

# BALTIC WORLDS

**A quarterly scholarly journal and news magazine. March, 2010. Vol III:1  
From the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES)  
Södertörn University, Stockholm**

**TANYA JUKKALA &  
ILKKA HENRIK MÄKINEN**

## Suicide patterns in the New Europe



# Romani? No thanks!

## Yet again, the door is closed on them

LL: RAGNI SVENSSON

## reviews & reports

**THE AMBER ROAD / MAP MANIPULATION / SKULLS / LABOR ON THE MOVE / KRISTIAN GERNER / PUTIN / DADA**

## New Marine Archeological Institute



**SWEDEN HAS** established its first marine archeological research institute (MARIS, Maritime Archeological Research Institute, Södertörn University). Professor Johan Rönnby will head this interdisciplinary center, which is planned to be a hub of maritime research in the Baltic Sea, and to function both interdisciplinarily and internationally. At present, a conference for postgraduate students and younger researchers from countries around the Baltic Sea is already being planned. MARIS is financed by the Baltic Sea Foundation.

One on-going project is the investigation and documentation of the so-called Ghost Ship, a merchant vessel from the 1600s that lies well-preserved at a depth of 130 meters. New technology makes it possible to “get on board” the ship.

Johan Rönnby believes that research on the ships gives fantastic insights into our history.

“Through the prism that a sunken ship constitutes, we can contemplate our history and draw conclusions about everything from how the sailors lived on board to the trade routes and mentality in the countries around the Baltic Sea.” ✖

Read a longer interview with Johan Rönnby, featured in BW vol II:I, 2009.

## BALTIC WORLDS ON THE INTERNET

Now Baltic Worlds can be found on the Web. A generous assortment of articles published in the journal will now become available on the Net. The articles are sorted chronologically, categorized according to the same vignettes as in the journal: essay, feature, interview and review. It is easy to navigate the Web site by searching among its tags.

All the authors of articles featured on the Web site are presented there. All

Baltic World readers are welcome to comment on all articles directly on the Web, and thus publish their own comments. We hope to make this the basis of a high-level discourse on research in and around the Baltic Sea area and Eastern Europe.

It's easy to subscribe to BW and change one's subscription address on the Net. ✖



Welcome to [www.balticworlds.com](http://www.balticworlds.com)

## Rights of homosexuals still unclear

**AFTER THE PREVIOUS** issue of BW had gone to the printer, Lithuania's parliament passed a revision of last July's controversial law, which forbade “public dissemination” of material likely to encourage homosexuality with the motivation that this might harm the physical, intellectual and moral development of minors.

The original legislation did not define “public dissemination”, nor did it stipulate penalties. It also referred to infractions such as bisexuality, polygamy, depictions of homosexual intercourse, dirty language, and bad eating habits.

The revision has made the law less specific. It now outlaws information “encouraging the sexual abuse of minors, sexual relations between minors, and other sexual relations”. According to a spokesman for Lithuania's president, this purges the law of its homophobic clauses and Lithuania now lives up to European standards for human rights.

But Vladimir Simonko, leader of the Lithuanian gay movement, said to the news agency AFP that the law remained problematic and that it apparently had been crafted by a bunch of Bible-thumpers. The law, with its recent addenda, categorizes as harmful the promotion of “any concept of the family other than that set down in the Constitution”, which stipulates that marriage is between a man and a woman.

“From now on, any of our public events could fall under that clause and be banned”, Simonko said. ✖

## Dear Sirs,

In the last issue of Baltic Worlds you publish an article entitled *A Polish heart in Lithuania*, please note that you permanently misspell there name of the Nobel Laureate Czesław Miłosz or Czesław Miłosz if you do not use Polish alphabet but not Milożs as you write. Combination of letters sz or cz in Polish constitutes a sound whereas zs or zc does not occur at all.

Best regards,  
Karolina Kłaczowska

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## An infectious subject

In modern societies, suicide has ceased to be seen as a shameful act, and now, the blame for a person's voluntary departure from life is often placed with family and survivors. This is one aspect of the civilizing process Norbert Elias spent a long life of research trying to disentangle and explain. In times past, when throwing away one's life was condemned, and the act itself criminalized, people that were tired of living sometimes murdered someone else in order to be sentenced to death and executed. Such suicidal homicide was a logical consequence of a strictly Christian doctrine that preached that all living things are God's creation which man has no right to violate – and in any event a murderer could always repent his deed before his life was terminated.

TABOOS AGAINST SUICIDE have existed in other religions as well. With the decriminalization of suicide, another taboo came into being, namely, the taboo against publicly exposing a suicide, instead letting the action – desperate or thought-through – remain a private matter. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, newspapers in Western societies did not write about people that committed suicide because, strictly speaking, it was of no concern to anyone but the dead man how he or she chose to depart from this life. There was yet another reason. Suicide is contagious – if it is written about, talked about, whispered about. People on the edge who would have hesitated to take the step towards actually committing suicide now take that step – in sufficient numbers that this change is statistically visible.

Media suicide contagion is an epidemiological reality. What is more, it has been possible to confirm that when the press ceases to write about a *certain* type of suicide, the incidence of precisely that type of suicide decreases. The editor-in-chief of this magazine has been pursuing a campaign in his home country to get newspapers and other mass media to stop their reporting of suicide. It is not just tabloid journalism that causes suicide rates to soar, but even more serious journalism that has suicide prevention as a goal. Publicity, when repeated, results in trivialization. This was something that Austrian suicidologist Erwin Ringel never ceased to stress.

SHOULD WE THEN STOP TALKING about the matter? Of course not. Epidemiological studies are available.



ILLUSTRATION: KATRIN STENMARK

And the quantity of knowledge grows unabated. In the humanities and social sciences, suicide has been a natural object of study for more than one hundred years. When large and revolutionary or disruptive events occur in the social and economic environment, there is good reason to closely monitor people's responses and behaviors so that institutional and other so-

cial actors have the possibility of adjusting their decision-making accordingly. Increased suicide rates over time (in contrast to the peaks that occur as a result of particular upheavals or events) may indicate that society as such is not feeling so well. Such knowledge is not something we should ignore.

IN THIS ISSUE OF BW, we include an overview of the state of knowledge regarding the occurrence of suicide in the Central and East European countries that liberated themselves from Communism. It is hoped that it will give cause for reflection on aspects other than the individual decisions. The hope is that such research as that which is reported here will, in the long run, contribute to a diminution of the space accorded the eagerness for speculation and desire for sensationalism in the public debate on the imperfections of our communities. ✕



A BALTIC  
WORLDS  
feature

# The Amber Ro

## CENTER AND PERIPHERY

There are a number of places in East Central Europe that claim, with varying degrees of justification, to be the geographic midpoint of Europe. Hranice could well be one of them. If you place the point of a compass in this Moravian, Czech town and draw a circle on the map with a 1500-kilometer radius, the line ends up running very close to London, Edinburgh, Trondheim, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Istanbul, Malta, Barcelona, Bordeaux, and Paris. But in Hranice it would appear that no big fuss is made about this “central” status; the town’s Web site and tourist brochures do not mention the matter at all, but rather highlight the natural beauty of the area and its beautiful historic buildings as tourist sites.

And on closer reflection, the town’s name seems like a mystification. The Czech *Hranice* means “border” (or “frontier”), which of course suggests periphery rather than center. What border? one might ask. For Hranice lies deep in the Czech Republic, far from any modern crossing points. If you go into one of the town’s three bookshops and take a look at the maps in the local historical literature, the matter becomes clearer: for a long time, this is where the border ran between two of the

**“Fossilized resin can be found in various parts of the world, but rarely of the quality and volume in which it appears in the ‘blue earth’ of Samland.”**

pieces of the puzzle of the strange political configuration known as “The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” – the Duchy of Silesia, and the Margraveship of Moravia. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Hapsburgs were forced to cede Silesia to Prussia, the area also became a borderland between the two rival German state projects, the Austrian and the Prussian. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Austria established itself there with a military academy, the secondary school at which several people who would later become famous, such as Robert Musil and Rainer Maria Rilke, studied. At that time, the town was known in Europe under its traditional German name, Mährisch Weisskirchen.

The political border belongs to the past, but geographically and hydrographically, Hranice actually occupies an interesting limit position. The town lies in a depression generally known as the Moravian Gate, a valley passage between the winding highlands of the Sudetes (Sudeten) and the Beskids, which constitutes a link between the plains of Northern Europe and the Danube basin. This also means that Hranice is located in the watershed between two inland seas, the Baltic and Black seas. The Oder has its source in the massif Jeseník just north of the town, but Hranice is located at Běčva, which is a tributary of the Morava, which in turn flows into the Danube.

Borders exist to be crossed. They make it possible to control the flows of things; along them, places for mediation and transactions arise. I get a sense of what Hranice was like when I roam through the elongated medieval town center from the old town square past the former Jewish Quarter, with its synagogue, and further up towards the castle, originally built during the Middle Ages, later converted into a magnificent Renaissance palace.

The square by the palace is called Pernštejn Square, which with a different spelling is the same as Bernstein



PHOTO: XX

The re-created Amber Room in St. Petersburg.

Square – in English: Amber Square. In pre-modern, non-standardized German, *p* and *b* were for a long time interchangeable; the writing systems reflected dialectal variations in pronunciation. Here, the feudal lords were called precisely Pernstein/Bernstein. They had their seat a few dozen kilometers to the west, and their Hrad Pernštejn is the knightly castle of Moravian knightly castles, a glistening Gothic eagle's nest, impregnable and strangely preserved. Perhaps Pernštejn Square in Hranice is named after some person in the long series of magnates that have protected (and taxed) the town, perhaps the name simply refers to an important commodity involved in the activity that took place here under aegis of the castle – transshipment, inspection, assessment of taxes.

Radan Květ conducts road research, and is thus a wanderer. For decades, he has studied the landscape of Central Europe, trudged around in muddy fields and scouted out ravines and fords, gathered traces of human wearing down of the terrain from times past. He contends that the old routes are not simply logistical memories; they also have significant symbolic dimensions, can be seen as a complex of symbols. They are bordered by the signs – natural phenom-

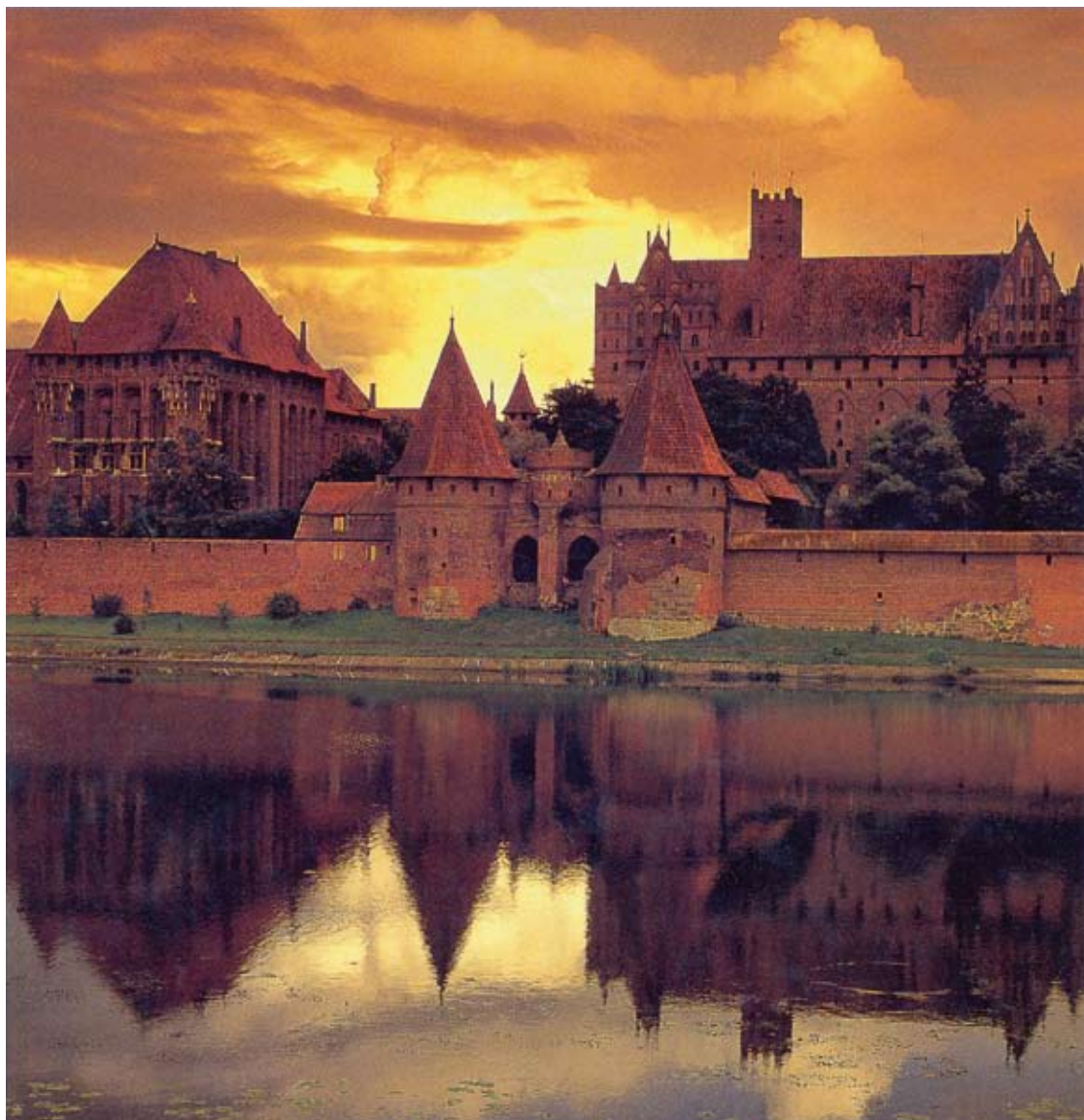
ena that have been given symbolic value, but also deliberately placed, interrelated buildings, and monuments. Before the time of roadmaps, traveling and finding the right path involved following a story, reading a saga. *Duše krajiny*, the soul of the landscape, is thus what Květ called his book, a rich portrayal from 2003 on old highways. He devotes many pages to what in Czech is called *Jantarová stezka*, the “Amber Road”, and identifies the various segments of it that run through Moravia. I accompany him part of the way and soon realize that here, local history becomes world history.

## ROSARIES AND POLITICS

Samland has been called the most remote area of Europe, but, curiously, it lies in the continent's most central location. The remoteness in this case is more of a historical than geographical nature. Samland, the peninsula (sometimes known simply as Sambia in Latin documents) between the shallow Curonian and Vistula Lagoons, in the southeast corner of the Baltic Sea, was – along with neighboring Lithuania – the part of medieval Europe that was last to come under the control of

the Roman Church. It was in the 1220s that the Teutonic Knights first began to take control of this area; with a particularly strict regime, they forced the pagan local population, the Baltic Prussians, to eventually submit to the cross.

The Order of the Teutonic Knights of St. Mary's Hospital in Jerusalem was formed in 1190 in the Holy Land during the Third Crusade, originally in order to run a hospital for the crusaders from the German Empire, but the philanthropic purpose was soon transformed into something military and mercantile. It was recognized at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century that the era of the Crusades was ebbing in the Middle East, and attempts were made to find new fields of activity in Europe. One can wonder about the willingness of the leaders of the Order to travel to regions by the Baltic Sea that were, compared with the Levant, barren, inhospitable, and under-developed; but in 1226, when the Polish Duke Konrad I of Masovia requested their help against the intractable Baltic Prussians, they launched a massive campaign. Under the leadership of Hermann von Salza (the grand master of the Order, 1209-1230), who was honed at power plays, this effort resulted in the founding of the so-called State of the Teutonic Order, which



The Cathedral of Aquileia.



Marienburg.

Equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius at the Capitolium in Rome.

came to be the dominant political factor in the Baltic area until the end of the Middle Ages.

This change is usually seen as part of the general easterly expansion that characterizes the German Middle Ages. Landless, young noblemen (Junkers) sought a living by colonizing East Central Europe, which at that time was still sparsely populated. The expansion of German urbanism in the same direction went hand-in-hand with this process. But as far as Samland and the surrounding area are concerned – what would later be known as Prussia, and then East Prussia – I believe that there was an additional factor that contributed to the surprising attractiveness of the area: amber. One can imagine that von Salza, during his voyages across the Mediterranean – he also had time to participate in the Fifth Crusade, along with the mythical Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen – frequently fingered his prayer beads of glittering amber and realized that the attribute of holiness needed its own special production service by the Baltic Sea. In the State of the Teutonic Order, amber became a *regale*, and all finds became the property of the rulers. The production of rosaries made of amber beads became one of the primary sources of income for the state. Thus, the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century meant not only an ideological problem but also an economic problem. The demand

for rosary beads was drastically reduced. The secular Duchy of Prussia instead had to encourage production of extremely “profane” jewelry and ornaments.

## BURNING STONE

On the coast of Samland, people have been beachcombers since the Stone Age. After stormy weather in particular, it could be rewarding to comb the long stretches of sandy beaches. Chunks and small pieces of amber would wash ashore. Some were gunged up in tangled strands of seaweed and required laborious cleaning, others were already shiny and rinsed clean and could immediately be processed into jewelry, ornaments, or ritual objects. It was believed that amber was a gift from the sea, but in reality it’s a matter of 35-50 million-year-old memories of submerged forests – the resin of fossilized conifers, consisting of various types of pitch, succinic acid, and essential oils. Fossilized resin can be found in various parts of the world, but rarely of the quality and volume in which it appears in the “blue earth” of Samland, a sand layer located about ten meters below the level of the beach, ending under water six hundred meters out in the sea.

It wasn’t simply because of its beautiful color and texture that amber caught the attention of ancient

peoples. It also had a number of surprising properties. It could burn and evaporate, hence Low German’s *bernstên*, from *bernen*, to burn. Rubbing it yields a pleasant aromatic scent, and also makes it negatively electrically charged, giving it the ability to attract light objects such as human hair and pieces of paper. Thus, the word *electricity* derives from the Greek name for amber, *ēlektron*. (The English word *amber* stems from a medieval confusion of the stone with the secretions from the sperm-whales that came ashore, which were a popular raw material for things like perfume.) As early as antiquity, amber oil and succinic acid were extracted from the stones, which were thought to have medicinal properties. The Roman Pliny the Elder wrote extensively about the healing properties of amber; “in a pendant around the neck, it will heal fever and illnesses, crushed and mixed in honey and rose oil it will help against earache, and mixed with Attic honey it will also cure weakened eyesight.” That amber sometimes contained remarkably well-preserved encapsulated insects and plants simply added to the fascination.

As a result, it became a medium of exchange and an important commodity, which early on found a market in the Mediterranean. The Baltic and Slavic words for amber (*gintaras*, Lithuanian; *dzintars*, Latvian; *jantar*, Russian and Czech) are thought to derive from Phoe-

nician's *jainitar*, which probably meant marine resin. A large quantity of gems has been found in the royal tombs at Mycenae that have been chemically determined to be Baltic amber, or *succinit*, which is the scientific name, from the Latin *succinum* (*succinic* acid is thus "acid of amber"). In Imperial Rome a huge demand arose; here people wanted *succinum* for jewelry as well as temple adornments and palace interiors. The historian Tacitus speaks, a bit condescendingly, of how the barbarians by the northern seas aimlessly wander collecting the coveted substance, which they call *glaesum*, and which the Romans then quite meritoriously know to import, process, and market. And it is the Gothic, Germanic word for amber he gives us, which we recognize in the modern word *glass*. For in Tacitus's time, before migrations stirred up the European pot, the coastal areas in that corner of the Baltic were Gothic.

## SALT JUNCTIONS

But how did this *glaesum* reach Rome, how was it transformed into *succinum*? It is probably best to begin by dismissing Tacitus's picture of the aimless barbarians on the beaches of Samland. In Tacitus's time, the processing and trade in amber already had a history going back several thousands of years, and surely had its specific organizational forms, with political consequences. Indeed, it may even have been amber that drew the Goths to this part of the Baltic, if they in fact were from Scandinavia – a notoriously contentious matter. There was an amber road, and it was important that it be maintained and monitored. Various monitors presented themselves over the years.

Kalisz is said to be Poland's oldest city. The evidence for this comes from the mathematician and geographer Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptolemy) of Alexandria, who, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, mentions a place by the name of Kalisia.

That the area was, for millennia, an important meeting place is clear, even if the town of Kalisz as such was established later, in the Middle Ages. For here two major European routes cross: one that goes from the southeast to the northwest and conveys a bodily food stuff, *salt*; and one that went from north to south and transported a particularly spiritual, symbolic, and aesthetic necessity, *amber*. The salt was transferred from the salt lands of Halychyna (Galicia), to salt-poor North-western Europe; and amber, to *succinum*-thirsty Rome.

In his thought-provoking book *Salt*, cultural historian Mark Kurlansky suggested an interesting and fruitful perspective on a culture whose identity has been strangely elusive for historians and archaeologists: the Celts. It should be pointed out that the modern use of the name Celts – which was introduced by the craze during Romanticism for druids and harps – is a misunderstood re-use of the Greek *keltoi*, which was never a precise ethnic designation. Ancient people knew the Celts as *Gauls*. According to the historical handbooks there appear to have been Gauls almost everywhere in Europe during the last millennium before Christ, not just in the areas which the Romans called *Gallia*. The picture is muddled. Were they a people, an empire, a language group, a religion?

Kurlansky points out that the Gauls were "masters

**"The Baltic and Slavic words for amber (gintaras, Lithuanian; dzintars, Latvian; jantar, Russian and Czech) are thought to derive from Phoenician's jainitar, which probably meant marine resin."**

of salt"; the name is derived from the stem *hal* or *gal*, that exists in several languages – including Greek – which means precisely salt (the Latin pronunciation slid towards *sal*). The Gauls were thus "the salt people". Place names throughout Europe speak volumes about the history of salt mining and extraction that the Gauls controlled; the German cities of Halle and Schwäbisch Hall arose around ancient salt sources. The Austrian name Hallein means "salt works", the nearby Hallstatt "salt place". And not far from them there is even Salzburg. And then of course we have the important provinces of Galicia in Poland/Ukraine (in Polish: *Galicja*, Ukrainian: *Halychyna*) and Galicia in northern Spain. These Gauls should perhaps be thought of as a cosmopolitan salt trading aristocracy, a kind of continental Hansa that had river valleys and mountain passes as its fairways. A certain cultural uniformity may have been formed because of these salt interests, much like the bourgeois guild spirit of the medieval trading cities around the Baltic Sea, or like the upper-class culture that tied together the European nobility of the early modern period. We can thus find "Celtic" elements in archaeological material from highly diverse parts of Europe, without this necessarily implying there was a common language or an established ethnicity. A more solid culture may have begun to be formed during the collision with the emerging Roman Empire, but it was then dissolved because of the Romans' successful policy of conquest and Latinization.

My detour onto the salt road was precipitated by the thought that the city name Kalisia/Kalisz also could be an allusion to Gallic activity. For it is the salt men that are thought to have provided the trade and transport along the Amber Road during antiquity with its efficient organization. Here in Kalisz I begin to understand how the route stretched along the river valleys and over the lowest points of the watersheds. From Samland, the route went first towards the southwest in the direction of the estuary of the Vistula. The Teutonic Order – with the support of amber revenue – built its main office at a strategic point in the region, the enormous Castle in Malbork (German: *Die Marienburg*), with a bridge within the castle built over the Nogat, a branch of the Vistula.

From there, one could follow the Vistula upstream to Thorn/Toruń, where one crossed the river in order to cross, via the old trading place Kruszwica, the Warta, a tributary of the Oder, which was reached at Konin. In Konin, a medieval road marker is preserved, a stone pillar dated 1151, which indicates the halfway point from Kruszwica to Kalisz.

What was it like to travel this route? Imagine col-

umns of packhorses, protected by armed guards – those brought along, hired, or added by local rulers – caravans of sorts, quite simply, even if the word sounds unfamiliar in a European context. A network of roads for vehicular traffic hardly existed north of the Danube. The Amber Road was rather a route of beaten paths. Here and there, accessibility over swamps and marshland was improved with landfill and corduroy roads. At places such as Konin and Kalisz, there were guest houses for safe overnight stays.

From Kalisz south one could choose a western branch that led to Breslau/Wrocław, or one to the east that led directly down to the Moravian Gate. After reaching the watershed at Hranice, one could follow the Morava river valley south towards the Danube, which in Roman times was the Mediterranean world's front-lines – here ran the *limes*, the fortified border.

## BORDER MEN AND ROMANS

**Such as bathing appears to thee – oil, sweat, dirt, filthy water, all things disgusting – so is every part of life and everything.**

(Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 8:24)

The shadowy people of the forest were called *Marcomanni*, frontier men. Ambushes at ravines and fords; silent arrows that suddenly bored into oak trunks. The Romans made punishing and forbidding intrusions to the north along the mysterious tributaries. Dangerous missions for the legionnaires, over the *limes* – the limit, the threshold.

In 179 AD, Emperor Marcus Aurelius personally commanded the legions guarding the border. At night he wrote. In Greek.

**That he who is discoursing about men should look also at earthly things as if he viewed them from some higher place; should look at them in their assemblies, armies, agricultural labors, marriages, treaties, births, deaths, noise of the courts of justice, desert places, various nations of barbarians, feasts, lamentations, markets, a mixture of all things and an orderly combination of contraries.**

(Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 7:48)

The frontier city Carnuntum on the south side of the Danube had bath houses, amphitheaters and mosaics. Gladiatorial games entertained the 60,000 inhabitants. On the streets, the Mediterranean and continental European met: togas and trousers. Wine (and later viniculture) took the leap northward across the Danube, the amber was rowed over for further transport to the Mediterranean. The town was originally Celtic; the name comes from the Celtic word *cairn*, which means "rock".

Marcus Aurelius, the philosophical and philanthropic Stoic, felt forced to make tough and barbaric campaigns in order to maintain the Roman regime beyond the Danube. But he did not just sit safely behind the fortifications of Carnuntum; he followed the legions. Parts of the *Meditations*, his self-reflections, are written in a military encampment "among the Quadi at Granna",

at the Hron River deep in what is now Slovakia: “Surely you have at one point seen a severed hand or foot, or a head, lying separated from the rest the body.” Villages burned to the ground, slave transportation, drawn-out trade negotiations in a confusion of tongues with the chiefs and warlords.

When you travel between Vienna and Bratislava along the southern bank of the Danube, and pass the town of Petronell-Carnuntum, where the preserved remains of Carnuntum are located, Devín Castle, perched on a cliff, stands out on the northern bank of the river in a dramatic profile against the evening sun: a barren mass of rock, sculpted by water and wind, crowned with the remains of the fortifications of various empires. Adjacent to the cliff and its castle there is an affluent – the Morava/March makes its tribute to the Danube.

A place for reconnaissance, for keeping an eye on the unpredictable people beyond the border. The Romans built a support point on the Devín rock, in foreign territory on the north bank of the Danube.

**Of human life the time is a point, and the substance is in a flux, and the perception dull, and the composition of the whole body subject to putrefaction, and the soul of a whirl, and fortune hard to divine, and fame a thing devoid of judgment. And, to say all in a word, everything which belongs to the body is a stream, and what belongs to the soul is a dream and vapor, and life is a warfare and a stranger’s sojourn, and after-fame is oblivion.**

(Written in Carnuntum. *Meditations* 2:17)

It was important to have an overview of the confluence of the two rivers for several reasons. It was along the course of the Morava that the merchants that brokered the highly coveted golden-red splendor from the northern beaches traveled. In the time of Emperor Nero, an expedition was dispatched in order to find out where the glowing amber actually came from. The traffic had to be protected from looting and disruption. Shouldn’t one be able to incorporate the amber country into the empire? The scouts eventually returned, well-stocked with succinum, but they advised against any military adventure. The amber coast was too far away, and the routes through the pathless forests would be impossible to control. Better, then, to work at a distance, by proxy and federations, *foederati*.

The Romans also determined to a large extent how things would be in the areas *beyond* the limes. They divided and ruled in the changing pattern of alliances and conflicts that spread over the stateless Forest of Europe. When one reads in the works of Tacitus and other Romans of the Germanic peoples, one can get the impression that there were stable nations and ancient traditions. But many of the “tribes” Tacitus lists were products of political events that went back only a few generations.

The Romans were involved in the creation of these “German peoples”; they arose from the particular conditions and needs generated by the border. The popular name Marcomanni seems originally to have been a sort of *professional designation*, on analogy with the Gallic masters of salt: the frontier men (or “border men”)

## “The Amber Road had existed for thousands of years when the Romans entered the Central European scene as prefects of a hitherto unseen caliber.”

were people that had developed special skills as border guards, merchants (for example merchants of amber) and brokers. They ran a kind of protection racket in no man’s land and might demand tributes from both the Romans, who needed them as guarantors of border security, and from the original inhabitants, who very much wanted access to the Roman luxury goods, and in addition very much wanted to avoid being exported to the south as slaves. Those who could not pay the protection money were of course sold to the Roman slave traders. In this matter, the Marcomanni had basically no scruples; human-trafficking was perhaps the most important border trade.

The Romans showered the cooperative bosses of the frontier trade with honors; made them dependent. But every now and then these *foederati* became so wealthy and influential that they became a threat to Rome.

The legendary Marcomanni oligarch Marbod was to a great degree a Roman product. He spent his youth in Rome, spoke Latin, and became an acquaintance of Augustus. Back at the territory on the Main in central Germania, which until then belonged to the Marcomanni, he found that the possibilities for the traditional operations had deteriorated considerably because of the Romans’ campaign (which later collapsed) to incorporate the land between the Rhine and the Elbe. So he moved the operation to Bohemia and Moravia around the year 9 AD. Intertwined with the local Celtic/Gallic aristocracy, and in league with the Quadi, who dominated parts of Moravia and Slovakia, the Marcomanni then became an important factor along the central part of the Danube. In the 160s AD, their protection racket became too keenly felt in northern Italy; this led to Marcus Aurelius’s protracted Danube campaigns. Large military camps were built on the north side of the river; the emperor was obviously attempting to out-manuever the difficult to control frontier men by moving the border further north. But when Marcus Aurelius died in 180 AD, the plans were abandoned. The Marcomanni remained, but it is significant that when the Roman Empire eventually dissolved and the border disappeared, the frontier men also disappeared in the early medieval borderlessness. They are not mentioned after the 4<sup>th</sup> century. It is believed that they changed names and became the core of the Bavarii, the ancestors of the Bavarians.

## TOWARDS THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Amber Road had existed for thousands of years when the Romans entered the Central European scene as prefects of a hitherto unseen caliber. The old routes and paths south of the Danube were now incorporated into the Roman road network. The limes did not pre-

vent the north-south trade, the trade in fact intensified. Carnuntum can be thought of as a place of transshipment, where Northern Europeans exchanged their loads of amber for Roman wines or luxury items such as bronze vessels or glass; Roman trading operations and “forwarding agents” took over the amber baton. From Carnuntum, which was in the province of Pannonia Superior, a route ran south through what today is the border region between Austria and Hungary, passed the citadel of Scarbantia (Sopron) and the Roman colony of Savaria (Szombathely), then turned off to the southwest and, via Emona (Ljubljana), reached the Adriatic Sea at Aquileia.

In 181 BC, in the coastal country of the Veneti between the Po estuary and Istria, the Romans founded a colony that had military significance as well as significance for trade policies. It was here that Marcus Aurelius had his primary base during the campaign against the Marcomanni. As a fortress, Aquileia was the key to the northern Italian plains; as a trade center it was the final destination of the amber as a raw material. In Aquileia, much of the imported amber was processed into jewelry, amulets, talismans and idols, and art objects. The size of the city (about 100,000 inhabitants) and its unusually cosmopolitan character – even by Roman standards – is probably the reason that it became one of the Empire’s first centers of Christianity. Just a few years after the Christ cult had become the state religion, the city’s bishop, Theodorus, built a cathedral the mosaic floors of which are preserved in the cathedral as it exists today. During the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the bishop of Aquileia took on the title of Patriarch, with claims to take the position in rank right below the pope. But the city – which had been invaded by Attila the Hun in 452 – was depopulated after the invasion by the Lombards in 568, and was soon transformed into an insignificant village. The Patriarchate was tenacious, but in the end was transferred to Venice in 1451. At that point, Aquileia consisted of little more than the cathedral.

According to one of the founding legends of Venice, it was fleeing residents of Aquileia that founded the lagoon city. This is in all likelihood a myth, but Venice in many respects did indeed take over the role Aquileia had had as a point of contact between Central Europe and the Mediterranean world. Perhaps it is no accidental occurrence that the Teutonic Order ran its network from a palace in Venice until 1309, when its seat was moved to the emerging Marienburg. The combination of crusades and amber was good business, both for the Venetians and for the Order.

## AMBER KING OF SAMLAND

At the end of 1700, Frederick III, Elector of Brandenburg, succeeded – after ten years of negotiations – in obtaining a favor from his feudal lord, the emperor in Vienna. Frederick was “at a time of his choosing, on the basis of his duchy, Prussia, to be permitted to declare himself, and be crowned, king”.

The elector immediately set to work. In Berlin, three hundred wagons were loaded with coronation appurtenances, whereupon the court, with the help of three thousand horses in brutal winter weather, began to move towards Prussia. On December 29, Frederick arrived with his entourage at the old castle of the Cru-



The Danube and the Morava by Devín.



Piece of amber.



Detail from the Column of Marcus Aurelius in Rome.

saders in Königsberg. Coronation ceremonies commenced on January 15, 1701. Four heralds, twenty-four trumpeters and two timpanists rode through the city, followed by sixty noblemen and a cavalry squadron. Golden commemorative coins were thrown into the crowd. Wine flowed from fountains. The people were fed with a roasted ox, stuffed with lamb, rabbits, geese, and other birds. Frederick III of Brandenburg was now Frederick I, “König in Preußen”.

The spectacle marked the establishment of the modern Prussian state, but it was also the culmination of an enormous cultural-political effort. Since his accession to power in 1688, Frederick had single-mindedly striven to give his realm the status of a modern territorial state. Via extensive patronage, Berlin, a mediocre county town with 30,000 inhabitants on the spartan outskirts of the German Empire, would shine as the new Athens. Artists and scholars were recruited; vast collections of art and antiques were brought in. Frederick wanted to bring the continent’s cultural heritage to the sandy banks of the Spree, where the new power – established upon the permanent and legitimizing piles constituted by the ancient heritage – would surpass the Hellenes and the Romans.

“The King in Prussia” also reigned over Samland, something Nero had once dreamed of in vain. The glowing gift of the beach became an important marker of identity, the *regale* of the Teutonic Knights still carried great weight, and even until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ornamental objects of amber were the standard gift of the Prussian kings to other royal houses of Europe. Perhaps as evidence that he outshone Nero and the latter’s legendary Domus Aurea (“golden house”) in Rome, Frederick I had his craftsmen decorate an entire room in the palace in Berlin in amber, in the magnificent baroque classicism that was the trademark of the Prussian state. During a visit to Berlin, Peter the Great was impressed by the splendor of the amber, and Frederick’s successor, the prosaic soldier-king Frederick William I, who had little interest in aesthetic showiness, gave away the decorations to the Tsar. It was installed in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, but was later moved to Tsarskoye Selo.

During the Siege of Leningrad, the Amber Room was dismantled by the German occupiers and taken to Königsberg Castle, where it was stored in its disassembled condition. In the final stages of the war, the old Königsberg was destroyed during the British bombardment and the Soviet ground attack, and turned into the backwater of Kaliningrad. The blackened remains

of the castle were demolished. The fate of the Amber Room is unknown. Numerous more or less improbable theories abound in popular historical literature.

In connection with the restoration of the palace in Tsarskoye Selo, work was begun in 1976 on a reconstruction of the Amber Room, whose whereabouts are still unknown. The Russians now had control of Samland, where the classic deposits in Palmnicken (renamed Yantarny) had been industrially processed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After German reunification in 1990 and the establishment of new German-Russian relations, the restoration project acquired an altered political significance. The re-created Amber Room was opened in 2003 in connection with St. Petersburg’s 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the presence of President Putin and Chancellor Schroeder.

Amber ended up conjoining, once again, seemingly incommensurably great realms. My excursion along the Amber Road has given me a different and, in two senses, interdisciplinary perspective on the broader European picture. The focus of the traditional historical narratives and atlases on the kingdoms, borders, and boundaries does not do justice to the many thousands of years of connections that stretch across the continent. The limes was no Iron Curtain, the Celts not simply harp players. The Amber Road, as it was organized by the collaborative efforts of the Romans and the Celts/Gauls, was a lasting inter-European system for mutual cultural and economic exchange. The inhabitants of the North probably knew more about the Romans than the Romans knew about them – this is apparent immediately when you read Tacitus’s ethnocentric depictions. There was reciprocity. The beach dwellers of the Baltic acquired beautiful things from Aquileia, with the help of the frontier men. And one can imagine adventurous voyages of Scandinavian mercenaries and pilgrims heading home along the route through Hranice, Konin, and Kruszwica – the shortest route from Rome to Scandia. ❧

anders hammarlund

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# SUICIDE

## IN CHANGING SOCIETIES

BY **TANYA JUKKALA & ILKKA HENRIK MÄKINEN**  
ILLUSTRATION **RAGNI SVENSSON**

To the untrained eye, suicide may appear to be a highly individual decision, and undoubtedly it is. However, it can be shown that suicide, as with the results of so many other individual choices, is also a socially patterned and socially reactive phenomenon. This essay attempts to say something about its relationship to changes in the surrounding society.

Since ancient times, suicide has been an object of moral and philosophical speculation; later, it also became a matter for medical and social-scientific thought. However, it became a focus of major attention only when, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the newly initiated mortality statistics revealed a relentless increase in the suicide rate.<sup>1</sup> The Swedish rate of suicide, for example, increased fivefold between 1810 and 1912.<sup>2</sup> Scholars from many scientific disciplines – medical, social, behavioral, legal, theological – competed in offering explanations for this startling phenomenon. It was generally suspected that the drastic social changes associated with the processes of industrialization and urbanization were somehow related to the rising suicide rate – but how exactly?

The theory that won the day (or at least the posterity) was developed by the French sociologist Émile Durkheim in his famous book *Le Suicide*, which first appeared in 1897.<sup>3</sup> The book can be (and has been) criticized as regards both data quality and the methods used for empirical testing, especially when judged by modern standards. In addition, its theoretical contents, while fascinating, are not always stated very clearly, which sometimes allows the author to use them in an ad-hoc manner in explanations.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, as a study of suicide as a societal phe-

nomenon, the impact of *Le Suicide* has been of major importance: it is still the leading theory and a natural starting point for any study.

### DURKHEIM ON SOCIETAL CHANGE AND SUICIDE

Durkheim presented a systematic theory of suicide mortality. It consisted of several elements, one of them being the claim that the level of suicide in a society correlates with the level of societal *regulation*, i.e. the regulation, on the part of society, of individual goals and aspirations. This regulation originates in social morality, as shared by and superior to the individual members of society. It sets limits on the individual's aspirations and desires and prescribes appropriate and attainable goals for individuals in different social positions and with varying resources and opportunities.

In Durkheim's opinion, human needs, in contrast to those of animals, exceed the purely physical ones, and their number or form cannot be absolutely determined. As a consequence, the satisfaction of the needs is always an uncertain and arbitrary matter. Thus, if they were dependent only on individual aspirations, the individuals' desires and goals would always be unattainable, and the individual would be left in a perpetual state of disappointment and dissatisfaction. However, in a normally functioning "Durkheimian" society, this state of affairs is avoided by means of societal regulation of both the desirable goals and the means of attaining them. This encourages the individual to reach a realistic contentment with his or

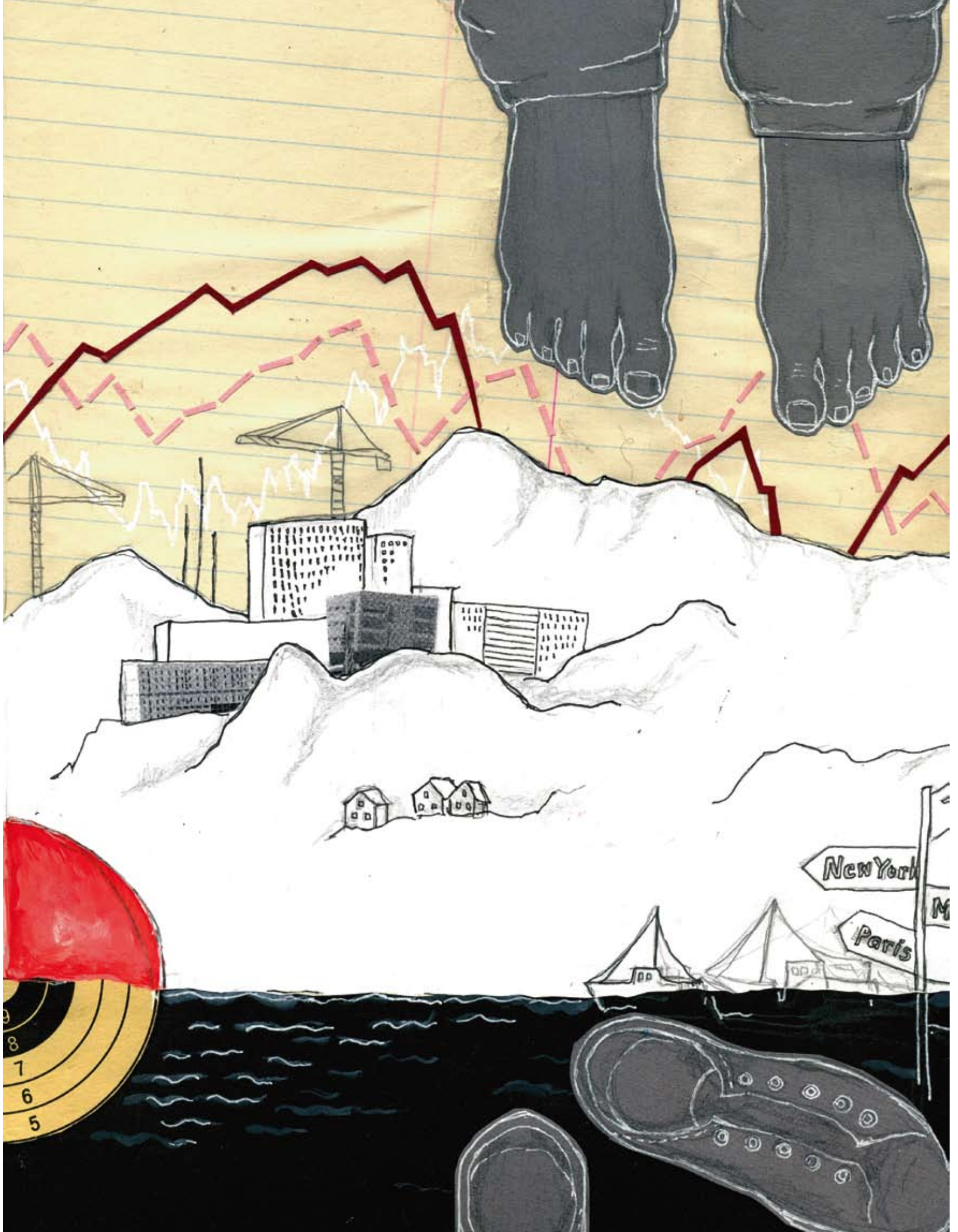
her lot, a fate that he/she can try to improve by working in conformity with the regulation. As a result, the individual will "be able to love what he has and not solely fixate on what he lacks".<sup>5</sup>

But when a society is in crisis, or affected by some abrupt change, it will sometimes become incapable of exercising its regulative influence on individual needs. When conditions of life change, the standards according to which needs are regulated cannot remain the same. Nor can a new standard be immediately implemented. Thus, for a time, the limits of what is possible, just, and legitimate in relation to individual needs will be unknown. This will result in a state of uncertainty in which individual needs, passions, and aspirations are unlimited and uncontrolled, a state of society known by its Greek-inspired name *anomie*. At the societal level, it is characterized by deficient regulation, at the individual level, by constant disappointments caused by unattainable goals and unmet aspirations. According to Durkheim, a society in a state of *anomie* will experience a great increase, for that location and time, of a specific type of suicide which he terms *anomic*. Some of Durkheim's statements seem to indicate that he believed that society in a process of modernization as such had an unbalanced, anomic character, and that similar reasoning could, perhaps, be applied to other rapidly changing societies too.

### THE ECONOMY AS LOCUS OF DISORDERLY CHANGE

In Durkheim's opinion, the economic sector was the most visible social sphere in which anomic imbalances

A world of opportunities offers a great many shortcomings. Even the Greeks had words for this.



Anxiety is the iceberg of change. At the top, people fall with different weights.

could be found, and the boom-and-bust capitalism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century provided him with a wealth of examples of rapid changes in fortune. Interested as he was in a possible correlation between economic changes and levels of suicide mortality, he was able to show how disruptions or changes in the economy, be they upswings, recessions or reforms, were *all* associated with increases in suicide mortality levels. This type of reaction could, in his opinion, only be explained by assuming that it was the change per se, and not the particular nature of the change, that affected the level of suicide mortality. The disequilibrium brought on by rapid societal change caused people to commit suicide more frequently.

Durkheim did not see the origins of anomie as solely economic. Change in the family structure was another potential source of anomie, as the higher suicide rates among divorced men, in his opinion, indicated. Divorce brought about a state of disequilibrium, because it interrupted the regulative functions of marriage, the regulation of “the life of passions”<sup>6</sup>, i.e. sexual relations. It did not have this effect on women for their desires were “naturally limited” due to their “less developed” mental life<sup>7</sup> (a line of reasoning consistent with Durkheim’s general ideas about the mental life of women).

Yet divorces were not numerous in Durkheim’s time, whereas there was an abundance of economic change. Table 1, which is taken from *Le Suicide*, contains an everyday example of how suicide levels increase during events, such as the World Exposition, that supposedly stimulate business activity and increase public wealth in the city where they occur. Guided by Durkheim, the reader will observe the increase in suicides in Paris in 1889, the year of the World Exposition. During the seven months the Exposition lasted, suicides increased by almost 10 percent in comparison to the previous year (567 suicides compared to 517), while, the following year, the number of suicides was again lower for the same months.<sup>8</sup> Durkheim goes on to give further examples of the relationship between suicide rates and economic change by showing how suicide rates increased during financial crises and stock market crashes and how they correlated with increases in bankruptcies and variations in food prices, production, trade, and public wealth.

Durkheim’s fundamental idea, that change in itself could be destructive, has been an inspiration for those coming after him. As far as individual examples are concerned, empirical tests have often given differing results. Durkheim’s original assumption that any change in the economy would lead to an increase in suicide mortality was confirmed in the 1970s by Albert Pierce.<sup>9</sup> Using fluctuations of stock-market prices as indicators of economic change, he found a strong

positive correlation between (white male) suicide rates and the absolute rate of change in the economic cycle, regardless of its direction. Pierce’s findings were later questioned by James R. Marshall and Robert W. Hodge<sup>10</sup>, who criticized certain aspects of his method and argued, with support from their own findings, that it was not a matter of economic disruption per se. Instead, they found that suicide increased during negative changes in the economy and decreased during improvements, contrary to what Durkheim had postulated.

Maurice Halbwachs, one of Durkheim’s adepts, had earlier advanced a similar argument. According to him, suicide increased during economic crises, not necessarily as a direct consequence of unemployment, bankruptcies, failures, and downfalls, but because of less general activity and people’s decreased participation in economic life. This created a situation where people’s “attention is no longer turned towards externals but dwells more, not merely on their distress or on their bare material competency, but on all the individual motives they may have for desiring death”.<sup>11</sup> Halbwachs’ argument reminds us of Durkheim’s other main theme, namely the association between suicide levels and the level of societal *integration*.

This second aspect of Durkheim’s theory predicts that the risk of suicide will increase among lonely and self-centered individuals, and that loneliness and self-centeredness may be promoted by prevailing social circumstances. In fact, for Halbwachs,<sup>12</sup> the aspects of societal integration and regulation were both a result of a common denominator: the individual’s attachment to society. Others after him<sup>13</sup> have agreed that the two – integration and regulation – are simply aspects of the same societal condition.

## A MODERN EXAMPLE: THE TRANSITION IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE CHANGES IN SUICIDE MORTALITY

Durkheim’s theory of a link between rapid social change and suicide mortality may seem very plausible when applied to 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, where rapid social change and increasing suicide rates were virtually ubiquitous.<sup>14</sup> However, one set of examples is hardly sufficient as evidence for answering the general question.

In our times, the fall of Communism has brought major changes in East European societies over the last two decades. The ensuing transition has influenced all levels and all spheres of society, not least the economic and the political; it has had a major effect on the lives of some 400 million individuals. For many, the change has meant increased poverty, social inequality, unemployment, and uncertainty about the future, while for others it has meant increasing personal, political, and economic freedom. In accordance with the above-mentioned theories, one might expect Eastern Europe’s transition to affect suicide mortality in two distinct ways. First, on lines with Durkheim’s theory, change per se causes anomie, which, in turn, should affect the levels of suicide mortality. Second, suicide mortality should be affected by the negative character

of the economic changes in many of these countries, accompanied, as they have been, by reduced purchasing power and increased unemployment.

The negative consequences undoubtedly exist. The state of public health in Eastern Europe started to stagnate as early as the mid-1960s. The rapid transformations of the early 1990s caused a severe deterioration of an already precarious situation. The former Soviet republics experienced dramatic increases in their mortality rates, especially among men, and suicide mortality was no exception. Rather, the increases in suicide levels in some of the East European countries were of such magnitude that it is scarcely possible to find their counterparts in 20<sup>th</sup> century history. In Russia, suicide mortality increased by 62 percent between 1989 and 1994, in Lithuania (which presently has the highest suicide mortality rate in the world), the increase during this same period amounted to 69 percent (see Figure).<sup>15</sup>

These alarming developments soon caught the attention of researchers.<sup>16</sup> In terms of theories about suicide, they pose serious problems for those who claim that suicide is always a result either of serious psychiatric illness or of specific genetic makeup.

When a systematic comparison is done of developments of suicide mortality after 1990 in the transition countries, one may find patterns that indicate significant differences between groups of countries. The Figure presents the course of events in selected East European countries which may be considered representative. For example, the developments in suicide mortality after 1990 in the former “European” Soviet countries (except for Moldova), i.e. Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and the three Baltic States, are fairly similar.<sup>17</sup> All of these countries saw sharp rises in suicide mortality in the years after 1990; moreover, suicide levels were already very high in all of these countries. In the middle of the 1990s, the rates peaked. Thereafter, a general decrease in suicide rates has occurred, except for Russia where the ruble crisis of 1998 seems to have been followed by yet another increase in suicide mortality from 1999 to 2001.

Poland, Romania, and Kyrgyzstan are additional examples of countries where increases in suicide mortality can be observed in the beginning of the transition period. These increases were, however, less dramatic than in the countries discussed above. In the rest of Eastern Europe, i.e. Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the Balkans, suicide mortality rates remained fairly stable, or even decreased. This was also the case in the Caucasian and Central Asian former Soviet republics. In other words, a “suicide crisis” occurred in only eight of the 28 East European countries, and even though it was of unprecedented severity, we must ask why this did not happen in all of the countries concerned. After all, the pains of the transition period were most certainly more severe in Albania than in Estonia, and surely no less serious in Romania than in Latvia. These cases, which actually constitute the majority of the countries involved, are not easily reconciled with Durkheim’s theory, according to which the changes that were common to all these countries – and that ought to have interrupted societal regulation – should have resulted in increasing suicide rates in all of them.

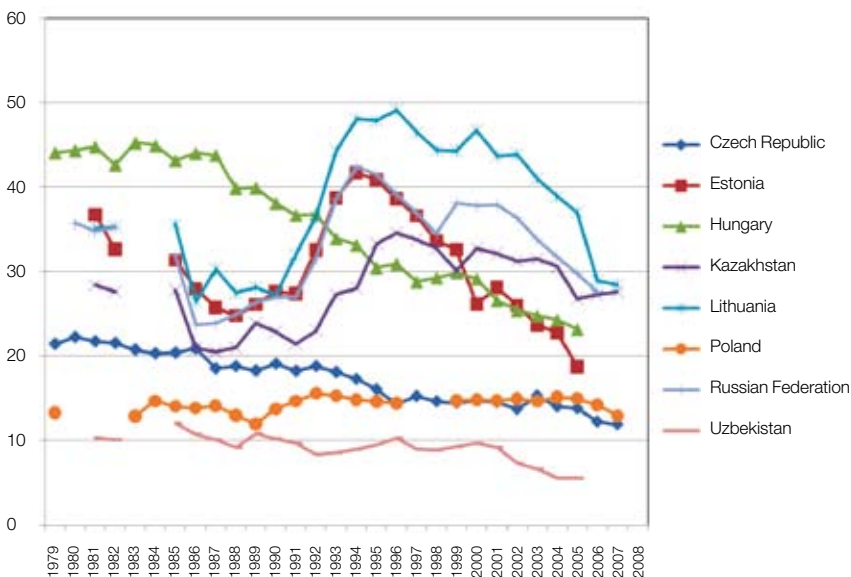
Where suicide rates did increase, it is possible that

**Table 1. Suicide Mortality in Paris Before, During, and After the World Exposition of 1889**

	1888	1889	1890
The seven months of the exposition	517	567	540
The five other months	319	311	356

Source: Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, London, 1999, p. 245.

Figure. Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injury in Selected East European Countries, 1979–2008



Source: World Health Organization: Health for All Data Base

the societal changes following the transition also involved other factors that made the members of these societies more prone to commit suicide. For example, Lisa F. Berkman and her colleagues claim that large-scale societal changes, such as the East European transition, “represent environmental challenges that tear at the fabric of social networks”.<sup>18</sup> Such deterioration in social relations in post-Soviet societies could be related to the second of Durkheim’s claims, namely that suicide levels vary with the degree of integration of society.

This picture is further complicated by a wide range of more specific explanations supplied by scholars studying the observed increases in suicide mortality in Eastern Europe. The increased suicide levels have been associated with factors such as the deteriorated macro-economic conditions<sup>19</sup>, increased alcohol consumption<sup>20</sup>, increased divorce rates<sup>21</sup>, and the general fragmenting of social relations<sup>22</sup>. Suicide levels have also been explained by referring to a generally increased level of stress and social disorganization<sup>23</sup>, as well as the deterioration of medical care<sup>24</sup>. Other authors have, in accordance with Durkheim’s general theory, emphasized the impact of rapid *change* per se<sup>25</sup> while still others have stressed the sole importance of rapid *economic* change, independent of the level of prosperity<sup>26</sup>. In addition, a negative associa-

tion between the process of democratization and suicide mortality has been reported, implying that democratization has some beneficial effects on suicide mortality levels.<sup>27</sup> However, these factors seem to be able to explain only parts of the variation in suicide mortality in the respective countries, and they do not predict well at all in many of them. The explanations offered for the rise in suicide rates seem merely to reflect the general variation in the opinions of suicide’s societal causes. The process of societal change in Eastern Europe has been so thoroughgoing

### SOME POINTS OF COMPARISON: CHANGES IN THE THIRD AND FOURTH WORLDS

For the sake of comparison, let us take a brief glance at another rapidly changing society – that of China. Since 1980, the country has risen from a poor, barely industrialized and barely self-supporting society to a major economic power and a world-class exporter of industrial goods, a development which, in its rapidity and comprehension, is certainly comparable to what took place in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

It is difficult to estimate the level of suicide mortal-

ity in China, since the country has no national death registration system. The tabulation of deaths by cause is based on population samples. The national suicide mortality rate has been estimated at 15.4 per 100,000 in 2000<sup>29</sup>, a figure not much higher than that of Sweden (11.4 per 100,000 in 2007<sup>30</sup>). Suicide mortality in China seems to have some unique characteristics. China is the one country where female suicide mortality levels exceed those of males. Moreover, suicide mortality levels are estimated to be about three times higher in the countryside than in the cities.<sup>31</sup> Whereas these characteristics of Chinese suicide mortality differ from those in the West, (other) risk factors that have been associated with suicide mortality in China, such as depression, previous suicide attempts, and acute stress at the time of death, seem to mirror what has been observed in the West.<sup>32</sup>

The high suicide mortality among rural women has been the focus of many studies, and has been linked to these women’s low status and limited options; they may, for instance, be subjected to forced marriages, abusive husbands or in-laws, stress caused by official birth policies, pressure from parents that want them to help the family escape rural life, etc.<sup>33</sup> However, as noted by Michael R. Phillips and his colleagues, women in many developing countries face a similar situation. In their own study, they find support for the hypothesis that it is the lack of religious or legal prohibitions against suicide in China that may make suicide an acceptable way of escaping a difficult situation, a circumstance that bears no intrinsic relation to China’s modernizing development.<sup>34</sup>

The link between China’s suicide mortality levels and economic development is difficult to determine due to absence of past statistics.<sup>35</sup> The estimations for the levels of suicide mortality during the 1990s seem to indicate that suicide mortality has either remained relatively stable<sup>36</sup> or has even fallen<sup>37</sup>, depending on how the calculations are carried out. In seeking to explain the possible decline in suicide mortality, it has been hypothesized that while positive relationships between modernization and suicide have been found in other societies, in largely rural environments, such as the Chinese, modernization might cause *decreases* in suicide mortality because of the attendant general improvements in living standards, better educational opportunities, and better medical care.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the decrease in suicides in rural areas seems driven by a decrease in young women’s suicide rates.<sup>39</sup>

These facts would again raise questions about Durkheim’s theory. The Chinese experience of changing suicide rates during periods of rapid social change,



seems to have been very different from that observed in Western or Eastern Europe. It further stresses the importance of the initial social and cultural situation, as well as the direction of the change.

Probably the most extreme social changes in the world are those experienced by “fourth world” peoples – traditionally small-scale, hunter-and-gatherer societies with limited contacts with the outer world. Globalization has often entailed either dramatic changes in or the disappearance of these societies. A Nordic example is that of Greenland.

For the last 50 years, Greenland’s development from a traditional society to one approaching a modern (Western) style of life has been marked by rapid socio-cultural transformations. These have gone hand-in-hand with large increases in suicide mortality, especially among young men. While Greenland had two registered suicides in 1971 (4.2 per 100,000) the level increased sharply, reaching its peak with 69 cases in 1987 (128.4 per 100,000), a thirty-fold (!) increase in only 16 years. And while suicide mortality decreased after a second peak in 1990 (118.8 per 100,000), it has fluctuated at a continuously high level (77.3–105.4 per 100,000) between 1991 and 2002.<sup>40</sup> Markus Leineweber and his colleagues observed differences in the trends in suicide mortality from one region to another, and they hypothesized that these were related to the variations in the influence of Western culture between the regions. Western influence began at different points of time in different areas, and the first peaks in suicide mortality increases seemed to occur in the regions that were first exposed. The initial period of influence would be marked by pronounced social and cultural changes, and suicides would increase. A subsequent period of adaptation to the new situation would be ac-

companied by the stabilization or decrease in suicide mortality levels. Furthermore, a lack of stable social networks seemed to be associated with suicide mortality at the individual level in Greenland.<sup>41</sup>

## WHY DON’T ALL CHANGING SOCIETIES EXPERIENCE RISES IN SUICIDE MORTALITY?

Returning to Eastern Europe, it is important to re-emphasize the fact that the developments in suicide mortality in the beginning of the 1990s varied greatly from country to country. Although all of them experienced similar societal transformations, the effect of these in relation to suicide mortality has not been identical, or even similar. Not even all the former Soviet countries, which, after all, share a longer common history, experienced similar developments in this respect. This seriously calls into question the general Durkheimian theory, according to which transformations per se, and the anomie that they cause, should lead to higher levels of suicide mortality. This is clearly not the case in the East European experience, and it is unlikely that other Durkheimian factors such as, for example, decreasing societal integration, could save the theory here.

A possible explanation for the variation in the effects of the societal transition on suicide mortality could be that the effect of social factors on suicide mortality is dependent on the context and, in particular, the *culture* of the specific environments undergoing societal transition. In a study on the development of suicide mortality in East Europe before and after the transition, one of the authors<sup>42</sup> found that Eastern

European countries could be divided into groups according to the specific properties of their suicide mortality, that is, their different “suicide mortality profiles”. These profiles were based on the level of suicide mortality and the distribution of suicide among sex and age groups (see Table 2), which were, in turn, thought to reflect different socio-cultural situations in relation to suicide. Countries with similar profiles also tended to follow similar developments in their suicide mortality during the relevant time period. The suicide mortality profiles seemed to be *mediating* the effects of (other) social factors that were used to explain the variations in suicide mortality, causing the effects to vary greatly. The profile groups remained almost the same during the two periods that were studied (1984–1989 and 1989–1994), which means that the profile differences were not altered by the transition process. Subsequent (still unpublished) research further supports the premise of their basic stability.

Thus, the general culture in these countries seemed to have a more significant determining effect on suicide than did (other) social factors. In his book, Durkheim gave only very fleeting consideration to cultural influences<sup>43</sup>, when mentioning the Greeks. It seems, however, that a mental link of some generality needs to be added to the societal circumstances and the suicidal reactions before the theory can hope to explain change in society and suicide.

## ADAPTING TO CHANGE

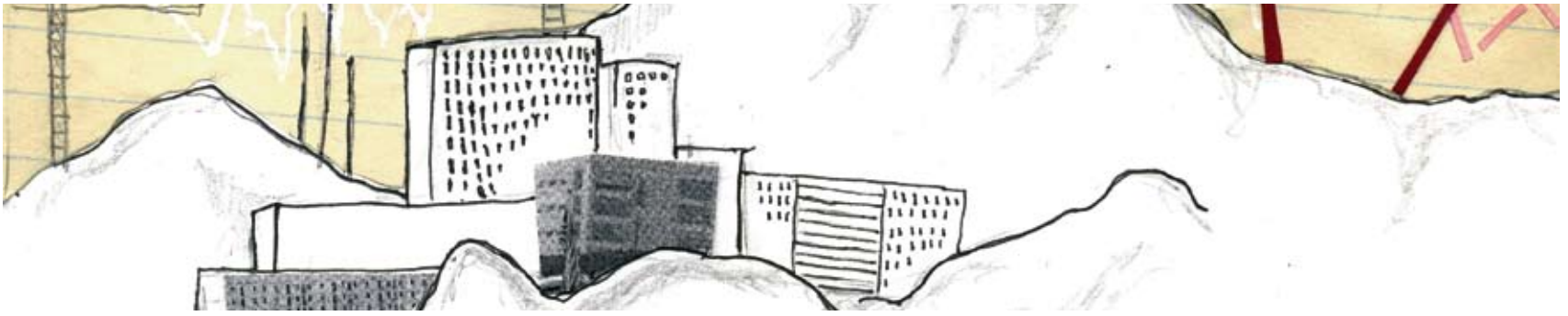
The rapid transformation of (West) European countries into modern societies, which took place between the 1830s and World War I, was reflected in rapid increases in suicide mortality in the majority. For Durkheim, this development was both an inspiration to

Table 2. Summary of the Developments in Suicide Mortality in Eastern Europe 1985–1993 According to Suicide Mortality Profiles<sup>a</sup>

Profile	Countries	Years	Total rate <sup>b</sup>	Sex quota <sup>b</sup>	Age quota <sup>b</sup>	Development in Suicide Mortality Between 1985 and 1993
High suicide rate, unequal sex distribution	Belarus, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Slovenia, Ukraine	1985 1989 1993	28.3 25.1 33.4	4.17 3.65 4.57	3.46 3.50 3.03	Large fall in suicide rates 1985–1989, followed by a very large general increase in 1989–1993.
High suicide rate, unequal age distribution	Croatia, East Germany, Hungary	1985 1989 1993	29.7 29.8 26.1	2.76 2.40 2.75	6.02 7.27 5.83	Suicide rates stable 1985–1989, fell somewhat after 1989.
Low suicide rate, unequal sex distribution	Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Romania	1985 1989 1993	13.6 13.6 14.1	4.08 3.72 4.53	3.13 3.26 3.04	Slight increase in suicide rates 1989–1993.
Low suicide rate, unequal age distribution	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, FYR Macedonia, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)	1985 1989 1993	16.7 16.3 15.6	2.33 2.44 2.32	8.72 7.18 5.60	Overall trend: falling suicide rates, except for middle-aged people.
Low suicide rate, equal distribution	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	1985 1989 1993	5.4 4.5 3.6	2.44 2.48 2.50	4.35 2.98 2.36	Overall trend: falling suicide rates, except for the youngest.

<sup>a</sup> Based on: Ilkka H. Mäkinen, “Eastern European Transition and Suicide Mortality”, *Social Science & Medicine*, 2000, vol. 51, pp. 1405–1420.

<sup>b</sup> Mean of the countries. Rate = annual cases per 100,000 inhabitants; sex quota = male suicide rate divided by female suicide rate; age quota = highest age-group suicide rate divided by the lowest one.



and a confirmation of his assumptions about the links between societal regulation/integration and suicide, for these modernizing societies were, in his opinion, characterized by decreasing levels of both. Interestingly, however, suicide mortality levels in the Western world began to stabilize or even decrease some time during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – as they did, later, in Greenland – despite a continued modernizing process. While the period between 1945 and 1975 was characterized by unprecedented increases in wealth similar to those experienced during the first phase of modernization, this change was no longer reflected in suicide mortality as it had been a hundred years earlier.<sup>44</sup>

Fortunately, the effects of societal change seem to be of limited duration, at least when it comes to this particular development. The hypothesis has been advanced that the residents of the modernizing world do, eventually, begin to adapt to the experience of continuous transformations. West Europeans have learned to live with the expectation that their lives are characterized by changing and partly unpredictable conditions.<sup>45</sup> It seems that continuous social transformation may be followed, in time, by adaptation, at least in the sense that primary increases in suicide mortality will level off. It is plausible that individuals, as well as societal systems and institutions, learn to anticipate future societal disruptions and develop strategies for handling them.

In Eastern Europe, the period of state socialism during which the Soviet republics and the satellite states were experiencing rapid transformation into modern socialist societies, can be viewed in the light of transformations in 19<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe of which Durkheim wrote. “East European modernization” was reflected in increases in suicide mortality, as well as in the tendency for suicide mortality to equalize across social classes, the so-called “democratization of suicide”.<sup>46</sup> However, any potential adaptation to these transformations was interrupted by a second wave of major transformations, namely the transition from state socialism into market economies.

## INDIVIDUALS IN CHANGING SOCIETIES: WAYS OF COPING

After all, the individual is essential to explanations of how a social impulse turns into a social reaction, a step that Durkheim himself, in his methodological works<sup>47</sup>, did not acknowledge, but one that has been emphasized by later scholars<sup>48</sup>. One general circumstance that may, to some degree, affect all kinds of changes,

is the availability of opportunities for coping with the changed situation. This might be more important than either the nature of the change or the fact of change per se. In their study of regional variations in suicide mortality in Russia 1990–2001, Yelena Andreyeva and her colleagues found that the strongest predictor of suicide mortality levels was the availability of “coping resources” in terms of opportunities to fight a declining living standard by turning to other economic alternatives, legal or illegal. Suicide rates were found to be higher in the provinces where the population lacked such opportunities.<sup>49</sup>

A very important aspect of the changes in East European suicide levels is that they have been far more pronounced among males (and among working-age males in particular). As mentioned above, male suicide mortality is considerably higher than that of females in the majority of countries, China being the only country where the female suicide rate is higher. However, the gap between male and female suicide rates is generally higher in East European countries than in West and North European countries, and this gap grew still further, and increased in relation to Western and Northern Europe, between 1987 and 1992.<sup>50</sup> The changes in Eastern Europe seem to have caused greater increases in male than in female suicide rates. That would indicate that any effect societal changes in Eastern Europe may have had on suicide mortality has been more detrimental to males, which in turn echoes the results of some previous research indicating that men’s suicide rates tend to react more than those of women to situations provoked by changing societal circumstances.<sup>51</sup>

In connection with the question posed above, it has been suggested that the gap between male and female suicide mortality rates might have to do with different options for coping with a changed situation. In an attempt to give an explanation of differences between male and female mortality in general in Eastern Europe, Peggy Watson<sup>52</sup> has argued that the importance of the family and the traditional gender roles that derive from the state-socialist era have led men and women to develop different ways of coping with difficulties. Under state socialism, the absence of credible social goals made the management of one’s everyday life and family an important personal priority. The traditional gender roles gave women an opportunity for coping by allowing them to focus on just that. Men, on the other hand, did not have this option – their position as breadwinners was more problematic, as it was difficult to develop meaningful roles in the work situation. In connection with the transition period, which was marked by rising unemployment, reduced

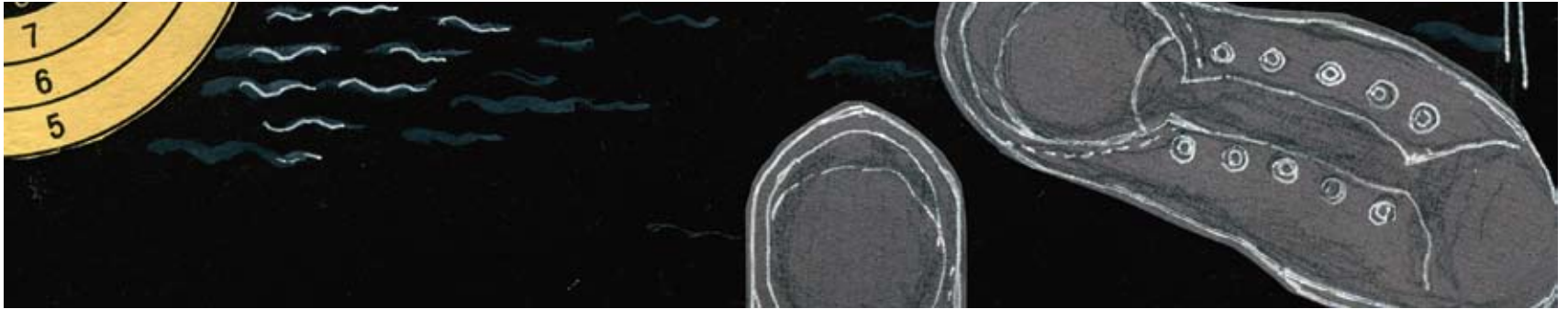
income, and uncertainty, men’s ways of coping became even more limited and fraught with difficulties.

As regards the general male-female difference in suicide, Anne Maria Möller-Leimkuehler<sup>53</sup> maintains that part of the explanation lies in masculine stereotypes and the coping behaviors they permit. Masculine stereotypes do not allow men to talk about their feelings or seek help, even when in need of it, while female gender roles allow women to do so. This probably also helps them to cope better with difficulties. Moreover, stereotypical male gender roles do not allow men to lose control or relinquish mastery. Under stressful circumstances, suicide may be seen as a way of taking control of and changing one’s situation.

Considering variations in suicide mortality, it seems curious that the largest increases after 1990 were observed in those countries that already had the highest suicide levels. If increases in suicide mortality are related to coping opportunities, as has been suggested above, then perhaps one could view suicide as a way of coping in times when alternative means of coping are scarce. In this manner, it might also be possible to see the simultaneous increase in alcohol consumption as *parallel*, rather than *prior*, to suicide; alcohol consumption would thus also, basically, be an alternative way of coping. If one takes this point of view, one may ask whether the likelihood of choosing suicide as a way of coping in a specific situation might depend on the degree to which suicide (or alcohol consumption for that matter) is already present in that particular culture. In this sense, it might be expected that the greatest variations in suicide mortality would be seen in countries where the suicide mortality level is already high.

## CONCLUSIONS

The fact that sharp increases in suicide mortality seem to have been a rather common element in many changing societies clearly demonstrates the accuracy of Durkheim’s description of suicide as a societal, rather than individual, phenomenon. However, societal changes are complex phenomena, and determining the potential trigger for increases in suicide levels is, it seems, very complicated. In the end, the result will most probably reflect the investigator’s choice of perspective. More interesting is perhaps the fact that societal change does not always appear to be accompanied by increases in suicide mortality, and when it is, it seems to be so for only a limited period of time immediately after the initial change. Above, it was suggested that the effect of societal change on suicide levels ultimately depends on the cultural context where it occurs. One might further hypothesize that suicide, as



a way of coping with societal change or, alternatively, as a result of such change, is a much more readily available (if not mandatory) option in some cultures than in others. If other ways of coping are available, there may be less of a tendency to choose the option of suicide. This is perhaps the case for women in Eastern Europe. The development of means of coping could be an ingredient in the adaptation to societal change, which is indicated by the falling or stabilizing suicide rates in Western Europe in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. ■

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## Male historians in exile. Constantly relating to their background

“Modern Western culture is in large part the work of exiles, émigrés, refugees.” The words are Edward Said’s, taken from his book *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000). The words stress the special importance exile has had in the development of cultural expression in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Said is, however, far from alone in emphasizing exile as a key to understanding our time. Exile as a poetic and existential trope is as old as Western history itself. Homer’s epic work *Odysseus* might be interpreted as one of the first narratives of exile. During the Renaissance, Francesco Petrarca on his part described exile as an emotional state, existentially comparable to death.

However, the exile to which Said refers is of a different, more immediate kind. As is well known, during the 1900s millions of people, including thousands of academics and artists, were forced to flee violent political upheavals. After World War II, researchers in a number of scholarly fields, particularly literary criticism and history, have investigated the various activities of emigrant and exile groups. The mass emigration from Germany has attracted most attention. Ehrhard Bahr’s study *Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism* (2007) is an interesting contemporary example of this kind of research. The 20<sup>th</sup> century mass flight of intellectuals from the Soviet-dominated areas has, in comparison, received far less attention.

Leading scholars of East European history have long sought to direct their focus to the decisive importance of exiled intellectuals in 20<sup>th</sup> century East European history-writing and nation-building. It is gratifying that this research area has become the subject of a conference, “East and Central European History Writing in Exile – International Dissemination of Knowledge”, held December 3–5 at Södertörn University, arranged by CBEES, within the framework of the research theme “cultural theory”.

**Over a period** of three days, presentations were given by close to twenty academics from different parts of Eastern Europe, each of whom had a particular approach to the subject. Special



attention was paid to historians in exile from the Baltic States, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and the former Czechoslovakia. One of the three principal objectives of the conference, besides illuminating the particular conditions of exile and the innovative thinking to which it can lead, was to examine how knowledge is disseminated. In his opening presentation, Stefan Berger from the University of Manchester emphasized that exile historians had tended to focus primarily on their home countries’ deficiencies, in order to gain a critical overview. At the same time, Berger argued, being in exile meant that the historians were suddenly placed outside their home countries’ institutional networks. This, in turn, made great claims on their ability to adapt quickly to the social and professional demands of their host countries. Here, language skills played an important part, but different academic cultures and stylistic codes might likewise be decisive for whether an article is accepted by a journal or a book is published.

Berger further directed attention to an important difference between historians who had fled Nazi Germany and those who fled the Soviet Union. In contrast to the formers’ generally critical, Western-influenced attitude towards older German historiography, which they blamed, to some degree, for the success of Nazism, the community of ex-Soviet historians took an anti-liberal stance, a stance which was, in time, to give rise to so-called Eurasianism.

Jaan Undusk, from Tallinn’s Under and Tuglas Literature Center, gave a presentation discussing the historian

Vello Helk (born 1923) which could be taken as a case-study of an exile historian’s achievements. After having been forced to enlist in the German army in 1944, Helk made it to Denmark in 1945. He quickly laid the foundation for a long academic career as a Danish-Estonian historian. Undusk described Helk’s case as an example of a particularly “successful” exile, as Helk rapidly established himself professionally in his new country. It had always been Helk’s ambition to stay in Denmark, to become a “good Dane”, an ambition that is reflected in his decision to publish many of his studies in Danish – amongst these a work on Estonia’s history, *Estlands historie* (1993). Helk studied many geographical areas, but he was always particularly interested in the Nordic nations and in Germany. German was Helk’s preferred second language for publishing purposes. In this context, one should mention his study *Die Jesuiten in Dorpat 1583–1625: Ein Vorposten der Gegenreformation in Nordosteuropa* (1977). Writing in German rather than Danish made it of course easier for Helk to gain international recognition for his work.

**Undusk traced** the reason for Helk’s many successes – Helk was awarded the Knight’s Cross of the Order of the Dannebrog and was also appointed vice archivist at the Danish National Archives – to his adaptability and his unrelenting loyalty to Denmark. It appears, however, that it was easier for Estonian academics to establish themselves in Denmark than in, for example, Sweden. Because Denmark, contrary to Sweden, did not have a sizeable Estonian community, Helk was perceived as an individual rather than as a member of a marginalized group. According to Undusk, this allowed Helk to demarcate himself more clearly. Furthermore, until his retirement, Helk avoided political stances and involvement in controversial issues.

This section’s subsequent three lectures focused less on individuals than on fairly large associations of exile historians, categorized according to pre-exile nationality. Andrejs Plakans from Iowa State University discussed his ongoing project, the mapping of Latvian historians exiled after 1945. After

fleeing Latvia, most of these settled in North America, Sweden, and Australia. Plakans follows a group of 25 individuals, spread over three generations. Of this group, only about ten were established historians when they fled Latvia in 1944. The third generation of historians, some of whom were not even born in 1945, is, together with the second generation, the group that has contributed most to the dissemination of Latvian history. At the same time, as Plakans was careful to point out, it is doubtful whether these second- and third-generation historians fit the definition “exile historian” to the same degree as the first generation.

In his presentation, Miroslaw Filipowicz from the Catholic University of Lublin focused on the first generation of Russian exile historians in the USA. From the Russian revolution until World War II, Russian exile historians settled primarily in European capitals such as Prague, Berlin, and Sofia. However, this changed in 1941, when the military alliance between the USA and the USSR led to a marked increase in American interest in the Soviet Union. American universities expanded their Russian studies programs, and both Harvard and Columbia universities opened Russian research institutes. Emigrant intellectuals from Russia were, thus, in great demand.

**Finally, Volodymyr** Kravchenko, Karazin National University in Kharkiv, described his research on Ukrainian exile historians. He is particularly interested in the third wave of Ukrainian emigrants, those who arrived in the USA during or immediately after World War II. Up to the late 1960s, Ukrainian exile historians were in the periphery of the American academia, and had difficulties establishing a dialogue with other exile groups. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, a series of important academic institutions were established (e.g. the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard) which gave the subject prestige and legitimacy. All the same, there still existed clear, ideology-tinted opposition between Ukrainian historians and researchers in Slavic, Russian and Soviet studies. Ukrainian Studies were, it was felt, tainted by extreme nationalism and insufficient objectivity. Meanwhile,

## Do it yourself urbanism. Vertical building extensions

Ukrainian historians accused Western intellectuals of being influenced by Soviet nationalistic historiography. This situation changed dramatically with the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Ukrainian Studies finally became an established part of mainstream West European academia.

**The speakers had,** in spite of their different research areas and foci, one striking similarity: the picture of the exile historian given was exclusively male. Unfortunately, the question raised during the concluding discussion, concerning the existence of exile women historians, was laughed away by some loud-voiced participants. The fact that two of those who had taken the initiative to arrange the conference were women historians with exile backgrounds, Anu Mai Kõll and Maria Zadencka, seemed to have been missed by most of the attending male historians. Latvian historians Lidiya Svabe, Mirdza Baltis and Zigrīda Runcis, the latter first archivist at the Swedish National Archives, the company also managed to ignore. We can only hope that future generations of historians specializing in this set of problems will be capable of seeing beyond anti-intellectual gender barriers. ✖

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Since 1989, post-communist Central and Eastern Europe have experienced a movement towards a market-based regulation of housing. Neo-liberal market practices have entered into almost all aspects of the housing sector. In many respects, this development has led to the polarization of society and of urban space, as some areas are gentrified while others, often working-class districts, have gone into decline. The inhabitants of such working-class neighborhoods have often been depicted as unable to adapt to the new economic situation. It has been argued that they lack the economic and social resources required to cope with changing circumstances.

Stefan Bouzarovski, a guest researcher at CBEES during the fall of 2009, has studied urban development in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Macedonia. Together with colleagues Michael Gentile and Joseph Salukvadze, he has reached the conclusion that residents in working-class areas may, in fact, display considerable resilience and adaptability to the new housing market, in spite of their very limited economic resources. One coping mechanism has been to enlarge apartments by building so-called vertical building extensions. These extensions are often of an improvised and temporary character, although some of them include concrete frame constructions that often resemble those of the “host building” in terms of size and function.

Much of this inventiveness is associated with changing values and power structures. One evident trend is the influx of new ideas and values in connection with the second demographic transition. The second demographic transition had entailed, among other things, substantial cultural changes with respect to family values and family structure. It began in North-West Europe (the Nordic countries and the Netherlands) in the 1960s and then spread to other Western countries. Signs of the transition, discernible as early as the 1980s, have become more obvious after 1989. At the nucleus of this new value system are the concepts of individualism, autonomy, and self-fulfillment. The expansion of economic and political opportunities inherent in the collapse of the authoritarian rule



and the planned economy, combined with increased normative pressure to strive for self-realization, including more individualized living conditions and more fluid family relations and household compositions, have led to a paradox. People desire more fluidity; but buildings are fixed. At the same time a housing career is not an option. Vertical building extensions can therefore be seen as temporally – and spatially – specific material manifestations of post-socialist coping strategies. They have provided a form of in situ residential mobility that significantly improves the living conditions of most of their residents, without those residents actually having to move. The extensions are, further, viewed as an investment at a time when trust in banks is at a low ebb.

In one of Bouzarovski's interviews, the following was the response of a city-dweller with experience in vertical building extensions:

“It really changed our life. We used to live in a one-bedroom, 60-square-meter apartment, with our son and his wife. Being unemployed, they can't af-

ford to move to a different home. Thanks to the addition of a new 20-square-meter room, which is used as a kitchen, we could convert the old kitchen into an additional bedroom. They are considering having a child now.”

The vertical building extensions are not only reflections of socio-economic and cultural change. They have also had an impact on social and economic life. The response from architects and other elite groups has, for aesthetic and security reasons, been largely negative (the extensions may imperil a building's resistance to earthquakes). Local authorities, however, sometimes motivated by considerations of financial nature, have often chosen to ignore the ongoing development. An entirely new semi-formal economy has grown out of these urban structures. There are construction companies that

specialize in vertical building expansions. Many people have also started to use them for private businesses.

Thus, the case of vertical building expansions shows that non-market transactions constitute a source of socio-spatial flexibility for marginalized groups. This flexibility provides these groups with limited but nonetheless real power with which they can counterbalance the structural-societal power that resides in the architecture itself. ✖

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# A MINORITY. A LANGUAGE WITHOUT AN ARMY

“Tolerance does not mean equality. Tolerance does not make anyone well-liked, just tolerated. You tolerate what you dislike, and no one wants to belong to a group that is (only) tolerated.”

Historian David Gaunt bases this observation on decades of experience in a field that might be summarized as minority research: the study of population groups that do not conform with the nation-states' strictest definitions of citizens, of minority groups that are subjected to the most extreme consequence of intolerance: genocide.

However, when he begins his research career, Gaunt is no specialist in minority issues. The year is 1968, a symbolic year in the political, even revolutionary sense.

At this time, Gaunt defines himself as anti-political, an anarchist. He comes to Sweden from the US, where he has studied at Kenyon College, which future prime minister Olof Palme attended, and at Washington University, where he won a Woodrow Wilson scholarship. It is his intention to study Swedish history.

But, “from day one”, he is confronted with the Swedish bureaucracy, which awakens his interest – both as a private individual and as a researcher – in the Swedish bureaucratic system, which is also associated with the minority issue.

Arriving in Sweden in 1968 meant obligatory registration at the police's immigration department. While waiting in line, Gaunt met Jews who had fled outbreaks of anti-Semitism in Poland, only to be told by Swedish immigration authorities that they must go to the Polish embassy in Stockholm to get their papers processed. Gaunt asked himself how a bureaucracy could manifest itself in this manner, why it had developed such an, at best, unimaginative way of handling people.

At Uppsala University he conducted research on the history of Swedish bureaucracy and, later, on family patterns.

**By 1978, Gaunt had** left Uppsala University to fill a position at Umeå University in northern Sweden. During his years in Umeå, he was to integrate the disciplines of anthropology and history. Together with one of his postgraduate students, Lennart Lundmark, Gaunt traveled “through the entire Arctic area of Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula” in order to study the history of the Sami. Gaunt had thus entered the field of minority research. At the same time, he continued his research on the family, which could be combined with his focus on minorities. As, for example, Gaunt did when he led a research project for the municipality of Stockholm in “applied ethnography”, investigating what it was like for Iranians, Kurds, Finns, and Greeks to grow old in Sweden. “Elderly immigrants stay in this country, the majority does *not* go home.”



Prof. David Gaunt's work on Turkey's Christian population has received attention even outside of academia.

“When I found out that Södertörn was to focus on multicultural studies, I decided that Södertörn would be a good place for me as a historian.”

Gaunt's years at Södertörn University have indeed confirmed his reputation as a minority researcher. His work on Turkey's Christian population – on how Turks and Kurdish tribes have massacred Assyrians, Syrians and Armenians – has received attention even outside of academia. In 2006, he published the book *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I*.

Minority research inevitably includes what Gaunt calls the morphology of genocide: the pattern followed when minorities are repressed. If genocide is to take place, certain preconditions must be fulfilled. One such precondition is the existence of a nation-state. The radical nationalism that emerged in the late 1800s points towards the future persecution of those who were not included in the national community and who therefore are identified as a problem, as a deviation from the pure norm.

**Gaunt reminds** us of the proverb: “A nation is a language with an army, a minority is a language without an army.”

Compared to nation-states, empires more easily include and tolerate minorities. They always comprise several language groups. Empire builders realize the advantage of encouraging and maintaining differences, of following the old device: divide and rule. This made itself felt within the Soviet army, where Estonian soldiers were placed in the Caucasus, Chechens in Lithuania, Belarusians in Chechnya. The only loyalties to be cultivated were those to the army and, of course, to the Soviet state.

The majority population may be suspicious and contemptuous of the minority, but that does not suffice to bring about persecution and genocide. For that to happen, the government and other authorities must kindle the majority's suspicion and hostility. As an evil and effective strategy, those in authority may describe

themselves (and the majority population) as victims of the minority, while they describe the minority as perpetrators, or as illegitimate holders of privileges, money, land, and positions.

This model does not apply to the persecution of the Romani, however. “Anti-Gypsism is not the same as anti-Semitism”, says Gaunt. Anti-Gypsism is directed against a people which is considered pathetic, inferior, under-privileged. Even though this is the perception of the Romani people, they have nonetheless been persecuted, repressed and subjected to extermination campaigns – that is, to an extreme kind of collective punishment. One possible explanation for this type of persecution of minorities is that the surrounding society wishes to eliminate not only what it experiences as a threat but also what is considered shameful, and therefore unbearable.

When the preconditions are in place, one must also *learn to kill* the others, those who are threatening, shameful.

Gaunt discusses his current research on the Holocaust that took place in the Baltic States – a subject on which relatively little research has been done.

“Most researchers are fixated on Auschwitz.”

The Holocaust started much earlier in the Baltic States than in Auschwitz, and it clearly shows genocide's tendency to expand. Around midsummer 1941, Jewish men capable of bearing arms were shot, in August it was the women and the children's turn to learn about death literally and palpably. Here, the Holocaust was far from being superior technologically. One shot one's (Jewish) neighbor with firearms, face-to-face.

Persecution is never a remote possibility. It is, rather, a latent force, easily mobilized, and objects of persecution are exchangeable. As Michel Foucault points out: when the leprosy colonies disappeared, the insane became the “problem”.

Gaunt knows more about minorities and genocide than most; this does not mean that he finds it comprehensible.

“The history of genocide is so *unnatural*; one can understand that there are conflicts, religious and ethnic, but it is impossible to understand those collective punishments.”

The after-effects of genocide make themselves felt within the affected families and in society as a whole for generations to come.

“It is only after a few generations that one can bring it up, and protest against the assault. The one who is subjected to it cannot, the second generation must relate to the first generation's suffering, it is in the third generation that it can happen.” ✕

**marielouise samuelsson**

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PHOTO: MIHAI ROMANCIUC - HTTP://FLIC.KR/P4PNYHD

# A EUROPEAN DILEMMA THE ROMANIES

BY IRKA CEDERBERG

**An e-mail came to** the Romani Internet group to which I belong. Jan was desperately appealing for help for himself and his family, his wife Anna and their two children. For five years they had been traveling through Europe, as refugees from Slovakia.

“We have two wonderful children”, wrote Jan, “but we might have had a third.”

Seven years earlier, Jan and his wife Anna, then nine months pregnant, had been on their way home one evening when they were suddenly surrounded by a group of neo-Nazis who, without a word, began to attack them. Jan was brutally beaten. When the neo-Nazis discovered that Anna was pregnant they yelled, “Oh, you want to multiply, you rats, and sully our white Slovakian race! We’ll finish what Hitler didn’t have time for!” One of the neo-Nazis kicked Anna in the stomach repeatedly until she fainted.

Jan and Anna woke up in the hospital, where they were informed that their child had not survived. During the police investigation, Jan heard one of the policemen say that now at least there was one less Gypsy in the country.

“Throughout Slovakia, Romanies are subjected to racial discrimination”, wrote Jan. Restaurants and public premises have posted signs: “Gypsies not allowed.” Employers say “no Gypsies”, without enquiring into the applicant’s qualifications. On the bus, Jan has seen other passengers wipe off the seat with a handkerchief after he has left it.

“A Gypsy can be as clean as crystal and dress like a prince, but to them we are all base dogs.”

In the schools, Romani children are placed in special classes because other parents do not want their “white” children to be taught together with Gypsy children.

“So I asked myself: What kind of future can I offer my children? Should I teach them to close their eyes to what is going on? Should I tell them not to take it to heart, as my parents said to me?

“No. I do not want my children to need to fear, to learn to close their eyes. To have to bring up one’s children in a place where people hate us so much that they even want to kill us is not human. I want to be free, without fear for my family, so that our children have no reason to be afraid in the playground and at school. Do we Romanies not have a right to a normal life?”

**About one month** after the assault, the family became the victim of another attack. A gasoline bomb was thrown through their window and the curtains caught fire.

“We would have endured their insults, discrimination and threats. But now we decided we had had enough. They had killed the child we expected and had ruined our home. We decided to leave our country for good.”

After three years in Holland, the family’s application for asylum was turned down. They could not return to Slovakia, for they were now stateless. Now began a classic, ambulating Romani life, lived in a trailer.

As illegal immigrants they were employed temporarily by farmers in Italy, France and Spain. They often went hungry and cold, and sometimes they were forced to flee from villages when people chased them away.

For five years in the 1990s, this stateless refugee family from Slovakia drifted around Europe – the heart of civilization. A gruesome parallel can be drawn with the centuries of persecution that their ancestors had endured. Today there is no bounty on Romanies. But the risk of having one’s nose cut off is as great as it was in medieval times.

Just then, this stateless Romani family had found a little breathing space. For the moment, their children were healthy and were attending school, wrote Jan. But how long would it last?

It was in Sweden that the family had found breathing space. They were living in a Swedish refugee facility. They had come to Sweden because someone had said this was a safe country. Anna’s life had just been saved, after a suicide attempt. But now their lawyer had informed them that they had no chance of being allowed to stay here.

**I made contact** with the family, and after visiting them in the refugee facility, I wrote an article about their situation. It appeared as a full-page feature article in the Swedish evening paper *Expressen* under the headline “A decent life, Göran Persson?” (April 3, 2000). Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson a few months previously had hosted his famous International Holocaust Conference which primarily focused on anti-Semitism, ignoring anti-Gypsyism almost completely.

Finally – the family was granted asylum in Sweden. This happened almost a decade ago. It is extremely doubtful whether Jan and his family would have been allowed to stay today, given Sweden’s current stone-cold asylum policy.

The world’s total Romani population numbers fifteen to twenty million. There are Romanies living in practically every nation in the world, except perhaps Iceland and Malta. About six to eight million are said to live in East and South Europe. It should be noted that while most Romanies live under miserable conditions, as is evident in the reports discussed below, this definitely does not apply to all Romanies. There are among them well-educated professionals, academics, researchers, physicians, politicians, artists, writers, and musicians. But for many of these, their careers have cost them their Romani identity. They have had to change their names, for instance, or take other measures to disguise the fact that they are Romanies.

The European attitude to Romanies resembles, in many respects, the attitude that Europeans adopted, for centuries, towards Jews.

**According to German** historian Wolfgang Wippermann, the term anti-Gypsyism was coined in connection with post-war Holocaust research. The historical parallels between anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsyism are numerous. Like the Jews, the Romanies have been seen as an alien people, have been viewed with distrust and fear, surrounded by mythmaking. Romanies and Jews have been attacked and demonized from pulpits, in popular culture, in literature, and, lately, not least in the media.

Anti-Semitism is, without a doubt, still strong in Europe, but many consider racism against Romanies, anti-Gypsyism, far more prevalent. A German opinion

poll held approximately one year ago showed that while 20 percent of the population held anti-Semitic attitudes, more than 60 percent expressed anti-Gypsyist opinions.

Unlike anti-Semitism, anti-Gypsyism has always remained more or less *salonfähig*. One reason for this is a lack of knowledge about Romani culture and history. When, in the early 1990s, thousands of Romanian Romanies applied for asylum in Germany, neither politicians nor mass media had any idea of the conditions they endured. No-one was aware that for five hundred years – up until 1864, in fact – the Romanies had been slaves in their home country.

Wolfgang Wippermann, who specializes in the fate of the Romanies under Nazism, has an additional explanation. Not until the 1980s did West Germany acknowledge that the Nazi extermination policy had been directed as much against Romanies as against Jews. The consequences of this denial of racist genocide can be felt today, Wippermann claims. When it comes to the Romanies, there is no general European acknowledgement of guilt; the majority of the population has not become engaged in fighting prejudice and anti-Gypsyism.

Europe’s Romanies have never held a position of power and have never been given a state of their own. The prejudices against them are centuries old and deeply rooted. After one thousand years of being part of the European political region, the Romanies are still seen as alien. Those in power have never had to rely on good relations with the Romanies, and so racism against them – anti-Gypsyism – has been allowed to flourish.

The old communist regimes in East and Central Europe thought racism was something unique to the USA and to apartheid South Africa. Officially there was no anti-Gypsyism; racism was forbidden by law. But when the Eastern bloc dissolved, Pandora’s Box snapped open. The economic system collapsed. A large number of people became unemployed. Poorly educated Romanies, who had depended on state-owned and collective workplaces, were among those worst hit. When large sections of the population were hit, as well, Romanies became scapegoats. Skinheads appeared in the streets, threatening everyone who looked “foreign”. Xenophobic and fascist parties multiplied. In many countries, they made it into parliament.

In January 2004, a few months before the EU was to admit ten new members, eight of which were East and Central European countries, European media was gripped by panic. The British popular press initiated an unprecedented witch-hunt, painting vivid pictures of hordes of impoverished East European Romanies swarming into the country.

**On January 18** 2004, the *Sunday Times* proclaimed that East European Romanies were just waiting for the day of the EU’s eastern expansion to start out towards the West. *The Sun*, Rupert Murdoch’s tabloid, claimed that tens of thousands of “Gypsies” were standing ready to stream into England. The following day, the number of Romanies prepared to “stream in” had, according to the *Daily Express*, grown to 1.6 million. And on February 5 2004, the *Daily Express* front page thundered in fat headlines: “GYPSIES YOU CAN’T COME IN.”

The British newspapers were clearly conducting a hate-campaign against people of Romani ethnicity. But no protests against this media witch-hunt were heard from politicians in Great Britain or other EU countries. Instead, the Labour government, led by Tony Blair, found it necessary to introduce restrictions on welfare benefits for jobseekers that came to Great Britain from the EU's new member countries. This could be seen as a silent endorsement of the British media's anti-Romani campaign.

Many Romanies had nursed high hopes concerning the EU expansion. The European Union had, after all, clearly demanded that the new member states guarantee the human rights of their large Romani populations. The new members were to end discrimination against Romanies in the labor and housing markets; in particular, they were to stop placing Romani children in separate, inferior school classes. Poorly educated, unemployed Romanies from the old, now-defunct centrally governed economies hoped for a chance to make better lives for themselves in EU's free labor market. Romani activists expected the EU to constitute a platform that would allow Romanies to participate in European politics. Romani voluntary organizations were hoping for greater support in order to further their cause.

There was awareness, within the EU, of the serious situation faced by Romanies in the new member countries. Fair treatment of the Romani minorities was made a requirement for admission into the EU. The pressure exerted was, of course, partially motivated by self-interest. The better the living conditions of Romanies in their homelands, the less likely they were to move to the richer EU countries.

The applicant countries made an effort to live up to the EU's stringent demands. They passed legislation against discrimination and established institutions for Romani self-government. The EU invested about 55 million euros in measures that were meant to improve the conditions of Romanies in the applicant countries.

But some Romanies voiced skepticism. They pointed out that when it came to the treatment of the Romanies, the "old" EU had many skeletons in its closets, too. Focusing attention on the Romanies just before the expansion of the EU did not mean that their situation would improve. How could EU membership change centuries of prejudice?

And what were the final results? Even though there have been noticeable improvements in several countries' healthcare and educational sectors, critics maintain that these have had little impact on the everyday lives of the Romanies. Romani organizations claim that the EU's monetary contributions often ended up in the wrong hands. The EU has been criticized for not cooperating directly with the Romanies and their various organizations.

Today, the Romanies are every bit as poor and marginalized, as unemployed, and as poorly housed as they ever were. They are as far from leading the normal lives of citizens in their own countries as they were before the EU's expansion.

In the West European nations, where Romanies have been a much smaller minority than in the east, anti-Gypsyism has smoldered for centuries. The recent expansion of the EU has given it added mo-

mentum. The expansion allowed citizens of new EU countries such as the Czech Republic, Romania, and Hungary to travel freely within the EU. The financial crisis that began to spread across the world in the fall of 2008 has led to worsened living conditions for everybody, but especially for Romanies.

In recent years, Europe's increasing anti-Gypsyism has been marked not only in the rhetoric and activities of the growing hosts of racist and neo-Nazi parties and organizations. These are, in fact, encouraged by leading politicians in a number of countries. In Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Italy, the tone has hardened alarmingly. To paraphrase a Slovakian Romani: If, a few years ago, you had accused a politician of being a racist, he would have responded with vehement denials. Today, the politician will say: certainly I'm a racist.

During the last two years, at least ten Romanies have been murdered in Europe for ethnical reasons. Romani settlements are being demolished. Pogroms are on the rise.

The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that all persons must be granted the nationality of the state in which they were born, if they otherwise would be stateless. An estimated 640,000 people are stateless in Europe. This is a hidden and neglected problem that affects, not least, Europe's Romanies.

**There are no** reliable figures as to how many Romanies are stateless, although estimates place the numbers at 10,000 in Bosnia, 1,500 in Montenegro, 17,000 in Serbia, and 4,090 in Slovenia. These are persons who were previously Yugoslavian citizens but who became stateless when Federal Yugoslavia dissolved. Those who failed to apply for citizenship in the new state within a set period of time were erased from the population registers. Romanies who moved to other countries lost citizenship in their countries of birth.

In other countries, the authorities have introduced legislation and regulations aimed at ridding the nation of Romani citizens. When, in 1993, Czechoslovakia was divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the Czech Republic planned to introduce strict regulations on citizenry which would, in practice, have rendered the majority of the country's Romanies stateless. Intervention from the Council of Europe forced them to soften the law, but its intentions were indisputable.

Many Romanies in Latvia and Estonia are also without citizenship.

In the spring of 2005, two years before Romania and Bulgaria had joined the EU, the EU Commission published a report on the Romanies' situation in the expanded European Union. "The Situation of Romanies in an Enlarged Europe" described both the Roma – mostly dismal – history in Europe, and their present problematic situation.

According to the report, there is, throughout Europe, a lack of understanding of the Romanies' extremely vulnerable position. The treatment of the Romanies is described as "one of the most important political, social and humanitarian questions in today's Europe". The report stresses the need for forceful legislation

against anti-Gypsyism in all EU member states, old as well as new.

**The growing anti-Gypsyism**, and the violence against Romanies, has caused a good deal of unease within the Union. The violence in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary has been condemned, but the growing racism in Italy has remained largely unnoticed. Despite long series of analyses and reports, no concrete measures against anti-Gypsyism have been forthcoming.

In 2003, the UN's Development Program, UNDP, presented alarming figures. These were based on interviews with more than 5,000 Romanies in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania, countries that are home to approximately 7.5 million Romanies – perhaps 80 percent of all the world's Romani population. UNDP studied such factors as child mortality, income level, and access to food and education. The conclusion was that the Romanies were "the poorest of the poor" and often lived in conditions that were far worse than the poorest levels found in the developing world. In many respects, the Romanies had apparently fared significantly better during the communist era, the report continues, although those advances had often required turning their backs on their cultural and linguistic identity. Now, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, 30 percent of Romanies in the countries investigated are dependent on public welfare. A mere 20 percent have steady employment, while another 20 percent work on the black market. One of six does not get enough to eat and one of two goes hungry for at least a few days each year. Every third child never completes elementary school and two out of three drop out at the intermediate level. Romani children are routinely placed in schools for mentally handicapped children.

In 2007, UNICEF, the United Nations' Children's Fund, released a report on the living conditions of Romani children in Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Bulgaria, and Romania. Of these 3.7 million Romanies (the majority living in Romania and Bulgaria) close to half, 46 percent, are children. According to the report, a great majority of these live below the poverty line and lack access to education and healthcare; their housing is sub-human. In Romania, two out of three Romanies live below the subsistence level and one in three live in ghetto-like settlements, often without running water.

The European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights, FRA, has the task of collecting data and information about human rights, assisting member states with advice, facilitating a dialogue with civil society and creating awareness about human rights issues. The FRA cooperates with the Council of Europe and other organizations and institutions on human rights.

In the spring of 2009, the FRA presented a study of the EU's immigrants and ethnic minorities, in an attempt to gain an overview of the occurrence of racism in the Union. This is the first investigation of its kind to include the entire EU. Approximately 25,000 persons in all 27 member countries were interviewed. The study shows that discrimination, harassment and racist violence are far more common than is registe-

red in the nations' official statistics. Not surprisingly, Romanies and Africans are the most exposed. They experience racism and discrimination on a daily basis. They question the police and the authorities' capability and willingness to defend them and therefore rarely report it when they are victims of crime.

Of those interviewed, 55 percent believe that ethnic discrimination is wide-spread in their own country and 37 percent have personally experienced discrimination within the last twelve months. 12 percent have, during the past year, been victims of racist violence and 80 percent of these have not bothered to report the violence to the police. Among the Romanies, as many as half of those interviewed report instances of discrimination.

In November 2009, the FRA released another report, which describing the situation of Romanies who have sought better lives by moving to other member countries. Not surprisingly, the report shows that the right of EU citizens to move freely within the Union does not extend, in practice, to those belonging to the Romani minority.

**Together, these reports** arrive at an unequivocal conclusion: racism against Romanies is on the increase throughout Europe. Many Romanies live in constant fear of racists, and draw comparisons with the atmosphere in Germany during the 1930s. Why,

then, is nothing being done?

The Romanies come by the thousands from the EU's new member countries, searching for a more tolerable existence in the old member states. One sees them, often, begging in the streets of London, Berlin, Oslo, Stockholm, and Helsinki. In many countries, the police suspects that the begging is organized by criminal gangs, something, however, for which no-one has yet found any proof.

In Helsinki, the population has reacted with horror to the growing number of beggars in the streets, most of whom come directly from Romania. The Finnish police has cold-bloodedly demolished a number of temporary dwellings that the Romanian Romanies had erected in the outskirts of Helsinki. The Romanies were offered no alternative dwellings, which led to sharp critique from, among other sides, the United Nations' Human Rights Council UNHCR.

It is not illegal to beg in either Finland or Sweden. Other EU countries have passed legislation against begging. The begging Romanies present a growing problem that has yet to be solved.

On September 16 2008, during the French Presidency, the European Commission held its first-ever summit on the Romanies. The immediate motive was Italy's infamous fingerprinting and registration of Romanies, as well as pogroms in Naples and other places. The participants made up an impressive group: five EU Commissioners, government representatives

from the member countries, the Council of Europe, OSSE, the World Bank, the UN, and many others. The tone was urgent. "The dramatic situation of the Roma in Europe cannot be solved in Brussels", said the Commission's chairman José Manuel Barroso, who also said, "This must not become just another discussion meeting".

Nevertheless, the summit became just that. Its only result was the decision to hold another summit meeting in 2010.

But now, at least, the Romani issue is on the EU agenda. After the summit, the Commission created a platform for the inclusion of the Romanies – not a formal institution but, it is claimed, an arena for the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and examples of good practice. There is, thus, as yet, no suggestion or common strategy for the solution of the Romanies isolation; merely the creation of a new discussion club.

In October 2009, Valeriu Nicolae and Bernard Rorke from George Soros's Open Society Institute published a skeptical commentary on what the EU had achieved at the previous year's summit. During that year, they write, despite all the bombastic assurances of engagement in behalf of the Romanies, violence against them had increased dramatically.

The principal responsibility for protecting the Romanies still rests on the national level, Nicolae and Rorke continue, in spite of all the assurances of supranational EU engagement. And, as the authors point



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## A EUROPEAN DILEMMA. THE ROMANIES

out, the situation on the national level is alarming in terms of, for instance, school segregation, increasing racist violence and pogroms, as well as a growing number of racist statements made by local and national politicians. The fact that the Commission, after the first summit of 2008, established a platform for cooperation between EU institutions and civic society which should be capable of producing a strategy for the integration of Romanies and suggesting forceful measures against anti-Gypsyism, they term a positive sign. But neither strategy nor suggestions have yet emerged; nor has the Commission specified how the platform is to function or what its objectives are to be, write Nicolae and Rorke.

**EU's leading politicians** have, as far as they possibly can, tried to keep the Romani issue at the national level. To criticize other countries' minority policies is a delicate matter. The question is how long the EU can refrain from passing forceful censure on Italy, Hungary, Great Britain, the Czech Republic, and other member states where anti-Gypsyism is on the rise.

Increasingly, the world's Romanies organize across national borders, a development that has been facilitated by the Internet. Already in 1971, the International Romani Union was established; approximately 70 Romani organizations from 28 countries have joined. The Union chose a Romani national anthem, "Djellem, Djellem", and a flag common to all the world's Romanies. In 1979, the UN granted the International Romani Union NGO status.

Growing anti-Gypsyism is one acute problem faced by the Romani organizations. Other important issues concern culture and the Romani language, Romani Chib. The Romanies are trying to reach consensus on the development of a standard language that can be understood by all the world's Romanies, based on all the 60 or so variants of that language. Today, there is a new ethnic consciousness among the Romani people who for much of their history have been forced, through fear of persecution, to hide their identity – a situation that, in some places, continues today.

**Romanies have grown** tired of always being described as a problem, as criminals and parasites. They are equally sick of the romantic Hollywood image of the carefree Gypsy. Romani activists now claim that if there is a problem with the Romanies, the problem is ethnic – not social.

But do they wish to be viewed as a unified nation, a Romanistan – albeit a nation without its own territory – or is their goal, rather, some sort of trans-nationalism? These are questions that are discussed among the Romanies. And who is to represent them in the various international agencies in which they participate, with increasing frequency? Should their representatives be "the elders", leaders appointed in traditional fashion; or should they be elected in a more democratic manner, as many young Romanies demand?

Would it be advisable to establish an EU citizenship, as suggested by the International Romani Union? This implies the obsolescence of the concept of the state;

after all, nationalism often leads to persecution and war. The principle here is a Europe consisting of human beings, not of states.

In May 2002, the World Romani Congress in Poland proclaimed a Romani nation – a nation without territory – and, as such, demanded greater Romani representation in the UN and the European Parliament.

In 1944, economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal published the book *An American Dilemma*, in which he discussed the situation of blacks in USA. He described the contradiction between the United States' official ideals – freedom, equality, and justice – and the racism that was in reality practiced in that country.

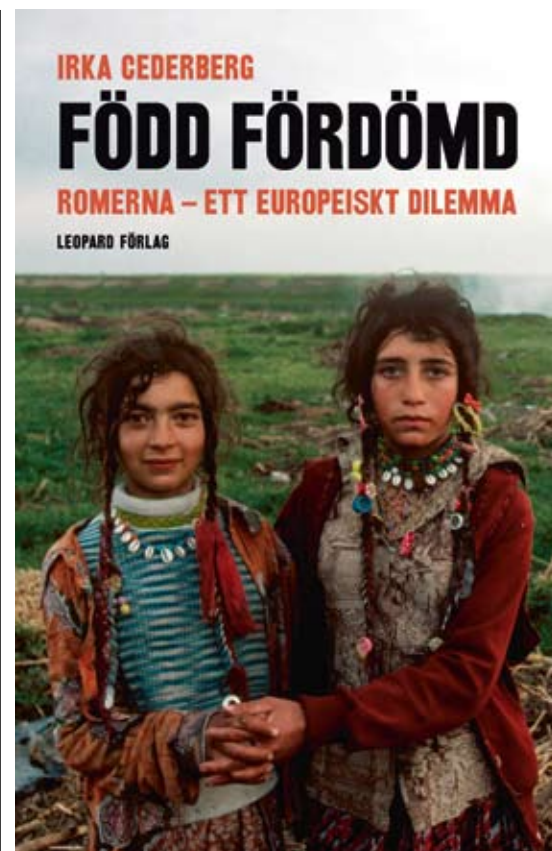
Time has come to speak of *The European Dilemma* – the contradiction between Europe's lofty ideals and the Europeans' treatment of their largest minority, the Romanies. In Europe, the Romanies number between ten and twelve million. Ever since their first arrival in Europe, a thousand years ago, they have been discriminated against and persecuted. And this persecution continues to this day. And yet lofty ideals, human rights and equality before the law are also revered within the European Union.

The Romanies are a people in Europe, the largest European minority without a territory. As boundary crossers with multifaceted experiences from most of Europe's countries, they may very well be "the only true Europeans" – as Nobel Prize winner Günter Grass calls them.

In Europe, millions are born condemned – this is a European dilemma. ❌

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## AUTHOR PRESENTATION

Irka Cederberg is a journalist and a Bachelor of Science in Social Work. For two decades, she has monitored and reported on the Romanies' situation in today's Europe. She has contributed to a number of anthologies, e.g. *Ett fördrivet folk: Antologi om förtryck och diskriminering av romer/zigenare/resande* [A Banished People: An Anthology about Repression and Discrimination of Romanies/Gypsies/Travelers], Forum för levande historia 2005. Her Swedish-language book *Född fördömd: Romerna – ett europeiskt dilemma* [Born Condemned: Romanies a European Dilemma], Leopard förlag, will appear in the spring of 2010.

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## THE FACES OF THE CRISIS IN THE EAST

# EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

## – AND A NEW ROLE FOR LABOR MARKET PARTIES

BY ANNA DANIELSSON ÖBERG

**One year ago,** most people realized that the financial crisis would lead to unemployment among EU citizens. Of course no one had any idea how many would be affected. Now we know. More than 4.6 million people lost their job between December 2008 and December 2009. This means that more than 23 million men and women today are unemployed.

The numbers vary greatly from country to country. According to Eurostat, Latvia tops the list with more than 22 percent unemployed, while the Netherlands ranks the lowest with 4 percent unemployed.

Researchers noted last year (BW vol. II: 1) that the crisis had affected the EU's internal migration patterns. The inflow of migrants from Eastern Europe to the largest receiving countries, Great Britain and Ireland, diminished during the fall of 2008. They also pointed out that we lack information concerning short-term migration patterns. The reason is that complex statistical data must be processed in each country and then be correlated.

Mihails Hazans, professor of economics at Riga's University of Latvia, is among those who believe that one can already see definite patterns. Last year, citizens in the EU's new member countries were less willing to move to Great Britain or Ireland – with the exception of citizens in the Baltic States. In the case of Latvia, he observes, migration numbers have almost doubled.

"During the first three quarters of 2009, more than 10,000 persons from Lithuania and almost as many from Latvia were registered as wage earners in the UK Worker Registration Scheme. But the total number of emigrants was higher. Last year, between January and June alone, 10,000 persons from Lithuania and more than 8,000 from Latvia were issued national insurance numbers", says Mihails Hazans.

And even though Irish unemployment was high in 2009, numbers show that nearly 4,000 persons left Latvia in order to go to Ireland. The new tendency seems to be that those who leave are planning to stay away for a long time, perhaps even settle permanently in their new countries. Another novelty is that interest in Norway has increased. Crash courses in Norwegian have gained in popularity.

Mihails Hazans estimates that approximately 30,000 Latvians did emigrate in 2009, and that this trend will continue for years to come:

"My guess is that the number will rise to about 100,000 persons over three years."

Charles Woolfson, professor in labor market research at the Institute for Migration, Ethnicity and Society at Linköping University, also predicts that there will be extensive migration, especially from Lithuania and Latvia.

"It will most likely be as great as it was at its peak – that is to say, some years after EU membership: 100,000-130,000 persons over a few years. What makes it serious is that these countries have dwindling populations. The birth rate is negative and the population is ageing while, at the same time, the young people are leaving. This leads to greater risk of social instability", says Woolfson.

**Those who leave** move away from something.

Factors such as unemployment benefits so low that one can barely survive on them, low wages, often paid "under the table", deteriorating healthcare and schools, etc., increase the likelihood for migrants to accept positions with low wages and poor working conditions in the countries to which they emigrate.

"The risk of exploitation is great and accordingly, there is a risk that wages will be lowered in the countries they go to. I am worried that tension will increase within the EU and that xenophobia will increase. We already see that happening."

If migration from the Baltic States becomes considerable, it may make it necessary for those countries to import labor from countries outside of the EU. This has already happened, e.g. from Thailand and China.

"But the Baltic States are not yet ready to receive persons from another culture or those who look different. They are quite simply not ready for a multicultural society", says Charles Woolfson.

Pawel Kaczmarczyk, vice director of the Centre of Migration Research at the University of Warsaw and advisor to Poland's prime minister Donald Tusk, notes that Polish statistics give a clear picture. If one com-

pares the number of Poles who were living outside of Poland in early 2008 with the same numbers for early 2009, one finds a decrease of 60,000 – to 2.2 million people.

"That is a significant drop. But one cannot say, with any certainty, whether it means that more of those who were working abroad temporarily have returned, or whether fewer people are leaving."

Although unemployment has not increased drastically in Poland (8.9 percent in December), Pawel Kaczmarczyk believes that the crisis as such makes people more cautious.

"It delays the decision-making process. People stay where they are, at home in Poland or abroad. But we do not yet know how the flows really look."

In Poland, also, there is great interest in going to Norway – and to Sweden. But that does not mean that Poles, when they decide to go abroad to work, either temporarily or longer-term, actually go to those countries.

"First of all there must be an obvious economic boom – and a widespread demand. One must keep in mind that in early 2009 there were 650,000 Poles living in Great Britain, and there is simply not enough room for that many in small countries like Norway and Sweden."

Statistics from Great Britain and Norway neither confirm nor refute claims that the crisis does affect migration patterns. The reason is quite simple: there are, as yet, no statistics available, according to both Christian Dustmann, professor of economics at London's University College and director of the Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration, and Line Eldring, research leader at the Norwegian research institute Fafo.

"What we can see is that the number of migrants from the eight countries that became [EU] members in 2004 is stable if we compare the first quarter of 2008 to the first quarter of 2009. But that is all we can say. Nor do we know what has caused this, whether the inflow and outflow have changed or remained constant", says Christian Dustmann.

Line Eldring gives the same picture. Comparisons between the third quarter of 2008 and the third quar-

**From no pay to low pay. When Europe unified, the labor market was divided in two.**

ter of 2009 certainly show that the number of Poles arriving in Norway has diminished somewhat, while the number of Latvians has increased a bit. But in order to determine with any certainty that something has changed, one needs more extensive statistical data.

"As yet, the numbers are simply too uncertain", she says.

Even if unemployment, when compared to the Baltic States, is lower in countries like Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, to some degree Ireland, and not least in Norway, it is higher today than it was previously. And forecasts indicate that it will take a while before the demand for labor goes up again. Whether an economic slump in what used to be attractive recipient countries for EU migration affects the will to migrate is open to question.

**Perhaps, argues** Christian Dustmann. But at the same time he stresses that migration depends on individual decisions. One reason why the prospect of moving to Great Britain has become less attractive is the devaluation of the British pound:

"I think migration will decrease in all countries. But in the long run, I am convinced that migration levels between EU member countries will rise."

Charles Woolfson is not equally convinced that the economic situation and labor market conditions are decisive for those who consider moving from Eastern to Western Europe:

"One must keep in mind that wages, no matter how low they are compared to those in, say, Great Britain, are still better than attempting to survive on the very, very low unemployment benefits provided in most of these countries."

A paradoxical outcome of the crisis may turn out to be that unions and employers find more explicit roles to play in the former East European countries. This conclusion has been reached by people with a reputed competence in the subject-matter. Anne Knowles and Svetla Shekerdjieva both work in the regional office of the International Labor Organization, ILO, in Budapest, whose task it is to further developments in the East European countries.

"Our impression that the governments have realized that if they do not talk to the labor market parties it will be more difficult to drive through the policies made necessary by the crisis. It is always difficult to generalize, but simplifying a bit one might say that the crisis has not been purely bad news for the labor market parties in these countries", says Anne Knowles, who represents the employers at the office in Budapest.

Together with Svetla Shekerdjieva, who has a background in union work in Bulgaria, Knowles is supposed to look after the development in a total of 18 countries, plus Kosovo. The mission has been going on since the early 1990s. Its purpose is to support processes that help establish relations between labor market parties. But ILO must also support the creation of modern labor

market policies, and help reform social insurance and pension systems. In order to be located in the "thick of it", the ILO office was established in Budapest. Today, its work is primarily directed towards countries that are not EU members.

"The countries outside of the EU have not established the same institutions as the former East bloc countries that have now become members", says Svetla Shekerdjieva.

According to their own ranking, Hungary belongs to the countries within their area of responsibility that have been hardest hit by the crisis. Unemployment is high (10.7 percent in December 2009) and the country's debt is sky-high. The crisis is felt by anyone who visits Budapest's city center. The expensive name-brand boutiques stand glaringly empty. The architects had obviously envisioned hordes of eager-to-shop Hungarians and tourists swarming in and out of the stores; but shoppers are few and far between.

"If the black economy develops further, things will be serious. Lower tax revenues obviously mean lower income for the states in this region, and these incomes are sorely needed", says Anne Knowles.

Björn Grünwald, with a background as director of the former Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF), became ILO's first employers' representative in Budapest. Since the early 1980s, he has had assignments in various East European countries, first on behalf of SAF and, as of 1992, of ILO. Now, 20 years after the fall of the Wall, Grünwald thinks that the World Bank, not least, was too hasty in carrying out changes in the former Eastern bloc.

"It won't do prescribing to countries that have had a certain system that now you must do it our way and do so within a few years. There was no corresponding infrastructure in these countries and they needed time to build it up. But the World Bank, the IMF and

other financial actors attempted to force through an instant market economy and did not realize the significance of a series of important differences."

Being self-critical, he thinks that even the ILO was in too much of a hurry. The organization had the best of intentions and attempted to save time for the East European countries, he observes. But one cannot "cultivate" a labor market party system that it has taken one hundred years to establish in the West, expecting that this can be done in a few years in the East. It must take time.

**"These countries** lacked all references and had no clue what we were talking about. 'Employer' was an insult and the 'union' was a state tool that was used against the workers."

Like his successors, he notes that the East European governments are beginning to turn to unions and employers' associations in order to gain support for their policies. In the not too distant future, he anticipates, this will prove a promising development. But there is no doubt that the crisis has caused serious economic concerns in many of these countries.

"Compared to the situation when the Wall fell, things are different. Many countries have a functioning infrastructure, fully established or under construction. The crisis has forced people to realize that one cannot demand economic changes and sacrifices without offering support. Furthermore, economic changes happen faster here than in what we call the West. In our countries trade cycles last five to eight years, while in East European countries they last half as long.

"So, in a few years much can happen – in the right direction." ❌

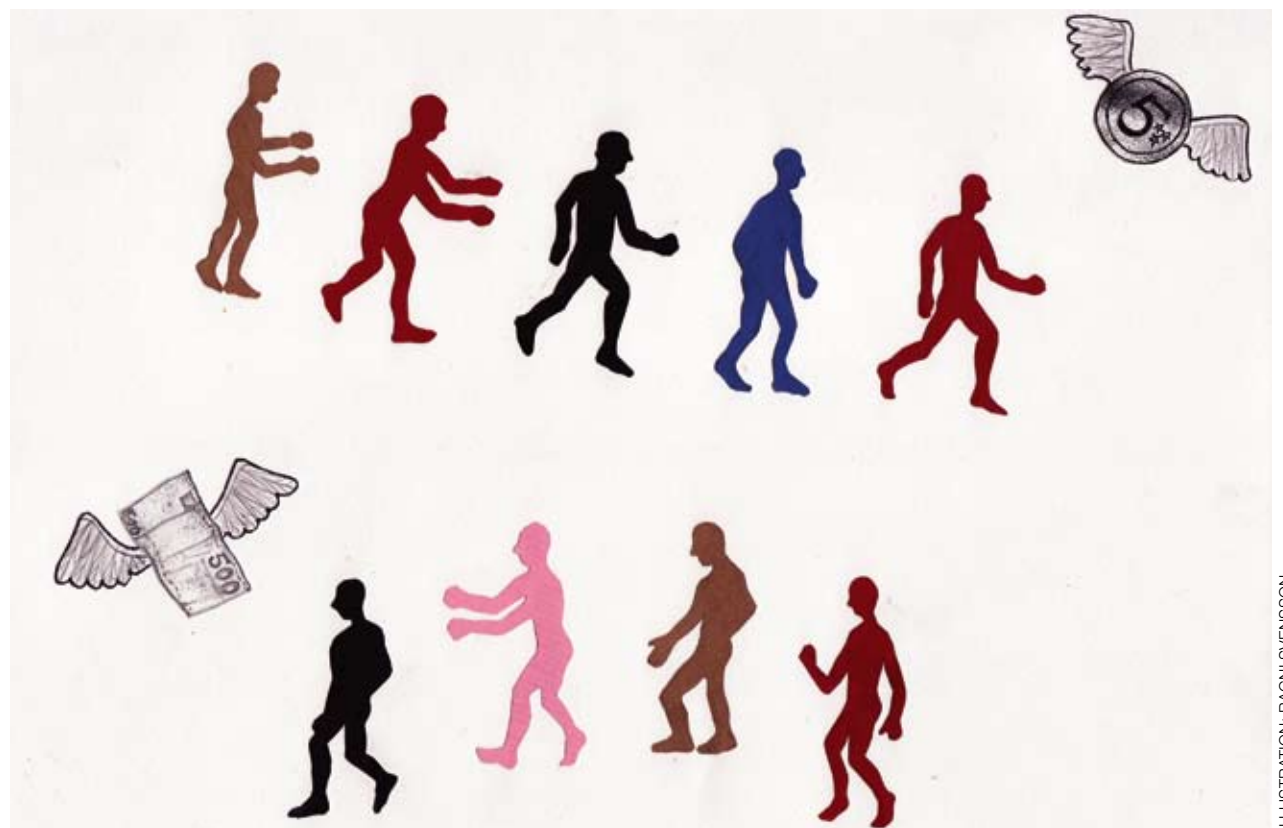


ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

**The Wall fell. Finally, the unions in the West had something new to talk about.**

# A GERMAN FAREWELL

The primary school of  
Kruschdorf where Folke  
went during the war.

BY FOLKE SCHIMANSKI

**T**he last Christmas of the war we celebrated by ourselves. It was a melancholy event as we all had the feeling that it would be our last family get-together. Our father came for a visit. He had managed to get his hands on four small candles that we put on a small, tabletop Christmas tree. That was a quite a change from the tall Christmas tree with its innumerable candles back in our Berlin home. No silver-plated swastika adorned the tree this time.

For me, it was a bittersweet memory. The harmony we all felt around the little Christmas tree coming to such an abrupt end. (And this kind of uncompleted event would become a recurrent theme in my life to come: a life of repeated interruptions and human relations constantly being broken off. A staccato life, instilling in me a desperate longing for something permanent. Someone must have decided that my life should be like this, perhaps me?).

When our last Christmas together ended, it was as if a blind had been pulled down. Our mother did not follow our father to the station. He absolutely did not want her to do so. She was never to see him again, and I would not meet him again until the 1950s.

My last letter from the German Reich to my father was written on January 3 1945. It was mailed from my sister's "Young-Sister Home" in Thorn, to which we had traveled at New Year. In the students' room where my sister lived I remember a large color portrait of Der Führer in his field uniform

The Soviet army was moving closer. There was a general feeling of apprehension. The official information on the Russians' advance was highly inadequate. One day, my mother and I calmly went shopping in Bromberg; however, when we arrived at the train station, we encountered a mass of suitcases collected

next to a sign upon which was written Evakuierung Thorn. Thorn was located only fifty kilometers south of Bromberg. We were shocked and dismayed.

Pathetic trenches had been dug by my sister and her BDM-fellows outside of Thorn, but just before Christmas this activity had come to an end. It was meant as a contribution to the Reichsarbeitsdienst (the obligatory manual work assignment for those in their late teens), and the Nazi leader in Danzig who had come on inspection had promised them "digging badges" for their efforts. The badges never arrived.

Where was she now? To our relief we found her on the stairs leading to the second story of the station building.

**On January 17,** the Russians were just fifty kilometers outside of Thorn, now it was the 20<sup>th</sup> and the flight from that town was already a fait accompli. We rushed head over heels back home to Kruschdorf, informed the surprised villagers of the seriousness of the situation, and hurriedly packed our possessions. My mother went to see a pompous little gentleman who was referred to as *Ortsbauernführer* (there were plenty of little Führers in the Third Reich), and asked for permission to flee to Berlin. He did not understand. No one was allowed to flee just like that.

But my daughter has fled from Thorn!

Fled?? Has your daughter fled?! No, she has been evacuated, the little Führer corrected her.

When things went badly for Hitler's armies, one resorted to a language in which any intimation of a setback was glossed over. Typical of the lunatic perseverance of the shrinking Third Reich was that the rocket testing at Tucheler Heide went on until the Red Army approached. The last V2 rocket was shot off on

## AUTHOR PRESENTATION



Folke Schimanski.

Folke Schimanski was for several decades a distinguished voice on the air. During the years when he was active at the public-service corporation Sveriges Radio (the Swedish National Radio), Schimanski covered a wide range of subject matters.

Schimanski's flight to Sweden at a young age was a consequence of the German defeat in World War II. In his work as a journalist, he took a critical stance to his early experiences in Hitler's Germany as well as to his special family situation: his father, who had been a member of the Sturmabteilung and of the NSDAP, remained in Berlin where he died at an extremely high age, while Schimanski's sister remained faithful to her ideological convictions and her belief in Hitler, and became the leader of a Swedish Nazi party, Nordiska Rikspartiet (Nordic Reich Party). Schimanski has also been active as an author of works on German cultural and political history.

**IN SWEDISH, SCHIMANSKI** has published *Dröm och verklighet i DDR: Några samtal med dem som var med* [Dream and Reality in GDR: Some Conversations with those who were part of it] (1993), och *Historien om Weimar: En kultur i Europas mitt* [The History of Weimar: A Culture in the Middle of the Europe] (1998). In 1991, he became a co-founder of the magazine *Populär Historia* [Popular History].

Published below is an excerpt from his soon-to-appear autobiography, in which Schimanski's mother takes a central position. Folke Schimanski has characterized her as follows:

**"MY MOTHER WAS NEVER** an organized Nazi, even though she was a German citizen. She was primarily a Hausfrau but had temporary jobs, for example at the OKW, the German military staff, where she belonged to the censoring department that scrutinized correspondence to and from the occupied countries during the war. Stupidly, I did not inquire about this while she was alive, I have not always been interested in our German past, at times the theme has bored me. All research in OKW documents concerning her position would have been useless, as these evidently were destroyed in the bombardment. She subscribed to *Den Svenske* [The Swede], a newspaper that belonged to Sven Olof Lindholm's Nazi party, the largest such party in Sweden. One might say that she was closest in sympathy to the German National People's Party (DNVP), which was not Nazi but national and conservative, gazing longingly back towards the time of the Emperor. She was very patriotic, and this in a double sense: towards Germany and towards Sweden." ❌

January 11.

In the pale wintry dawn on the next day, we heard tanks rattle through our town at five. But why towards the West? We understood when we glimpsed a red star on the tanks. They were, indisputably, "Tea Salons" – the famous T-34s in the lingo of the German soldiers.

The villagers gathered together their horses and carriages in preparation for departure. There was chaos and confusion. There were no automobiles available, as these had been requisitioned by the military.

We were classified as second-class refugees, as we had been evacuated from Berlin and were now in the wrong place. People from Hamburg belonged here, whereas we should have stayed put in East Prussia. Hence we were not assigned to anyone to bring us along, and as evacuees we had no transportation of our own. My sister appealed to the Löper family, a family she had helped with their beet fields, who immediately took us in. However, she first had to help them butcher some geese. Since these were just flapping around and she could not catch any, she left the stable in panic.

The peasants drove the cows out into the fields, hoping that the Poles would take care of them. The Ukrainian farmhand stayed behind; bidding him farewell was strange. What would fate have in store for him? Soviet prisoners and forced laborers, especially those in "privileged" positions such as his, were treated very badly by their own when they were "liberated". They were considered more or less as traitors.

Finally we got on our way. The red-armored soldiers had no time to waste on civilians as they were hurrying westwards towards Nakel, so we made a detour towards the north-west.

**It was a sunny day.** From time to time the monotonous creaking of wheels stopped, whenever the horses had to rest or be fed. We zigzagged along constantly having to make detours to steer clear of the fighting.

It was minus 13 degrees Celsius. At night the temperature must have dropped to minus 20. We were surrounded by the continued rattle of machine guns, at fairly close range to boot. My mother lied to me, claiming it was "practice shooting". I was perched high up on a carriage, wrapped in a layer of blankets, while my mother and some other women trudged along behind.

I can still see their dark forms in front of me, persistently moving forward while chatting quietly; it feels as if they are still walking along today. Now and then I had to be lifted down in order to prevent frost-bites.

In the middle of the night, our caravan was held up when an urgent transport convoy for wounded soldiers attempted to get through. The man in charge of the transport yelled at us in a Bavarian dialect, which led to angry retorts. The old hostility between Prussi-

ans and Bavarians still flared up, if momentarily, even in this situation. Do not imagine that Germany stood wholly united even under the centralized Nazi regime. As our horses had now become very tired, we were forced to jettison a large part of our luggage by the roadside: my mother's jewelry, silverware, chinaware, bed-clothes, clothing, the hangings that my mother had woven, and even the binoculars my father had just given me for Christmas.

**A**t a road-crossing our caravan suddenly stopped dead. The gun-fire sounded heavier than before, and from the opposite direction three wagons rapidly approached, the horses galloping out of control. In one of the wagons my sister saw a crying woman with a blood-soaked bundle in her arms. Panic seized our caravan, horses were whipped – we had to get the hell out of here by all means. Our horses suddenly refused to budge on an uphill stretch; all the other wagons passed us by and we ended up entirely alone on the country road – five women and one little boy.

But help arrived in the shape of a farmer from our village. He had discovered that we had been fallen behind, and had coldheadedly driven back. He rounded up two fresh horses and helped us pull the wagon up the incline. I did not notice any of this drama as I was sleeping peacefully, but I was cold as ice. My sister had to slap me repeatedly in order to get my circulation going.

I was wrapped in blankets which I was not allowed to undo. Once I did so anyway and said: "I saw a shooting star!" I was running a fever. Finally we reached a place where the rumble of the war could no longer be heard. It may have been around three o'clock. We stopped to give the horses a rest and I looked up into the starry sky, so totally aloof from the horrors that steadily afflict our earth. I felt a peculiar peace, as if the firmament for the time being took me into its care, demonstrating to me the serene indifference of the universe. The starry sky does not care whether we are dead or alive on this messy planet of ours. A further dimension: we and our lives, the wheels of history rolling and crushing – and then the wide universe.

At around half-past four, we arrived exhausted in the small town of Vandsburg, where we laid down on the wooden benches inside a schoolhouse. Drowsy

they had no intention of abandoning their horse and carriage. The farmers appeared astoundingly calm, as if they had brought along their farms. This was the last time we saw those helpful people, one could well imagine what would happen to them afterward. Yet after the war, my mother found out that they had arrived safely in West Germany.

**The station in Vandsburg** was already crowded to the hilt. Piles of bags and cardboard boxes lay abandoned on the platform, and people were anxiously looking out for the train. After a couple of hours it arrived in a cloud of steam. It was originally bound for Nakel, but that destination had been canceled because the front had overtaken the town. Instead, the train went to a place called Flatow. There we were stuck for seven hours because planes had bombed the railway line. The train was meant to continue to Schneidemühl, a large railway hub at the border between Germany and Poland – that is to say, where the border had been before September 1 1939, when it had been overrun.

It was not until late at night that a train could take us to this town of Schneidemühl. There, the whole station was a depot of chests, bags, cartons, bundles of cloth, and household utensils. Desperate, we went back and forth along the overcrowded trains – all of which were west-bound, of course – looking for empty seats. On a side-track, my sister found a short train of wagons with, as yet, only a few passengers in them. It was not going the whole way to Berlin, but only to the town Küstrin at the river Oder. So here it stood at Schneidemühl's station without moving. That was particularly nerve-wracking because the ominous front was approaching closer and closer.

We must, must get away from here! Finally the train was set in motion. Now, there were not enough seats for everyone; one of us had to stand the whole way. A young, blonde woman heated milk for her baby by holding a candle under a saucepan. The candle she had gotten from my mother. Our journey was prolonged by repeated stops. At one of these interruptions, Red Cross sisters arrived distributing milk to the children and hot chocolate to the grown-ups.

While a locomotive was being repaired we were attacked by Soviet planes. It was not that dangerous though; some passengers got minor wounds. How-



The railroad station in Bromberg. Today replaced by a modern building. To the right, the last photo of Folke that his father took during the war, on the icy Bromberg Canal, January 1945.

Photos: Pre-war postcard; Hans Schimanski.

ever, many windowpanes were broken, so backpacks and whatever had to be used to prevent draughts to form in the winter-cold. To our joy we were told that the train would go on to Berlin, we would not have to search for a new connection from Küstrin.

In Kreuz we were severely tried by a long stay, and my mother saw a dreadful sight: rows of open freight cars with refugees, some of whom almost certainly had frozen to death. We, at least, had a “roof over our heads”. Then we rolled on. Time after time the train halted, once the locomotive even steamed back in order to pick up additional wagonloads of refugees. At one point it stopped at a lineman’s cottage. We ran out to get something to drink. We got only warm water, but under the circumstances it was divine. We had a frozen-stiff loaf of bread somewhere, and to warm it up the grownups took turns sitting on it. This is the only time I have eaten bottom-warmed bread. In the middle of all this I asked my mother, with the oddly consistent logic of a child: “Do you think the ice-cream shop at Breitenbachplatz is still there?”

The flight from Schneidemühl took several days, although the distance to Berlin by rail was no more than 245 kilometers. It was a part of the old, Prussian railway line which went east towards the Russian border. But we were, at least, approaching our final destination, and when, close to the capital city, the train came to an abrupt halt, I fell and started crying.

An old returning soldier with a ravaged face rumbled: “A German boy does not cry!”.

**T**he entry into Berlin was ghostly. The passengers stood glued to the windowpanes, amazed at the extent of the destruction, *Mein Gott!* It was as if we were now the privileged ones, we who had come from the “provinces”. Goebbels had not been overly anxious to call attention to the devastation caused by the bombings. As the Danes put it, it all came “bag på os” [our just deserts].

At first we went to the Swedish congregation to fetch a “Sverigepaket” [Sweden-package]. On our way home to Steglitz, a friendly gentleman in the streetcar offered my mother two blankets. War creates a sense of fellowship, as is illustrated by the war nostalgia that has been cultivated in England since the end of this war. My father was then stationed in a location close to the Czech border.

Our apartment was barely habitable. One wall in the nursery had cracked. And during the fall of 1943, a bomb had drilled a hole through the roof, fallen into the living room, and destroyed grandmother’s Blekinge armchair. A metal cap had been left as a souvenir. A chaffinch in one of

the cages had asphyxiated from the smoke, otherwise there was no damage, and there had been no people in the apartment when it was hit.

We often had occasion to go to the Swedish Victoria Congregation, to collect food packets or clothes or to inquire as to when we could leave for Sweden. We were told it was possible to tag along Folke Bernadotte’s white buses. During our long walks to the congregation, we had to zigzag between the barricades that had been erected in preparation for the final battle, which was imminent. Only narrow openings were made so that the few cars, running on producer-gas and with their headlights partially darkened, might slip through.

It was an interesting walk. The obstacles were bizarre: constructions that looked like heaps of bulky refuse, made out of chairs, carts, piles of brushwood, and all kinds of odd items from old baby carriages to store mannequins. My mother and sister also participated in the construction of barricades, and did so with a certain black humor. Among the tables and flower-pots they set up an artificial lady’s head taken from a hairdresser’s salon. Below it they put a sign saying “Room for rent” with an arrow pointing towards a ruin – that is, if the Russians could read it. In the irreverent Berlin vernacular, the city’s pathetic barricades were called “eleven-minutes obstructions”. For ten minutes, the Soviet armored troops would laugh themselves silly, and then take a minute to break through the obstacle...

On the walls one could read the message “BERLIN BLEIBT DEUTSCH!” [Berlin remains German], urging people to put up a heroic final struggle. To resist at any price was of course expected. In the east, the Russians were standing at the river Oder, a mere sixty kilometers from Berlin, something of which I had not the slightest clue.

My sister often turned on the radio, and what I remember best is the eternal schlager music, it was as if they wanted to drown us in those sentimental hit-songs to make us forget that the Reich was facing a catastrophic defeat. Clearly, many of the most frequently

played hits were meant to mobilize the last vestiges of morale to be found in the population. I particularly remember a song with the comforting title “All things will pass”. The song is about the girl Hanne who faithfully waits for her soldier. He stands guard somewhere in the war zone, but he always comes home unscathed from the “inferno”, an eternal happy ending. And the singer Lale Andersen comforts us with “after December comes another May”, a reassurance that acquired uncanny connotations towards the end of the war.

It was also Lale Andersen who sang the most famous of the German war hits – *Lili Marleen*, the girl who was to meet her soldier at the street lamp outside his barracks. The song became popular, even among Allied soldiers. Goebbels was not overly delighted, periodically it was even banned as “weakening the will to defend the country”. Lili’s soldier was, it seems, all too unwilling to leave his darling and go back to his camp.

Lale Andersen came close to ending up in a concentration camp because of her contacts with German expatriates. The lyrics to *Lili Marleen* were translated into eighty or so languages, but in occupied Denmark the song was given an anti-German text. The Germans were pleased that the Danes sang the song, but did not realize that the lyrics had been changed.

**Lale Andersen was** the singer’s stage name; she was not of Danish extraction. The Swede Zarah Leander was, on the other hand, Scandinavian. Once, when she visited the Swedish congregation in Berlin, she carried me on her shoulders. In 1943, the year when the Third Reich’s fortune of war began to turn, Leander returned to Sweden and her bank accounts. But her songs were still played in what was, now, the disintegrating German Reich. Teenagers found it easy to imitate her characteristic alto voice. My sister sang along gaily while pottering about in the kitchen. It really was successful, that war pop-music.

Zarah Leander was a far more effective card in Goebbels’s clever campaign of denial than was Lale Andersen. Zarah sang the prophetic “I know that a mi-

racle will happen” (which may make one think of the Retaliation Rockets) and “For that reason the world will not go under” (which was supposed to make the Germans put up with any hardships, no matter how severe). She spread a deceptive light-heartedness in those chaotic times.

This inducement of light-heartedness was a political instrument, as the Minister of Propaganda knew very well. Pop music served as a tool of political repression and carefree entertainment functioned as a soothing opiate for the people. Which, of course, also is the case in peace-time. Incidentally, it is strange



The village Krischdorf, now Kruszyn, in 2003. Photo: Folke Schimanski.

that I still remember so many tunes from my German childhood, both Nazi and more harmless ones. “Homestead, your stars” was my favorite; it was a war schlager which made soldiers in the field melancholy. Me too.

We were forced to move out of our cold apartment, so the Swedish congregation became our last dwelling in Berlin. Here I lived in a little world of my own, in “splendid isolation” from the deteriorating surroundings and with one foot in my future home country. In the garden there was plenty of room to move around in, especially for a little boy like me. In my mind, I was already in Sweden. Out there on Kaiserallee was Germany, where occasionally some tanks rattled by, bearing – at least as yet – black-and-white crosses. Waiting ....

Folke Bernadotte’s rescue action got rolling. The White Buses with their producer-gas generators attached stood ready to depart outside the premises of the congregation, and we waited for our turn to be taken out of Berlin. As a matter of fact, the buses were initially used for the home transport of Swedish-Germans and Scandinavian concentration camp prisoners, not to save Jews.

On the first leg, the white-painted bus took us to Lübeck. Our bus driver had to keep an eye on the sky as well, as hostile fighter planes might come and attack us. Admittedly our vehicles were, by special request of the Royal Air Force, painted white and marked with large red crosses and equipped with blue and yellow flags, but a pilot in a Spitfire did not always have the time – even if he cared – to pay attention to such details. The English suspected that the Red Cross transports could be camouflaged German military vehicles. Thus it did happen that white buses and trucks came under fire. On one occasion, 25 persons were killed during such an attack, including concentration camp prisoners.

The next leg of the journey was to Sweden. For my mother it was almost a homecoming, as her parents were Swedish and were already there. To my sister Sweden was a country that she had visited occasionally during her summer vacations. For me it was a mysterious paradise.

But there was something we were not allowed to bring with us to Paradise. In West Prussia, my sister had gotten infected with lice. Everybody leaving Germany was disinfected in a public bath; the clothes were gassed. I do not know why, perhaps so it would not be said that people who came from Germany were riddled with vermin and contagions.

While our clothes were being gassed, we had to wait naked, separated according to sex and placed in two halls. The older boys were worried that my sister (“Vera is coming!”) might open the door and tease us in our predicament, so they barricaded it carefully with heavy poles. In Lübeck my sister tried to keep her brown BDM jacket with the swastika-mark as long as possible, even though it was resented in the Swedish colony. A sharp-tongued lady told her she ought not to have on “that Hitler-cardigan now that the war was soon to be over”. A Swedish Red Cross soldier forbade

her outright to wear the outfit. In order to forestall troubles my mother exchanged it for a few eggs.

It was, however, not really wise to harass my sister in that way. The BDM meant something very special to her, and it was not just a matter of politics. Experts on the Nazi era have claimed that the various organizations in which German youths were put, could at times serve as sanctuaries from tyrannical parents, be it that they were obviously institutions of indoctrination.

This applies to my sister in view of the manner in which my father treated her. This may be part of the reason why she stayed a Nazi. That busy-body of a lady had probably provoked her rebellious sentiments. When she later met with nothing but censorious disapproval in Sweden, the world of her youth collapsed. Deprived of a harmonic family upbringing, the fellowship provided by the BDM and *Reichsarbeitsdienst* remained my sister’s only positive memories from her teens. It would have been better if she had on her own initiative and after deliberation rid herself of the “Hitler jacket”.

**A couple of days** after Easter, the white buses stood ready on the quay at Lübeck and we were on our way.

When we finally approached the Danish border, my sister began to cry quietly, others began to sing *Deutschland über alles*. My sister who, in the last minute, had been granted exemption from serving in the Flak<sup>2</sup> ought to have been delighted with the reprieve. Instead she felt shame, she thought she had betrayed her country.

At the German-Danish border we had to alight to have our passports examined, and then we had Germany left behind us. But not entirely: for Denmark was occupied, it still teemed with German military presence. The first stop was Padborg, where the

Dannebrog flew defiantly from many a flagpole. It was a happy sight, the flagpoles bloomed with red and white, peaceful flags – no swastikas in sight. Had we already reached paradise?

The weather was beautiful. Denmark looked its best with the spring foliage unfolding.

Unscathed. Smiling. In Odense we were in for a surprise. A choir of brown-clothed Danes of the Red Cross sang for us, standing on the stairs to the large hotel where we were to stay for the night. A substantial evening meal was in store for us in the dining room, where the tables were laid with white tablecloths. It was incredible what the Danish Red Cross had arranged for us. What had we done to deserve this? After all, several among us did sympathize with Nazism or were pro-German. I later wondered whether we had been taken for concentration camp prisoners. The

warm welcome was even more puzzling because the conflicts between the local population and German occupiers were particularly severe in Odense during the last year of the war.

Nor did it go any worse the next day on the Great Belt ferryboat, where we were served lunch and rich Danish pastries on blue and white china. They had given us packed lunches in Odense, which we saved. It was a life of luxury. But the packed lunches would find it uses later.

**When we disembarked** in Korsør harbor, a band of German soldiers turned up, not an arrogant and belligerent bunch, but rather pathetic creatures, many of them bandaged, dragging their feet and with faces marked with indescribable fatigue. They must have arrived with one of the large boat transports from East Prussia, which, to a large extent, went to Denmark. “Stop the bus! Stop!” some of our women shouted and rushed to the bus exit. Impulsively they gave the soldiers their packed lunches, to the consternation of Danish passers-by, for they were German soldiers. Denmark was also being overrun by hundreds of thousands of refugees from the eastern parts of the Reich. They were not welcome guests.

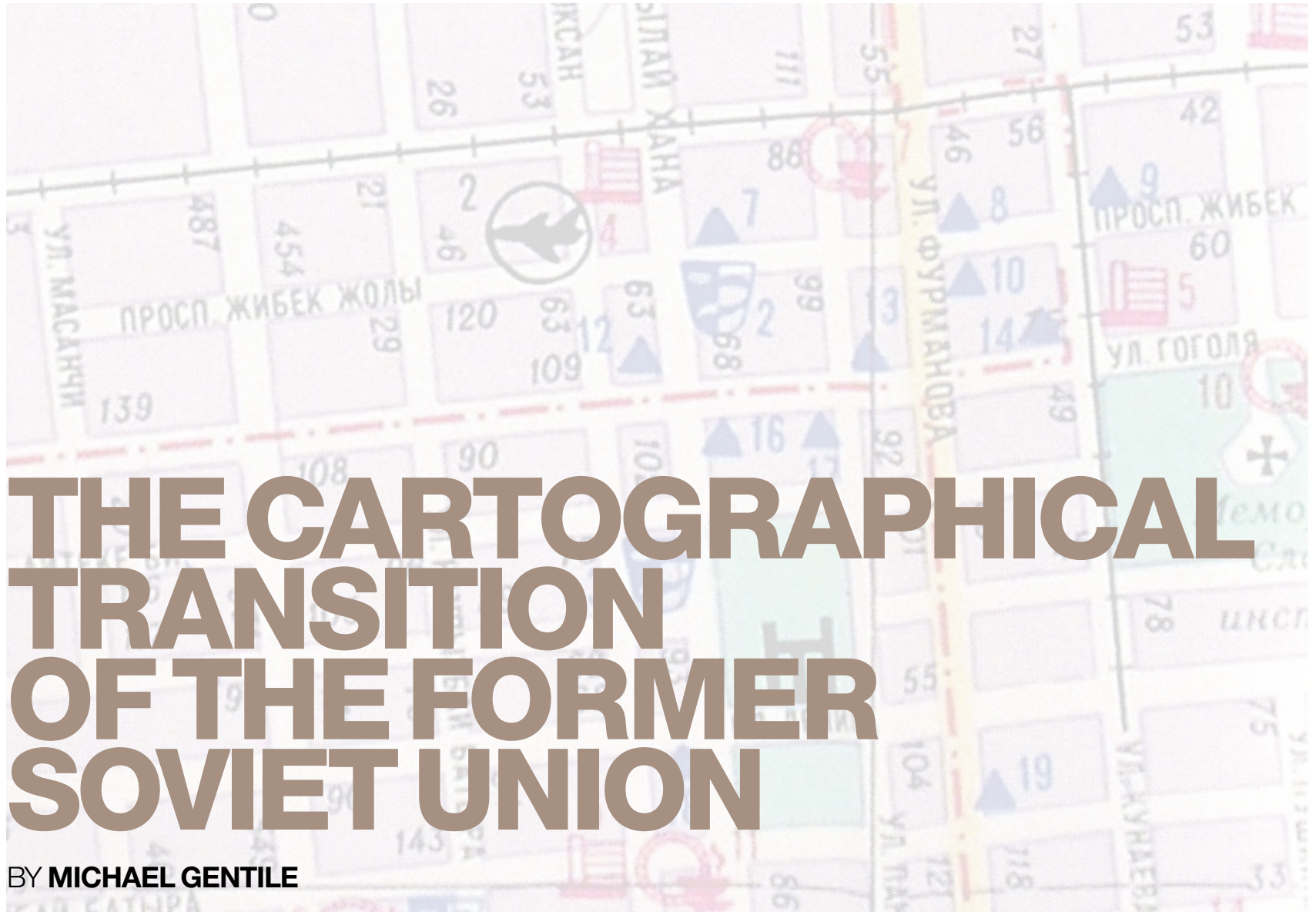
Copenhagen and the “Sverigekaj” [Sweden quay]: one single German soldier on guard, the kind of soldier Lale Andersen sings about, was the last I saw of Denmark before boarding the ferry.

Then we saw the lights on the Swedish coast, the final destination. Before we reached Malmö it had become dark, but the bus drove through lighted streets, no blackout here.

It was April 6 1945. A new chapter had begun for us, yet not one so much happier. I was eight years of age, and my birthday would be celebrated in Sweden in a few weeks time. My German childhood had been broken off too soon, leaving too many loose ends. For the rest of my life, I have tried to tie everything together; a Swedish childhood was to replace a German. Everything was changed: language, songs, landscapes, and people. And the conflagration of war was exchanged for peace, peace.... ✕

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- 1 BDM, *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, a division of Hitler-Jugend for girls between fourteen and eighteen years of age. A junior division for those between ten and fourteen was called *Jungmädel*. The BDM had the risqué nickname “Bald deutsche Mutter” (Soon German mothers [to be]).
- 2 Flak, *Flugabwehrkanonen* (air defense guns).



# THE CARTOGRAPHICAL TRANSITION OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

BY MICHAEL GENTILE

One winter afternoon, a few years ago, I took part in a compulsory discussion at the regional office of the Kazakh customs authority in the industrial city of Ust'-Kamenogorsk, in the northeastern part of the country. The head of the customs station and two agents from the Kazakh national security agency were present. The discussion concerned a parcel that I, thanks to the honorable intervention of the customs authority (or security service), had not succeeded in sending to Sweden. Primarily, what was discussed was an object. The object was a tourist map of said city of Ust'-Kamenogorsk. The map was drawn in accordance with the principles that characterized the Soviet tourist map<sup>1</sup>: it lacked scale (or rather used highly variable scales), the angles weren't correct, and it was extremely selective in its selection of streets; in practice, it could not be used to get around the city because the amount of falsification and misrepresentation was simply too great.

The only difference now was that the Communist paraphernalia that previously might have had macroscopic proportions on the map – the Lenin Statue, the “Eternal Flame”, and so on – was replaced by more market-oriented items (since the map

was funded by advertising, the locations of certain companies were shown quite clearly). Despite these drawbacks, the tourist map was the first openly accessible map of the city available since the October Revolution – at least. Moreover, it showed the bus and streetcar network of the city, although the actual number of bus routes proved to be slightly fewer in reality than what the map suggested, something that I noted directly on the map to make it more usable for my purposes, as I did in the case of some other deficiencies. Here lies the core of the discussion at the customs office/security service: when the authorities have approved and permitted the release of a map of the city, it is supposed to appear as it does regardless of what it may show – any handwritten corrections of course constitute complementary (or rather replacement) information that no one ever sanctioned. In other words, society, or rather the regime was still marked by the information terror passed down by the Soviet Union, something that was manifest by the need felt by the authorities to check both the quality and the quantity of the discrepancy between reality and the way it was described on paper. The year was 2001.

What follows is a brief account of the transition from a Soviet to a post-Soviet representation of spatial knowledge. The main argument is that maps of the former Soviet sphere have not kept pace with the region's information revolution.

## THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION

The “Information Revolution” is a relatively neglected aspect of the post-Soviet transition period, but it is of great importance. In the late 1980s, photocopying was still associated with enormous bureaucratic obstacles – mostly bans – in most socialist countries. Within just a few years, the region was inundated by information from all sources imaginable (satellite TV, newspapers, foreign visitors, the Internet, etc.), even if the media's economic problems often forced them to subordinate themselves to the demands of private or governmental financiers, while, as far as the sources of information were concerned, the range of choices the population had was limited by their declining purchasing power. In plain language, this meant that television, at least in the 1990s, bore the greatest



Figure 1. Fragment of a tourist map of Semipalatinsk, Kazakh SSR. Source: GUGK, 1982.



Figure 2. Hand-drawn copy of a fragment of the master plan for Daugavpils, Latvian SSR, in preparation for the allocation of land to the furniture trust for the construction of a summer guest house. Source: archival material from Daugavpils zonālais valst arhīvs (copy can be obtained from the author on request).



Figures 4a and 4b. Part of the ordnance survey maps (scale 1:10,000) of Air Force Bases in the two similar cities of Tartu (the Raadi Air Base), bottom, and Uppsala (Ärna Airfield), at the top. As in the case of Daugavpils, the air base in Tartu was replaced with an unusually empty steppe landscape. Source: General'nyi shtab, 1974 (Tartu) and 1976 (Uppsala, Sweden).



Figures 3a and 3b. Lociki Air Force Base and the heavily populated area associated with it, outside Daugavpils, Latvia, was “forgotten” in the classified ordnance survey map with the scale of 1:50,000. Note the absence of landscape features in the airfield area, and that the north-south main road marks the border between correct and falsified representation of the landscape. Sources: Satellite image from Google Earth (accessed 2008-06-28) and General'nyi shtab (1975).

responsibility for the legacy of the information revolution from the earliest years of the transformation.

## THE SILENCE OF THE MAPS

During the Soviet period, spatial information was scanty, if not nonexistent. As Thomas Borén<sup>2</sup> pointed out in his dissertation, the lack of maps meant that people were forced instead to acquire the corresponding knowledge by accumulating and mentally structuring their everyday “spatial experiences”. Moreover, because the landscape of the city changed only sluggishly – since the relations of supply and demand in urban areas were not dictated by the market, but

by a constellation of different state actors – this learning process was relatively easy.

That the maps that were actually published withheld much information is, of course, hardly surprising in view of the Soviet “information terror” described above. Among the most important manipulations is undoubtedly the deletion of the secret cities from all maps. That secret cities were kept secret in this way is of course not itself surprising – after all, one of the cities used for the American atomic bomb project, Oak Ridge Tennessee, also belongs to this group of temporarily non-existent places – but what makes the Soviet case extreme is the size of these cities, along with the time horizon.

North of the large West Siberian city of Tomsk, for example, a satellite city known as Seversk (or Tomsk-7 as it had previously been known) has existed since the late 1940s, which, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, contained many more than 100,000 inhabitants. In total, several millions of Soviet citizens lived in the “non-existent” cities, usually with a far better standard of living than was customary. The common denominator for most of these places, or rather for one or more of the factories that were located at these places, was that they were administered by the so-called Ministry for Medium Machinery, which was the authority responsible for the nuclear industry.

## THE CARTOGRAPHICAL TRANSITION OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION



Figure 5. Fragment of map of Ulan-Ude in 1998 with original scale of 1:25 000. Source: Federal'naya, 1998.



Figure 7. Fragment of map of Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 1998 with original scale of 1:30,000. Source: Komitet, 1998.



Figure 8. Fragment of Russian-language map of Kiev from 2006 with original scale of 1:35,000. Source: Geosvit, 2006.

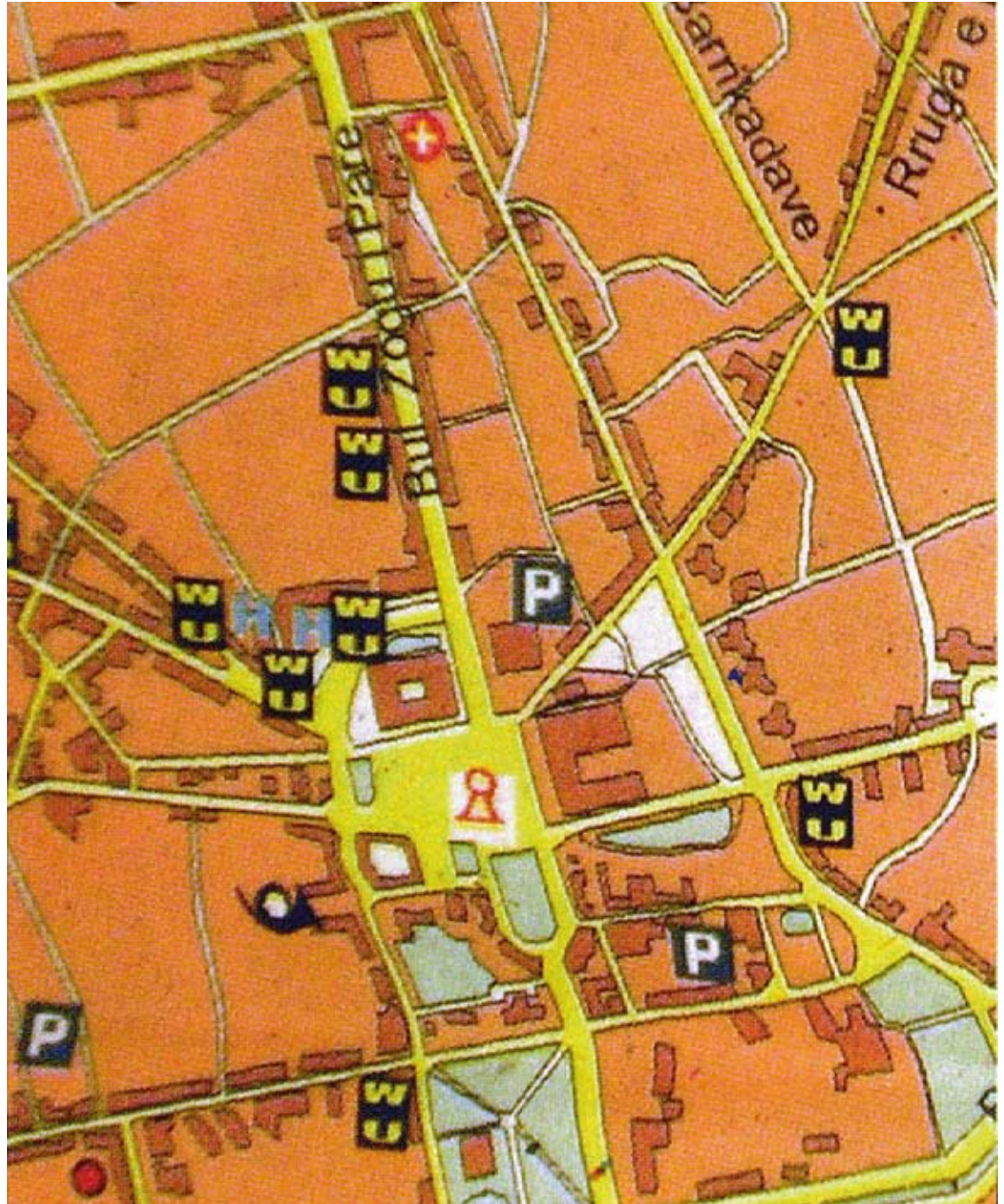


Figure 6. Fragment of map of Tirana in 2000, with unknown initial scale. Note the buildings that line the main streets and the lack of information about what lies between them. According to the legend they are public buildings, but this is not the case. In general, the legend is over-ambitious since it even includes the item "metros", even though the nearest subway is in Bulgaria. Source: Aksion, 2000.

Despite the silence of the maps in society at large, the Soviet Union produced maps prolifically. Ordnance survey maps were printed in only a few cities – among them Riga – and nearly all maps with a scale of 1:200,000 or larger were classified. Maps with smaller scales approved for publication were heavily retouched yet nonetheless relatively inaccessible to the public, except the so-called tourist maps (Figure 1). Ordnance survey maps formed the basis of all the more or less detailed and accurate cartographic material of the Soviet Union. Large parts of the Soviet Union were covered by secret topographical maps using a scale of 1:200,000 or 1:100,000, but some of the more densely populated regions were also rendered

at a scale of 1:50,000. The classification, *sekretno* (secret), of these middle-scale maps was changed towards the end of the 1980s to the softer wording *dlya sluzhebnogo pol'zovaniya* (for official use). Very large parts of the rest of the world were mapped in the same series, including many Third World countries, where the Soviet maps are still considered to be the best source of spatial information.

The cities are mapped at a scale of 1:10,000 and sometimes 1:25,000. With maps of Soviet cities there is an area of text describing the city's most important military-strategic aspects and objects, but without further details. The same map series covers a wide range of military-strategically interesting locations in

other countries. In the case of Sweden, for example, all significant port cities were mapped in a scale of 1:10,000. The amount of place information contained in the maps, however, was much greater than in the Soviet maps. For example on the map of Uppsala (surveyed and mapped in 1976) we find, among other things, the various scientific institutions of the university (except the Department of Geography!) and all known major locations or objects connected with defense.

For the master plans of the cities, which were also classified as top secret, maps at a scale of 1:10,000 were used. The master plan, whose function was approximately the same as the Swedish *översiktsplan*

(literally: overview plan, or scheme) except that it had the same juridical force in relation to the population as the detailed maps, rarely existed in more than one or two copies. Every time the construction of an object had to be approved by the *gorispolkom*, the city's steering committee, the planners/architects involved had to copy (by hand) the relevant fragment of the master plan (Figure 2). Even though the master plan map was the most important tool of the city planners, it was constructed upon the more or less censored versions of the original ordinance survey map, whose classified status, in contrast to that of the maps done at a scale somewhere in the middle, was never lowered.

There were of course other governmental authorities that needed to have access to cartographic information. One example is the Goskomstat, the Soviet Union's equivalent of Statistics Sweden (Sweden's central statistical office). Without maps, it would have been impossible to conduct population censuses, since it would not have been possible to divide urban areas into census units, nor to distribute them among those collecting the information. The solution was specially designed (and, of course, classified) maps that only furnished the user with information on the configuration of the street network along with the house number. The map I've seen, which was used for the census in Kazakhstan as late as 1999, was hand-drawn – probably with the ordinance survey map as a basis – and there was only one copy.

## NOT EVEN THE MILITARY MAPS . . .

Ordinance survey maps may well have been secret, or intended for official use, but that did not mean that they were not subject to manipulation. This suggests that there may have been an additional level of security in the publication of the maps, though there is no trace of this. On the medium-scale military maps of the Soviet Union, it is not uncommon for military facilities or objects in particular not to be included (Figure 3), which may have been part of a deliberate strategy designed to confuse the capitalist enemies. Nor, moreover, is the secret Russian city of Seversk (Tomsk-7) included in 1991 in the ordinance survey map with a scale of 1:200,000.

On the large-scale maps (1:10,000) of the domestic towns the same tendency can be seen (Figure 4), in addition, it can happen that a significant number of details that are included are not correctly represented. That the latter is the case is something I experienced on-site in the Georgian steel mill town of Rustavi – here the power lines run somewhat differently in reality, and the buildings of the nearby prison colony don't correspond to those on the map either.

## THE CARTOGRAPHIC TRANSITION

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, most of the former Soviet republics experienced somewhat of an information revolution, but, with the exception of the Baltic countries and to some extent Georgia, the improvement in the availability of good cartographic

material can be described as a gradual transition at best. In most of the countries, including Russia, the availability of topographical maps at a scale of 1:100,000 or larger is extremely limited, while the quality of the published maps is constantly being improved (except in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, where the regimes still cling to the Soviet approach to maps).

In the early 1990s, the situation in Russia was temporarily a bit brighter, and it was also at that time that the Library of Congress in Washington acquired a very large stock of Soviet maps, including city plans in a scale of 1:10,000. However, this collection did not cover the Russian Federation, though it did cover most of the other former republics. The maps also became commercially available in the West around the same time through a number of companies based in the US and Britain, and even in Russia it was possible to purchase lightly censored map-sheets in 1993 with a scale of 1:200,000 that covered nothing other than the secret and mysterious Kola Peninsula. As late as 2000, there was also the theoretical possibility of buying somewhat censored versions of the ordinance survey maps of Russia's Cartographic Corporation, which is the name of the business arm of the Russian maps authority, but in reality this possibility was subjected to the FSB's (the federal security service's) erratic assessments of both the customer and the item requested.

With regard to the published maps, the quality has constantly, albeit slowly, improved since the early 1990s. The pace of change has however varied greatly among the former republics. As early as 1992 a relatively accurate map of Riga was released<sup>3</sup> while developments in Russia outside Moscow and St. Petersburg had not gone further than in Figure 5, which shows a fragment of a map from 1998 of the Siberian city of Ulan-Ude.

In Tashkent, no map had been released to the locals as late as the end of the 1990s, but for visitors, a greatly improved variant of the Soviet tourist map was made, which now was afforded with both a scale and accurate angles, while the selectivity surrounding the street network outside the city center remained<sup>4</sup>. Sometimes the zeal to highlight the main streets can result in strange cartographic effects, as in the case of the map of the Albanian capital, Tirana (Figure 6). Here, the user knows nothing about what is hiding between these streets, while a large number of buildings along the main streets is described in the legend as public buildings, but this is not the case – in some cases it might be shops on the ground floor.

A similar, if slightly better map of Almaty, the former capital of Kazakhstan, was released around the same time (Figure 7). The amount of information included about areas outside the city center is still quite limited, but the map is nonetheless useable. At around the same time, the Kazakh cartographic authority released an excellent map of Astana, the then new capital, at a scale of 1:10,000, based on the old ordinance survey map. Why similar maps of the country's other cities did not in time come to be released is not clear, and the "silence of the maps" still remains in the country, despite Google Earth's watchful eye. Further evidence of this is that geography

students at the East Kazakhstan State University were still using fictional maps in cartography instruction in the early 2000s. During the 2000s, the overall quality of the maps approved for publication increased in most places in the former Soviet Union. In general, the major cities have been in the forefront (and of these there are also maps made abroad, in particular in Germany) with the regional capitals trailing behind, if they are present at all.<sup>5</sup>

A recent map of Kiev (Figure 8) is an example of this. One explanation for the accelerating increase in quality among the commercially available maps is of course likely due to external factors for which the local mapping authorities are not responsible – after all, as early as the 1990s anyone could buy almost any Soviet general survey map (not including some of the 1:10,000 urban maps), and with the advent of Google Earth, anyone can peer into many of the secret cities of the former Soviet Union completely free of charge. Eventually, even the old ordinance survey maps will probably be released, but so far, only a small number of countries has actually released these maps – along with a few others where the ban is not taken as seriously as it once was.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that, generally speaking, the post-Soviet map has not kept pace with other aspects of the information revolution in the region since the glasnost years of the late 1980s. The changes have been gradual, but they are in the right direction. Fortunately, the maps do not seem to be experiencing the "information recoil" that, according to a growing number of observers is manifesting itself in a number of countries in the region, including Russia. The commercial maps are improving while the rest of the information landscape is cooling down. This was the situation in 2008. ❌

This essay was previously published (in Swedish) in *Ymer* 2008, vol. 128.

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- 2 Thomas Borén, *Meeting-places of Transformation: Urban Identity, Spatial Representations, and Local Politics in St Petersburg, Russia*, Meddelande 133, Stockholm 2005 (Kulturgeografiska Institutionen).
- 3 Jāņa sēta, *Rīga M 1:25000, Jaunākais Pilsētas Plāns*, Riga 1992.
- 4 Uzgeodezcadastre, *Tashkent Tourist Plan*, Tashkent 1997.
- 5 A very rare exception is the city of Khabarovsk in eastern Siberia, which recently released a city atlas, the maps of which come from updated but of course also somewhat censored fragments of the old ordinance survey map at a scale of 1:10,000.



ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

## On the road towards a “European culture of memory”? Coming to grips with Stalinism

Julia Obertreis & Anke  
Stephen (eds.)  
*Erinnerungen nach der  
Wende: Oral History  
und (post)sozialis-  
tische Gesellschaften*

Essen: Klartext Verlag  
2009  
401 pages.

**T**HIS ANTHOLOGY IS A collection of papers from a conference held in Wiesneck, Germany in the fall of 2005. The contributors are young scholars and senior researchers. The editors are careful to note that the contributors are “from 12 different countries”. However, whereas the individuals were, of course, born and raised in nation-states, as a group they represent the fact that social scientists and historians in contemporary Europe and North America move around during the course of their academic careers and thus belong to and identify with a multinational community of scholars.

The editors recognize the indisputable fact that the contemporary international scholarly community uses English as its lingua franca, while also realizing that English is not a panacea that makes other languages superfluous as instruments of history and social science. They observe that concepts can

be specific to different natural languages. In the case of oral history and memory studies, we are confronted with the pre-eminence of German:

German has the advantage of certain terminology which are [sic!] difficult to express in other languages, such as “Zeitzeuge” (eye-witness to a whole period of time) and “Aufarbeitung” (the coming-to-grips with, assessing, debating and processing of history, especially of a collective catastrophe or crime). German language oral history also stands for an especially conscientious treatment of the sources and for a research tradition in which less practical but more interpretive and methodological problems are paramount. (p. 47)

**THE GERMAN-LANGUAGE** version of the introductory chapter just quoted omits the explanations that the English text provides within parentheses, for obvious reasons. The historical and sociological reasons for the specific and prominent role of German as the ultimate language for analyzing and discussing historical

memory have to do with the Holocaust. After World War II, the “Aufarbeitung” and the related concept “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” (indirectly referred to with the expression “coming-to-grips with” in the quote above) came to stand for a new, sophisticated stance in history and the social sciences. It was generally recognized by scholars who subscribed to the notions of democracy and human rights that it is necessary, in history and the social sciences, to take into account the fact that there cannot be any “pure”, “scientific” history, as with mathematics or physics. The moral and political impact of history and social science writing must be acknowledged and taken into cognizance.

When “coming-to-grips with” the communist period, Stalinism would have to be treated in a manner similar to the German approach to the Nazi period. Although Russia, in the guise of the Soviet Union, experienced a genocidal

## Continued. On the road towards a “European culture of memory”?



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regime, there has been no counterpart to the German “Aufarbeitung” and “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” in Russian historiography – despite the fact that Russian oral-history studies are, today, a vital area of studies. Thus, in a recent review of a Russian book on the history of the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States, the reviewer praises the book in question because it subscribes to the principle of observing “a sharp contrast between history as a science of past events and, on the other hand, the memory of the past or the politicized use of historical events”. *Erinnerungen/Remembering* is a forceful refutation of that futile principle.

In his overview of oral history in Western and Eastern Germany, Alexander von Plato directly challenges the smug Russian approach cited above by referring disapprovingly to the cult of Stalin in contemporary Russia. von Plato quotes a vice director of a major state museum in Moscow, who in the year 2005 described Stalin as the most eminent politician and military commander (“Feldherr”) of the twentieth century. One is reminded of the contemporary reference, in Nazi Germany, to Adolf Hitler as “Grösste Feldherr aller Zeiten” (ridiculed as “Gröfaz” by critics). von Plato asks us to imagine the reaction to the 2005 Moscow statement if it had, instead, taken place in the German Historical Museum in Berlin with Adolf Hitler as the venerated hero.

**VON PLATO’S OBJECTION** to the Russian way of not-coming-to-grips with the past is supplemented with a plea, which he himself admits may sound pathetic, for the creation of a scholarly ethos along the lines of the European tradition of the history of science. According to von Plato, the different national memory cultures in Europe must be investigated in a spirit of independence and tolerance, with the final aim of creating a “European remembrance culture” (p. 81). Although von Plato’s uneasiness concerning the Stalin cult in Russia is warranted, it must be acknowledged that there are Russian scholars who view the Stalin period critically, especially members of local Memorial Societies. A fine example of critical oral research in Russia is Alexey Golubev’s contribution in *Erinnerungen/Rememberance*. His conclusion, based on a research project carried out among different ethnic groups in Russian Karelia,

is that Russians have obliterated any remembrance of the Stalinist repressions from their memory. An explanation of this fact is that “generally the traumatic experience was kept away from the Soviet collective memory. [...] Soviet society couldn’t offer social mechanisms of reacting to the historical trauma.” Golubev quotes a report from his compatriot, historian Alexander Daniel, who “considers this true even for the contemporary Russian collective memory”. (p. 269)

It is worthwhile elaborating on the difference between the Russian and the European stances concerning history and remembrance culture. Whereas an obviously representative Russian view is that “it would be bad history, if not a flatly falsified history, to use the values and standards of our time as a screen for the representations of the past”, the alternative attitude that inspires contemporary European historical research and especially memory studies and oral history takes into consideration the importance of “the values and standards of our time”. In a perceptive chapter on “identity elaboration” (“Identitätsarbeit”) in this anthology, Ulrike Jureit observes that “our memory is inscribed in social relations and thus in current and past discourses”. (p. 88) The observation is valid not only for the evaluation of oral history sources but also for the evaluation and analysis of texts, such as letters, state papers and other documentary material that is preserved in historical archives. Jureit’s reference to the salience of current and past discourses in the investigation of remembrance culture is an updated version of the German critical hermeneutic tradition epitomized by the name of Jürgen Habermas.

The uses of oral history in *Erinnerungen/Rememberance* are examples of emancipative history. The conscious and elaborative confrontation between different epochs with different official values, social relations and frameworks of interpretation results in a multifaceted and intriguing image of the societies of “really existing socialism” (“Realsozialismus”) and of the experiences of identity and history in the post-socialist societies. This is history from below that places state-centered historiography in a sobering perspective. It is recognition of the fact that historical actions and processes, that are the effects of political decisions at the highest level, are not the whole history, perhaps not even the most important history for ordinary people, those who constitute the social fabric of society.

**THE CHAPTER ON THE THEORIES** that guide and the methods used in historical memory research and oral history is published in both German and English. Of the remaining 25 chapters, 15 are in English and 10 in German. After von Plato’s principal discussion, in German, on the German experience of two successive dictatorships, the Nazi Reich and the Communist GDR, and the resultant special German obsession with coming-to-grips with the past, five special sections follow. These all have both a German and an English title, but the articles themselves are in either German or English. Bearing in mind von Plato’s emphasis on the salience of the German language in the field of

memory studies and oral history – in spite of the fact that the French scholar Maurice Halbwachs was the founding father of historical memory studies and in spite of the long tradition of oral history in Britain – the bilingual presentation might be interpreted as an attempt to induce the reader to grasp the whole intellectual universe of the project.

On the one hand, the conceptual and thus theoretical advantage of using German terms in the context of their natural language is obvious. On the other hand, it is certainly advisable to anchor the project in the hegemonic language of contemporary international historiography and social science, i.e. English. It must be assumed that readers of the book have at least reading knowledge of both languages.

**THE FIVE SECTIONS**, all of which are presented in the table of contents with the German title first, cover a wide range of subjects. The first section, “Regime Changes, Identity Construction and Current Disputes about the Past”, approaches the legacy of both Nazism and Communism in post-GDR and Ukraine and probes into the sensitive question of how former Communist party members remember and interpret their history. A chapter on memories of the 1989 Romanian revolution (this is the term used for the events) is noticeable for its sophisticated analysis of the interplay between the institutional production of testimonies and the remembrance of individuals. The author writes about “competing narratives”, thus calling attention to the fact that insight from oral history projects helps give substance to the notion that postmodernism is an ample label for the state of mind of people who try to come to grips with the past in post-socialist societies.

The second section, “The Inheritance of the Emancipation ‘from above’: Female Experience and Gender Roles in Socialism and Post-socialism”, can be read as a refutation of Joan W. Scotts unconditional anti-essentialism. Socialist reality, as well as the tribulations of the transition period, has made it sensible and fruitful to approach women as women, as individuals with gender-specific experiences. In this context, it is worth quoting from the conclusion of the short chapter on women’s history in the Bulgarian town of Ruse: “Women have become more emancipated during socialism and post-socialism, but

## Hardships and pleasures during the Soviet era. Life stories

nevertheless the female way of life has not been made any easier: its changes follow the 'traditional model of division between the male and the female'." The quote within the quotation is from Pierre Bourdieu. A footnote inserted after the word "post-socialism" reads: "The female way of life is being relieved of the socialist obligations to be a man-nish girl." (p. 170)

The remaining three sections are devoted, respectively, to "Competing Images of History", "Victims and Perpetrators", and "Everyday Life in Socialism". Space does not permit a separate presentation of the different items. Suffice it to say that these studies, and the volume as a whole, give highly readable and empathic accounts of the hard life of people in the eastern half of Europe under Communism as well as during the transition period and in the post-socialist societies. Last but not least, the contributions by the young scholars from the region bear witness to the fact that – at least when it comes to history and social sciences – one can speak of one coherent European intellectual space.

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- 1 Lennart Samuelson, "The history of Soviet incorporations" (Review of Elena Zubkova, *Pribaltika i Kreml, 1940–1943*, 2008), *Baltic Worlds*, vol. 1:1.
- 2 Samuelson, op. cit.

**Estonian Life Stories**  
**Edited and translated**  
**by Tiina Kirss**  
**Compiled by Rutt**  
**Hinrikus**

Budapest: Central  
 European University  
 Press 2009  
 539 pages



**MAIJA RUNCIS**

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“AT PRESENT, BOTH Estonians and Russians use history as a weapon, so, sad to say, I am suspicious of a history book published on commission by the government”, a Russian student said in connection with the Estonian and Latvian governments' publication of a Russian-language history book in 2005; the year that Russia celebrated its 60-year commemoration of its victory over Nazi Germany.

The fact that history is still being used as a political weapon in the former Soviet Republics is exactly what has led the citizens of these countries to lose faith in official history-writing. During the entire Soviet era, history writing had more to do with ideology than with science. It is primarily against this background that the governments in the Baltic States have intervened to structurize history: the “true” history was finally to be told. For the purpose of showing “communism's crimes against humanity” the government archives began to publish selections of formerly classified documents from the communist party's and KGB's archives. The archives were often *gefundenes Fressen* for those who had a vested political interest in accusing individual authority figures and political opponents of participating in communism's “crimes against humanity”. Partly in order to deal with this issue, historians' commissions were set up in the three Baltic States and given the task of investigating these crimes.

ANOTHER WAY OF DEALING with the citizens' deep-rooted distrust of public history-writing has been to let people relate their own history. After the fall of communism, the collection and preservation of biographies from the Soviet era have served to compensate for the deficiencies of public history-writing. Events that it had been forbidden to talk about could now be recorded for posterity. In Estonia, the first campaign was started as early as 1988, and produced more than 2000 life stories. This campaign has been followed by several others. The stories are kept in the collections of the Estonian Literary Museum.

The book under review is part of the Estonian collection of life stories that is published by the Literary Museum in Tartu. The life stories are selected from the series “One Hundred Lives of the Century”. They are 25 in number and are written by people with very different lives, aged 35 to 92. The stories have footnotes that refer to a “Glossary” that provides broad background information to the concepts and events mentioned in the stories, e.g. the “Cultural Autonomy Law for Ethnic Minorities”, “Deportations” or “Destruction battalions”. The glossary contextualizes the stories, whose events are thus anchored in historical facts.

The oldest storyteller is a woman and teacher, Hilja Lill, born in 1905. Her story covers several decades, and includes many dramatic events and private sorrows. Following her life story is like reading an exciting novel. It starts with a happy childhood – a childhood that comes to an abrupt end when both of her parents are murdered by unknown persons when she is 11 years of age – and continues with passionate love and

sudden, violent death, when her spouse is shot dead by the Red Army in July 1941. But the story also contains a few “confessions”, for example, that it was “easier to breathe” under Nazi-German occupation than under Soviet rule. The Red Army's entry into Tallinn is described as a pure slaughter of humans and animals, the destruction of houses and farms – indeed, pretty much everything that got in the army's way.

IN THE SPRING OF 1945, Hilja Lill was apprehended and interrogated by the NKVD (the Soviet Secret Police). She was accused of having hidden Estonian resistance fighters. Her story, printed in the book, includes the full names of the men who worked at the NKVD's headquarters in Viljandi (where Hilja was apprehended). She was arrested and taken to the infamous prison Patarei, where she was again interrogated. Her story also provides the full names of her fellow prisoners.

Given the ways in which history, archives and documents have been used for bringing accusations against individuals, one might question the wisdom of publishing full names, without any attempt to provide protective secrecy. Hilja was sentenced to 10 years of penal servitude in Siberia on anti-Soviet conspiracy charges. Her life story ends, more or less, with her release and return to Estonia in 1957. It is as if, once everyday life took over, there is nothing else to tell, even though Hilja lived for another 40 years after her release. She died on July 4, 1997.

ELMAR-RAIMUND RUBEN'S LIFE story is also full of wartime drama. As a trained service man, Elmar-Raimund was recruited into the Red Army, where he remained for the entire war. He gives detailed accounts of each battle and troop movement and describes his own “heroic deeds” with a certain pride and joy. The same joy can be sensed in the story's continuation after the war. Elmar-Raimund was demoted because of “nationalism”, but remained, nonetheless, in military service for another 14 years. I cannot help wondering whether the mention of this demotion, included in a life story told in 1996, was meant to legitimize his long Red Army service. In spite of his heroism during the war and in the army, he was denied a military career because his superiors had classed him as an Estonian and “nationalist”

## Continued. Life stories

rather than as a Soviet citizen. One must keep in mind that the life stories are recounted in an entirely different context than the ones in which the events took place, which makes the source-critical reader constantly suspect the intention underlying the story. Life stories may be exciting reading, but they must not be interpreted as giving the “truth” as, for instance, a historian would define it. An analysis of these stories does, however, allow us to examine the positions from which the narrative is created and the positions to which it gives rise.

In the introduction to the book, Tiina Kirss emphasizes the problematic relation between history and life stories: “Undoubtedly a life story is a narrative about the past, but history is not the sum of life stories, of remembered ‘great lives’.” The purpose of publishing the book’s twenty-five life stories is to reflect the history that has previously not been told, namely the years of occupation 1940–1941, then 1941–1944 under Nazism and 1944–1991 under Communist rule. The purpose is not to use the narratives as complements to “scientific” history, but rather as texts and memories of particular historical events. In any case, this is not the kind of book one reads from beginning to end – one can safely skip those life-stories that are not of interest to one’s own research objectives, while others may be very rewarding. Personally, I have benefited greatly from taking part in the women’s life stories about everyday hardships and pleasures during the Soviet era.

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**Michail Kasianov  
Bez Putina:  
Politicheskiye dialogi s  
Yevgenyem  
Kiselyovym**

[Without Putin: Political  
Dialogues with Yevgeny  
Kiselyov] Moscow:  
Novaya gazeta 2009  
320 pages

## The legacy of shock therapy. Russian liberalism in the political wilderness

**M**ICHAEL KASIANOV WAS Vladimir Putin’s first prime minister, serving between 2000 and 2004. In Russia, he was generally viewed as a compromise head of government, appointed by the former president Boris Yeltsin’s family to supervise the new leader, Vladimir Putin. According to this popular belief, Kasianov’s main mission was to guarantee the interests of the oligarchic groups that emerged during Yeltsin’s reign. In 2004, when Putin became a powerful political leader, Kasianov and his government were finally dismissed. Putin appointed his own men to the most important positions in the Russian administration. Shortly thereafter, to the surprise of many, Kasianov placed himself in opposition to Putin, making an abortive attempt to challenge Putin’s presidential candidate Dmitry Medvedev during the 2008 presidential elections. In fact, he never even gained permission to register as a presidential candidate.

Despite the author’s former high-ranking position, the book would probably have been of limited interests if it had only consisted of conventional memoirs. Kasianov represents the rather typical Russian bureaucrat, mundane and uninspiring – although he has always given the impression of being a cautious and skilful courtier and politician, qualities of use to him in a successful career. Kasianov has never emerged as a controversial or passionate oppositional politician who appealed to the broad masses. What makes this book special is that it is written in the form of interviews with Yevgeny Kiselyov. Kiselyov was a leading Russian political journalist during the Yeltsin era, the “face” of the Russian TV channel NTV that was, in turn, controlled by one of the oligarchs, Vladimir Gusinsky. However, Kiselyov is much more than a famous journalist. His influence on the political processes of the 1990s and, later, his uncompromising critique of Putin have made him into one of the symbols of Russian liberalism. Not surprisingly, after Putin’s succession as president, Kiselyov lost his job and disappeared from Russian TV. He currently works as an anchor for several popular political programs on Ukrainian TV.

**KASIANOV’S MEMORIES** of the 1990s constitute the most informative part of the book. The reader becomes familiar with aspects of this dramatic period in Russian political history that were previously unknown. Kasianov informs us, for the first time, of how German chancellor Helmut Kohl and French president Jacques Chirac helped Yeltsin survive politically when, just before the 1996 presidential elections, he needed money to pay wages and pensions in his economically ruined country. At this point, Yeltsin’s rating was as low as 2 percent. The loans to Yeltsin’s government, which came to about 5 billion dollars, were a decisive factor in Yeltsin’s electoral victory. Kasianov, then deputy finance minister, was involved in negotiating these loans and was, subsequently, greatly favored by Yeltsin.

Kasianov also gives us a good deal of information about the Russian financial crisis and default of 1998

that ended Yeltsin’s political career. According to Kasianov, the announcement of a default was, in fact, unnecessary. The government could have either paid or restructured its debts. The default was a deliberate political decision, made by a small number of high-positioned Russian government officials. Who were these persons and why did they reach this decision? These questions are never explicitly answered.

**KASIANOV IS RESERVED** in discussing his time as prime minister under president Putin. Here, Kiselyov’s text and questions are far more interesting and provocative. Kiselyov’s background in the Russian security services in the 1980s (he then taught Persian at the KGB’s higher school) has given him considerable insights into how the Russian political kitchen has functioned after 2000, during Putin’s reign. He thus poses questions based on a multitude of rumors, speculations, and different versions of important political events. Because Russian politics depend more heavily on the activities of influential individuals at the center of power than on the functions of independent institutions, this information is of considerable value. Kasianov definitely rejects the rumor that he owed his appointment as Putin’s prime minister to the influence of the Yeltsin family. Nevertheless, Kasianov’s own version, that his advancement was entirely due to his professional qualities, is not entirely convincing. The book includes pictures taken at Kasianov’s private parties, pictures which show, among the guests, several Yeltsin oligarchs – such as Roman Abramovich, Alexander Mamut – and, not least, Yeltsin’s daughter Tatyana Yumasheva.

Kasianov’s description of how Putin concentrated power into his own hands in the early 2000s is quite credible, but does not add much that is new to the picture. The exception is his account of the events surrounding the 2003 Yukos affair. Kasianov contends that some months before the arrest of the Yukos owner Michail Khodorkovsky, the latter, with the support of leading oligarchs, had presented Putin with a plan meant to legalize the outcome of the Russian privatization of the 1990s. This was to be institutionalized in the form of a special law. In exchange, the most prominent oligarchs were to make one-time payments into a special state-owned fund to finance public expenditures on

PHOTO: WWW.NE.SE/VLADIMIR-PUTIN



Yeltsin introduced the reforms that paved the way for Putin's increased power and influence.

Russian infrastructure. It was hoped that this "one-time tax" would prevent a reversal of the privatization results and guarantee greater stability for the new post-Soviet business elite. However, Putin rejected this plan, since he wished to keep the leading Russian businessmen under his personal control.

According to Kasianov, Putin dismissed his government in 2004 because he could not tolerate Kasianov's independence and professionalism in opposing Putin's steering Russia towards an authoritarian regime. Putin supposedly feared a prime minister who was or could become a political rival. This statement is not completely reliable. Kasianov was not in a position to challenge Putin politically. Indeed, according to the Levada Center's public opinion polls of 2000–2004, the policies of Kasianov's government was always unpopular with the majority of the Russian electorate – in stark contrast to Putin's growing popularity during those same years.

**THE LAST PART OF THE BOOK**, devoted to Kasianov's political activities as an oppositional politician, is rather boring and not to be trusted, with one important exception. Kasianov gives a good deal of information about his contacts with Yeltsin before his death in 2007. The former president expressed his disappointment with the policy followed by Putin on several occasions, complaining to Kasianov that Putin was reversing the democratic gains of the previous period. Yeltsin, who lived under constant surveillance, feared, Kasianov tells us, for the personal safety of his family should he make such criticism public.

It is still unclear why Kasianov rejected a number of offers, made by Putin after Kasianov's dismissal in 2004, to assume important positions in the

Russian administration, opting instead for a role in the opposition. Kasianov's own explanation, that he was kept from serving in Putin's government by his determination to safeguard the democratic values of the Russian people and oppose the concentration of power in the hands of Russian security services, as embodied by Putin, is hard to believe. The demolition of Yeltsin's illusory "democracy" and the concentration of power had begun long before Kasianov's dismissal in 2004 – it had been a continuous process, going on for years, yet Kasianov had not felt called upon to resign.

The title of the book is rather ambitious since it does not reflect the book's contents; it is instead an indication of Russia's political future, when Putin will no longer be a leader of his country. This is not as farfetched as it may seem at first glance. The current economic crisis, which has brought insecurity and a decrease in the standards of living to the majority of Russians, may lead to a rapid decline in the popularity of Putin as the "national leader" of Russia. According to the constitution, president Medvedev has the power to dismiss Putin's government without notice or explanation, just as Putin dismissed the government of Kasianov. A group of influential liberal-minded experts at the Institute for Contemporary Development, founded under the auspices of president Medvedev, are openly discussing this alternative. These experts, who appear to be more or less active behind-the-scene politicians, share Kasianov and Kiselyov's ideological convictions. If such a development were to take place, the result could be a chain of unpredictable political events that could completely change Russia's political landscape. The liberal opposition to Putin will need a leader, one who is well-known to the Russian public and who is not compromised – as are the majority of the most influential liberals – by direct participation in the notorious privatizations of the 1990s. Under such conditions, Kasianov might be launched as the Russian liberal leader. This is the reason why this book was published towards the end of 2009, and not before, and also, probably, the reason why Kiselyov has participated in the project.

**READING THE BOOK EVOKES** some reflections on the nature of Russian post-Soviet liberalism, or, to give it its proper name, neoliberalism. Russian liberals, for a short historical moment in the early 1990s, were leaders of the transformation of Russia from a state-led centralized society into a market economy. In this historical mission they failed. Russia's liberal governments preferred "shock therapy" to gradual transition, and the highly controversial privatization of the huge state-owned enterprises led, eventually, to the whole economy falling into the hands of a few so-called oligarchs. A dramatic process, the equivalent of a civil war, followed as a result of the economic collapse in the late 1990s. Hundreds of thousands of Russian men killed themselves during the years of privatization and redistribution of what had been state property. Not surprisingly, this led to a greater acceptance of violence and the spread of criminality in Rus-

sian society, which in turn undermined the credibility of the institutions responsible for the stable development of the market economy. Most importantly, Russians still lack respect for private property, an indispensable condition for a well-working market economy.

Such respect could not be fostered under "shock therapy" conditions, which means that privatization from the start was based on fraudulent schemes leading to the impoverishment of the majority of the Russian population.

**THE REFUSAL** of the liberal opposition to accept this failure will, probably, keep it from gaining power, at least through democratic means. Putin's popularity among Russians is not only due to his concentration of power that includes his control of television and of election procedures. As the Levada Center's public opinion polls show, the majority of Russians have a clear and disillusioned perception of Putin's policies, both when it comes to the economy and in terms of the development of democratic institutions. Nonetheless, Putin has managed to present himself as an alternative to the "damned 90s" (Putin's own expression). Memories of the 1990s are still fresh with a majority of the Russian citizens, as is the Russian liberals' historical responsibility for the atrocities of the era. By praising the legacy of the Yeltsin period, Kasianov and Kiselyov are, in effect, defending the 1990s' suppression of the political opposition, Yeltsin's anti-constitutional coup in 1993, and that same year's tank attack on the democratically elected parliament. More importantly, Yeltsin's introduction of a new constitution created the very super-presidential power system that Putin was later to master so skillfully. Both Kasianov and Kiselyov, the former as a member of the government and the latter as an influential TV profile, personally contributed to Yeltsin's re-election in 1996 – a re-election that ruled out the option of a democratic change of political power in Russia for a long time to come.

Whatever political and ideological values the authors of the book represent, *Without Putin* is full of interesting facts about and insights into political life in post-Soviet Russia. It is valuable reading for those interested in contemporary Russian politics and economics.

**ilja viktorov**



**ILJA VIKTOROV**

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## Language disputes and modernization. Dissertation review

**Oddmund Løkensgard  
Hoel  
Målreising og  
modernisering i Noreg  
1885–1940**

[The New Language  
Movement and  
Modernization in Norway  
1885–1940]  
Trondheim: Noreg's  
University of Science and  
Technology, NTNU, 2009  
589 pages

**SWEDEN IS A COUNTRY** that has, for almost two hundred years, been spared not only from wars but from disputes over national and minority languages. It is true that in the decades around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Swedish state opposed the official use of Finnish in Tornedalen, but the language issue did not give rise to national or political conflicts. From the point of view of other Baltic Sea countries, this is indeed an anomaly. In the Baltic States, political and cultural antagonisms between the native and Russian languages weigh heavily in today's politics. Even if the opposition between Swedish and Finnish is, today, less bitter than it has been, it remains constantly present in Finland's cultural and social life.

In Norway, the language dispute has had a different character. The issue, here, does not concern competition between two separate languages, despite what the most pugnacious have sometimes claimed. It is, rather, a matter of two variants of Norwegian, which, in turn, has much in common with Danish. In the beginning, these variants were called *landsmål* and *riksmål* – that is, country language and national/standard language – respectively. After 1929, the official terms have been *nynorsk* [New Norwegian] and *bokmål* [Old Norwegian, lit. Book Norwegian]. The source of the conflict between these two “languages” lies in events that took place during the nineteenth century, the century of nationalism.

**POLITICALLY, NORWAY'S** emerging nationalist movement was directed against Sweden, which dominated Norway within a Swedish-Norwegian Union created in 1814. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, Norway had been liberated from Denmark, but forced to join Sweden in a loosely coupled Personal Union. The Swedish king was Regent of both Norway and Sweden, but Norway retained its constitution and enjoyed extensive autonomy. For a long time, Norwegian discontent focused on inequities within the political structure of the Union. Not until the 1880s did nationalists begin to openly demand its dissolution. The immediate cause of disagreement was the Union's foreign policy, which was exclusively han-



dled by the ministry of foreign affairs in Stockholm. Although Norway was given some influence, such a limited voice could never satisfy the steadily growing national opinion, gathered, first and foremost, within the liberal farmers' party Venstre [The left]. In 1905, the Union was peacefully dissolved, and Norway became a sovereign nation-state.

It was Denmark, however, that was the cultural opponent in the eyes of the nationalists. After centuries of Danish rule, Norway's civil servants spoke Danish, albeit with a Norwegian intonation; ever since the middle ages, Norwegian scholars had gone to Copenhagen for their training. Ivar Aasen (1813–1896) was a pioneer in the struggle against Danish cultural and linguistic influence. Starting in the 1840s, he conducted his studies of the different rural dialects in Norway. Using these as his base, he constructed a language of the country, the so-called *landsmål*. In this language, Danish expressions and linguistic forms were replaced by what were considered ancient, original Norwegian equivalents. Around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the

radical writer Arne Garborg (1851–1924) emerged as Aasen’s follower. By this time, *landsmål* had obtained an organizational anchor, not only in the countryside and, in time, various urban associations, but also, increasingly, in – among other places – publishing houses, newspapers, theaters, folk colleges, grammar textbooks, and coffee houses. According to the most radical *landsmål* advocates, Norway’s language differences (between those who spoke Norwegian dialects and those who spoke Danish-inflected Norwegian) reflected the country’s division into two nations: the people of the countryside and the cities’ civil-servant class. The latter was defined as an “unnational” element in the Norwegian body politic. Unsurprisingly, an opposition movement soon arose. The writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørn-



## Continued. Language disputes and modernization.



**TORBJÖRN NILSSON**

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movement's central leadership – hence a study of an elite. As Hoel points out in his introduction, the study does not include an analysis of how the different branches of the movement have functioned in practice. The starting point is 1885 – that is, the date on which the Norwegian parliament decided that “the Norwegian folk language” (i.e. *landsmål*, later *nynorsk*) should be given as much space in the school system and in public life as the already existing written language (*riksmål*). The choice of 1940 as the ending year of the study has to do with research economy: it allows the author to avoid the post-war era with its new conditions, and, furthermore, an era which has been studied more thoroughly.

**AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER**, which discusses possible approaches to the problem, existing research, theories (quite extensively), and the language movement, is followed by an account of empirical studies, spread over eight chapters and divided chronologically into three sections: 1885–1900, 1900–1920, and 1920–1940. Each section emphasizes the three essential problems that the movement faced during those eras: urbanization, industrialization and the emergence of the labor movement. The source material consists primarily of secondary sources. The movement's newspapers make up the bulk of primary source material. As the subject matter is closely tied to nation building, the concept of nationalism is also discussed, to a large extent based on a division between modernists (Hobsbawm, Gellner, Anderson, Hroch) and non-modernists (Smith, Hutchinson).

The thesis was written within a research project on language and cultural change at the Ivar Aasen Institute, Volda University College, an institute established by the language movement itself. Hoel has held a leading position within that movement. This does not disqualify him from writing on it, but there is a tendency, in his thesis, to acquit the movement of accusations that it espoused non-democratic actions, militarism or, of more central importance, anti-modernist views.

Hoel admits that, around the turn of the nineteenth century, the countryside's distrust of the towns played an important role in securing the language movement's first wave of successes. The movement's attitude towards ind-

ustrialization is, however, more complex. Movement members could oppose large-scale industry while simultaneously encouraging the development of modern technology and smaller industrial initiatives. The conclusion is that the movement did not fight modernization per se. Rather, it supported an alternative modernization program, based on small-scale industry. It is in this context that Sejersted's research might have been cited in support of the argument.

**IN SPITE OF THE THESIS'S** reliance on a modernization-oriented approach to industrialization and urbanization, political explanations are granted a significant role. The movement's expansion depended on its integration into Venstre's long successful nation-building project. In the 1930s, when Venstre began to lose power, the language movement was weakened as well. The movement never attained the same close relations with the new leading political power, Det Norske Arbeiderparti [The Norwegian Labor Party]. Although the latter was long formally neutral on the language issue, in practice the Labor Party supported *nynorsk*. The term *sammorsk* [Common Norwegian] stood for a fusion of the two Norwegian languages. Even though the proponents of *sammorsk* met with difficulties, their efforts did contribute to a weakening of the language movement.

At this point, the language movement no longer had the sort of national mobilization it had enjoyed in 1905. When groups closely associated with the movement fought, during the 1920s, for a “Norwegianization” of town names, they met strong resistance both from locals and from the opposition *riksmål* movement. The fact that the capital Kristiania in 1925 became Oslo was a special case. But the failed campaign to turn Trondhjem into Nidaros cost the movement dearly, even if the more Norwegian-sounding variant Trondheim did see the light of day.

The dissertation is voluminous. It gives a broad account of the language movement's development during the period, even if historians are already quite familiar with much of the stuff. In several areas, it serves to round off our picture of the movement. Although the thesis takes, as its central theme, the importance of modernization, the study nevertheless tends towards a more traditional, generally descriptive approach. The introductory chapter's theoretical expositions, which are well worth reading, are rarely followed up, and the concluding chapter is relatively thin.



**BUT LET US RETURN TO** the modernization perspective! In what respect does it throw new light on how the language movement developed during this period? Here several problems emerge. Of the three criteria for modernization given, industrialization tends to dominate completely. It does not become clear

whether the growth of the labor movement poses a threat or an opportunity. Is fighting against the labor movement indicative of a “traditional” attitude? Then again, it is difficult to treat urbanization separately from industrialization, as the former is, if anything, a result of the latter. Urbanization was the one symptom of the emergence of industrial society that most palpably affected everyday life in the countryside. Industry was primarily located in the cities and in new, concentrated industrial areas. Migration to the cities became the most obvious example of the growing difficulties faced by the language movement, as people left the areas loyal to *nynorsk* in order to settle in the cities, which were filled with *nynorsk*'s opponents. Industrialization was more abstract, but without a doubt the driving force behind urbanization. Accordingly, industrialization remains this study's determinant factor, given its classic approach to modernization.

**HOEL HAS A POINT** when he claims that the movement's opposition to large-scale industry did not exclude an alternative approach to industrialization, one that would enable the agricultural sector to use modern technology and would allow the needs of small-scale industry to determine the direction of future developments. The problem is that his method allows any actors showing any degree of support for modern economic ideas, even if only to the extent needed to preserve their own trade, to be categorized as favoring modernization. This raises the question of what shape a Norwegian anti-modernization movement could, in fact, have assumed at the time. Not even the folk-college advocate and Farmer's Party member Lars Eskeland, who opposed any change that might threaten the stability of peasant society and who especially feared the dissolution of norms brought about by secularization, rejected modern technology or the development of small-scale industry in the countryside. Modernization becomes inevitable if almost any movement can be categorized as pro-modernization. In spite of the author's introductory, nuanced discussion, he ends by expressing an almost deterministic view of the development of the Norwegian society.

Another problem is that modernization, from the study's theoretical perspective, becomes static. The concept

of small-scale industry formulated in 1885 would have an entirely different implication if presented in 1940. As a result, the modernization perspective is not especially illuminating, and in the concluding chapter the author tends to depend more on political explanations. The primary explanation of the fate of the language movement can, somewhat brutally, be summarized as: the decline of Venstre! Hoel's analysis of the political development is, in fact, convincing. It does, however, indicate that some of the choices made at the inception of his research were methodologically somewhat unfortunate.

At the same time, there is an embryo indicating the possibility of more fruitful reasoning, one which gives us glimpses of more pathbreaking results. Hoel's own research does indicate that concepts of multiple modernities and discursive or communicative rationality might have superior explanatory power. This is also touched upon in the final chapter, in his discussions of the language movement's positive view of science and popular education, as well as in the discussion of modern organization and democracy. In a section which focuses on the importance of religion (chapter 6), a connection is drawn to a form of rationality that the classic modernization theory misses. Had this type of connection been used consistently, as a point of departure, the study would have escaped the disadvantages of a one-sided industrialization perspective.

**HOEL'S BROAD-RANGING** study of the Norwegian language movement has achieved, at least in part, a synthesis of its development during a revolutionary era, when modern Norway was established. Both the threats, and the opportunities, that the movement faced have been placed in the larger context of modernization. Even though the language movement was uniquely Norwegian, the thesis serves to remind the reader that historical research in other countries benefits from studies where the modernization concept is applied in a nuanced way, thus avoiding sweeping judgements about the character of popular movements as well as schematic descriptions of modern development.

**torbjörn nilsson**

Note. Noreg is Norway in New Norwegian.

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## UNCIVIL SOCIETY – REVISITED

In the book *Uncivil Society*, Stephen Kotkin and Jan T. Gross have questioned the description of the 1989 transformation of Eastern Europe as a popular revolt against communism. So far, Kotkin's and Gross's book has been reviewed with enthusiasm in *The New York Times* and with friendly interest in the *London Review of Books*. Timothy Garton Ash, a leading writer and historian who interpreted the course of events as a peaceful revolution, has, on the other hand, attacked its central premises in the *New York Review of Books* (2009, vol. 56: 17).

He employs two principal lines of argument.

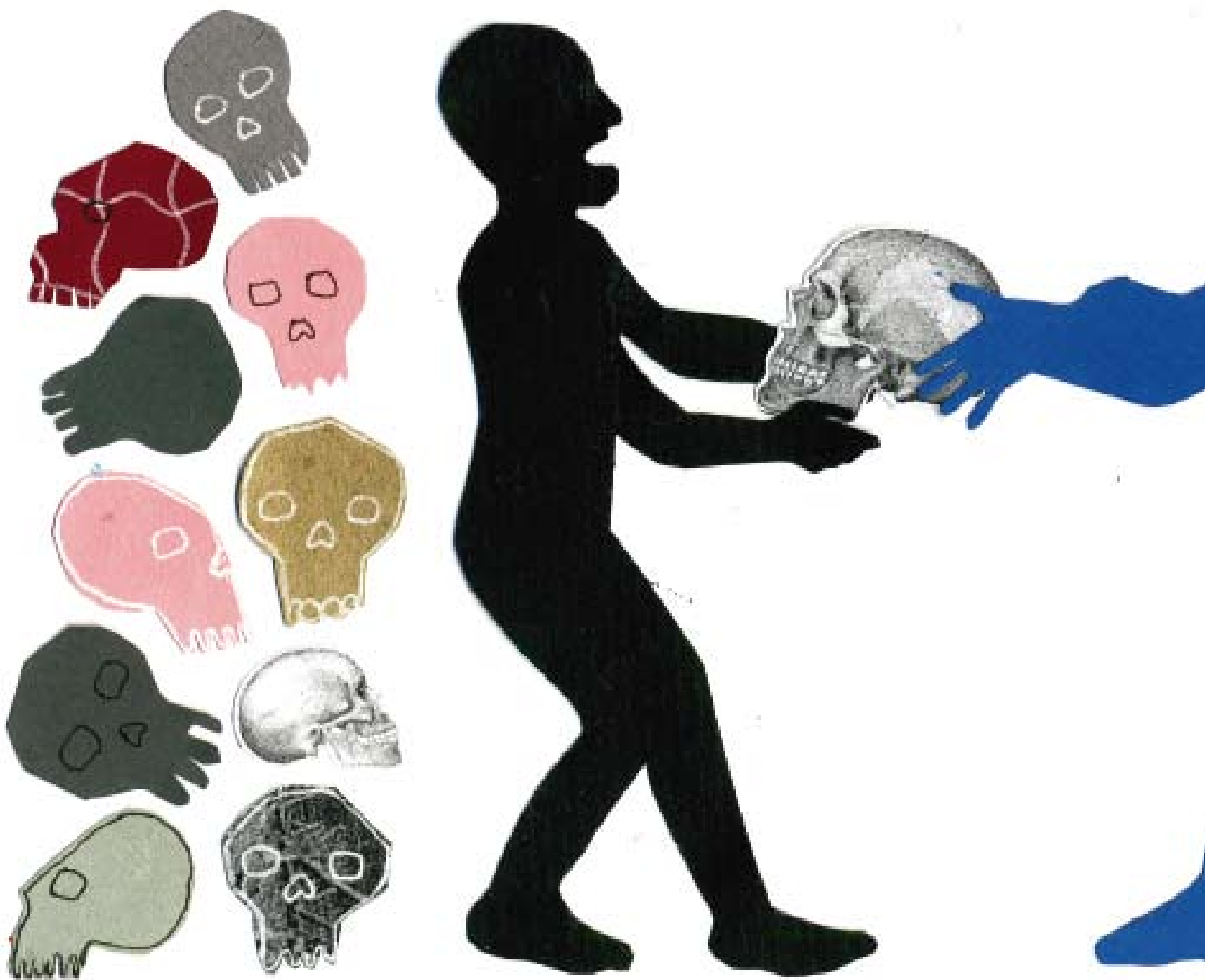
According to Garton Ash, one cannot, as Kotkin does, claim that the regimes in Eastern Europe were bankrupt. States, he maintains, do not go bankrupt. Had the Soviet Union continued to support the GDR, for example, that state would have survived for many years to come. This line of argument is, however, not particularly powerful, as the Soviet Union did withdraw both its economic and military support – this is integral to the analysis.

Garton Ash's other line of argument is, unsurprisingly, that Kotkin shows what amounts to disdain for the popular resistance of 1989, which terming it a "bank run". This term suggests that the East European elite threw itself into transient democratic movements only after they felt the ground burning beneath their feet. "Ludicrous", writes Garton Ash. Those who protested took a risk, and expected to be met by tanks. Instead of giving economic explanations, Kotkin and other historians ought to investigate how and under what circumstances such fast-growing political movements arise. In this line of argument, one senses a trace of Rosa Luxemburg's thesis on the spontaneity of revolutionary movements.

Garton Ash does not really discuss Kotkin's critique of the use of the concept civil society in countries with communist governments. This is an issue that will be worth returning to, as the debate continues, to balance the importance of economic factors against the impact of spontaneous popular movements. ✕

**anu mai köll**

# HEAD HUNTERS



Primitive societies. At a high level of civilization.

# AND COLLECTORS

BY **FREDRIK SVANBERG**  
ILLUSTRATION **RAGNI SVENSSON**

**I**N THE 1904–1926 edition of *Nordisk familjebok* [Nordic Family Book], which, incidentally, is the most comprehensive Swedish encyclopedia ever written, one may read under the entry “Hufvudjakt” [head hunting] that superstitions about the human head, widespread among different peoples, sometimes take the primitive expression of a desire to “own as many skulls as possible”. This is the rationale, the entry tells us, behind head hunting among the Naga People in continental Asia, as well as peoples in America and on the Solomon Islands, New Guinea and various East Indian islands. Head hunting, we are told, reaches its ultimate expression among the Dayak People of Borneo, about whose primitive habits the encyclopedia has much to say.

**I**N 1996, A LARGE COLLECTION of human skeleton parts was found packed in boxes in the storerooms of Uppsala University. The collection included approximately 2,000 human skulls as well as several plaster replicas of human heads. According to the information currently available, the collection, which was amassed during the late 1800s and early 1900s, belonged to the University’s Anatomical Department. It was put into storage in the 1950s; a large part was subsequently transferred to The Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm. One can find traces of information about the skulls in the catalogue *Museum Anatomicum Upsaliense*. From this, we learn that the skulls originated in Lapponia (that is, they are Sami), Egypt, Greece, Greenland, Indonesia, Italy, Micronesia, Hawaii, Norway, Peru, Poland, the Kola Peninsula, Spain, Sri Lanka and Sudan, as well as, in all probability, other countries. Most of the skulls, however, were collected from nearby Uppsala cemeteries as well as, among others places, the Swedish island of Gotland.

**HOW DID ALL THESE SKULLS** end up at Uppsala University? Who collected them and why? What purpose did they serve? And what are we to do with them today?

First and foremost, it is clear that the greatest head hunters of the past century were not Borneo’s Dayaks, but Western scientists and travelers.

Nineteenth-century anthropologists took interest in comparing peoples from different parts of the world, seeking to use observed differences to find a method for dividing humanity into neat categories – preferably races. Skulls were considered the best source material. Accordingly, anatomical collections were established.

Thus, in the 1910s and 1920s, we find zoologist and explorer Erik Mjöberg engaging in the most gruesome types of grave robbery and desecration of the dead while in Australia. His goal



was to get hold of skulls; these were then smuggled back to Sweden. When the well-known entomologist, archaeologist and ethnographer Hjalmar Stolpe sailed around the world with the steam frigate *Vanadis* in 1883–1885, he also wanted skulls. He raided old burial grounds in South America and Hawaii; what he dug up ended up in the Uppsala collection. Mjöberg and Stolpe were both systematic skull collectors, although they collected many other articles as well. Generally speaking, the skull hunt was a varied affair, but it does seem that, at the time, everybody was after heads – missionaries and ambassadors, businessmen and tourists.

**SKULL COLLECTIONS WERE BEING** amassed all through the 1800s, which is when race research started to come into vogue. After 1910, this “science”, whose advocates used skulls to support their arguments, gained real vigor and momentum. In 1924, race biologist Hans Günther, who was later to become one of Nazi Germany’s central race researchers, gave student lectures based on Uppsala’s anatomical collection – presumably, the same collection of skulls now stored in The Museum of National Antiquities. The collection’s plaster replicas may include some of those lent by race anthropologist Gaston Backman – himself author of the infamous article “Negroes” in the second edition of *Nordisk familjebok* – to Herman Lundborg’s “Folktypstställning” [Exhibition of folk-types]. The exhibition, which toured Sweden in 1919, opened doors, a few years later, for the foundation of Uppsala’s infamous Institute of Race Biology, headed by Lundborg. In his history of the Institute, Gunnar Broberg, a historian of ideas, mentions plans for an anatomical museum – one that was, perhaps, to house the skulls now found in Stockholm.

During the 1930s and 1940s, race research changed direction towards social medicine. In 1935, Herman Lundborg was succeeded by the openly anti-Nazi genetic researcher Gunnar Dahlberg as director of the Institute of Race Biology. Skull-based research was phased out and the collections were put in storage or placed in museums. There, they have bided their time, wrapped in brownish-gray cardboard boxes, stowed away in dark storeroom corners.

**NOW, HALF A CENTURY LATER**, a new head hunt has begun. Representatives of the peoples and groups from which the skulls were taken want their ancestors’ skulls returned. It is important to make absolutely clear that these demands do not derive from factors *comparable* to the race-biological concerns that were the primary motive behind the original collection. However, it is obvious that despite the lack of race-biological motives, the demands are – and in this, they resemble the processes underlying the original collection of skulls – integral to larger processes of constituting “Us” and “Them”. The aim of race biology had been to find supposed variations that could be used to conjure up a white, Western “Us”, positioned at the top of the evolutionary hierarchy. All other peoples, such as the Sami (and the Dayaks, with their primitive head hunting), could be placed lower in this

hierarchy. This required the collection and proper classification of our own as well as others’ cultural heritage, including human remains – for instance, skulls.

Today, aborigines, previously marginalized minority groups, regionalist revival movements as well as states with newly awoken nationalist sentiments are demanding that those historical temples, museums, return their cultural heritage. These “new” processes, interestingly, follow a logic similar to that which informed race biology: that is, the need to constitute an Us on the basis of the construction of a shared cultural heritage.

The museums’ skulls and many cultural artifacts are far more than dead objects in a storehouse. They catalyze social and political processes; they contribute to structuring society. To collect is really all about taking things out of their original context and placing them in a new context with different rules and meanings – those of the collection. Museums, suddenly awakened from long-held, traditional views of their artifacts, must now ponder the fact that their way of ordering their collections was neither as definite nor as eternal as previously believed. Attention has once again focused on Sweden’s skull collections. In 2004, Stockholm’s Ethnographic Museum returned Erik Mjöberg’s aborigines’ skulls. The Museum of National Antiquities is in the process of returning skulls collected by Hjalmar Stolpe to people in Hawaii, as well as a Sami skull from the Uppsala collection to the Swedish Sami.

**OBJECTS HAVE NO SOULS**, but they can become powerful agents in social and political processes of change. The museums’ collections have a social dimension and dynamic that has been activated by globalization. Knowledge of the skull collections and other similarly charged subjects is essential to those wishing to participate in an informed discussion about new questions and demands. This is an important discussion. It concerns, ultimately, not which rules, laws or classification systems should be applied to our cultural heritage, but rather how we would like our society and our world to be. Cultural heritages can be used to construct pure, delimited and exclusive societies and groups where not everyone can fit in. If we, through a lack of background knowledge and ability to consider the facts carefully, comply with demands that serve such purposes, we are, perhaps, no better ourselves.

Meanwhile, as light is increasingly focused on the darker aspects of early twentieth-century science and culture, knowledge about the collections also becomes important for those writing a new history of the period and those wishing to assess its impact on our world. What do all these heads represent? Some of

the skulls in the Uppsala collection were collected, it is said, after the battle of extermination at Omdurman in 1898, when British colonial troops massacred a Sudanese army. Who strolled about the battlefield collecting the heads? And how did all the skulls from Uppsala’s cemeteries end up in the collection? Not to mention the skulls from Italy, Poland and Indonesia. What can the head hunting and its material cultural bequest tell us, today, about the early 1900s, about the science and world view of that era? Are the skulls the exclusive cultural heritage of a particular group, or are they also key to understanding the dark sides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Incidentally, my colleagues tell me that the skull of a “Swede” is supposedly found in the Danish National Museum. Should Swedes demand its return? Or perhaps let the matter rest? ❌

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Note: An earlier version of this article has been published in the daily *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm).



**If museums are a place for stolen goods, perhaps visitors are committing the misdemeanor of handling stolen goods.**

## Anders Hammarlund



Associate professor, cultural historian, and music ethnologist, whose special fields are Central Europe, the Balkans, and Turkey. The link between aesthetic and political culture has been a constant theme in Hammarlund's work as a researcher, teacher, and media personality in Swedish Radio and the universities of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Uppsala, in the last of which he was in charge of the Department of Soviet and East European Studies, and at the Swedish National Collections of Music (Stockholm), where he has, as of 2006, held responsibility for multicultural issues. Among Hammarlund's published works, the following are particularly noteworthy: *Kulturbrytningar: Musik och politik i Centraleuropa* [Cultural Diffraction: Music and Politics in Central Europe] (1999) and *Ett äventyr i Staten: Carl Gustav Heraeus (1671–1725) från Stockholm till kejsarhovet i Wien* [An Adventure within the State: Carl Gustav Heraeus (1671–1725) from Stockholm to the Vienna Imperial Court] (2003).

## Michael Gentile



Associate professor of human geography at Södertörn University and Umeå University. He has a longstanding interest in the dynamics of urbanization and urban change in post-socialist countries and has recently published in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* and in *Eurasian Geography and Economics*.

Tanya Jukkala  
Ilkka Henrik Mäkinen

Doctoral student in sociology at the Baltic and East European Graduate School (BEEGS), Södertörn University. Is currently writing her thesis on suicide in Russia. Has previously published articles on Russia, e.g. "Economic Strain, Social Relations, Gender, and Binge Drinking in Moscow" (*Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 66:3; with I. H. Mäkinen, O. Kislitsyna, S. Ferlander, and D. Vågerö; see BW 1:1) and "Institutional Trust in Contemporary Moscow" (*Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 61:5; with A. Stickley, S. Ferlander, P. Carlson, O. Kislitsyna, and I. H. Mäkinen).

Professor of sociology at Södertörn University, director of the Stockholm Centre on Health of Societies in Transition (SCOHST). Has published extensively on suicide in general and on suicide in Eastern Europe in particular, including chapters on social theories on suicide and on labor market positions and suicide in the recently published *Oxford Textbook of Suicidology* (2009) and widely cited articles such as "Are there Social Correlates to Suicide?" (*Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 44:12). Mäkinen's publications also include a variety of other topics related to health and mortality in Eastern Europe.

## Latest on the Web

## Awarded with a prize yet denied access

An interview with Birgitta Almgren on [www.balticworlds.com](http://www.balticworlds.com)

In March, Germanist Birgitta Almgren, who holds a chair at CBEEES, Södertörn University, was given a personal award of 100,000 Swedish



crowns by the Swedish Academy – the institution that bequeaths the annual Nobel Prize in Literature – for her studies of Nazi-German infiltration in Sweden and of the offshoots, in Cold War Sweden, of the GDR's policies.

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH Hans Wolf, Almgren discusses aspects of the latter

study. She also explains her motives for requesting that the Swedish law courts make it possible for her to continue her research by granting her access to the so-called Rosenholz Acts. These acts consist of material from the East German Stasi archives secured by Western intelligence agencies in connection with the dissolution of the GDR. Of these, the Swedish Security Service (Säpo) has received those documents related to Swedes' collaboration with the Stasi.

So far, Säpo has refused to give Almgren access, citing the confidentiality of intelligence documents. Almgren's request was also turned down in court;

nor has the Swedish government moved to revoke the documents' confidentiality.

WOLF'S INTERVIEW WITH Almgren can be found on

*Baltic Worlds'* newly-established Web site ([www.balticworlds.com](http://www.balticworlds.com)), where historians comment on Almgren's request.

When the award was published, the Swedish Academy's permanent secre-



tary said, in an unusual statement, that he found it "extremely odd that a researcher of Almgren's high reputation was not allowed to complete the important and thorough mapping process by gaining access to the Säpo archives' information on the fifty or so Swedes who worked for the East German Stasi. In most countries, this request would have been entirely uncontroversial, but not here. The Swedish state's secretiveness about some aspects of Cold War history is, sadly, constant, irrespective of the political color of the ministry." ❌

## The tension between the bud and the blossom. Peripheries going vanguard

It is a striking but surprisingly often overlooked fact that the artistic and literary modernism of the 1900s had much of its origins in the European provinces. The avant-garde – and not just the political avant-garde – came from the East. A phenomenon such as dadaism for example, is inconceivable without the influence of the intellectual scene in Romania, especially the influence of the Jewish intelligentsia. Later, these iconoclasts and anarchists of language had no difficulties establishing themselves and their movement in more central location such as Zurich. Linguistically and educationally, they were integrated into the rest of Europe.

**This is contrary** to common knowledge. In his reference work *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy: From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (2007), Peter Gray leaves the periphery largely to its own devices (unless we want to count Russia as part of the periphery, something we should of course not do). Social and economic historians have readily characterized Eastern and South-eastern Europe in terms of feudal backwardness, of lagging behind the rest of Europe. It is true that, in the first half of the 1900s, a country such as Romania had an extremely archaic social structure, unequal distribution of property, and a political culture that only very reluctantly accepted the principles of a liberal state governed by law. At the same time, Bucharest had a university that was the world's fifth largest, and in the mid-1930s there were more than two thousand daily newspapers in the kingdom, with a combined circulation of just over four million.

**In several books** (the latest, *Dada Öst: Rumänerna på Café Voltaire* [Dada

East: Romanians at Café Voltaire], 2005; and *Ett svunnet Europa: Om modernismens glömda rötter* [A Europe that has Vanished: On the Forgotten Roots of Modernism], 2009), art historian Tom Sandqvist has reminded us of this rich heritage from the provinces. Finland, his home turf, can also credit itself with a number of the pioneers of literary modernism. These people all knew

what life on the outskirts meant – prominent figures such as Edith Södergran, Henry Parland, Elmer Diktonius, Gunnar Björling had a minority language as their native language or first language. Being on the geographic fringe did not insulate them, the province was not a barren terrain, and the metropolises were often the recipients of input from the outside. In Sweden as well, the

provinces have been literarily productive, with landscapes such as Värmland and its Selma Lagerlöf, Västerbotten and P. O. Enqvist, Småland and Astrid Lindgren, while the giants of the capital – C. J. L. Almqvist, August Strindberg, Hjalmar Söderberg – often became strangers in their own country and ended up in temporary or long-term exile (America; Paris and Switzerland; Copenhagen).

**Is there** a compensatory aspect in the willingness of the periphery to be the vanguard? One may well wonder. The big city, multicultural and without identity, was encircled by rural masses during the phases of national unity (which of course is *one* aspect of modernity) and became the face of the nation to the outer world. Anders Hammarlund (see pp. 4–9), Swedish cultural historian, found many of the men of the modern revolution in Moravia, long a Central European backyard: a Sigmund Freud, an Adolf Loos, a Gustav Mahler, a Tomáš Masaryk, an Alfons Mucha, a Leoš Janáček (*Människor bortom lustprincipen: Mähriska öden* [People Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Moravian Life Stories], 2006). They were all, in different ways, leading figures in broader contexts, pan-European icons – but in some sense were also upstarts and outsiders. They exploited the tension between the provincial and the universal, between the bud and the blossom. In the era of globalization, is anything of this tension left? ❌

