of the Baltic Sea as a sea of reconciliation, a history canonized by the EU? What happens when the position of the islands in a strategic defensive center belongs to the past, and the political and military, and also cultural and social significance of the former garrison towns thus risks being erased from the collective memory of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In what way can this come to affect the people whose identity continues to be connected in some way to the previous military presence? Which history can they relate to if the memory of the Cold War is pushed aside, and thus taken away from them? And what consequences would this collective loss of a local heritage from the Cold War have for the ongoing construction of a common socially and economically tenable Baltic Sea Region? ✖

## REFERENCES

- 1 Ina-Maria Greverus, "Islands as Borderland: Experiences and Thoughts on Rügen and Usedom", *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures*, 1997: 1, pp. 7-28.
- 2 Aida Hachaturyan-Kisilenko, "An Attempt to Describe Life in a Soviet Military Garrison through Biographical Material" in *Pro Ethnologia*. Eesti Rahva Muuseum: publications of Estonian National Museum, Tartu 2003:16, pp. 99-112.
- 3 Sören Sörensen, *Öarna i Östersjön: Förr och nu* [The Islands in the Baltic Sea: Then and Now], Visby 1992.
- 4 It should, however, be emphasized here that the ideology and construction style of the garden city cannot unproblematically be linked to National Socialism. For further reading on the international history of the garden city, see, e.g., Thomas Paulsson, *Stadsplaneringen under 1800- och 1900-talet* [City Planning During the 19th and 20th Centuries], Stockholm 1970, and for research on the significance of the garden city in Germany, and, specifically, on its significance for the city planning ideals of National Socialism, see Sven Rolf, *Die Konstruktion totalitärer Räume: Am Beispiel des Generalbebauungsplans für Berlin im Dritten Reich*, München 2008.
- 5 Bernfried Lichtnau, "Siedlungen in Dranske und Wiek auf Rügen: Bauten des deutschen Nationalsozialismus", in *Stier und Greif. Blätter zur Kultur- und Landesgeschichte in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*, 1997:7, pp. 24-31.
- 6 *Gotlands Allehanda*, "Fårösund = öns livligaste samhälle just nu" [Fårösund = The Most Lively Community on the Island], 1940.10.15.
- 7 [http://www.architektenkammer-mv.de/gruen\\_veranst.htm](http://www.architektenkammer-mv.de/gruen_veranst.htm). Accessed 2008.01.10.
- 8 [http://www.wenzel-consulting.de/pdf/reftourismus/bug\\_auf\\_ruegen\\_baltic\\_sea\\_resort.pdf](http://www.wenzel-consulting.de/pdf/reftourismus/bug_auf_ruegen_baltic_sea_resort.pdf). Accessed 2008.01.10.
- 9 <http://www.dok.se/vision.html>. Accessed 2008.04.28.

With his keyboard placed on a map of Europe, Karl Schlögel goes on excursions in geography and history.

# The return of space

A conversation on the geography renaissance with Karl Schlögel.

**T**he wooden stairs creak leading up to Karl Schlögel's apartment on Prinzregentenstrasse in old West Berlin. The surroundings are light and airy in a way that is not readily associated with a city of stone, and the fact is that large parts of this city still have an almost rustic character. Here there is place and space – two geographic elements that have characterized the mature historian Karl Schlögel's interpretations of the past. His thesis of a “spatial turn”, in contrast to the “linguistic turn” of postmodernism around 1980, has had a major influence on historical research over the course of the last decade.

This “return of geography” is encountered profoundly in a city like Berlin – Schlögel's vantage point on the outside world, a short distance from European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), where he has his academic post. And there is every reason to note that precisely a city like Berlin, situated to the east of another and much older imperial city, Prague, has, so to speak, moved with the changes in political geography over the last hundred years, from having been the center of two Continental powers, to being a shared outpost in the interface between two military alliances, to becoming – perhaps not finally? – a natural center of a modern *Gesamteuropa*, also a city of youth and many artistic experiments. Yet again, one could say.

**It is as if the young** Karl Schlögel, cleansed of the doctrinaire utopian Left's lack of interest in the actually existing world, in a coming to accounts with what remained of political left-radicalism, suddenly sensed the ground under his feet, when, in 1986, he published his thin, programmatic booklet, *Die Mitte liegt ostwärts*: the midpoint lies to the east! It was a battle slogan, a provocation, but also a research program. People need to see spatial totalities in order to understand long-standing cultural connections.

“What I wanted to stress was the importance of the environment in a broad sense. Even philosophical thoughts and systems have their origins in certain places, certain locations, and from there they probably move to the wider world and

become global. But they are grounded somewhere. And I think one of the most fascinating questions is how this cultural texture is produced. But how had it been possible that place and space had been ignored for so long a time – in the academic research fields as well as in the public sphere?

“In Germany in particular it was entirely out of fashion to talk and reason in spatial terms. The Nazis of course had abused space to the extent that a sort of *räumliche Atrophie*, a weakness of spatial imagination, had come to be established. There was also a sense that new technologies of information and communication made places lose their significance, disappear, or even be liquidated. History suffered too.

“I couldn't follow that course. It was equivalent to the notion of the end of history. What was happening was in fact the very opposite: that everything was speeding up, that history was regaining its meaning.

“Now, from that perspective, Berlin was a rather good place to be living in. The city was itself a border, a fact of geography and of history. When I wrote *Die Mitte* I had in mind a *Streitschrift*. There was a tendency to ignore what was happening at the time – I talked about things that were happening, were underway, whereas my adversaries talked about things that had already occurred, a body of established facts. They confirmed the things that were already disappearing.

“What I did – for I was not alone – was to adhere to a debate that was going on among dissidents in Eastern and Central Europe, where they really were rediscovering the meaning and importance of Europe. And now this has become history!”

**The historical heritage was ignored at the same time that historical development was acquiring an accelerated tempo. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when new political and geographical facts were being established all over Europe, the study of history certainly had a strong upswing, but as you discuss in the book *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit*, geography was separated from the study of the past. Isn't this paradoxical?**

“But at the same time you saw the invention of geography as a new science. Geography got a new task or mission in “re-measuring” the world; the world was occupied by the colonial powers. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, I would say that there was a strong move to reintegrate the disciplines that had been separated from one another. The great achievement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had been the creation of new disciplines and sciences.

“Progress was made by developing a division of labor between the disciplines. You specialized. But parallel to this trend was a strong desire to unite disciplines.

A selection of titles from his own publications.



Ideas and thoughts are anchored in physical space. Everything has its place.



PHOTO: GORM K. GAARE

“*Die Leipziger Schule*, with the cultural historian Karl Lamprecht and the geographer Friedrich Ratzel, tried to do exactly this, to bring disciplines together that had been separated. And I have the impression that today we have approached such a turning point once again. The flourishing of cultural studies, to my mind, certainly has to do with a desire to unite research disciplines.”

**But Lamprecht lost his battle, didn't he?**

“Yes, he lost the battle, I would say, at least in Germany. This would really be a fascinating chapter in the history of ideas and the history of science. The heirs of Lamprecht became *völkisch*, trying to combine biology with geography. What became important was *Kulturbodenforschung* (cultural area research, research on the relationship between territory and culture), where the task was to find the soul of the nation, the *Volksgeist*.

**We also lost many scholars and scientists through emigration.**

“It was sort of a kidnapping. In the process, geography became petrified; it was defined as a science of the physical surface of the world. But Germany is a special case. Other disciplines as well, ethnography and many social sciences, were part of this disaster, even the study of languages was contaminated. My conclusion is that we have to reconquer all of this from the Nazi discourse.”

**Perhaps a word such as “Middle” also became contaminated by the use by National Socialists and extremist nationalists of the terms *Mitteleuropa* and *Mittellage* as an expansionist battle formula?**

“We have to be very careful of course. How do we avoid the old front lines? How do

we find a language for the new situation that is non-revisionist, non-revanchist? But how can you talk about Schopenhauer without taking into account that he came from Danzig? And Königsberg was Kant's world, and it was the center of philosophical thinking.

“Breslau/Wrocław, which since World War II has been a Polish City, was a German city for seven hundred years, with Jewish Breslau being a part of that entity. It won't do to portray it as a multicultural city, as Norman Davis does. It would be an exaggeration, a retro-projection. You might call it a city under Bohemian, Austrian, Prussian rule; however after 1945 it became a wholly Polish city. Today it is becoming a center of scholarship, with the MIT Europe to be located there. I am in Wrocław quite often; it is booming. And it tries to sell itself as part of the Hapsburg and Prussian heritage!

“On the other hand, Grodno, in today's Belarus, situated on the Niemen River and thereby in contact with the Baltic, might be taken as an example of true multiculturalism. It was a Russian city to begin with, the elite were Polish, 30-40 percent of the inhabitants were Jewish, it had a tiny portion of Lithuanians and, via peasant immigration, also Belarusians – forming a sort of Rainbow Commonwealth, what San Francisco is today. In the interwar period it was established as a Polish city with many Ukrainians living there.”

**Geographic proximity is of course significant in determining the direction development takes.**

“Absolutely. I am fascinated by the bridge connecting Malmö with Copenhagen. A new region is being created by increasing density. And there's the Trelleborg-Sassnitz ferry, with all these people, working and middle-class men and women,

**Geography is about relations among neighboring bodies. Contacts create new spaces.**



## “What Russia needs above all is time, to give up its pretensions.”

traveling, as they did from Bremerhaven to New York in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a huge movement crossing this *Binnenmeer*. The whole Baltic space has been reactivated since 1989.”

**All this points to the importance of regions.**

“When I left Uppsala on Midsummer 2007, I fulfilled a long-standing wish and went by car to Hammerfest in the very far north via Kiruna and Kirkenes. It was an enormous experience: to see the North Cape gives you an entirely different perspective on Europe. You suddenly see a new transportation route from the North Atlantic to the cities of Murmansk and Archangel, an area which was an important battlefield in the Second World War! A chain of harbors will be rebuilt along the Northeast Passage, and the Russians are part of this project.

“It reminds me of the interwar period and Klaus and Erika Mann’s *Northern Fascination*. In the middle of that Midsummer night, at the big rock, thousands of people were crowded, looking out towards nowhere! I have seen the Nordic summer light in museums – now it became a reality.

“My feeling is that we will start to discuss the formation of a ‘Northern Hemisphere’, like in Canada, where they are preparing for the reopening of a new Northwest Passage.

“I mean, even our German chancellor has paid a visit to Greenland!”

**Now, going back to the Baltic area, to what extent do countries like**

**Poland and Russia, once large continental empires, belong to that region?**

“There is a clear Baltic dimension in both Polish and Russian history. They are connected to the Baltic in several respects. But national territories do not necessarily coincide with cultural regions. Krakow is certainly not a Baltic city. In a way, the Baltic area as such can be seen as the Mongolia of Europe, where the layer of culture is very thin and specific, a borderline case. It was by no means obvious to Peter the Great that he would locate his new capital in that region. His first choice was Astrakhan or perhaps Yekaterinburg. And it wasn’t a decision meant to last for an eternity.

“The places where history is made change. Russia had of course a *Drang nach Westen*, a desire to be part of the European state system...”

**As you might say that Poland had a *Drang nach Norden*.**

“Well, as you know, Tsar Peter’s first war went southwards. He wanted to reach Persia, via Azerbaijan. And for most of the twentieth century, St. Petersburg was a dead end.”

**And what about the German component in the area? The Germans arrived as conquerors and, after many centuries, left as losers.**

“If ever German culture was open to the world, it was in this area! The men of letters in these cities, Dorpat, Reval, Riga, were part of world literature. They were not provincial, not at all narrow-minded, as is so often the case in main part of Germany. In normal times these places flourished, in crisis they felt threatened. This is one aspect of the cosmopolitanism of our German East.

“After Versailles, there was much talk about ‘die Auslandsdeutschen in Gefahr’. Königsberg was seen as a fortress, an enclave. And that gave rise to a militant, national-conservative ideology of defense. But aggressiveness is not the whole story. I think the time has come for the rehabilitation of the German East.”

**Perhaps there is a case also for the rediscovery of, let’s say, a Swedish East?**

“There are many good examples. Take Fjodor Lidvall – a Swedish architect and Russian subject. Before 1914 he was one of the ones who shaped the face of the city of St. Petersburg. A great Peterburgian. His achievements in a way could be seen as part of a pre-national history.

“I think you also have to remember another great architect in the Russian realm, Franz Schechtel. His forebears came from Bavaria. He received his education in Moscow and adopted a *Jugendstil* with a strange English-German blend.”

**Many are now looking for a new “Baltic spirit”, a joint project which they call “Balticness”. Is this a fruitful enterprise?**

“Wolfgang Schivelbusch has used the expression ‘culture of defeat’, *Kultur der Niederlage*. If we could reformulate that concept into something positive, we might perhaps be able to reach a state of maturity. The Russia of 1999 was obviously altogether another power than the Russia at the time of the Treaty of Nystad in 1721, at the end of the Great Nordic War.

“If you listen to young Russians in the Berlin metro, you will find that they regard Germany as an efficient, cheap and comfortable country. This is a new generation without war experiences. Still, they are not at the end of a process. Maybe Russia is profiting from the new situation. Some Russians get more money than others.

“What Russia needs above all is time, to give up its pretensions.” ■

**anders björnsson & thomas lundén**

Over a cup of coffee  
on Prinzregentenstrasse  
in Berlin.



**Karl Schlögel wrote a groundbreaking work on European cities at the dawn of modernism. Has dusk already fallen?**

## Much awarded. A Berlin Russia expert on the traces of Russia in Berlin

With his book on turn-of-the-century St. Petersburg, *Laboratorium der Moderne* (1988), Karl Schlögel (born 1948) had his breakthrough as a researcher. The book is part of the cultural-historical literature on European cities at the dawn of the modern – or even modernist – era. Carl Schorske had written about fin-de-siècle Vienna; John Lukacs gave a portrait of his Budapest from the same period. The universality of the Central European metropolises became, one might say, a kind of battle cry in the fight against the iron curtain mentality. But it was Karl Schlögel, more than any one else, who gave orientation towards place and space a historiographic significance.

**IN HIS WORK** *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit* (2003), which has a partially programmatic orientation, Schlögel argues that the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, as well as the fall of the Twin Towers in 2001, meant a renaissance of place, after the triumphal postmodernist procession of language and discourse during the 1970s and 1980s, in the study of the past. Eighteenth-century Renaissance thought had loosened the ties between geography and history. In aesthetics, it was the same: the poet worked with words and text, the artist with body and movements. Extension in time and space were distinguish-

hed. After the system collapse and the end of the Cold War, that distinction came to seem bizarre. When cultures were reunified, it wasn't simply the map that was changed into something new: the frame of historical interpretation was fundamentally transformed.

**IN MONOGRAPHIC STUDIES** and scholarly essays – which call to mind the notion of investigative journalism – Karl Schlögel sought to approach this complex historical continuity and geographic proximity in an innovative manner. *Berlin: Ostbahnhof Europas* (1998; second, enlarged edition *Das Russische Berlin*, 2007) is an extensive survey of the Russian emigration to the German capital after 1917 and the reciprocal relationships that those who lost World War I had with each other – cultural, political, industrial, and military – until Hitler's rise to power. The collection of essays *Marjampole oder Europas Wiederkehr aus dem Geist der Städte* (2005), rich with cultural-historical insights, vividly captures a number of urban environments located in the junction between an East and a West and that have rapidly grown together, but all of them continue to bear their historical traumas.

**KARL SCHLÖGEL SPENT THE** 2006-2007 academic year as a fellow at the SCAS, the Swedish Collegium for Ad-

vanced Study in Uppsala, where he worked out most of the ideas for his latest book, *Terror und Traum* (2008), a mosaic, with a literary form, of Moscow during the excesses of the Stalinist purges. Last year, he received the city of Leipzig's Book Prize for "European understanding" for that work; a few brief excerpts from it (below) accompany our conversation with Schlögel. In 2005, he was presented with the city of Hamburg's Lessing Prize, in 1998 he became the first recipient of the Anna Krüger Prize, awarded by Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, and he can, in addition, count to his credit a number of literary, governmental, and academic distinctions.

**SINCE 1994**, he has been Professor of East European history in Frankfurt an der Oder. In 1998 he lectured at The Swedish History Days in Stockholm. He lives in Berlin. ■

## 1937. A terror orchestrated by so many voices

### 1.

Much of what forebode an omnipotence of state power is now the desperate actions of an impotent power; what has the look of a daring utopia is purely the thought of a state of emergency, without which a power with conceivably weaker legitimization wouldn't be able to survive for one day. Upon closer inspection, what appears as a plan proves to be desperate action, improvisation, reaction, and maneuvering, living from hand to mouth. The "system" proves to be in truth barely self-controlled – yet at times also an unleashed chaos, renewed ever-again to the process of securing of control.

The power that terrifies people must not necessarily be a power that controls their own action.

### 2.

With Ordzhonikidze's suicide a veritable wave of suicides was set in motion. Statisticians have counted a total of 1,690 suicides in the European part of Russia, the largest concentration – 698 – occurring in Moscow. In the Red Army alone, according to the data of Oleg Suwenirow, 782 suicides were registered in the year 1937, and in 1938 – not including the Navy – 832. Because of an order from Jeshow separating children from their imprisoned or murdered parents, even child-suicide increases – in the Danilow-Kloster for example, which had been converted into a child prison, the son of the Director of the state news agency TASS and the son of the director of the Chelyabinsk tractor factory committed suicide.

On the 18th of December, 1937, at five-thirty p.m., Sergo Ordzhonikidze, Minister for heavy industry and member of the Politburo, committed suicide. More followed.

### 3.

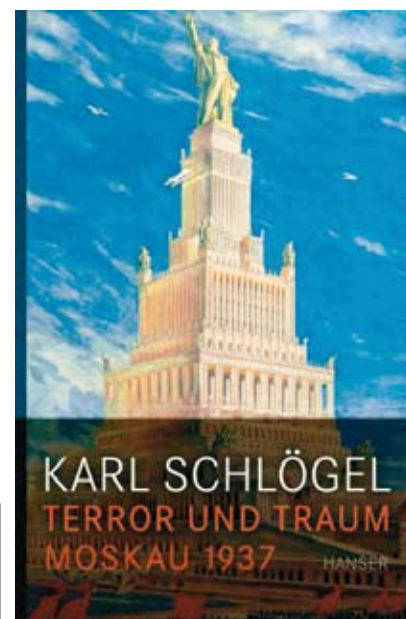
Bulgakov's "magical realism" opens up a space for descriptive possibilities that are to a great extent forbidden to the humanities: a history of the confusion and dissolution of everything fixed, a space for the fantastic, which in no way is unreal or surreal – the real-fantastic. To grasp this using the humanities, and precisely not literarily, but as *more historico*, would be the task of a historical account that didn't shy away from the privileges of literature with regard to knowledge and representation, but rather allowed itself to be inspired by them.

The historian who writes on a time that is in a state of confusion must oscillate between the realistic and the fantastic.

### 4.

The people appear on the scene like the chorus in a Greek tragedy. The chorus articulates the lamentation, the pain, reports what only a thousand eyes have been able to observe and record, and hurls curses against the accused. The chorus is the voice of a hundred thousand, a one-hundred-thousand-voice chorus. In this, it makes audible something elementary, a true wrath of the people, yet so finely nuanced in the intervals and pitches, that one can scarcely doubt that one is dealing with brilliant directing.

The Moscow Trials – a drama where the chorus is also a part of the staging.



## Space age again. Peenemünde and superpower dreams

In Peenemünde, the Nazis built a rocket base. Today, the public can observe the remains, and ponder the techno-optimism that existed at the beginning of the space age.

It is here that the Space Age began, with the German rocket program during 1930s and '40s. It is here that the Swedish dreams of becoming a superpower gained momentum, three hundred years earlier, when, in 1630, Gustavus Adolphus went ashore on the north coast of Usedom to intervene in what became the Thirty Years War.

Of the Third Reich's rocket base, an enormous power plant remains – a grotesque colossus, renovated a few years ago as a museum of both rocket technology and Nazi crimes. "Förfäras ej Du lilla hop" (be not terrified, my little flock), we read on the back of the memorial stone to the Swedish disembarkation in the cemetery a few hundred meters away. "Thou shalt not kill" is the contemporary message of resistance from the modest chapel walls.

**It is a gray** and desolate experience to step off the train at the final destination for the seaside resort of Usedom, with the sign "Peenemünde". "But where is the town center?" a woman traveling alone with a baby carriage asks, and from what I can see, there isn't even a village here.

Across from us is an abandoned row of condemned houses from the 1930s with their windows smashed and shrubs and trees growing into the stairwells. An apologetic notice from the municipal authorities on a construction enclosure surrounding the area indicates that the

houses are private property and that the municipality is not responsible for the neglect. Perhaps the private owners are in the West. Local politicians in the old East Germany, the former GDR, tend rather frequently to complain about "Wessies" who have purchased or reacquired houses in the East that they fail to take care of. The money of those who have invested in the area is all the more visible just a few kilometers from here, where a string of exquisite seaside resorts from the imperial period has been cleaned and polished and stretches eastward up to, and even across, the border into Poland.

But a vacation atmosphere has never come to Peenemünde. The western corner of the beach island, Usedom, was unspoiled land when the rocket engineer Wernher von Braun chose the area as an appropriate test base, in order to have a free artillery range over German waters 400 km towards the east off the Bay of Gdansk (then known as Danzig Bay). And although the cape was outside the general motorways, it was only a few hours straight north from the national capital, Berlin. Here, starting in 1937, a whole city was built for over 10,000 inhabitants and for forced laborers in a concentration camp, along with factory facilities and launchpads.

On October 3 (now the date of German Unity Day!), 1942, the first successful launch of an A4 rocket took place. In early summer 1943 the Western powers had begun to understand what was going on, and in August the same

year, Peenemünde was subject to allied bombing raids. Weapons production was moved underground to Thuringia in southern Germany. At the end of the war in 1945, the generals and engineers had fled Usedom.

**The Nazi rocket** facility became, for forty years, a coal-fired power plant that covered local needs, as well as a GDR airforce base. Only with German unification in 1990 was the public finally able to visit the area for the first time. Now, the verdure of nature is once again getting the upper hand and covers most of the remnants of the launch pads. Signs warn of unexploded ordnance and grenades in the fast-growing deciduous forest.

Here, in its gloominess, the evil heritage of history is stored. But Peenemünde also is compelling for rocket and technology enthusiasts who come here in order to learn and reflect on how today's Space Age and satellite-based communication society began.

It was also German enthusiasts from the area who first wanted to do something with Peenemünde in 1992, in time for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first successful rocket experiments. Here, a technical museum displaying the modern technological wonders of our age would be built. But the leaders of the Federal Republic knew all too well about Germany's need to constantly work through their history, and, instead, what was built was a place for historical reflection on over both space romanticism, Nazi crimes, the Cold War, and scientific knowledge in the service of military needs.

**The balance in** the exhibition between Nazi history, techno-optimism, and fantasies of space, has, of course, been difficult to maintain. But it works to some degree. What is most distracting is a nostalgic graveyard of worn out and decommissioned aircraft, helicopters, and missiles from the Soviet and GDR era that occupies the isolated space in front of the museum. There are more worrisome connections between Peenemünde and things that still live on in our time.

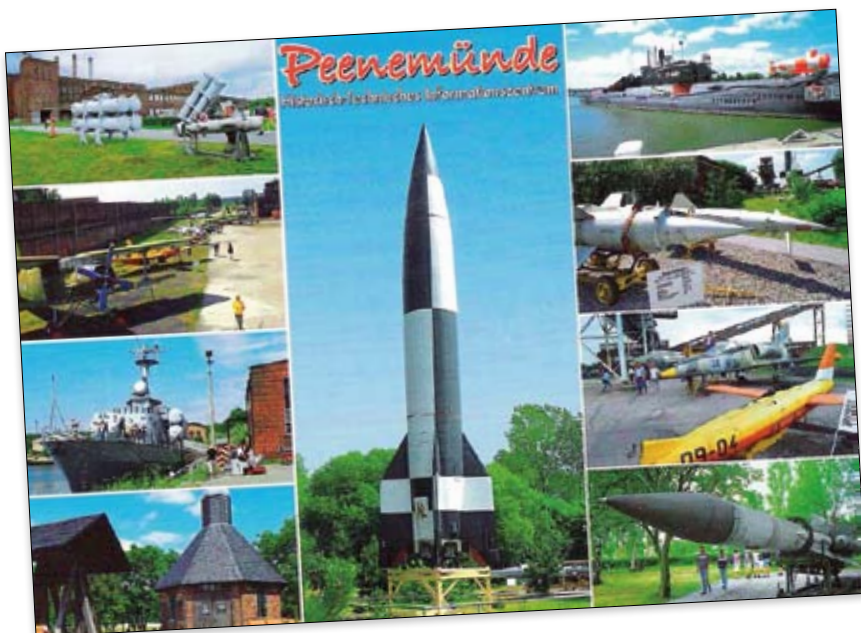
It was with the cheerful engineering optimism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that interest in rockets began. The first museum halls show the infatuation for

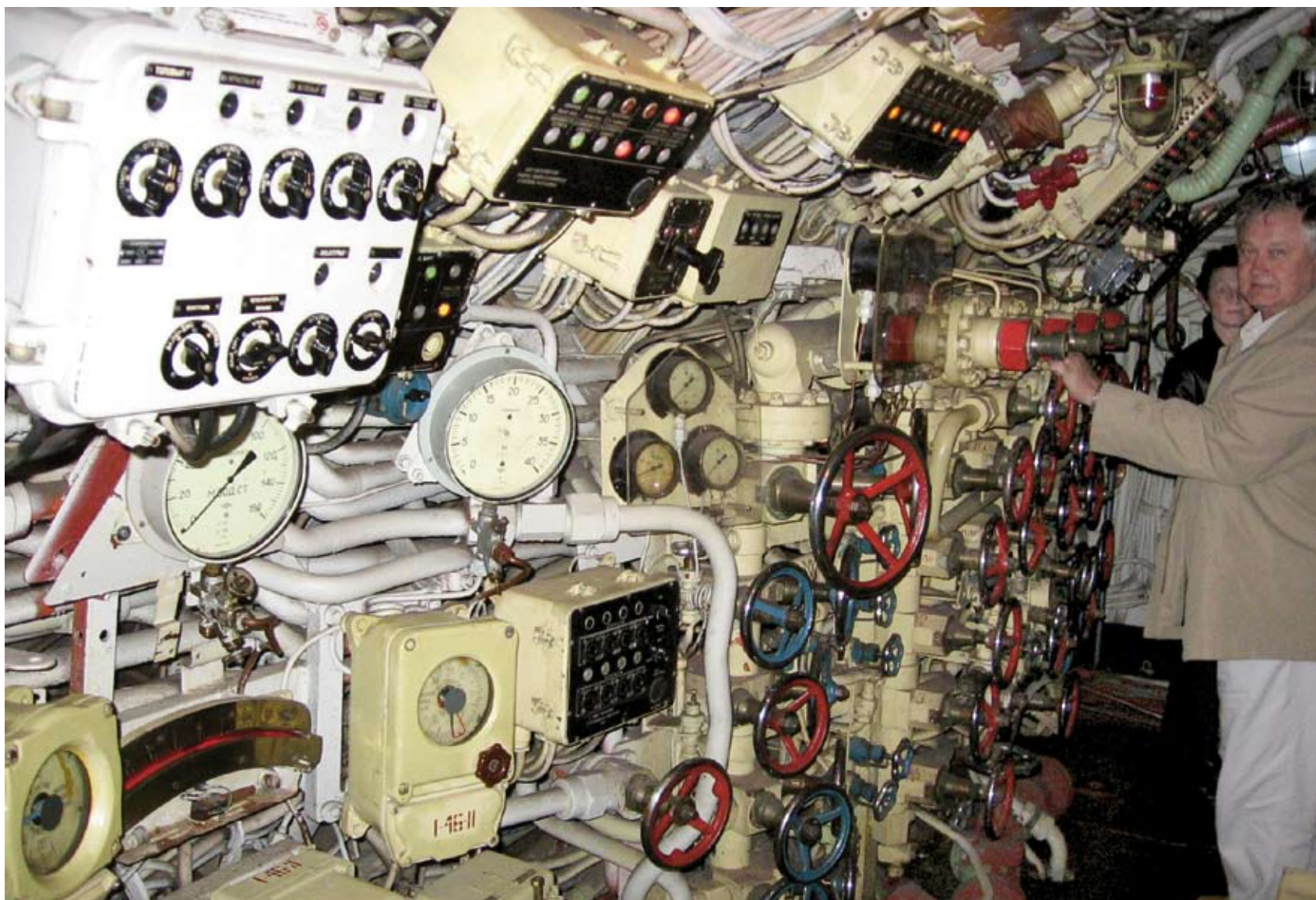
space in Germany during the 1920s, and we can see excerpts from *Woman in the Moon*, by the great filmmaker of the time, Fritz Lang. But as is customary with technological development, the engineers had to turn to the military to gather momentum and get money for their projects. Space and a potential "Star Wars" were still beyond the horizon of the military strategists' imagination. But the possibility of being able to develop a carrier of bombs with great range and high precision was attractive.

**At the same** time, the traditional antagonism among the branches of the military put a spoke in the wheels of the development of the technology. The army had its testing laboratories in the western part of the new city, and the air force had its in the east. Adolf Hitler himself and the Nazi leadership were never completely overcome by enthusiasm for rockets. It is frightening to think what might have happened if Hitler had believed more strongly in rocket-based weapons, waited to launch the war until they were fully developed, and, from the beginning, had access to a weapon of mass destruction that his opponents in both the West and the East did not have. As it was, rocket-based weapons came into play only during the last phase of the war, and merely contributed to prolonging death and suffering when the battle for Europe was already lost for the Germans.

The head of development, Wernher von Braun, even came into conflict with the Nazi leadership when he and his colleagues increasingly wanted to focus money and attention on developing space rockets, rather than mass-producing efficient carriers of weapons for a war that had begun to go badly for Germany. But von Braun was no political virgin, and was perhaps even an opportunist. During his time in Peenemünde he joined both the Nazi Party (1937) and the SS (1940), and said that he admired Hitler.

The last exhibition halls in Peenemünde form a bridge to the Space Age we still find ourselves in the middle of. At the same time, they tell the unsavory postwar story of how German expertise was divided up among the victorious powers after World War II. Both the rocket engineers and officers were quickly exonerated of their past in Nazi Germany and took on important roles





in the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France, where they contributed to the development of space technology and the new Cold War.

**In the fall of** 1944, Wernher von Braun had sensed that the tide had turned, and began talking about establishing contacts with the Americans. He and the military commandant in Peenemünde, Walter Dornberger, surrendered to U.S. troops at the end of the war and were interned in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the Bavarian Alps. Von Braun's imprisonment was a short few months, Dornberger's, two years in Great Britain. Both found themselves in the U.S. just in time for the beginning of the Cold War. As early as the 1950s, Wernher von Braun had become something of an American hero, and is now remembered mostly as the brain behind both the Saturn rockets and the Apollo Program. Major-General Walter Dornberger worked at the airbase in Dayton, Ohio (known now for the treaty of 1995 that was signed after the war in Bosnia)

and was able to retire as vice president of Bell Aircraft.

"Once rockets are up, who cares where they come down/ that's not my department, says Wernher von Braun", sang the 1960s satirist Tom Lehrer about that career. But isn't it in fact too serious to joke about? What if "Chemical Ali" from Saddam Hussein's Iraq was taken to the U.S. today to be head of development at Dow Chemicals?

Regardless, Peenemünde, in one way, is more unpleasant than many other memorials to the horrors of the Nazi era because we so clearly can see the connection to the successes and dreams of our own time.

And, moreover, even though the Cold War is over, the western tip of Usedom continues to have strategic importance. The massive turbine area in the abandoned power plant has been converted into a concert hall. On the exterior wall, there is a banner from the concert season that has just ended. First among the sponsors of this year's music festival on Usedom is Nordstream, the company behind the Russian-German gas pipeline

that will cross the Baltic Sea.

It will reach German soil in Greifswald around the corner from Peenemünde. ✖

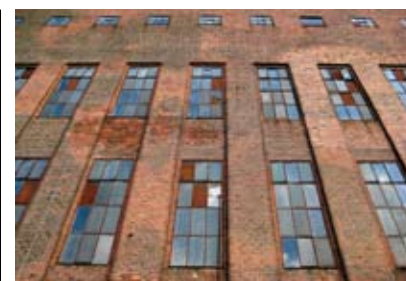
**anders mellbourn**

Visiting professor at CBEES, former director of the Swedish Institute of Foreign Affairs

## REFERENCES

Johannes Erichsen & Bernhard M. Hoppe (eds.), *Peenemünde. Mythos und Geschichte der Rakete 1923–1989*. Katalog des Museums Peenemünde. Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung 2004. 390 pages.

Museum Peenemünde. Historisch-Technisches Informationszentrum im Kraftwerk. Open daily April–September, 10:00 a.m. — 6:00 p.m. October–March 10:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m. (closed on Mondays, November–March) [www.peenemuende.de](http://www.peenemuende.de)



**Turncoat Wernher von Braun. Hitler's man until 1944. American hero of the Apollo program.**

## Soviet history. Politization and popularization challenges historical account of Stalinism writing

Few can have failed to notice the growth of interest, during the past decade, in the 1928–1953 period of Soviet Russian history. At present, we seem much less concerned with the 1917 Russian Revolution, the 1918–1920 Civil War, or the development of the Soviet Union after Stalin's death in March 1953. During the 1990s, academic research based on the newly-opened archives in Russia, Ukraine and other ex-Soviet states led to the publication of a large number of monographs, articles and dissertations. But of the rich assortment of work produced by universities in Germany, Britain and North America – not to mention Russia itself! – the public debate has only noticed that which focuses on the history of terror and oppression.

In 1997, Stéphan Courtois and Nicolas Werth joined several other French historians in the landmark book *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*. This work's exclusive focus on Stalin's crimes against humanity – crimes which, of course, also characterized the era – narrowed and simplified the debate on Stalinism's political, economic and military systems. National parliaments, EU institutions and the OSSE complemented this trend in historical discourse by passing a number of resolutions, declarations, and even proposals of illegalization.

During the Cold War, both East and West sponsored biased and tendentious accounts of 20<sup>th</sup> century history – not least in the Soviet Union's official histories, with their mythologizing accounts of the glorious role of the Communist Parties. Unfortunately, this has been replaced, today, by an equally superficial and vulgar use of the history of the decisive events of the 1930s and of World War II in particular. Various politicized accounts have an explicitly anti-Russian slant; some go so far as to demand financial compensation from the post-Soviet states. It is surprising to note how few of those who advance such suggestions are conversant with what de facto is being written by Russian historians, or with what Russian children are actually expected to learn from the many new textbooks treating the twentieth century's dramatic history.

Historians in Russia and other former East Bloc countries have been trying, for years, to get past the confrontational dichotomy that has characterized East-West history writing,



ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

particularly when it comes to the period after 1917. The organization EU-Story has made summer courses and study camps available to interested students from many Russian cities. EU-Story has, moreover, given participating students the chance to read textbooks directly translated from various West European languages into Russian. Here, it is worth noting that those West European opinion-builders and Russia experts who have, as of early summer 2007, seen fit to publicize their opinions of what is, supposedly, taught in Russian schools concerning Stalin, have done so on the basis of a slanted description of a Russian Teacher's Guide, a guide which no West European has yet read. *Russia's History 1900–1945* – the textbook that sparked the great debate – will not appear until fall 2009 (in a trial edition). This has not prevented Swedish publicists from holding forth, in thick headline letters, on how “Putin Will Gloss Over the Stalin Era” or how

“Russian School Children Are to Learn to Love Stalin”.

The West's politicizing against what it has identified as Russian points-of-view has provoked, at present, only a few reactions from Russian historians and authors. In anthologies with telling titles such as *The Great Phony War* (a play on the term *The Great Patriotic War* of 1941–1945), highly-esteemed military historians have pulverized both newly-minted myths and the old, Cold-War clichés that have recently come back into favor with certain West and Central European historical writers.

**The post-1990** Ukrainian re-interpretations of the causes of the Great Famine of 1932–1933, which present the Famine as part of a deliberate genocidal attack on the Ukrainian people, have – contrary to what is sometimes claimed in the West – sparked new Russian research on the subject. Several new

collections of sources on the forced collectivization program's consequences, such as mass starvation, forced deportations and excessive mortality, will be published in the near future.

Today, panegyrics to Stalin are being written by Russian Communists, spurred on by Party Chairman Gennadij Ziuganov. His own book *Stalin and the Present* presents Josef Stalin-Dzjugasjvili as the most far-sighted of the Bolsheviks of the 1920s, and describes the 1930s terror as a – strictly speaking – rational measure meant to consolidate the hemmed-in Soviet state against outer and (suspected) inner enemies. Thus do various Russian leftist factions revive and honor clichés fetched from the stockpiles of the Soviet Communist Party.

**But these clichés** are not honored in the more generally respected publications of Russian historians and textbook authors. Western observers should pay attention to the fact that modern Russian politicians and social debaters can describe their country's recent past – the twentieth century and the Stalin era – without resorting to prettifying eulogies or to one-sided denunciation. Sufficiently bitter lessons have been learned during the era of the personality cult – that is, the years before 1953 – and the subsequent “years of stagnation”, 1965–1985. During the first of these epochs, Stalin was portrayed as wise, omniscient, and successful in all he undertook. During the “years of stagnation”, attempts were made to write Stalin out of history. His name was never mentioned, not even in discussions of, say, World War II situations where he undeniably did occupy center stage.

Those who are, today, conducting extensive research on modern Russian history are also contending with the challenge posed by commercially adapted popularizations. The journal *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* (2008:3, pp. 497–504) has noted a tendency which it ironically terms “outsourcing”. This is a system whereby a publisher supplies a successful author with a number of Russian co-workers. The author and the editors then re-write the assistants' summaries of archival research findings in an easy-to-read form. *Kritika's* editors pointed, in particular, to the publications of Orlando Figes

## Twenty years after. The Church in the GDR

(*The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*) and Anthony Beevor (*Stalingrad* and *The Fall of Berlin 1945*), who are joined by several other Anglo-Saxon authors in producing works which are cleverly marketed as popularizations. Published in huge editions, their translation into dozens of languages is guaranteed before the project is even begun. Meanwhile, serious, solid university publishers in the USA, West Europe and Russia struggle to publish fundamental research results in editions that rarely number more than 500. Figes and Beevor have refuted some of Kritika's criticism but have not denied that they find their Russian research assistants useful (<http://web.mac.com/kritika/iWeb/ekritika/Marketing/Marketing.html>).

**There is no** questioning Figes' and Beevor's scholarly ambitions. There is reason for significant skepticism, however, when it comes to other authors' treatment of their Russian archival source material. The British historian Simon Montefiore has been fairly explicit on how both of his Stalin biographies rely on research which he "outsourced" to Russian and Georgian specialists. Further, as the *Kritika* editors noted, his *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* and his *Young Stalin* also contain many purely factual mistakes and doubtful interpretations. His literary and archival references will impress only those who have never used either Russian libraries or Russian archives.

In a British drama-documentary (shown on Sveriges Television in March 2006), Montefiore also claimed to be the first to have answered the question "Who murdered Stalin?" Neither this documentary nor his two Stalin biographies demonstrate an ability to distinguish between facts supplied by historical documents and in corroborated memoirs, on the one hand, and opportunistic forgeries and the stuff of myth and legend, on the other. The assumption that anything other than natural causes (a series of strokes) killed the over seventy-year-old tyrant is highly suspect. Montefiore, however, does not hesitate to infuse stories, apparently to titillate viewers. He gives a false picture of why, at the end of the 1940s, Vjatjeslav Molotov's wife Polina Tjemzjuzjina was arrested and deported from Moscow (Montefiore: she

"had had group sex with young Communists"). In fact, the problem was her association with Golda Meir, Israel's first Moscow ambassador, as well as with other Jewish delegates. They communicated in Yiddish, and it was suspected that Russian affairs of state and official secrets were disclosed during their conversations. At one point, Polina was overheard speculating on whether Solomon Michoels, leader of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee – killed, according to the official explanation, in an auto accident – had in fact been murdered. This was enough, in Stalin's view, to warrant her arrest. But in order to compromise Polina, it is claimed that Viktor Abakumov's security service arranged love trysts between the aging Polina and "electricians" who were sent to the couple's apartment, trysts which were documented with photographs and shown to the already shattered Molotov.

One is less surprised when Montefiore portrays Lavrentij Berija as a manic sex-offender who picked up young women, murdered them and buried their corpses under his house in Moscow! This slanderous mythopoeia dates back to Berija's arrest in the summer of 1953; it was subsequently cultivated by fiction writers such as Anatolij Rybakov and Vasilij Aksionov. Historians with access to the relevant archives have been able to demonstrate that the myth was, in fact, created by Khrushchev and other members of the new Soviet leadership.

The Hollywood film currently underway, which concerns *The Young Stalin* and is, according to reports, based on Montefiore's latest book, will include descriptions of young Georgians' criminal rampaging and sexual escapades. It will probably appeal to a broad public, but it will scarcely provide a deeper understanding of why, in the early 1900s, even this part of the Tsarist Empire was on the brink of revolution. ✕

**Iennart samuelson**

Associate professor  
of economic history at the  
Stockholm School of Economics

Orlando Fige's book  
*The Whisperers* will be reviewed  
in a forthcoming issue of BW.



ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

In recent years, several important research contributions have been published on conditions in the GDR, including studies on the role and place of the Church in the worker and peasant republic. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989, it may be time to examine the Church's position in the GDR and the problems that resulted in obstacles being placed in the way of the work of the Evangelical Church.

The Confessing Church's firm position against Nazis had led to recognition by the Allies after World War II of the Evangelical and Catholic churches in Germany as an independent group. The churches were to assist in the management and reconstruction of Germany and thereby play a significant role. Priests helped many refugees, and starting in the fall of 1945, provided food, medicine, and clothing to the refugees via an ecumenical council they had established. The new administration in

Mecklenburg and the Soviet military administration (SMAD) made good use of the Church in connection with the land reform in September 1945, but then antagonism between state and Church increased. In Mecklenburg, the Church managed to receive small government payments. In contrast, the church in Pomerania received no government support, although starting in the 1950s, small amounts of government money were distributed.

In the Soviet occupational zone, the Church followed the formation of political parties attentively, although the priests could not officially endorse any particular party. Many priests and members of the congregation in both churches were nonetheless active in the founding of the CDU, and priests were also active as members in the SPD and, starting in 1946, in the SED. This openness would not last long; starting in 1947, the SED adopted a hostile position towards the Church, and the CDU's

**And why would the West pretend that Stalin's death was not natural? What is the value of creating a popular-historical legend?**

status was crucially weakened. With the implementation of the new socialist society based on Marx's and Lenin's views, the churches came to be perceived as a disruptive element. On the other hand, the GDR's new constitution of October 7, 1949 guaranteed freedom of faith and conscience, guarantees which soon, however, were undermined, despite Church protests.

**After the workers'** rebellion in 1953, the SED leadership strove systematically to deprive the Church of all influence. Beginning in the fall of 1954, the churches were faced with ever more restrictive measures, including restricted opportunities to publish and to provide social assistance. The demand that the churches take oaths of loyalty became, in the following years, a central theme and a critical yardstick for assessing the relationship between state and Church in the GDR. In 1958, then prime minister Otto Grotewohl declared that the Church cannot have the same rights as the state. There was no church autonomy: the state was the only instrument of power.

The targeted attack on the work done by the Church had as a consequence that members of the congregational councils distanced themselves from their congregations, resigned, or simply left the GDR entirely. The proclamation concerning the further establishment of socialism in 1958, and the socialization of agriculture in 1960, hit the congregations in the countryside particularly hard. It was thus surprising when Walter Ulbricht, at a meeting in the Volkskammer in October 1960, said that Christianity and the humanistic goals of socialism were not in opposition. The speech, however, placed conditions on the evangelical churches: that they abandon their pan-German organization, recognize the state's demand that it have sole authority over education, and promised to support the government's policies. The Church did not yield however, although there was participation in solutions to important societal tasks. The most difficult conflict between the GDR leadership and Church leaders arose in connection with the question of the unity of the evangelical church, specifically, the legal and practical relations between the churches in the two German countries.

After 1957, the SED was not just trying to narrow the latitude possessed by the Church via administrative means. In the party and state apparatus, the

Church was defined as a dangerous political opponent, which should be eliminated. From the Church's side, the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the closure of the border with West Germany meant that a reorientation was necessary. In 1963, the evangelical churches in the GDR drew up the so-called "Zehn Artikel von Freiheit und Dienst der Kirche", about being a Christian and living in a socialist state.

In the late 1960s important changes came about in the political and ecclesiastical spheres in the GDR. In 1968, a new constitution was introduced, which described the GDR exclusively as a socialist state and denounced the idea of a unified Germany. West Germans, however, held fast to reunification as a goal, and in 1969 embarked upon a pragmatic policy towards East Germany. That same year, the "Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR" was founded, which meant a secession of the eastern regional churches (*Landeskirchen*) from the pan-German Evangelical Church. This secession, which followed years of pressure from the SED, was not, however, followed by a declaration of loyalty to the socialist state. After 1973 the formula became "Kirche im Sozialismus" – that the Church would exist and operate within the socialist state.

**In the late 1970s**, Erich Honecker tried to defuse tensions by negotiating with the bishops, but the very same year, a serious conflict began with the stern response of the GDR regime to ecclesiastical peace initiatives. The response from the Church was to adhere to its vision as well as its religious services and "Weltverantwortung", from 1984. Despite internal tensions, the churches generally understood themselves to be a "loyal opposition", which did not fundamentally call into question the GDR as a state. This principle is reflected in the Mecklenburg regional churches as well. From the SED's standpoint, however, the mere existence of the Church was viewed as a provocation. Advantage was taken by the Church's because of its relative autonomy in order to lead extensive discussions on social and political issues, which the state saw as particularly provocative.

The internal Church debates about public policy issues led to great activity in the congregations and grass-roots organizations. One can even speak of a "conciliatory process". At the first GDR-wide ecumenical assembly in Dresden,

in 1988, a comprehensive proposal was submitted requiring a clear Church position on the burning issues of the day. Among the themes that dominated the agenda in the period around the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was "State Security". It had thus already been discussed relatively openly long before.

In the time before the Wall came down, it was clear that the GDR as a state not only fought against the Church from outside, but also was now seeking to play the different groups and various positions off against one another internally. The so-called progressive, realistic, and loyal Church members were encouraged or put under pressure. Because of this, many came to be henchmen, directly or otherwise, of the SED.

The developments leading to the uprisings in the GDR emerge generally in three phases: in the first phase, it was important to inform people, then to organize, and finally, in the third phase, to act. The Church thus took on a significant role in the first uprisings. The Church set in motion a comprehensive wave of information, which added nuances to the government information and took on a more penetrating form in the Western media. In the churches, there was access to Western newspapers and books. The formation of a New Forum in Schwerin in Mecklenburg received tremendous Church endorsement, and the agitation for change received the support of the broader population.

The Church's role in the events of 1989 in the time of "die Wende" thus were extraordinarily important. Behind this, however, was a lengthy process that had begun long before 1989 and, as a general process of transformation, continued after 1990. Even after the GDR ceased to exist, the regional churches take on a political role in the new eastern *Bundesländer*. The Church played an integrating role in the new Germany, which was in the process of growing together. This role was of use to the Church, since between 1945 and 1990, it had represented a Protestant (counter)culture to the GDR/SED. ✖

**Jens E. Olesen**

Professor of Nordic history  
at the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-University,  
Greifswald

## War and transfer of knowledge

Prisoners of war can be made use of in a number of ways. After the Swedish defeat in the Great Northern War (1700–1721), the Russian army seized soldiers, but also quite a few civilians, and put them to work, in many cases in the Siberian capital, Tobolsk. But one contingent was transferred to St. Petersburg, the new capital of the empire, where the captured Swedes had to work on various building and construction projects. The central, showpiece street, Nevsky Prospekt, was laid out exclusively by Swedes in two years' time, and when that work was finished they had to see to street cleaning every Saturday as well.

The Swedish army also took prisoners, in the battles and operations in which it was successful. Several high-ranking people in the empire had to spend many a year in Sweden, if not in the state of privation of their more common compatriots, nonetheless under severe restrictions. As a prisoner of war, the Georgian prince Alexander Bagrationi, banished, along with his father, by the Turks became a collaborator of the internationally renowned Swedish Slavist Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld (1655–1727) in his work on dictionaries. Craftsmen on both sides helped to develop the countries' economies – the Swedes, in particular, within the Russian iron industry.

There were instances of "industrial espionage", and it was high season for cartography during the prolonged military entanglements.

On the occasion of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the difficult Swedish loss at Poltava at the end of June 1709, a research anthology was published in Russian and Swedish, with many new findings concerning the two countries' mutual relations at the time. For the Russians, the war was an opportunity to acquire not only land, but also knowledge, in areas where Sweden at that time was highly advanced, for example in public administration. Swedish nobles educated in the humanities, who had command positions in the army, introduced and spread European traditions, including instrumental music that had been out of favor with the Orthodox Church, but which Peter the Great now took up in order to create a corps of military musicians.

## REFERENCE

Lena Jonson & Tamara Torstendahl Salytjeva, *Poltava, Krigsfångar och kulturutbyte* [Poltava: Prisoners of War and Cultural Exchange]. Stockholm: Atlantis 2009. 388 pp.

## Dissertation. The kaleidoscope of family policy

**Zhanna Kravchenko**  
**Family (versus) Policy:**  
**Combining Work and**  
**Care in Russia and**  
**Sweden**

Stockholm 2008. (Acta  
Universitatis Stockholm-  
iensis. Stockholm Studies  
in Sociology. New Series  
30. Södertörn Doctoral  
Dissertations 27.)  
184 pages.



**ANNA ROTKIRCH**

Associate professor  
of social policy and  
Women's Studies at the  
University of Helsinki,  
leads family research at  
the Family Federation in  
Finland, and the research  
project Fertility Behavior  
and Family Patterns in  
St. Petersburg.

**MANY OF THOSE LIVING** in the Nordic region probably would associate Russian families with a demonstrably intimate emotional climate. Cramped rooms, but always room for a friend; guests can step into slippers, stay a long time, feel part of great events and tragic fates. At the same time, certain taboos are detectable. Confusion arises immediately if you comment on how much the hostess of the house is doing in the kitchen while the men sit and talk. Other characteristics also feel amazingly old-fashioned: a minimum of three courses for dinner on a normal day, toasts held in honor of the beautiful ladies at the table.

The emotional climate makes it tempting to exaggerate the differences between Russian and Nordic family life. After all there are a lot of similarities between Russian and Nordic families; small families with few children and working parents, public health care, affordable daycare and free schooling, suburban life in ugly high-rises, a high divorce rate, and a large number of single mothers. Much of what seems to be “typically Russian” can also be found in Southern Europe: maternal dominance, the patriarchal traditions, the closeness between generations.

When Göran Therborn examined families of the previous century around the globe, he underlined the peculiarities of the European family model, relative to all the others. But even if one limits oneself to Europe, differences are seen from the very start. From a socio-political standpoint, it is exciting to figure out which ingredients are relevant: is it about legislation, ideology, or everyday culture?

**ZHANNA KRAVCHENKO'S** dissertation, *Family (versus) Policy*, compares family policy in Sweden and Russia from 1991, when the new post-socialist Russia arose, until 2007.<sup>1</sup> She is interested in the goals of family policy, the implementation of the policy, and its outcomes, especially with regard to the question of reconciling children and career. In contrast to most previous comparative family policy studies, she does not base the research on different welfare regimes à la Esping-Andersen. Instead, she examines the so-called

gender contract at various levels: the official, the normative, and the everyday level. In this way she can compare Sweden and Russia on three different levels (government policy, attitudes, practices), but can also observe the discrepancy between different levels within the same country, as well as the direction in which these levels are developing.

Kravchenko makes use of different kinds of material and methods of analysis: for the policies, documents; for attitudes, survey data; and for the micro-level, personal interviews with employed parents.

**I AM A STRONG** supporter of this kind of methodological pluralism and pragmatism. The materials and methodology used by research should, of course, be determined by what one is trying to figure out, namely the research question, not the theoretical guru that previously had been granted the status of household god. In recent years, purely “qualitative” sociological research seems to have reached an impasse. There are far too many dissertations in which no statistical background is given and the outcomes depend solely on a few, intuitively interpreted interviews.

As sociologist Pertti Töttö has pointed out, a hunt for “meaning” and “depth” that has gone too far can result in all figures aside from page numbers being banned. Just a month or so ago I heard someone with a Ph.D. in sociology discourage surveys as a method, on the grounds that “a survey can never say anything about meanings”. Coupled with this attitude is often a blind faith in the power of ideologies and expressed opinions, a kind of reverse Marxism.

Kravchenko's methodical choices thus serve her theoretical ambition: to examine *how* ideologies, attitudes, and practices affect each other. Nonetheless, it may be difficult for one and the same researcher to master both textual interpretations and statistical analyses. Researches also have different talent for these rather disparate kinds of handicrafts. In addition, there is the matter of how much time a graduate student can find for various methodology courses – both advanced semiotic analysis and advanced statistics require months of training.

Kravchenko manages all of her material with the same skill and confidence. The analyses are methodologically simple, but the results fascinating. As if through a kaleidoscope, the research approaches a question, answers it, and, keeping that mosaic in mind, performs the next turn of the kaleidoscope with it, creates a mosaic in memory at the next turn.

*First mosaic: the official contract.* What do parental leave, public childcare and families' economic benefits look like in the two countries? The biggest difference concerns the constant emphasis on gender equality in Sweden, as opposed to the Russian orientation, which either is gender-neutral or holds the woman responsible for both the children and the household. In practice, the countries guarantee fairly similar rights, except that the level of benefits, support, and services is higher in Sweden. Kravchenko stresses that the development of childcare in both

countries came only after women and mothers had entered the labor market, not vice versa.

The Swedish tradition of part-time working women leads to the significant difference that resonates throughout the research: more than 30 percent of Swedish women worked part time in 2002, compared to just five percent in Russia. On the other hand, 14 percent are housewives in Sweden, but 20 percent in Russia. This means that 45 percent of Swedish women and 25 percent of Russian women (usually mothers) do not work fulltime – the latter in a country that has not consciously focused on equality during the past two decades! Among other things, the Russian maternity leave is, in practice, consistent with what feminist researchers have called the gender equality oriented model – but without being so in an ideological way.

In contrast to Russia, Sweden has made efforts to involve fathers in childcare, with results that are obvious, albeit modest in relation to how much mothers still do. Another striking difference is that the proportion of children in daycare steadily increased in Sweden (53 percent of 0- to 7-year-olds in 1992, 63 percent in 2003) while it held at around 57 percent in Russia. So daycare practice from the Soviet period has for the most part continued, despite new private nursery schools, and increased difficulties facing parents in the search for a good daycare center.

The Swedish drive for equality in parenting thus results in more and more young children being in daycare. If one wants to stir up a hornet's nest in the eternal debate on homecare versus daycare one could ask whether this trend of increasing daycare is the price of increased paternal mobilization in the family. And if the Swedish trend soon reverses because of the childcare allowance: more children at home but reduced equality? Kravchenko does not approach this hornet's nest. Also, she consciously takes the adults', not the children's, perspective on family policy.

*Second mosaic: the normative contract.* How do Russians and Swedes view women's professional work and gender equality? Responses from the International Social Survey Programme from 1994 to 2002 show, not surprisingly, that Swedes are consistently more egalitarian and less traditional than



## Continued. Dissertation

Russians. Despite this, the trend in *both* countries is towards greater support for equality. The distribution of household work paints the same picture: greater polarization between the sexes in Russia, yet with the same trend in both countries – men doing more “women’s jobs”, women doing more typically “male” jobs, and couples also sharing more tasks.

This result is as important as it is positive. Given Russia’s economic crises, massive social inequality, and sometimes openly misogynistic mass media, one might have predicted the opposite – and many did just that. During *perestroika*, leading feminist scholars claimed that the country was moving towards a patriarchal renaissance and that the status of women both in the labor market and in the family would deteriorate sharply. That this did not happen should be celebrated more vociferously. Kravchenko shows, in particular, that the acceptance of working women has increased, presumably as a result of its continued normalcy (see also Motiejunaite & Kravchenko). More general claims about gender roles changed somewhat more slowly. Interestingly, the variation among the responses is also greater in Sweden than in Russia.

*Third mosaic: contract for everyday life.* Sweden preaches equality at the official and individual level, but is far less egalitarian if we look at the labor market; Russia glorifies traditional gender roles but has a more egalitarian economic and social practice. What does this look like in the everyday life of families with small children?

Kravchenko rounds off the work with an analysis of twenty interviews conducted in families with children where both parents work. Here, too, Swedish couples emphasize the importance of sharing equally to a greater extent than what actually occurs, while Russian couples talk less of equitable sharing, emphasizing “rational” reasons (“My husband does everything I ask him to around the house, but I will do it better and faster, so what’s the point in asking him?”), but nonetheless share quite a bit.

The chapter elucidates the similar rhythms and challenges in both countries: everyday life rolls on until the delicate balance is interrupted by something unexpected, and urgent

assistance is needed. (And of course the Swedes love to plan much more than the Russians do.) The introductory theoretical discussions emphasized that the families’ “agency” shapes the actual outcomes of family policy. This no doubt holds true for individual values. As Kravchenko summarizes it, “sometimes [people] diverge from their normative ideas, guided by practical considerations, while on other occasions the most practical solutions are ignored in favor of the dominant (but not necessarily utilizable in their best interests) norms”.



**BUT HOW MUCH LEEWAY** do families have in official family policy? In my reading, the interviews with parents show just how strongly social policies govern behavior: benefits are taken advantage of, parental leave is taken precisely as it was intended. Examples of truly radical change are not given, though they are theoretically possible: families who do not put their children in daycare or school at all, families where no adult wants to work for a wage, or families who put their children in daycare before their parental leave has expired. (In Finland recently, a mother originally from France wanted to return to work when her baby was three months old. Officially, she had a right to daycare, but in practice, nothing was available to her since “no” Finnish parent does that.) The Swedish and Russian families live in a basic social structure that has already become deeply rooted and accepted, and that is rarely questioned. We are very, very far from the situations existing in countries that do not have statutory parental leave and do not provide early childcare, countries in which the very first thought of having a child is already overshadowed by the question of who should take care of it.

There are a couple of interesting differences between Swedish and Russian families. First, Russians compensate for the lack of legal benefits (for example the right to a week-long absence when a child is sick, part-time work arrangements) with personal agreements at work. Swedes, however, follow the regulations and don’t get involved in informal “deals”. Both practices of course have their good and not so good sides when it comes to changing workplaces, personal relationships at work, or the chance to be on flextime when it suddenly and unexpectedly is needed.

Secondly, there are differences in both attitudes towards, as well as the use of, relatives, primarily grandparents. Russians say it is important that their own parents participate in raising the children – that is, important for reasons other than the practical relief it offers them. Russians are also less likely to resort to friends or organizations if they need help with the children. Swedes see their parents more as practical help and also make much use of friends and organizations. This behavior is related to the phase of life when children are born: Russian women still give birth in their

20s and are often grandmothers in their 40s, while the later age of childbirth in Sweden means that the grandparents themselves might need care when the grandchildren are very young.

**DORIS LESSING WRITES** in the autobiographical novel *The Four-Gated City* about how different motives may underlie the same action. Lessing’s alter ego questions the reasons she gave at the time for why she left her family, but nonetheless knows that she would have left either way. It is the action taken that counts. Zhanna Kravchenko’s dissertation illustrates this in relation to gender equality and the situation of women in Russia. Although it’s been some time since any genuine policy providing for equality has been pursued, the economic and social status of Russian women is not as bad as one might think. Even though Russian men have no feminist superego, they iron and wash almost as much as Swedish men. Suddenly, the Russian president is able to express his concern for the economic dependence of housewives in much stronger terms than those a Nordic prime minister ever would have chosen (Rotkirch, Zdravomyslova & Temkina).

Ideologies and lip service are of course also important, but are not all that matters. Family policy outcomes do not necessarily coincide with their declared motives.

If the Nordic guest still remains with his Russian hosts, it may be worthwhile to avoid abstract discussions about gender roles and instead question them about what these women and men experienced during their lives. It is actions that count.

**anna rotkirch**

1. Since I am thanked in the introduction, this commentary should not be read as an objective review.

## REFERENCES

A. Motiejunaite & Zh. Kravchenko: “Family Policy, Employment, and Gender Role Attitudes: A Comparative Analysis of Russia and Sweden, *European Journal of Social Policy* 18:1 (2008).

Göran Therborn: *Between Sex and Power: Families in the World, 1900-2000*, London 2003.

Anna Rotkirch, Anna Temkina & Elena Zdravomyslova “Who’s Afraid of the Degraded Housewife?” Comments on Vladimir Putin’s demographic speech, *European Journal of Women’s Studies* Vol 14:4.

## The lost Scandinavism. From Indian summer to Nordic winter

**Ruth Hemstad**  
**Fra Indian summer til**  
**nordisk vinter:**  
**Skandinavisk**  
**samarbeid,**  
**skandinavisme og**  
**unionsoppløsningen**

[From Indian Summer to Nordic Winter: Scandinavian Cooperation, Scandinavism, and the Dissolution of the Union]. Dissertation. Oslo, Akademisk Publiserings 2008. 653 pages.

**T**HE SCANDINAVISM OF the 19<sup>th</sup> century is depicted mostly as a movement on the losing end of history. When the idea of a unification of the Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish peoples was put to the test during the Second Schleswig War (also known as the Danish-Prussian War) in 1863–64, it fell victim to the realpolitik of national egoism. Despite previous (Swedish) pledges, the Danes were left to their own devices. Scandinavism failed the test when its rhetoric was confronted with harsh reality. Denmark lost the war and ended up in the shadow of the powerful German empire that was created in 1871. Scandinavism appeared to have been buried forever.

In the preceding decades, the tone had been different. Scandinavian student meetings in Uppsala in 1843, Copenhagen in 1845, Kristiania (Oslo) in 1851, Uppsala in 1856, and Copenhagen in 1862, to name just a few, had garnered much attention. In emotional speeches and countless toasts, the friendship among the three peoples was cemented. Swedish monarchs such as Oscar I and Charles XV committed themselves to Scandinavism in a variety of ways. Their motives were less idealistic than those of the enthusiastic students – the monarchs wanted to create a super-Nordic kingdom under Swedish leadership.

**THE PAINFUL DEFEAT** of political Scandinavism has contributed to other forms of Scandinavism being neglected by research. In general, the myriad of forms of cooperation between the associations of a highly diverse nature that characterized the Scandinavism of late 19<sup>th</sup> century has been overlooked by researchers. These shortcomings have now been largely overcome, thanks to a comprehensive, wide-reaching dissertation by Ruth Hemstad, a historian at the University of Oslo, currently working at Norway's National Library. The dissertation has recently been published in book form. In addition, through her work over the course of several years as project coordinator for the Norwegian-Swedish "Project 1905", Hemstad has dealt with other, closely related issues as well.

The primary thesis of her book is that, contrary to the conventional view, Scandinavism as a cultural movement did not die out after the student Scandinavism movement and the defeat in



FROM GEDDEHOLMS GÅRD, VÄSTERÅS STADSARKIV

1864 of the idea of a unified political entity, but rather experienced a – albeit brief – heyday. She refers to this period in the 1890s with a concept taken from Erik Rudeng: "Indian summer", a time of warmth before the cold sets in with the coming of "the Nordic winter". These metaphors based on the seasons are central in Hemstad's account.

**AS NOTED**, THE dissertation is extensive – 653 pages. The notes alone (2,252 of them, some very detailed) fill up nearly 160 pages, itself the size recommended in Sweden in the 1970s for an entire doctoral thesis. That norm is however long since dead and gone, and Swedish dissertations in history often tend to be tomes. In Hemstad's dissertation, incidentally, an appendix with the results of the survey of Nordic arrangements (that is, not simply Scandinavian, but at times also including Finnish participation), from the period 1839–1929, is also included. In addition, a separate register of gatherings makes it possible to find all the meetings, from conferences on schools for disabled children (*abnormskolor*) to conventions of eye doctors, which she found in her assiduous examination of the source material. We see then that the book has a strong empirical character. Nonetheless, a number of important threads in the history of Scandinavism are followed with the help of theoretical concepts and discussion. The analytical components are not buried in the account of all the meetings, gatherings, and other activities – something to which the scope and ambition of the project easily could have led.

In recent years, researchers other than Hemstad have noted the multifaceted cooperation that took place in Scandinavia during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Göran B. Nilsson, in connection with his research on André Oscar Wallenberg (*The Founder: André Oscar Wallenberg (1816-1886): Swedish Banker, Politician & Journalist*, 2005), has addressed "practical Scandinavism" via gatherings of economists at which

matters such as banking questions were discussed. Bo Stråth, in his *Union och demokrati: De förenade rikena Sverige-Norge 1814-1905* [Union and Democracy: The United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway, 1814-1905] (2005), has also drawn attention to the issue, partly with the help of Hemstad's previously published articles. The cooperation has however not heretofore been set into a broader historical perspective, and the numerous and varied types of meetings have not been investigated systematically in the way that Hemstad has now done. About a hundred different types of meetings, conferences, and the like have been identified in the period from 1839 to 1905, and an equal number can be added from the period beginning with the dissolution of the Union, and ending in 1929.

The concept *Scandinavism* is not identical with *Scandinavian cooperation*. In order to speak of Scandinavism per se, more is needed than pathologists, folk dance enthusiasts, and orthopedists have conferences or gatherings that bring together people from across the Nordic borders. There is a risk that the rich flora of types of exchange presented in the book will necessarily yield a picture of a grand, immense Scandinavism. The author is aware of the problem, and strives to elucidate that which is not merely the sort of cooperation that results from practical professional interests or other practical reasons, but which, in addition, has some connection to Scandinavism's message of a shared identity and culture. The cooperation or collaborative effort must be seen by those involved to have a value in itself in order to qualify as Scandinavism. Scandinavism and Scandinavian cooperation are two phenomena that for a time developed along parallel lines, and in mutual interaction – or, as it is put in the title of Hemstad's book: from Indian summer to the Nordic winter – without the process needing to be seen as in any way fated.

The Indian summer variant is referred to as *Neo-Scandinavism* – less political and more cultural than its predecessor. The earlier Scandinavism that existed during the time of the student meetings and the dynastic intrigues was cast in a different mold: specifically, it was more far-reaching. The three states would be gathered together into one realm, or would at a minimum try to make changes needed to make political

and institutional cooperation easier. It was very much a unifying nationalism, and thus parallel to the contemporary national aspirations found in other attempts to create unity, Germany and Italy. With its primarily cultural orientation, Neo-Scandinavism was not a competitor in the same way to the nationalism of the individual countries, which led to a flowering of the movement at the turn of the century. Nonetheless, it was seen as a threat in Norwegian patriotic circles. Why strive for cooperation with the state whose influence over language and culture one wished to counteract (Denmark), and with the state with which one wanted to sever ties (Sweden)?

**HEMSTAD'S DISSERTATION** has a basis in conceptual history. Within the tradition of conceptual history, represented primarily by the German researcher Reinhart Koselleck, concepts are seen as ambiguous, malleable, and context-dependent. Often, there are debates over how the concepts should be interpreted, debates that may shed light on the relevant political history, among other things. A standard work in the area is the extensive lexicon that Koselleck, along with Otto Brunner and Werner Conze, starting in the 1970s, prepared over the course of twenty years: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. The polemical force of concepts appears to be strongest in the tension between what is described as the space of experience (*Erfahrungsraum*) and horizon of expectations (*Erwartungshorizont*). The discussion of concepts plays a central role in Hemstad's book, something seen both in the title and in the actual approach to the problem. In addition, the analyses in the empirical studies are continually connected to the sphere of theory. By way of introducing her thesis, she also refers to discourse theory, network theory and – though it plays a more subordinate role – theories of nationalism. These approaches, however, are not very noticeable in the presentation itself. Even if these research areas may have inspired the author, they have no real function in the text.

**DURING THE YEAR** of the dissolution, 1905, Norway began boycotting various Nordic meetings and gatherings. Norwegians refused for example to partici-

pate in the first Nordic history conference, the Nordic Games, and the third Nordic Chess Congress. For Swedes, Scandinavism was seen almost as an invective after 1905. In 1906, the Swedes boycotted a Nordic student meeting with a Christian program, as well as a Nordic meeting on colleges and universities the year after. Countless other meetings were canceled or postponed. A veterinary congress planned for 1907 wasn't held until 1921. The sixth Nordic peace conference in 1906 didn't take place until 1910. After difficult negotiations, the eighth Nordic Sunday school meeting was also canceled in 1907. Even these forms of seemingly peaceful meetings could resume only after the Great War. The women's movements in the two countries also came into conflict with each other, something that Inger Hammar has shown in her *För freden och rösträtten: Kvinnorna och den svensk-norska unionens sista dagar* [For Peace and the Right to Vote: Women and the Final Days of the Swedish-Norwegian Union] (2004). The 1905 Nordic Conference on the Woman's Question [*Kvinnosaksmötet*] was canceled and held in 1914 instead. Thus, after 1905, winter prevailed. In view of the meetings and conferences that were canceled or cut back because of conflict surrounding the Union, one can even speak of an ice age.

When the exchange slowly resumed around the First World War, not gaining much momentum until the 1920s, people didn't look back to the experiences of Scandinavism. The term "Nordic" fit much better – partly to suppress Scandinavism, a suppression for which the parties involved might have different incentives, partly to include Finland as well, which had achieved independence in 1917. Also, as a symptom of this, *Föreningen Norden* (The Nordic Association) was founded in 1919.

**IT IS THE DISSOLUTION** of the Union in 1905 which constitutes the true breakdown of the Scandinavianist movement, or movements, as one should perhaps say – there were of course countless exchanges and cooperative efforts of various sorts. The Indian summer during the preceding decade had been overshadowed by the sharp contradictions of the dissolution of the Union. The warmth doesn't harmonize particularly well with a Norwegian national image of a unified opposition to the Union ever since the 1880s.

In this way, the poor state of research on the heyday of Scandinavism around 1900 also illustrates the connection between historical research and political/ideological developments. That various epochs and perspectives have been put at a disadvantage is rarely a coincidence, but rather the result of dominant ideological currents of the time. This also became clear during the work with the period of the Union and its dissolution, with which both the author and reviewer were involved a few years ago (*Projekt 1905*). The rather weak official Swedish interest, at least at first, in the centenary of 1905, reflects the relative unimportance of the issue here in Sweden. Aside from the period right after 1905, the matter has not occasioned any controversy; the Union has rather been forgotten. From a Norwegian perspective, 1905 is a memorable

year in the group of nationally significant years. 1814, 1905, and 1940/1945 jointly contribute to an overarching national story of the country's struggle for liberation. The interpretation of the Union period is still politically explosive in Norway. In 2005, groups who are against the EU equated – as they did earlier in the battle over Norwegian membership – the Swedish governance of the Union from Stockholm with the power of today's European Union in Brussels. A critical attitude towards the EU often went hand in hand with a downplaying of the harmonious elements from the time of the Union in favor of an image of Swedish oppression and Norwegian resistance.

**ALTHOUGH THE QUESTION** of the Union and the conflicts of the previous turn of the century do not elicit any significant excitement in today's Sweden, the symbolic force of the history has not disappeared. In the fall of 2008, the municipality of Malmö (Sweden) discussed a proposal to invite the three royal families to the city in connection with the centenary of the meeting of the three kings ("treküngamötet") there in 1914, in which the monarchs and foreign ministers of the countries participated. The meeting was mainly intended to show the world that the countries were united in their neutrality during the world war that had broken out earlier that year. At the same time, the meeting helped accelerate the cooperation that the Nordic winter had left frozen. The proposal at hand, however, fell victim to opposition from the left. One argument from the Social Democrats involved the undemocratic circumstances of that period. To highlight the contributions of the kings would be to oppose the very idea of democracy. However, the possibility had existed of placing more of an emphasis on the idea of peace (in line with the bloodless dissolution of the Union) and the significance of Nordic cooperation, areas that, in Nordic contexts, are often described in high-flown language. The meeting of the kings in 1914 and its significance were probably too unknown to politicians for its symbolic potential to be visible. Now, rather, it was the general form of government of the time that constituted an obstacle to a focus on historical knowledge.

One important feature of Scandinavian cooperation is its voluntary nature. Those who took the initiative were



**TORBJÖRN NILSSON**

Associate professor of history, works at the Institute of Contemporary History, Södertörn University. Has written a major work on the history of the Swedish right. Editor of the Swedish journal *Personhistorisk Tidskrift* [Journal of Personal History].

## Continued. The lost Scandinavism

active in civil society, not representatives of the state – students, professional groups, cultural associations, and sports organizations, among others. The state had, at least initially, a more modest role. It was only later that the exchange was institutionalized under the various states, municipalities, and other authorities. Civic organizations nonetheless still have an important role.

**OLDER SWEDISH HISTORICAL** research placed the state at the center of its studies. Later, the classic popular movements come to the fore. The multitude of voluntary groups and institutions that are more difficult to get a grasp on have been paid less attention, although there are groundbreaking studies such as Torkel Jansson's *Adertonhundratalets associationer: Forskning och problem kring ett sprängfyllt tomrum eller sammanlutningsprinciper och föreningsformer mellan två samhällsformationer ca 1800-1870* [Associations of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Research and Problems around a Void Filled to the Brim, Or Principles of Unification and Forms of Association Between Two Social Formations Around 1800-1870] (1985). That the intense exchanges between the countries did not occasion so much Swedish research might thus be a result both of the relatively weak status of the question of the Union, and of the greater attention paid to the state and popular movements. Civil society has not held the same position in the Swedish historical consciousness.

**DESPITE RUTH HEMSTAD'S** solid investigation, or perhaps because of its interesting results and detailed mapping out of the relevant phenomena, Scandinavism, Nordic cooperation and related issues would appear to constitute a research area with great potential. With luck, the 2014 bicentennial of the beginning of the Union will also be observed in Sweden, even if Sweden, as was the case with the 2005 centennial, lag far behind neighboring Norway.

torbjörn nilsson

## Expelled and expeller. On the reality of forced migration

**Andreas Kossert**  
**Kalte Heimat: Die Geschichte der deutschen Vertriebenen nach 1945**

München: Siedler 2008. 427 pages.

**Jan Musekamp**  
**Zwischen Stettin und Szczecin: Metamorphosen einer Stadt zwischen 1945 und 2005**

Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde, vorgelegt an der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), 29. Januar 2008. 347 pages.

**Bernd Aischmann**  
**Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, die Stadt Stettin ausgenommen: Eine zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtung**

Schwerin: Thomas Helms Verlag 2008. 228 pages.

**Stig Dagerman**  
**Tysk höst**

[German Autumn]. Stockholm: Norstedts 1947 167, [1] pages and later editions. Has been translated to other languages, among them German (Deutscher Herbst).

**Hans-Åke Persson**  
**Retorik och realpolitik: Storbritannien och de fördrivna tyskarna efter andra världskriget**

[Rhetoric and Realpolitik: Great Britain and the Displaced Germans after World War II]. Lund : Lund University. Press 1993 325, [2] pages. CESIC studies in international conflict. Dissertation. German translation: Hans-Åke Persson: Rhetorik und Realpolitik: Großbritannien, die Oder-Neiße-Grenze und die Vertreibung der Deutschen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Frankfurter Studien zur Grenzregion, Band 3. Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg 1997. 215 pages.

**A** S A YOUNG STUDENT, I chose to write a paper in a political science seminar on the Danish minority in Southern Schleswig. After the war ended in 1945, there was a fundamental change in the national mood of many inhabitants of Southern Schleswig. Danishness increased to a point where those who considered themselves Danish called for a new referendum on the question of which state Southern Schleswig would belong to. This referendum would, according to those identifying themselves as Danish, apply only to Schleswig, and would not include the large number of German refugees from the parts of Prussia and Pomerania that were placed under foreign control.

**THE DANISH GOVERNMENT** wisely rejected all proposals for a new vote, and Danishness soon declined to more reasonable levels. In my general enthusiasm for the rights of minorities – whether this be the rights of Danes, Germans, or Frisians – I saw the displaced Germans who were lodged in the Danish-German-Frisian peasant country as a threat to the historical multi-ethnic heritage of the area. That those who had been displaced were the ones who had lost the most was neither of relevance to local public sentiment nor of interest to this young student. I may have vaguely recalled that their presence in itself was a cause of the re-vote, but although there were indications of local resistance to those who had recently arrived, that particular argument was used rarely, and, as time went on, more carefully, in the Danish-minded argumentation.

**IT IS NO SECRET THAT THE** final phase of World War II led to massive expulsions and forced displacements, especially in northern Central Europe. Compared to the amount of research on the geopolitical changes that took place after World War I, it is nonetheless striking that the number of studies of the situation in the German-Polish-Soviet border region during the period 1945-1950 has been so limited. The Swedish historian Hans-Åke Persson points out in his dissertation on British policy towards the displaced people that the issue aroused little attention outside Germany, but his finding applies to some degree to Germany as well. By comparison, there have been extensive studies of the Finnish territorial losses between 1940 and 1944 and the expulsion of Finns from Karelia, which was annexed by the Soviet Union. There are of course explanations for the (relative) German-Polish-Russian amnesia: In Soviet history, the end of the war has been hailed as a victory, and the “enemy’s” hardship and privation was long seen as well-deserved – part of an almost xenophobic view of Germans as fascists. The Polish territorial gains in the west have been seen by the Soviet Union as a victory, as a recovery of that which was Slavic, and the losses in the east as a rightful incorporation of Belarusian and Ukrainian irredenta. From the Polish side, the myth of a Polish kingdom existing a thousand years ago dominated the view of the expulsion of the German population, who have thus been regarded as present-day intruders. In Germany,



PHOTO: THOMAS LUNDÉN

For a few years now, in the town of Anklam near the Polish border, there has been this memorial dedicated to ethnic Germans, expelled in 1945. Organizations in Anklam invite their Polish neighbors to discuss common memorial sites.

**THOMAS LUNDÉN**

Professor of human geography, CBEES. Editor of the year-book *Ymer*. Recent publications: *On the Boundary* (2004), *Crossing the Boarder* (ed., 2006).

research on the displaced people has been hindered by several factors: the study of the refugees' fate was thought to pose a risk, via "guilt by association", that the researcher would end up in the camp of the "revanchists" who demanded the return of the lost territories. Many researchers did not like the idea of shattering the myth of the happy assimilation of the displaced Germans. Moreover, for social scientists and historians, there were enough other themes to engage in that wouldn't run the risk of falling into disfavor among the ranks of the politically correct.

**WITH THE BREAKUP** of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the conditions have changed, and many taboos have vanished. The German historian Andreas Kossert, who lives and works

in Warsaw, has had a research interest in deviations from the nation-state norm – such as Jews and Polish-speaking Protestants living in Poland and East Prussia – as well as in the displacement of East European Germans towards the west. His latest book, *Kalte Heimat: Die Geschichte der deutschen Vertriebenen nach 1945*, is a broad depiction of how approximately 14 million ethnic Germans, displaced from their homes in Eastern Europe and from the former eastern territories of Germany, came to be treated in occupied Germany and in the two German states. It is estimated that around 2 million people died during the displacement. In the GDR, the refugees were called *Umsiedler*, "resettlers"; in rural Mecklenburg in 1949, the refugees constituted half the population. Their story could not be told in part because it revealed the Soviet military's abuses towards the end of the war. Aside from a small group of socialist Sudeten Germans, the refugees from the east were considered to have deserved their expulsion because of the Nazi regime's atrocities. An attempt to assimilate these displaced people by the distribution

of agricultural land soon became a thing of the past because of collectivization.

**IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC**, there were of course no official efforts to assign blame, but the reception of the displaced people left much to be desired. The reaction in Southern Schleswig was not unique. By necessity, the displaced people were housed in small towns and villages that had been spared the devastation of the war, and they came as foreign birds into a relatively undisturbed milieu with strong traditional local values. Those who had moved in were at times called "Poles" or, at worst, *Mischlinge*, refugee camps acquired sobriquets such as "Klein-Korea" or "Mau-Mau", after the trouble spots of the time. The refugees consisted largely of war widows with children who were an

## Continued. Expelled and expeller

unwanted addition to the agricultural villages, and the few refugees who were farm owners were, at best, demoted to farm laborers. For many of the displaced people, migration meant a trip downward on the social ladder. Kossert quotes a U.S. officer who – with some exaggeration – writes:

**In Bavaria or perhaps the whole of Germany there is no difference between a Nazi and an anti-Nazi, Black and Red, Catholic or Protestant. The only difference is between natives and refugees.**

The Swedish author Stig Dagerman, who visited Germany in 1945–1946, wrote in his book *Tysk höst* [German Autumn] of the refugees from the east:

**Their presence was both odious and welcome – odious, because the arrivals had nothing with them other than their hunger and thirst, welcome, because it fueled suspicions that people wanted to bear, distrust that people wanted to entertain, despair, with which they wanted to be obsessed.**

**IN PART IN ORDER** to assimilate the refugees, the Western occupying powers sought to disperse various groups throughout the three zones (though France refused to accept any of these refugees for quite some time). The family was the only cohesive unit. The displaced people, who together represented very different cultures, therefore came to be mixed with one another and with the local cultures – to the extent that the local cultures allowed others to mix with them. Between but also within the two large churches, discord arose when room was to be made for groups with their own traditions and hierarchies. In northern Germany, the already weak Low German language was weakened further because of mixing with the eastern dialects.

When West Germany recovered, the displaced people contributed to urbanization as well as to class circulation. In the GDR, the displaced people constituted a high proportion of the escapees to West Germany, but the lack of trained people in the East meant that many who stayed had a chance to advance socially, in particular as teachers.

**KOSSERT SHOWS IN HIS** broadly planned study how the displaced were treated and how their situation was reflected (or rather distorted or concealed) in the public debate, the media, and cultural life in general. One would perhaps like to have seen more quantitative data concerning for example class circulation, marriage, and migration. The image of the fate of the displaced is somber, but paradoxical. Although the treatment of the German refugees is in many ways shocking, at the same time we get an idea of how the mixing of the often tradition-bound local populations with the uprooted and thus perhaps involuntarily and necessarily flexible East European Germans has contributed to Germany's integration, to a leveling out of the antagonism between North and South and between the major Christian communities via the addition of people with other experiences. Paradoxically enough – and this is something Kossert also points out – it is precisely the descendants of the “revanchist” refugees who are now contacting their ancestors' native districts in order to establish peaceful contacts and forge business relations with the more recent arrivals.

**THE OTHER SIDE OF THE EXPULSION** – the requisitioning by the new settlers of the space of those who were displaced – is depicted in a dissertation by Jan Musekamp on one of the German Baltic cities, Stettin, now Szczecin: *Zwischen Stettin und Szczecin: Metamorphosen einer Stadt zwischen 1945 und 2005*. He locates the city's downfall as German in the seizure of power in 1933, with the political cleansing and extermination of the German-Jewish inhabitants. The strategically important town was subjected to Allied bombing attacks, and was conquered by the Soviet Army on April 26, 1945. Until the city was officially turned over to Polish rule in July, many of the evacuated residents had been in the process of returning. While Poland sought to expel them, the Soviet military required the Germans' capacity for work and knowledge of the area, in particular the port, which was a Soviet exclave used for the removal of “spoils of war” (reparations) from the occupied zone to the Soviet Union. (The short interregnum, during which Stettin/Szczecin was separated out by the Soviet occupation authorities from the surroundings, when it was still unclear how the boundaries were to be drawn, is depicted by Bernd Aichmann in his book *Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, die Stadt Stettin ausgenommen: Eine zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtung*.)

While the remaining population of other parts of the new Polish areas was promptly driven across the new border, Szczecin was, starting in the fall of 1945, vacated relatively slowly, yet the evacuation took place under a compulsion that resulted from the Germans being treated more poorly than the newly arrived Poles. In accordance with the Potsdam Conference, the former German areas under Polish administration were to be evacuated. The deportation went slowly, and caused great hardship for those affected. The new local administration, which needed the German workforce, received strict orders from Warsaw to free the area from “the demoralizing influence of the factor of

a foreign nationality”. By 1948, almost all the Germans had been replaced by those who had arrived at the “recovered territories”. According to a still widespread rumor, the new Szczecin residents consisted mostly of refugees from the lost multi-ethnic regions in the east. but in reality, the group was dominated by young, rootless migrants from central Poland, Poznan, and Warsaw.

**IN THE EARLY YEARS** an anti-German nationalism dominated, based on the myth that the Slavic territory of the Poles was simply being taken back. With the consolidation of the communist regimes on both sides of the border, the formal attitude changed to one of a Stalinist sister nation – the Germans had of course virtually disappeared from the area. But the border remained difficult to cross.

Musekamp devotes a large part of his thesis to the physical transformation of the city. Everything German – street names, tombstones, monuments – would be erased or made Polish, first in a return to a mythical Slavic prehistory, later on in Stalinist social realism. The city's long German history was changed into an empty parenthesis; only in recent years have people carefully started referring back to the German period.

Musekamp's and Kossert's works depict a repressed history. Two German historians, with good knowledge of the Polish language and with a sympathy for the neighboring country, describe a difficult period for both peoples. Both books, including Musekamp's thesis, are well written, almost essayistic, well documented, but are not attempts at theoretical explanation. They of course represent a German view of history, but with a good understanding of the complex and often contradictory forces that ruled the early post-war period in northern Central Europe.

thomas lundén

## Königsberg. The city that withstood destruction

Jürgen Manthey  
Königsberg:  
Geschichte einer  
Weltbürgerrepublik

Munich/Vienna: Hanser  
2005. 736 pages.



REBECKA LETTEVALL

Associate professor of the history of ideas at Södertörn University, chairperson of BW's editorial board. Has written on Immanuel Kant and the international republic, on cosmopolitanism, and the idea of peace.



Where the Königsberg castle once stood, there is now a huge concrete colossus. This unfinished Soviet building goes under the nickname "The Monster".

PHOTO: PAUL PHILIPPOV

**W**HEN I FIRST became interested in Königsberg, I looked the place up in the index of an atlas. But it was of course not there. I don't recall where my thoughts then took me; presumably I concluded that the town was too small to appear on the map. Years later I came to understand that Königsberg had been transformed into the Soviet city of Kaliningrad, and that it was a stone's throw away on the other side of the Baltic Sea, as seen from southern Sweden. Later, the family's summer island in the province Blekinge in the south of Sweden would be visited by an uninvited and possibly nuclear-armed submarine from Kaliningrad, and later still I would on several occasions have the chance to visit the now Russian city, located in the Russian exclave.

My first visit commenced one early December morning around six o'clock

when the night train from Vilnius came screeching into the platform. The raw morning cold was something I immediately recognized from other Baltic cities in wintertime. But the intense throng of people appeared more overwhelming, likewise the congestion on the streetcar, where the trip only cost a few kopecks. First impressions: broad main streets; Soviet public housing; the infamous half-finished, abandoned construction project, the "Monster", like a large gray colossus on the spot where the castle once stood, before it was demolished into posterity. In the absolute center of the city, which was bombed by the Allies in August of 1944, it is clear that Kaliningrad is a Soviet city. It was never Russian – not until the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the exception of a few years during Immanuel Kant's lifetime. It is part of the tragedy of the wars that the vast majority of the inhabitants fled, were driven out, died, or were killed – improbable stories of how masses of people fled on foot over the ice of the Baltic Sea toward certain doom. Hope is the last thing to die. The city was re-populated by Soviet settlers who were offered economic benefits in order to entice them to become farmers.

There is something provocative in the idea underlying Jürgen Manthey's impressive work. The book has its basis in a view that bears discussing: "750 years ago, Königsberg was founded, and 60 years ago, it disappeared from the map." The idea is that Königsberg ceased existing when it became Soviet, and then was transformed into something else. Kaliningrad became the city's name in 1946. According to Manthey, 90 percent of the center of the city and 40 percent of the entire area was in ruins after the air raids in 1944. That was the beginning of the end for the old Hanseatic town, strategically located between East and West, with favorable maritime conditions. Four thousand five hundred lives were lost and half of the 360,000 residents had no roof over their heads after the air raids. Then came a few years when the remnants of the German population put their energy into surviving, first during the siege, then during and after the last phase of the Soviet fighting. When the Soviet authorities discontinued food rations for the Germans in 1947, on the grounds that they were too weak to work, the truly abject starvation broke out. Manthey depicts this in the last chapter of the book.

IT IS QUITE RARE FOR cities to disappear. Pompeii and Herculaneum are a couple of examples, so is the mythical, ancient Baltic city of Vineta. And the question is whether Königsberg really has disappeared in that sense. After having read the final chapter, it is tempting to answer such a question in the affirmative. Far too much disappeared because of the World War II. Language is a fundamental prerequisite for life, and language, along with ideology, were quite concretely replaced.

Manthey calls Königsberg a *Weltbürgerrepublik*, not only because it was the hometown of the (theoretical) cosmopolitan, Kant, but also because it was there that modern German literature had its breakthrough. Manthey seems to have read more or less everything that has been written on Königsberg and its intellectuals.

This voluminous and highly readable work is divided into fifty chronologically arranged chapters. Most of them are constructed around the life history of someone either intellectual or royal. Kant is of course one of those who receives attention, but Theodor Gottfried

## Kant. The first cosmopolite

von Hippel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Agnes Miegel, and Hannah Arendt are also among the more renowned people with a connection to Königsberg. Despite the structure of the book, it is not a history of the lives and times of particular individuals. In the same way that people are, to put it mildly, necessary to the life of a city, Manthey contextualizes those he selects so that they rather constitute a background, or sounding board. One chapter highlights the Jewish community in Königsberg. Manthey believes that the preconditions for the creation of new ideas and the generation of new intellectual climates existed to a greater degree in Königsberg than in many other German cities. In the early 1800s, Frederick William IV of Prussia coined the expression the “Königsberger Oppositionsgeist”.

**A FORM OF NOSTALGIA** generally hovers over this kind of book, which hardly proves damaging in the case at hand. Not only the bright and exciting sides of the city’s history are included, but also the darker sides. But the basic idea that the city existed for 750 years, along with the dramatic description of its end, contribute to the sense that a heavy curtain comes down in 1946, or possibly slightly later. This is the story of the rise and fall of a city.

On subsequent visits to Kalinin-grad, I have found that Königsberg, despite everything, still remains. History cannot be erased. Königsberg is everywhere. A popular activity among Kaliningrad residents is collecting objects from the German period, and they are also exhibited in local museums. The Russian Kant Society is based in Kaliningrad, and every day the chairman honors Kant with a jog around the island formerly known as Kneiphof. In the center of Kaliningrad, as well, it is possible to detect Königsberg – for those who are open to it. It is even more present in the city’s surroundings. But much is run down and in poor condition, extremely poor condition, and in urgent need of restoration. Other remnants seem to be beyond the possibility of restoration. The monster is no longer cement gray, but painted in light blue. But to be able to see Königsberg in Kaliningrad, it is really very helpful to have read Manthey’s book.

rebecka lettevall

Rebecka Lettevall &  
My Klockar Lidner  
(eds.)

**The Idea of Kosmopolis: History, Philosophy  
and Politics of World  
Citizenship.**

Stockholm 2008.  
Södertörn Academic  
Studies 37. 181 pages.

**T**HE IDEA OF cosmopolitanism is ancient, as the Greek origin of the term suggests. According to Diogenes Laertius, the historian of philosophy who lived in the second century A.D., the first person to use the term was the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope, today perhaps better known for his life-style than for his doctrines, given that he had chosen to dwell in a tub. When asked where he came from and what his native city-state was, Diogenes answered, provocatively, that he was “a citizen of the world” (*ho tou kosmou politês*). The Cynic’s provocation consisted precisely in the challenge posed to the prevailing classical ideal of the small city-state by the idea of world citizenship, and no doubt Diogenes and his cosmopolitanist stance were considered by his contemporaries as something extravagant and odd.

Nowadays, however, the idea of cosmopolitanism is taken more seriously; indeed, it has become more and more necessary to take this phenomenon into account. The change in the direction of a more positive reception began in eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, but cosmopolitanism has gained even more relevance in the times in which we now live – in the period which began after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The recent book *The Idea of Kosmopolis*, based on material from a symposium at Södertörn University, accurately reflects the changes that have taken place surrounding the concept. As the editors state in their preface, the relevance of the idea of *kosmopolis* to our times is intimately connected with the emergence of a new world order that started in the early 1990s.

**THE PROFOUND CHANGES** of the final decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the international political system seemed to pave the way for an unrestricted expansion of the global free market economy, and (neo-)liberalist globalization was the only alternative form of social development after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. But the events of the next decade – the deepening awareness of ecological problems and the rise of militant Islamism, and now the financial crisis – which compelled a moderation of what at first were the almost utopian expectations of advocates of a global market, along with a retreat from the positions adopted in the early 1990s – have made it clear that economic globalization per se is not a sufficient strategy for a better future.

Lettevall and Linder point to an important conceptual distinction made by the well-known German sociologist Ulrich Beck, who considers economic globalization to be an empirical fact, while viewing cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, as the ability or will to act on the basis of globalization. In other words, the idea of *kosmopolis* is an attempt to get a grasp on seemingly spontaneous economic globalization processes. As such, it is actually indispensable, and one must in fact wonder why the problems of a cosmopolitan way of life have been discussed so little, especially when one surveys the mass of literature dedicated to economic globalization trends.

Of course, the present discourse on cosmopolitanism has not emerged in a vacuum. As Hans Ruin shows

in his erudite contribution, as early as in antiquity there were different interpretations of what cosmopolitanism might be, and the whole concept was somewhat ambiguous. It seems that the Stoics developed a naturalistic interpretation of cosmopolitanism, equating *kosmos* not only with the political order, but also with the general order of nature. Ruin cites a dictum from the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, where Marcus, starting from the assumption that reason is common to all men, concludes:

**If this is the case, then we have also a common law. Supposing this, we are all citizens in a common state (*cosmopolites*); and again supposing this, the world (*cosmos*) as a whole can be looked upon as one state.**

I find the aphorism from the *Meditations* remarkable, because it seems to foreshadow the modern ideas of *ius naturale* as a basis for general human rights. But the second advent of cosmopolis had to wait until the eighteenth century. It was, in fact, one of the key concepts of the Enlightenment, and as such it is the topic of several contributions in *The Idea of Kosmopolis*. Andreas Önnersfors analyzes the multiple connotations of cosmopolitanism and freemasonry in Enlightenment culture, which leads into Christoph Martin Wieland’s vision of an invisible Order of the Cosmopolitanism, and Jessica Parland-von Essen takes a look at the ways in which the Swedish nobility tried to combine cosmopolitan ideals of *le Grand Monde* with patriotic values in its educational practice.

**HOWEVER, THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY** theoretician of cosmopolitanism *par excellence* was Immanuel Kant, whose ideas have had an immense impact on the subsequent discourse on cosmopolitanism and international relations. Kant’s masterpiece, *Zum ewigen Frieden* (Towards A Perpetual Peace) (1795), put forth the main tenets of modern cosmopolitanism. His argument – cited in extenso by Lettevall – is as follows:

**The people of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and this has developed to the point where a violation of rights in one**

part of the world is felt *everywhere*. The idea of a cosmopolitan right is therefore not fantastic or exaggerated; it is a necessary complement to the unwritten code of political and international right, transforming it into a universal right of humanity. Only under this condition can we flatter ourselves that we are continually advancing towards a perpetual peace.



FORMULATED THUSLY, Kant's idea of cosmopolitanism differs substantially from the more naive view, which was widespread during the Enlightenment and is still widespread today – that cosmopolitanism is simply a way of life which includes traveling around the world and having encounters with different peoples, countries, and customs. Kant's cosmopolitanism has a more precise character: it focuses on human rights, and its boundaries are the same as those of humanity.

Carola Häntschi, too, concentrates on Kant in her study on Kant's category of the *Weltbürger* (world citizen). Relying partly on Josef Simon's semantic interpretation of Kant, as well as on a distinction between one's own as opposed to alien reason, which Kant drew in some of his works, e. g. in *Träume eines Geistersehers* (1766), Häntschi defends the idea that we can only understand reason and human rationality in a communicative way. Thus, the universal moment in Kantian ethics, which makes

the cosmopolitan way of life possible, is nothing other than the "unlimited recognition of the alien individuality". This kind of communicative rationality is just the counter-position of the world citizen against different modes of egoism. It should be borne in mind that this recognition of the alien individuality is not based on a philanthropic love of the Other, but has an impersonal, legal character. For anyone acquainted with the general traits of Kant's ethics, this "formalism" should come as no surprise. According to Kant, a cosmopolitan community can be based only on international law:

**The rational idea [...] of a peaceful (if not exactly amicable) international community of all those of the earth's peoples who can enter into active relations with one another, is not a philanthropic principle of ethics, but a principle of right [...]. This right, in so far as it affords the prospect that all nations may unite for the purpose of creating certain universal laws to regulate the intercourse they may have with one another, may be termed *cosmopolitan (ius cosmopoliticum)*.**

THAT THESE IDEAS OF KANT are still entirely relevant today, over two centuries after they were written down, is demonstrated by Peter Kemp in his essay, "The Cosmopolitan Foundation of International Law". Although it is, according to Kemp, obvious that "the citizen of the world must be the ethico-political ideal for our new century", it must at the same time be admitted that this cosmopolitical ideal has not yet been realized. For an empiricist or "political realist", the recognition that an ideal is not fulfilled in the actual world we live in would amount to a capitulation in the face of harsh realities, and, at worst, a withdrawal into political and moral cynicism. But this is not the Kantian option, which instead stresses the importance of the obligation – the famous "ought", *das Sollen* – which, for Kant, gives the ultimate foundation of the possibility of any morality.

The volume concludes with Lena Halldenius's short article on the "cosmopolitan obligation", which also presents critical comments on some points put forth by Kemp. She agrees with Kemp that ideas of international human rights and universality are a part of cosmopolitanism, but she points out that we nevertheless "need a more stable foundation for global obligation". The obligation cannot be supported only by such "thin" ties that are, ultimately, merely formal or psychological. According to Halldenius, the foundation of global obligations of justice needs a material anchoring in "adequate institutions", that is, in different international organizations which support the ideas of a shared humanity and universal morality. In this case, as well, the germ of the solution can be found in Kant, who, in *Perpetual Peace*, pointed to the civilizing influence of e.g. international trade, which much earlier had already forced people to grapple with global obligations.

IT IS OF COURSE NOT POSSIBLE to analyze or even mention all the aspects of such a multifaceted phenomenon as the *kosmopolis* in just one book. One thing, however, that I would like to have seen is an analysis of the "New Thinking" launched during Gorbachev's *perestroika* in the late 1980s – not only that the *perestroika* process, by scrapping Cold War barriers, ultimately led to the changes in world politics that made the present discussion on cosmopolitanism possible, but, in addition, during *perestroika* many ideas were expressed which truly could be called cosmopolitan – e.g. when the Soviet leaders suddenly began to speak about the "values of the entirety of humanity" as a basis for every rational international policy, in contrast to the earlier stress on the "class approach". That this "cosmopolitan opening", as I would like to call it, got no adequate response from the West has undoubtedly contributed to a worsening of today's global problems.

The overall tone of *Idea of Kosmopolis* is thus very Kantian. Although some articles (by Önnérfors, Parland, and especially David Östlund and On-Kwok Lai) are rather specific case studies, one can say that the contributors follow in Kant's footsteps regarding the ideas of cosmopolitanism, international law, human rights, and international institutions. This unanimity is telling: it shows that the status of Kant as the philosopher of modernity *par excellence* is indeed well-earned. It is interesting to note that as the problems of cosmopolitanism have become more relevant, the reputation of Hegel in the "philosophic stock exchange" has sunk compared with that of Kant. It is well known that Hegel's views on international affairs were penetrated by an acceptance of *Realpolitik*, which for him was the apex of dialectical wisdom in the philosophy of history. That Kant nowadays is held in higher esteem than Hegel is thus an expression of the widespread feeling that the present global problems cannot be solved by simple-minded "political realism", but need an audacious and innovative approach – in other words, acknowledgement of obligations, a *Sollen* against the "realities".

vesa oittinen



VESA OITTINEN

Professor of Russian philosophy and intellectual history at the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki since April 2008. Has published numerous research articles, primarily in German and Russian, as well as *Spinozistische Dialektik* (1994), *Evald Ilyenkovs Philosophy Revisited* (ed., 2000), *Marx ja Venäjä* [Marx and Russia] (ed., 2006), *Venäjä ja Eurooppa* [Russia and Europe] (ed., 2007).

## Holocaust in the archives. Writing for an astonished posterity

**Samuel D. Kassow**  
**Who Will Write Our**  
**History: Emmanuel**  
**Ringelblum, the War-**  
**saw Ghetto, and the**  
**Oyneg Shabes Archive.**

Bloomington: Indiana  
 University Press 2007.  
 523 pages.

**Sascha Feuchert,**  
**Erwin Liebfried &**  
**Jörg Rieck (eds.)**  
**Die Chronik des Gettos**  
**Lodz/Litzmannstadt.**

Four parts + 1 vol. sup-  
 plementary material. Göt-  
 tingen: Wallstein Verlag,  
 2007. 523 pages.

**F**riday 26 June was a great day for the Oyneg Shabes. Today at dawn we heard a British radio broadcast about the Polish Jews. It was mentioned everything that we know so much about: Slonim and Vilna, Lemberg and Chelmno. For months we have been suffering because we thought that the world was indifferent to our tragedy, which is unprecedented in human history. (...) But now it is clear that all these efforts have achieved something.

The person writing this in his diary on June 26, 1942, is Emmanuel Ringelblum, the founder of the Oyneg Shabes Archive in the Warsaw ghetto. For months, Ringelblum and his colleagues had tried to smuggle out documentation concerning the ongoing mass-murder of Polish Jews by the Nazis. By putting together an intricate puzzle of often conflicting testimony, they had managed to get a surprisingly precise picture of what was going on in the extermination camps.

Much has been written on the Warsaw ghetto – on the starvation, the poverty, the corruption, the violence; and of course on the revolt that broke out in April 1943, during which a handful of minimally armed, but tactically skilled and extremely motivated members of the resistance succeeded in keeping the German occupying forces at bay for months, until the SS forces finally leveled the entire ghetto to the ground.

**THE RESISTANCE WORK OF** Oyneg Shabes is at first glance not as spectacular. Reports were requested, and documents of various kinds were collected. Not only official communications, but also seemingly irrelevant things like streetcar tickets, candy wrappers, theater posters, ration books, as well as menus from the restaurants where the privileged (and corrupt) elite of the ghetto could afford to eat while begging orphans starved or froze to death outside on the street. Nor was the work of the Oyneg Shabes archive a one-man operation, but rather a collective action in which every one of the collaborators followed their own leads and wrote on the basis of their own convictions, which makes the work more difficult to depict in a clear-cut way. How the group

was assembled, and what internal contradictions it masked, is seen in Samuel D. Kassow's book, the first detailed study of Oyneg Shabes, and of what it means to engage in a process of information gathering in the middle of an ongoing genocide.

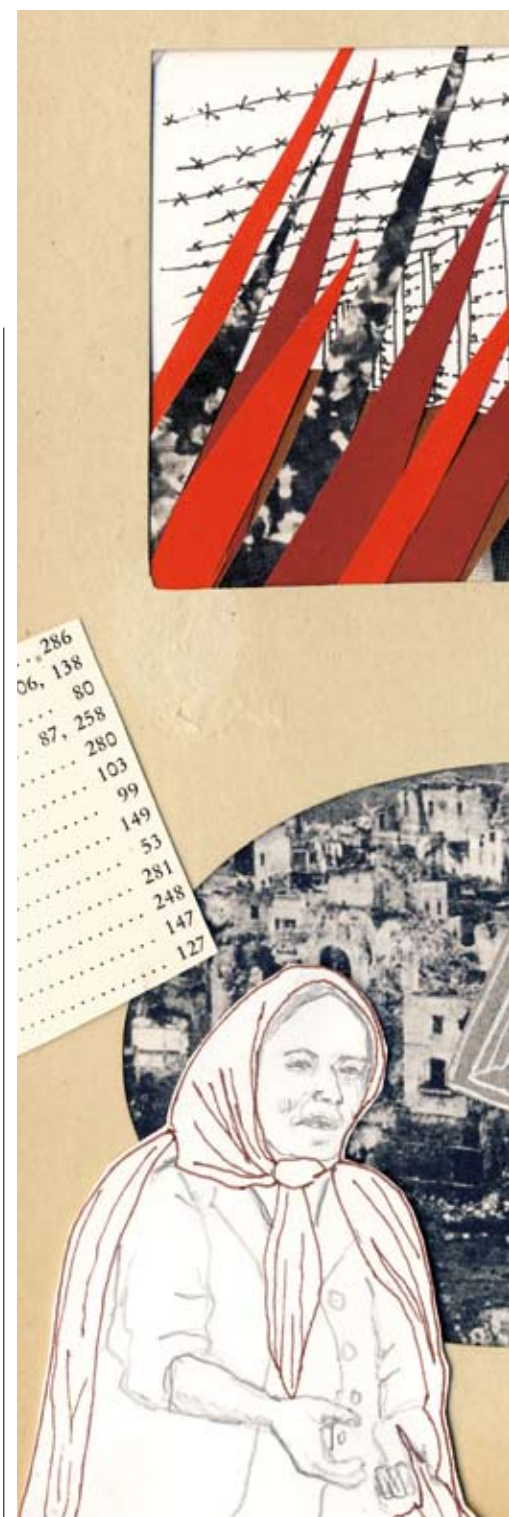
*Oyneg Shabes* means "the celebrators of the Sabbath", and up until the mass purges of the summer of 1942, it defined its mission as one of primarily documenting the "bad times" Polish Jews were now experiencing. The *Judenrat* the Nazis established was, however, not trusted, so information was instead sought at the voluntary self-help organizations that were still active in the ghetto. It was precisely the dissident character of Oyneg Shabes that is important in understanding the deeper driving forces behind the archive work, Kassow believes. There was, quite simply, a fear that if nothing was done, the history of the Warsaw Ghetto would end up being written exclusively by those who had an interest in falsifying it.

**EMMANUEL RINGELBLUM'S** own career as a historian was relatively modest before the archive was founded in 1940. He was active early on within the left faction of Poale Zion, the part of the Zionist Left Party that supported the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Ringelblum was seeking, precisely like the party's founder, Ber Borechov, an amalgam of the universalism of Marxism and the attempt of Zionism and Yiddishism to discover a historic mission for the Jewish working masses. The people must find their clear anchoring, Ringelblum contended, in their own concrete historical situation, and in their own language (Yiddish). During the inter-war period, which was a heyday for Yiddish culture in Poland, he was one of the driving forces behind YIVO, the institute for scientific research on Yiddish that was founded in Vilnius in 1925, and was the founder of the branch dealing with history.

As a historian in his own right, Ringelblum was not particularly original; mostly he was a gifted compiler. But he possessed an unfailing organizational talent, and an ability to keep a cool head in sensitive situations, which would serve him well later, during the occupation.

**OYNEG SHABES WAS NOT** the work of Ringelblum alone, but without him the archive would never have come to be, writes Kassow. Kassow's own picture of Oyneg Shabes is one of a gigantic choir, where far from all the voices – not even the majority of them – were intellectuals. Contributing with essays and papers were people from all walks of life, everyone from daycare personnel to doctors; even a few representatives of the ghetto's odious police force were recruited as writers. Slowly, the voices are silenced one by one. A contributor who submits an article to the archive one day can be shot to death or deported the next.

Ringelblum spent his final months on the run, hidden by a Polish family. His last works include an essay on the relationship between Jews and Poles during the war. He was now writing in Polish, as if to indicate that his mission was no longer to document the past but to show what a future understanding of history should



look like. In March of 1944, an informer points out the bunker where he was hiding and Ringelblum and his wife and young son are arrested and murdered by the Nazis.

Oyneg Shabes was not the only archive of its kind in Nazi-occupied Poland. As Kassow points out, within the Eastern European Jewish communities there was a centuries-old tradition of storytelling in the form of chronicling, known as *pinkesim*.

It is in such a context that we must also see the *Chronicle* that was written in the ghetto in Lodz.

The ghetto in Lodz (or Litzmannstadt, to which the Nazis renamed the city) was the largest in Poland after the one in Warsaw. But conditions in the two ghettos could not have been farther



ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

**STEVE SEM-SANDBERG**

Author and critic. Has published a dozen novels, investigative stories, and collections of essays. *Theres* (1996), a novel about the journalist and RAF terrorist Ulrike Meinhof, has been translated into several languages.

apart. In the Warsaw ghetto, power factions fought against one another under almost Mafia-like conditions. In Lodz, just one single man ruled, Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, appointed by the Nazis as the Jewish Elder, with almost dictatorial powers. Rumkowski helped the Nazis build up a network of industries and manufacturies, almost all of which received orders from the German armaments industry. In Lodz, slave labor came to guarantee survival.

**THE AUTOCRACY IN LODZ** is also that which controls how the history of the ghetto is told. Around the beginning of the year 1941, Rumkowski had already had an archives department set up, and instructed it to draw up a list of various events in the ghetto. That is how the *Chronicle*

begins: as a kind of report-writing, with continuing announcements about the delivery of food supplies, food rations, weather conditions, and more.

But in the fall of 1941, when the Nazis began to deport Jews to Lodz from the German-speaking parts of the Reich, something happened. Along with the transportations from Berlin, Prague, and Vienna, there followed established Jewish writers and journalists, many of whom soon succeeded in gaining work in the archives division of the ghetto. Between factual statements and the obligatory presence of Rumkowski's speeches in the *Chronicle*, there now begins to appear reports from the ghetto's industries, surprisingly critical insights into people's wretched housing conditions; but also satirical short notices, gossip. Under the recurring headline "*Man hört, man spricht...*", one can read in disguised form how various factions within the "ghetto hierarchy" battle over power and influence.

*The Lodz Chronicle* is a classic example of how a form is established as an instrument of control, be-

longing to those in power, but is taken over and undermined by those who are intended to use it. That this took place is largely to the credit of two journalists – Oskar Singer and Oskar Rosenfeld. Singer came from Prague, Rosenfeld from Vienna. Both were accustomed to working under censorship. One might, for example, read somewhere in the *Chronicle*: "In tomorrow's edition, we will report on the lives of the dead." (As if there were in fact hundreds of thousands of devout readers of this Archive Journal, as opposed to not even one.)

That devices like those were far from simply rhetorical became clear when the rumors about the extermination camps in Chelmno and Auschwitz began making their way into the ghetto. Now it became clear that it isn't any

## European universities. Visions and branding names

imaginary newspaper reader that the *Chronicle* writers are addressing, but rather an entirely real posterity. – “*Ein wenig kompliziert sind die Sachen für den erstaunten Leser unserer Nachwelt*”, we for example see in the *Chronicle* on July 2, 1944, with an increasingly resigned and bitter irony when the deportations to Auschwitz had begun.

The *Chronicle*’s writers lived and worked in a present of constant uncertainty. But they *thought* in a historical imperfect. In this way, the daily registering of murder and abuse also becomes part of a mental survival strategy. The moment you have someone to turn to, be it only a “dismayed” posterity, the possibility arises of imagining an end to the whole madness.

**BECAUSE OF THE SIZE** of the *Chronicle*, 3,000 closely printed pages, it has previously been available for a wider public only in an abridged English edition. Since last year, however, the full text has been available in German in five volumes, with an additional volume containing supplementary material. *Die Chronik des Getto Litzmannstadt* is the result of a unique and entirely unprecedented cooperation between German and Polish researchers who each sought, on their own, to make sense of the different text versions and, in the explanatory notes, to elucidate questions and problems ranging from internal power relationships to linguistic peculiarities. A whole teeming world is revealed, characterized primarily, of course, by the Nazi reign of terror, with deportations, forced labor, hunger and suffering; but also an irrepressible will to live. As one of the co-editors, Jörg Riecke, writes, the most important purpose of the documentation *The Ghetto Chronicle*’s writers are engaged in is not to fasten history on paper, but to hold onto common sense and reason in a time when reality itself seems to be falling apart. If you can collect trolley tickets and go through the tiny calorie content of a soup ration, you are, after all, still human.

**steve sem-sandberg**

The review has been published in Dagens Nyheter (Stockholm).



The Rector's Hall in Vilnius University.

PHOTO: VIDAS NAUJIKAS, VILNIUS UNIVERSITY (FROM THE BOOK "UNIVER-CITY")

**Bo Larsson (ed.)**  
**Univer-City: The Old**  
**Middle-Sized Euro-**  
**pean Academic Town**  
**as Framework of the**  
**Global Society of Sci-**  
**ence – Challenges and**  
**Possibilities.**

Lund: Sekel Bokförlag  
 2008. 472 pages

**T**HE UNIVERSITY IS UNIQUE among our civilization's institutions: it makes the true content of European culture evident and tangible. No other institution in our society is as old as the university; none has changed so drastically during the course of its existence. It remains, moreover, extremely dynamic. Indeed, its durability is linked to its versatility (in this regard, it is rewarding to compare the university to the two-thousand-year-old institution of the Catholic Church!). The university has survived revolutions and modernization, it has been subject to both the wisdom and the stupidity of reformers, it has given way to political repression, and yet it has endured. It has continued to exist as an institution, even if the centuries have brought changes to both its contents and its structure. The university's ability to survive is indubitable. It is, clearly, the surest means of developing a civilization, of bequeathing a cultural legacy from generation to generation, quite aside from its functions in research and teaching. Universities, and their associated libraries, are the most visible expressions of our collective memory. They set us apart from other beings, as humans; they are, at the same time, the collective expression of our visions of the future. (The museum, a younger institution than the university, has been more exposed to the proclivi-

ties of the times. As a result, museums have been more frequently subjected to changes in structure, contents and spatial aesthetics.)

**THE UNIVERSITY**, WHICH originated in Plato's Academia, soon made its triumphant way over Egypt (Alexandria), around the Mediterranean and up into Northern Europe. Ever since the middle ages, the meaning of academia has, as concept and institution, been identified with specific place names. Bologna (1088), Paris (1150), Oxford (1167), Prague (1347), Heidelberg (1386), Rostock (1419), Uppsala (1477), Tartu (1632) stand as *branding names* for learning, for science and research, for academic and for student life. Universities became identified with the towns in which they were seated. Patronymics, by contrast, were associated with outstanding achievements in the sciences rather than with any particular university as an institution. Not until 1810, when the Prussian idealist

Wilhelm von Humboldt founded the Berlin University, did an academic institution acquire a personal epitheton. The “Humboldt Spirit”, the “Humboldtian University” – these terms denote the modern research university. As of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this type of university would triumph globally. No longer would the geographical setting – the town – constitute the reference point of a university’s excellence and quality. Today, what sets a university apart is its reputation for adherence to the principles of scientific freedom and individuality, the indivisibility of research and doctrine, the indivisibility of the disciplines.

**FROM VERY DIFFERENT** points of view – historical, spatial, regional, structural and cultural – the *Univer-City* illuminates the problems of the university as an institution. Because the university is an urban institution, many, if not all, “universital” problems are bundled into the relationship between university and city. This is true today, when universities often constitute the second-largest if not the greatest regional or urban employer, with economic weight to match – not to mention the revenues contributed to city coffers by students’ household consumption. The problematic relationship between university and town is apparent in, for instance, the objections raised by the citizens of Berlin and the Prussian authorities to the founding of a new university. They worried that the young people – that is, the students, unleashed and with slovenly lifestyles – would cause unrest in the city; they were feared as a potentially criminal element.

When one pages through Larsson’s rich and wonderful work, almost all of whose illustrations are in color, one gets a sense of what causes the friction between university and city. Indeed, one is left wondering why there are not many more such works. This book presents case studies of twenty-six selected “old” universities, located in medium-sized European towns – ranging from Coimbra (1290) in Portugal through Cernivici (1875) in Ukraine, Turku (1640) in Finland and Urbino (1467) in Italy, to Germany’s Göttingen (1737). Each is analyzed in terms of the relationship between the town and the university as an institution. The selection includes many “great” names: St. Andrews, Cambridge, Uppsala, Sala-

manca, Bologna and Vilnius, to mention just a few.

Town/county antagonism towards the university reflects problems associated with the development both of the modern city and the modern university. These were caused, first and foremost, by the cramped nature of the old towns. The Europeans, as well as the Americans, have found several answers to the resultant hemming-in of the universities’ development. First, there was the Campus University, placed outside the city gates. Then there was the takeover of declining urban industrial areas. These were transformed into sites of knowledge, as old and abandoned harbor and factory facilities furnished homes for colleges. Today, the same problems of space are solved by placing university areas in the green meadows at the edge of town. A third option, which is motivated by regional politics, is to locate universities in far-distant places. Most of the universities founded after the 1970s have served as aids to regional development (and as showcases for politicians with regional obligations). To this category belong universities founded so that a neighborhood might be upgraded, or in order to assist in the recovery of a declining area through the infusion of intelligentsia (of this, Södertörn is an excellent example).

City planning and university planning, the maintenance and development of a city’s environment, the preservation of cultural legacy and the modernization of the university – these are opposites, but also communalities, whose dynamics unfold during the planning process. They are systematically thematized in Larsson’s work: the cooperation between city and university, which benefits both parties and creates synergetic effects, as is noted in the publisher’s introduction. Carl-Gustaf Andrén’s historical overview of the city-university relationship and Claes Caldenby’s analysis of the interface between city and university deserve particular attention. These sketch the guiding lines that the reader will follow on his or her voyage through the work. What does a university need, at present, as a place of research and teaching? How can these needs be realized with and within the modern city?

**IT IS, AS THE EDITOR MAKES** abundantly clear, fascinating to see and read how similar are the planning problems faced by middle-sized universities in Europe’s middle-sized towns. Here, it appears, is a tradition that seems to reach across the continent, one that can be traced in plans and drawings, designs and planning suggestions. To this is added the cultural, urban background, against which the universities have to contend – they have, after all, constituted a type of “city-dweller” not always and everywhere welcome.

The work (the result of a Lund conference) includes illustrations, which are enough in themselves to demonstrate the allure of the city-university symbiosis, at least in middle-sized towns. Starting in the middle ages, the European university town has been distinguished by the combination of concentrated urban life and the studious atmosphere that emanates from young people. This denotes, on the one hand, the pos-

sibility of withdrawal – marked, in the city ambience, through meadows and town squares; on the other, the aesthetics of the traditional, dense building style that characterizes edifices built in the middle ages and early modernity. The fact that only three photographs show winter-time university environments (quite wonderful: Turku Castle in the snow), while the rest portray the vivacious, out-door academic life of spring and summer – it never does rain in these pictures! – pretties up the actual realities and glosses over the often fairly monotonous every-day life of a small or middle-sized town; the provinces possess an aesthetic allure of their own ...

The presentations of the various universities and towns vary a good deal. The fluctuation in quality is far from negligible – for the contributions are *also* written by planners and university promoters, people with their own agendas: the marketing of universities. There are, further, articles written by city planners who focus on their city’s image rather than on the critical dimensions that arise from their own activities – it is not the gift of every planner to be a writer, or to convey a comprehensible message to a non-planner. Some contributions are crammed full of numbers and charts; not every university and town is analyzed and described with equal stringency. Some chapters give us little more than the town’s history; others concentrate on city planning; while still others offer brilliant analyses of the town, the university, and their shared future. But one can read past this heterogeneity, for it serves to make clear the different facets of the conditions of university and town. Further, this heterogeneity opens new perspectives through which the university becomes “comprehensible” as an urban institution – one can read “science in the town”, *read* in the several senses of that word.

**bernd henningsen**



**BERND HENNINGSSEN**

Professor, Director of the Department for Northern European Studies (Nordeuropa-Institut) at the Humboldt University of Berlin. Has written a work that is an overview of Denmark which will be reviewed in the next issue of BW. Frequent visiting scholar at CBEES.

## Ethnic cleansing. Towards a transformed city

On the morning train from Warsaw, I share a cabin with a man in his thirties wearing a suit. He has no time to talk with me. He opens his laptop and disappears into his computer world. There he remains for almost five hours – until we approach Wrocław in the province of Silesia (Polish: Śląsk, previously the German Schlesien) in southwestern Poland.

While he's packing up his laptop I squeeze in a few questions. Yes, like me, he's getting off here in Wrocław. Does he live here? He winces at that question, as if it makes him uncomfortable, looks at me for the first time and answers no, he certainly does not! He is only here for business, traveling here once a week or so.

Is it not such a great city? No, no, it's just a little small. He doesn't say rustic, but I sense the assessment of a big-city dweller. Today, Wrocław is in fact a city of 660,000, the fourth largest in Poland, and just as economically and culturally oriented towards Dresden and Berlin as it is towards the Polish capital.

What should I see when I'm here on a brief visit? Here he lights up and knows precisely where I should go: Stare Miasto! The Old Town! Wrocław survived the war intact and the entire Old Town has been preserved. It is very beautiful, he assures me.

I say nothing, since I have read up on this and know that, on the contrary, during the last seven months of the war, seventy percent of Wrocław was turned into ruins, piles of brick, and ash. Of the Old Town, not much survived beyond a few lacerated facades, among them, as if by a miracle, a part of the historic late Gothic town hall at the city's old commercial square, Rynek.

We should not make too much of the fact that a man in his thirties is unaware of the great post-war restoration of Wrocław. What we can say, however, is that his understanding of the city fits into the intentions of the Polish authorities: they wanted to create a city with a long, unbroken, and beautiful Polish history.

But for Stare Miasto, a German term would be much more fitting: die Altstadt. Architecturally, this part of the city is very German. Art historians (in Germany) go so far as to say that Wrocław offers more typical old German architecture than Berlin.

The reason, of course, is that Wrocław has a German history that goes back to at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The city



PHOTO: STAN BARANSKI

has belonged to Bohemia, was part of the Hanseatic League, was one of the most important cities in the Habsburg Empire in Austria, experienced an economic boom in Prussia, and a political intoxication under Hitler.

The city's name has gone through a series of changes, from Vratislavia (Bohemia), Presslau (Habsburg) to Breslau (Prussia and the Third Reich). At the outbreak of World War II, Breslau had thus for seven hundred years been a German town with a small Polish minority.

In order to see Polish roots, one would have to go back to the so-called Piast dynasty during the early Middle Ages.

Breslau actually came close to surviving the war unscathed, just as my traveling companion thought. Until February 1945, not a single house had been damaged. Breslau was so far from the front that allied bombers could not reach it. This is why Hitler concentrated large weapons and ammunition factories in the city. And worried German parents sent their children to the city so that they would be saved from the threatening battles in the west.

But in February 1945, everything changed. Soviet troops surrounded the city. Artillery bombardment and air strikes began. Hitler had declared Breslau to be "Festung Breslau"; it would be defended to the last man. And Breslau fought. For eighty days, Breslau held out against an increasingly overwhelmingly superior force.

The fact is, Breslau did not give up until May 6, four days after Berlin capitulated.

The next day, the Russians marched in and a new era began, the era of revenge, when Breslau was to be purged of Germans and the city would instead

become the Polish Wrocław.

The systematic expulsion of the Germans began in the summer of 1945. Even as late as December, however, Breslau was still a primarily German city with more than 166,000 German inhabitants, compared with 33,000 Polish. In March of 1947, the situation was completely reversed. Then, the number of Poles was 197,000, with only 17,500 Germans remaining in the city.

In the space of two years, the ethnic cleansing of Breslau was almost total. The old German city had experienced several rulers over the course of the centuries, but 1945 was the first time that its entire population had been replaced. The Germans were replaced by Poles who came mainly from the historically Polish areas east of the Bug River; many from the city of Lwów (Lemberg, or Lviv), which Poland was forced to cede to the Soviet Union at the end of the war.

No other large city has been totally transformed by ethnic cleansing in this way. There is much to be said about how this took place. ✕

johan selander

### REFERENCES

Gregor Thum, *Die fremde Stadt: Breslau 1945*. Berlin: Siedler 2003, 639 pages.

Norman Davies & Roger Moorhouse, *Microcosm: Portrait of a Central European City*. London: Jonathan Cape 2002, 585 pages.

This is a text from Johan Selander's blog that was published in Swedish and is called "Öga och Öra" [Eye and Ear].

## Swedish-Finnish sea strategies

On May 14th of this year, at the first official meeting ever of the Swedish and Finnish governments in Hämeenlinna in celebration of the memory of the dissolution of the common realm in 1809, an agreement was concluded on measures for improving the marine environment of the Baltic Sea. Among the things we read in the government communiqué released after the meeting is the following:

"Sweden and Finland will carry out, within both countries, that which is prescribed in the Baltic Sea Action Plan drawn up by the Helsinki Committee (HELCOM) and, in addition, will together support the work that other countries, in particular Russia, are doing to implement the action plan. The two countries will contribute to a new fund within the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and Nordic Finance Corporation (NEFO). The purpose of the fund is to set in motion projects that seek to reduce emissions in several countries on the Baltic."

The communiqué further states that the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy "should be designed so that it becomes an effective instrument for implementing the Baltic Sea Action Plan. Sweden and Finland will cooperate in order to implement the EU's Marine Strategy Directive and the WFD (Water Framework Directive). The Baltic Sea should be designated in 2009 as the target of a pilot project within the scope of the Marine Strategy Directive. Sweden and Finland will actively pursue the development of marine planning in the Baltic Sea. The Northern Dimension is one of the spheres in which cooperation with Russia and other neighboring countries shall occur." ✕

Antje Wischmann



Currently visiting professor in Scandinavian studies at the University of Tübingen, lecturer at the Department for Northern European Studies at the Humboldt University Berlin, and research associate at CBEES. Has published *Verdichtete Stadtwahrnehmung: Untersuchungen zum literarischen und urbanistischen Diskurs in Skandinavien 1955–95* (2003) and *Auf die Probe gestellt: Zur Debatte um die "neue Frau" der 1920er und 1930er Jahre in Schweden, Dänemark und Deutschland* (2006).

Irina Sandomirskaja



Professor of cultural studies at CBEES. Holds a doctoral degree in theoretical linguistics from the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. In 2001, published a study of the deconstruction and archeology of Russian and Soviet patriotic speech practices. Current projects: *De patientia: Language, Violence, and Strategies of Subjectivity*, a collection of essays in language, power, and writing, and *A Story of O, or Between Technique and Catastrophe*, on Soviet deaf-blind education and related theories of language and consciousness.

Beate Feldmann



Ph.D. student in ethnology at CBEES. The essay in this issue of BW is a part of her forthcoming doctoral thesis.

## Sven Hedin on Eurasia – a vast land for the future

**SVEN HEDIN AND HIS** achievements in the geographic region known as Eurasia are the focus of a special edition of *Östbulletinen* [The Bulletin of the East]. Editor Ingmar Oldberg argues that Sven Hedin is Sweden's most famous "Eurasianist".

Sven Hedin completed no fewer than nine expeditions in the region between the Black Sea and the Yellow River. The first took place in 1886, and the last between the years 1933 and 1935. The journeys were all well-planned, multiyear field studies. Unparalleled empirical material was collected, and theretofore essentially unknown areas charted. Staffan Rosén, linguist and Asia expert at Stockholm University, has studied Sven Hedin's achievements in Central Asia. Rosén describes him as a thoughtful and well-respected researcher, who, in the political and private realms, was however almost impulsive, driven by emotions, perhaps even a little naive.

In his time, Sven Hedin was successful in many ways. He was respected and held several senior positions in international academies. He managed to establish trust among highly placed contacts in Russia, which made the practical implementation of his field studies pos-

sible. But he seems to have been naive in his belief that these personal relationships were affected by no hidden motives, or that his position or status was not affected by how he acted politically. Rosén describes how Hedin, after having seen during his travels how Russia had expanded eastward, became concerned that Russia now sought to expand to the west and north, perhaps towards Sweden. He felt it was his duty to issue a warning to the Swedish people, and also, in 1912, created a pamphlet of which over a million were printed and distributed. Tsarist Russia was not sympathetic to this action, something that seemed to surprise Hedin.

**ROSÉN THEREFORE** presents a complex picture of Sven Hedin and his actions. For years, interest in Hedin was cool in Sweden. His positive attitude towards the Nazis had the consequence that many distanced themselves from him. As a researcher, however, he was greatly respected in the academic world.

Cartographer Philippe Forêt finds it remarkable that Hedin, nearly a hundred years ago, dismissed the thesis that human influences on the environment

result in lasting climate change. It was in 1915 that the geographer Huntington presented his *Civilization and Climate*, where he claimed that the climate in Central Asia had been moister two or three thousand years ago, but changed as a result of human influences on the environment. Hedin argued, however, that these new findings – which at the time attracted attention among geographers – should not be taken too seriously. Climate changes are much slower processes and are not affected by human interference with nature, said Hedin.

**THE WAY SVEN HEDIN** reasoned in his age has also fascinated economic historian Sergei Lebedev, who has read Hedin's correspondence with various influential people, both Russian scientists and people such as Princess Khovanskaya. These letters show that Hedin was interested early on in geopolitics and came to see Germany as a wall against widespread bolshevism. Sven Hedin also expressed a fascination for Russianness in these letters, and tried to get a grasp on Russian culture, Russian mentality, its distinctiveness. He saw a relationship

between that which is Russian and that which is Asian. In 1924, Hedin viewed Russia and Asia (i.e., Eurasia) as the most interesting places for the future.

Eurasia is not an unambiguous concept, contends historian Igor Torbakov, based in Istanbul. It can mean a geographically defined area, but it can also be described as a more abstract entity in which people feel an affinity with one another and share a community that transcends national borders. Eurasia can also be understood as a kind of organism, which doesn't simply contain various ethnic minorities and nations and cultures, but also creates them. In this way, the concept Eurasia becomes, as Igor Torbakov presents it, not only unifying and inclusive, but also self-establishing. ✖

### REFERENCE

*Sven Hedin and Eurasia: Knowledge, Adventure, and Geopolitics*: Ed: Ingmar Oldberg. *Östbulletinen* Special issue 2008. Swedish Society for the Study of Russia, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 51 pages.

**Hedin – both naive and inconstant. In 1923, he paid tribute to the Bolsheviks as friendly and peaceful, unlike the Tsars.**

## Middle class destinies. Deported and disillusioned

On January 25, 1946, some 2,500 soldiers who had come to Sweden in the last phase of the war were deported. They were placed on *Beloostrov*, the ship docked at the southern Swedish port of Trelleborg, and bound for Liepāja. Most of them had left Liepāja and made their way to Gotland, had been detained, and then transferred to camps on the Swedish mainland. Of the deportees, 146 were of Baltic extraction, volunteers in the *Waffen-SS*, the elite force of the Nazis. It was assumed they were headed for certain death in their former homelands, and a vocal public had demanded that the government put a stop to the extradition. No other governments in Europe were taking such actions. The Soviet Union was the victorious power, had sacrificed the most in the fight against Hitler, and the agreements between Stalin and his allies had to be honored.

Was there a difference between people and people? Few worried about the fate of the others who were extradited. They had fled from the encroaching assaults of the Soviet army in the eastern Baltic Region, and arrived in German uniforms, but not all were Germans – among them were Poles, Romanians, Hungarians, combatants from countries that had signed on to the German side during the war, or had been conquered by Germany. Of those, many ended up in the Gulag as prisoners of war. In Soviet prisoner of war camps, the death rate was consistently lower than in the German prisoner of war camps, according to Tony Judt (*Postwar: A Story of Europe since 1945*, 2005). None of the 146 Balts were executed. Life was made gloomier for them all.

In 1968, P.O. Enquist wrote a documentary novel, *Legionärerna* [The Legionnaires], on the extradition of the Baltic soldiers and its consequences. In an autobiography, *Ett annat liv* [Another Life] (2008), he has returned to the circumstances surrounding the origins



of the book and its reception. *Legionärerna* stirred up emotions; it also led to research and numerous reassessments. Swedish Foreign Minister Östen Undén, a professor of law, had to take the blame for the extradition decision. Later on, it turned out that Undén, who was openly critical of some of the Swedish coalition government's concessions to Nazi Germany, had dug in his heels to the very end. Not one concession more!

**Moscow was** influenced by the Swedish refractoriness. For its eco-

nomie reconstruction, the USSR needed good relations with a country that hadn't been damaged by the war, and Enquist, in the memoir, makes the bold interpretation that the deported soldiers rescued a far larger group of refugees that remained in Sweden. The Swedish government had met its commitment, and the Soviet government refrained from demanding that Baltic civilians – some 40,000 Estonians, 4,000 Latvians, 400 Lithuanians – be repatriated, something it didn't hesitate to do in similar cases. In a trip fraught with danger, they had made their way over

Baltic Sea, escaping the Soviets. The process by which they were integrated into Swedish society was smooth.

**Integrating does not** mean giving up. Bruno Kalnins, the Latvian Social Democratic leader, was a center of resistance in Stockholm. Enquist says that Kalnins gave him the address of an academic who had been dismissed from his post, Frīdrihs Menders, residing on the outskirts of Riga, who provided him with information on the stagnation of the Soviet economy. Enquist smuggled the data through customs, Kalnins published the data in the exile press, Menders was deported and died. In 1984, Enquist reported on the economic decay in the Baltic countries and was castigated by an embassy official in Stockholm. One could write of dissidents who were classified as sick – but one could not suggest that the Soviet economy was sick.

Today's Russia has a complicated economic legacy. Economist Jan-Otto Andersson thinks the country bears similarities to Saudi Arabia because of the enormous supply of raw materials, to Italy because of the mafia networks, to Zaire because of the shock therapy transition to capitalism, to Brazil because of the extremely unequal income distribution at approximately the same per capita GDP, to Finland because of a highly educated populace, and to Bulgaria because of a rapidly decreasing population (*Finsk Tidskrift*, Turku [Finnish Journal] 2009: 1-2). Richness of raw materials, not just oil and gas, makes the system relatively resistant to the contagion of democracy. Billionaires make progress with ease; a middle class can't be afforded. Was it deported, disillusioned, for ever? ❌