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From the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES)
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interview: János Kornai

TOLSTOY AND CHECHNYA / TRAVELS TO DISSIDENT RUSSIA / TÕNISSON – ESTONIAN FREEDOM FIGHTER / LINNAHALL

Belarus: Discussion for bringing about change

On April 26, a number of representatives of the opposition in Belarus participated in a seminar called "The Way Forward for Belarus", which was held at Jonsered Manor, north of Gothenburg, as part of a collaborative project among the University of Gothenburg, the City of Gothenburg, Baltic Worlds (CBEES), and the Swedish International Liberal Centre. The seminar addressed such issues as the difficulties experienced by the opposition in working for democracy and human rights in Belarus, and what the outside world can do to support their work.

"SINCE DECEMBER 19, conditions in Belarus have become far worse where human rights are concerned. The softer image put across before the election was merely playing to the gallery; there were no real changes. The same structure of control has been in place the entire time. After December 19, the grip tightened."

So says Valentin Stefanovich, vice president of the civil rights organization Viasna (Spring), which was set up in 1996 and publishes regular reports on violations of human rights in Belarus.

Valery Karbalevich, an independent professor of political science, has recently published a book about Lukashenka. He believes that Lukashenka's time in power is drawing to an end. However, he does not think that Lukashenka will relinquish power voluntarily.



PHOTO: ILLYA ROZENBAUM

The award-winning photograph, [Shushkevich], in the 2008 International Photography Awards (IPA) competition. It was part of an exhibition to mark the 90th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Belarusian National Republic.

Stanislaw Shushkevich is one of the leading figures of the democratic opposition. "Lukashenka has had total power in his hands since the coup d'état of 1996. As the opposition, we are reduced to holding small gatherings, having verbal communication, knocking on doors. We have no political arena, no organization", Shushkevich says emphatically.

OPPOSITION REPRESENTATIVES are clear about the fact that they need support from the West in order to succeed in working for democracy and human rights in Belarus. Today they lack resources and a platform.

What can the outside world do? Artur

Michalski, director of the Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland, wants to base Polish efforts on a dual approach: support civil society by helping the people develop and survive, and, at the same time, support sanctions against the government to penalize the powers in Minsk. ✕

Read the full report from the event at <http://baltic-worlds.com/category/conference-reports/>

With a focus on the Baltic States

Since the fall of 2011, this magazine has sought to create a systematic overview of the general elections and referendums in the area of interest to us — which, in addition to the Baltic States, includes all of the old Eastern Europe. No, that is of course not quite true, for we also cover the *new* Eastern Europe as well. This monitoring, with attendant analysis and commentary, can be found at www.balticworlds.com. Recent developments covered include the parliamentary elections in Finland, with the significant breakthrough made by a new national-populist party.

In the current issue of our quarterly, Poland and the three Baltic republics are, in different ways, in focus. Our authors examine processes of emancipation, as well as corruption. Erkki Tuomioja, the former foreign minister of Finland, writes about an early Estonian nationalist and statesman, Jaan Tõnisson, and there is a report depicting how a monument in Tallinn from the Summer Olympics of 1980 has acquired an entirely new use.

JÁNOS KORNAI, the Hungarian economist whose name comes up increasingly often in discussions of potential Nobel Prize laureates, makes a bold analogy between the uprisings in the former Soviet bloc and today's popular movements in the Arab world.

The editors are grateful for all submissions. Debate is conducted on the Web site. There are also links to quite a number of related forums, and all issues of the magazine are now available for downloading as PDF files. ✕

THE EDITORS

Visiting scholar: Tony Wood

In September of this year, Södertörn University and CBEES will be visited by a relatively young, independent researcher from the UK: Tony Wood. He will give



several seminars on contemporary Russia and present his current project, "The Reforging of Russia: Collapse as Crucible", which deals with the shifts in the social structure of Russia since the 1980s. Previously he has presented his research at Berkeley, Stanford, Columbia, the New School for Social Research, and other academic institutions outside Europe.

Tony Wood is a contemporary scholar, and not a conventional academic. Over the last ten years, Wood has written a fair number of articles on culture, economics, and politics in Russia, including pieces on Eisenstein, Andrei Platonov, and Cold War design. He is the author of a highly acclaimed book on the second civil war in the Caucasus, *Chechnya: The Case for Independence* (2007), and has since followed developments in Russia, and the Caucasus in particular, for the *London Review of Books*, where he

most recently wrote on Russia and climate change ("Frozenology", *LRB* Sept. 9, 2010) and the journalist Anna Politkovskaya: "I dream of him some day sitting in the dock" (*LRB*, June 24, 2010).

Tony Wood has an education in modern and medieval languages from Cambridge University, where he wrote a BA thesis on "Time as Space: The Fourth Dimension in Bely's Petersburg and Malevich's Suprematism". He also earned an MA from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (London University) with a thesis on "The City in Soviet Film 1924—1941". Besides English and Russian, he is fluent in French and Spanish, and has most recently translated Mario Vargas Llosa into English (2009).

Since 2007 he has been the deputy editor of the *New Left Review*. ✕

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The next issue of BW is scheduled to be published in September 2011.

Contact BW at bw.editor@sh.se.

Subscription is free. More information at www.balticworlds.com.

The struggle for latitude



During the Cold War, “Finlandization” was a pejorative in the Western (anti-Soviet) world. In Finland itself, the term was used to devalue the sacrifices the country had made in its struggle for independence.

Finland was the only country that had fought on Hitler's side in World War II and that was neither occupied by a victorious power (the Soviet Union) nor forced (by Moscow) to accept a tributary government.

But it was a long time before pundits in Washington and London stopped regarding Finland as an Eastern European country or simply part of the Soviet bloc – and this despite the fact that Finland, unlike other Northern European countries, had never had a socialist majority in its parliament since winning sovereignty from the Russian realm in 1917 and becoming a democratic state with the same rights as other democracies, or states in transition to democracy.

FROM AN “EASTERN EUROPEAN” perspective, on the other hand, Finlandization could be understood as the lesser of two evils during the Cold War. It pointed to a path away from giving and taking orders towards negotiating – on an unequal basis to be sure, but nonetheless with elements of reciprocity. During the long era of President Uhro K. Kekkonen (1956–1981), Finland maintained its cultural identity and its legal and political institutions while strengthening economic ties with Western Europe. All of this was possible only because the Republic of Finland respected and acknowledged the Soviet Union's more or less legitimate security interests.

Finlandization was a matter of compromise, sometimes less than pristine, but even today, few Finns in responsible positions would say that it was tantamount to surrender. Finnish politicians could be corrupted, but Finland was never suppressed. This is surely an important explanation for why there has not been any strong Finnish opinion in favor of demanding the return of conquered land in Karelia after the fall of the Soviet regime in Russia.

JUST HOW STRONG WAS control from Moscow over the leadership of countries where, unlike Finland, the Soviets could exert hegemony and expect obedience? Were the real-socialist countries of Eastern Europe (minus Yugoslavia, Romania, and Albania) pure vassal states? This is of course an empirical question that historians must examine and try to answer. But it is clear that the legacy of political cultures in these countries produced different outcomes, with regard both

to the scope of political repression and to ownership structures, in particular within agriculture. There was latitude, albeit limited.

But even in freer systems, like the EU, the latitude of individual states is being gradually constrained. Europe is undergoing “Europeanization”, but the process is far from smooth. And it is meeting resistance.

Not even EU-Europe marched in step towards the war against Libya, and the Eastern European governments (like the Finnish!) were clearly opposed to the military action. It became the war of “Old Europe”, while the “New Europe”, those among the “coalition of the willing” in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, now chose to show restraint. Obviously, they felt that they had been duped by Washington into a war that was neither justified nor supported by international law. Even though three quarters of its own people opposed the invasion according to opinion polls in March 2003, the Polish elite chose to join the coalition. President Kwaśniewski said at the time that he had “complete trust” in George W. Bush. Polish Prime Minister Tusk (*Reuters*, April 9) is now opposed to war and speaks of the “hypocrisy of the Western powers”. In May, Lech Wałęsa refused to meet US War-President Obama during the latter's visit to Polen.

IS THE INFATUATION of Eastern European elites with the United States cooling? *The Economist* claims, in fact, that “Atlanticist sentiment is ebbing on both sides of the ocean” (May 14–20). It seems a reasonable conclusion that the risk of a “new Finlandization” is declining in the face of the Russian government's persistent problems with modernizing its economy and inability to instill optimism in its decreasing population. In parallel, the status of the United States as a superpower is being challenged by China. For smaller countries, this may entail greater latitude and less compulsion in their strategic choices. ✕

ILLUSTRATION: KARIN SUNVISSON

24 hours is a long time in revolutions

János Kornai on taking risks and ending up on opposing sides

“For a large part of my life”, says János Kornai, “including the formative years of my youth, I was cut off from the centers of economic science. I was living in Budapest, next to the Iron Curtain, in some sort of isolation. This situation had many drawbacks, but it had also some benefits. It compelled me to find original ways of thinking, instead of working under the direct influence of great masters, following their example, or – as often happens in the centers of culture and science – simply following and imitating the pioneers. I don’t wish to sound arrogant, but in a sense, I share this condition with the composer Joseph Haydn. Haydn spent long decades not in Vienna, the very center of music in his time, but at the court of Esterházy in Hungary, far away from the mainstream. Haydn once wrote, ‘I was cut off from the world, so I had a chance to develop and take risks.’”

János Kornai certainly has been taking risks, and he definitely got his chance to develop in a most unusual way. He started out as a very young journalist in communist Hungary, and he eventually became a professor at Harvard.

“In the late 1940s and early 1950s, I was actually one of the top editors of the main Communist Party newspaper. After one or two years of service, I was considered for promotion. A close friend and former classmate of mine was also considered for a similar high-ranking position. When the proposal was submitted to the editor-in-chief, he asked, ‘Is this going to be a kindergarten?’ I was barely 21 when I became editor of the newspaper’s economics section, and my friend, not much older, editor of foreign affairs. We were really a young generation – a generation of fanatics.”

János Kornai did not attend university in the Eastern bloc, and when later in life he was exposed to Western academic thought, he is pleased that he was not still a young undergraduate who had to have the basic tenets of the economic mainstream drummed into him. He had a chance, Kornai says, to develop his own thinking, with all its faults. “Living in far-away Hungary did me good”, Kornai writes in his memoir *By Force of Thought*. “Strange as it may sound, it made it easier for me to retain my intellectual autonomy.”

But you began as an enthusiastic communist, didn’t you?

“Yes, that is true, and I speak about it very frankly. Today, if you talk to the intelligentsia and even to politicians in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, some prefer to deny that early part of their lives before the system changed, and you also hear quite a few former party members claiming: ‘Yes, I was forced to join. Otherwise I wouldn’t have had a career.’ I find that rather cynical. For me it is easy: I joined because I believed in the ideas of communism.”

You have actually said it was like falling in love.

“Well, that may be a bit exaggerated, but I was certainly an enthusiastic – even for a few years fanatic – believer. To begin with, I am of Jewish origin. I was never a

religious person, but under Hitler and under Hungarian law, being Jewish was not a matter of religious belief but a matter of racist discrimination. So I was considered a Jew, and in 1944, when the Germans had occupied Hungary, at a very sensitive age I had to wear the yellow star. I was barely 16 years old. My father was taken to a concentration camp and from there sent on to Auschwitz where he was murdered. Two of my brothers were sent to labor camp. To me the Holocaust is not just an abstract event known from history but my personal experience.”

You were saved by Raoul Wallenberg?

“To be precise, not directly. I got a document from the Wallenberg group, not a Swedish passport, just a piece of paper really, claiming that I was under the protection of the Swedish embassy. I was in a kind of concentration camp, and the Swedish document helped me to escape and to hide. The trauma of the occupation and the Nazi threat made me change my worldview. I was looking for a guarantee that Nazism would not return to Hungary, where a very large part of the population really did sympathize with Hitler and his movement. And because the Communist Party had been illegal under the previous regime, and emphasized being consistent, and in fact the most radical, opponents of Nazism, and because later the Red Army drove the Nazis out of Hungary, that certainly triggered my sympathy for the Communist Party.

“The second explanation is more ideological. At a tender age, when young people’s minds are wide open, I very carefully read Karl Marx. I really worked my way through *Das Kapital*, taking notes, and I was impressed by the logic and the strong explanatory power of the book. So I was convinced that Marxism was the right doctrine.”

“Then there is a third explanation. During those months of persecution in 1944, I was sent to a labor camp, which was actually part of a brick factory. I came from a well-to-do family. In Marxist terms you would call me bourgeois, and here I was living with workers. You could say I met the proletariat, and the proletarians were very good to me. A fourth attraction was my encounter with a few, very charismatic young communist leaders who talked to me, very persuasively. Finally, there is one more component: after the trauma of 1944 I wanted to belong to a community, something I had never experienced. I had been a rather lonely child. So I turned into an enthusiastic member of the communist youth movement, and I became more and more involved. From 1944 until 1953, during those eight years, yes, you could say I was a believer.”

But then your enchantment disappeared?

“It did not simply disappear. It collapsed. First there was the death of Stalin, followed by a change of government in Hungary. The old Stalinist dictator Mátyás Rákosi was not dismissed, but his power was curbed, and we got a new prime

The advantage of not being in the middle of things: independence is given a chance.



Hungarian economist János Kornai, born 1928.

PHOTO: CLAUDIA MARTINS

minister, also a communist, whose name was Imre Nagy. This was followed by the release from prison of a number of people who had been jailed under Rákosi's terror regime. Some of these people had been loyal members of the illegal Communist Party before 1944, but under communism they had been brutally tortured in prison.

"I met such a person whom I had known in my newspaper work before he was arrested, an old, very bright, very decent journalist, and he told me his personal story, how he was called a liar, accused of crimes he had never committed, and how he had been punished.

"All this came to me as a complete moral shock. The party I supported and was working for had been using these unacceptable, dreadful methods. And at the same time, figures were published telling us how many people had been arrested and put in jail.

"Here I was, a journalist writing about the economy. As a matter of fact, I had found problems with communist central planning, but that had not changed my weltanschauung. Now I had a problem with all these innocent people who had been arrested and brutalized and tortured. So I started reading various critiques of communist planning, and gradually my thinking changed. If you think of other fanatics, for instance modern suicide bombers, it is impossible to convince them with rational arguments. Their minds are closed. They need some personal experience or trauma in their lives. Then they will open up. That is what happened to me."

So by October 1956 you were definitely against the government?

"Let us not run too fast. I became an active supporter of Imre Nagy, and when he very soon was forced out – we are talking about 1953–1954, when the hard-liners regained power – I along with many of my friends were fired from our newspaper by a decree from the Politburo, a very high-level decision. It was bad enough to be thrown out of work, but I consider it my lucky day, because it was the start of my career as a scholar and a scientist, someone doing serious research.

"The trauma of the occupation and the Nazi threat made me change my worldview."

You were fired. How did you survive?

"I got another job. Don't forget, this was the post-Stalinist period in Hungary. Before Stalin died, my group of journalists would probably have been sent to the Gulag or shot. But nobody was arrested. Each of us got another job at a much lower rank. After being fired, I received less than 40 per cent of my earlier salary. That was the pen-

alty for supporting Imre Nagy in 1953–1954."

Yet, you kept your head. How about your family?

"I was married and had one child at the time. My wife worked at the same newspaper, and even though she was less active politically, she was also fired. She got another job as a journalist, much less prestigious. We were both thrown out and lost a great portion of our income. But we were alive and hadn't been arrested. It is interesting to follow what happened to members of our group. After 1956, some emigrated, two were arrested and spent several years in prison. One was sentenced to death after 1956 and executed. One of us returned to the Communist Party and became a big shot under the Kádár regime, and a member of the Politburo. And I have my own personal story."

Where were you in October 1956?

"We are talking about a period of ten days. The Hungarian revolt began on October 23. On the very first day, I was commissioned by one of Imre Nagy's closest associates to draft Nagy's economic program. The naïve idea was that, sooner or later, there would be a free parliament and Imre Nagy as prime minister would give this speech. I wasn't simply a speechwriter who would provide a popular formulation of a given content, a well-defined economic program. I was expected to shape eco-

Science as salvation from politics. During "scientific socialism".

conomic policy. And I worked very hard, day and night, for four or five consecutive days.”

Did you take time out to be on the streets, demonstrating?

“No, no. I got a huge office that belonged to the president of Hungary’s bureau of statistics. I had two secretaries taking my notes. Of course, all the time I got phone calls from friends so I could follow what was happening. But at the end of those four or five days, I gave it up. I didn’t finish the job, and I didn’t submit my text to Prime Minister Nagy.”

So what happened?

“Quite frankly, I was not born for politics. I have the mind of a scholar. All the time I consider consequences, what will happen – on one hand and on the other. In 1956, I probably would have been able to give advice similar to what Dubček and Gorbachev later had in mind: socialism with a human face, some hybrid combination of central planning and the market. Not a genuine capitalist market economy, but something like market socialism.

“But on the fourth or fifth day, it became clear to me that if the revolution succeeded, Hungary was going beyond market socialism. There would be a multiparty system. There would be much more private enterprise. I didn’t object to privatization, but I did not know how to do it. If such a system was on its way, I was not the right person to write a program for it. And most likely Imre Nagy would not be the right prime minister to implement the transition to capitalism. So I sent Imre Nagy a message: ‘I’m not able to do this.’”

Then what did you do?

“In a revolution, 24 hours is a very long time. For one single day, I joined a new newspaper started by my old friends, the followers of Imre Nagy. In modern language, I would say they were the radical reformist wing of the Communist Party. The leader of this group, Miklós Gimes, a very dear friend – you can see his picture in my memoirs – became a martyr. He was sentenced to death and executed at the same time as Imre Nagy.”

But during these hectic days you did have some hope?

“Of course, all this time we feared Soviet intervention. But at the same time we really did imagine that a kind of compromise could be worked out. There was the Austrian situation. In 1955, one year earlier, Austria had in fact won its independence. There was also the Finnish example. Finland was enjoying a multi-party system which included a tacit agreement with the Soviet Union. Finnish politicians did not attack the Soviet Union, not even in their speeches. The idea of ‘Finlandization’ of the formerly communist Hungary appeared in our discussion – and many people thought it was not totally impossible.

“Imre Nagy really wanted a neutral Hungary. He didn’t want to turn against the Soviet Union. In retrospect, you can see this was not politically feasible. One reason was the Suez affair, which unfortunately coincided with the Hungarian uprising. What was of vital interest to the West was not Hungary, but what was going on in the Suez Canal. We were a little people, hoping against hope that there was a chance of compromise between the West and the East.”

What actually triggered the Soviet invasion?

“You are bringing up issues on which I am not a great expert. Here in Budapest we have a wonderful research institute with historians specializing in this period. It is called the Institute of 56 (56-os Intézet) which, as the name suggests, focuses on 1956. You would also have to ask kremlinologists, who could give you a better answer. From our national Hungarian perspective, all that mattered was that after ten days, the revolution was smashed and Soviet tanks entered. First we were fed vague

“It is very important not to jump from 1956 to goulash communism.”

promises that there would be no reprisals, but then there followed several years of terror and repression.”

Still, eventually Hungary became the happiest camp in the Gulag, the exponent of goulash communism. How did that come about?

“This interview will be rather disproportionate. We have spent a long time talking about hours and days of the revolution, and now you are

jumping across decades. It is very important not to jump from 1956 to goulash communism. That would give you the wrong idea about Hungarian history.

“First of all, on November 4, 1956, the Russian tanks arrived. After that, we are talking about a period of seven years of terrible, brutal repression. There was no goulash, no liberty – and the brutality can be gauged from the number of death sentences. We are a small country, with a population somewhat larger than in Sweden. The number of executions after 1956 is between 250 and 300, which is a terrible number.

“After Lajos Kossuth’s and Sándor Petőfi’s revolution of 1848–1849 against the Habsburgs, many people were executed, and the same thing occurred after the defeat of Béla Kun’s communist revolution in 1919. After the 1944 occupation, a number of Nazis and leading members of the Arrow Cross were executed. But adding it all up, you have the revolution in 1848, and you have four months of communist power in 1919, and you have the bloody tragedy caused by the Nazis, and the total number of executions after those events is still smaller than the number of death sentences handed out after 1956. The difference is really dramatic. This was the revenge for ten days of revolution. Several thousand people were arrested, and several tens of thousands were fired from their jobs and banned from public life. The backbone of the Hungarian people was smashed.”

After 1963, the Kádár regime, which had been put in place by the Soviets, changed track. It became, Kornai points out, somewhat more tolerant and somewhat more market-oriented. There was, he says, a kind of tacit compromise between the regime and a large portion of the people.

“Liberalization didn’t start as something emerging from a wonderful liberal mind. When you already have an obedient and frightened people, you can afford to be generous. In Czechoslovakia, dissidents were arrested and put in jail. In Hungary, dissidents were harassed by the police, yes, but not thrown in jail. There were moderate market reforms. Companies remained state-owned but started acting like autonomous market players. Hungary was somewhere between communist central planning and a genuine market economy – not a hybrid, but a bastard. I used to call it a plastic Wall Street, the simulation of a true market economy.”

A characteristic feature of Hungary’s goulash period, says János Kornai, was the decision to establish what he calls a *premature* welfare state.

“Hungary introduced free health services for practically every citizen, free education, including academic studies, a state pension for everyone, a large number of kindergartens, and promises of good care for the elderly. Hungary accepted all the commitments of a welfare state but did so without reaching the level of development of the Scandinavian countries.”

Even today’s rich Sweden, János Kornai maintains, cannot afford a full-blown welfare state, either financially or fiscally.

“Now imagine Hungary. With one third of Sweden’s per-capita GDP, how could Hungary afford free education for every university student and free health services for everyone? It could only be done at a very low, inferior level. But even after the collapse of communism, the population expected to enjoy all these commitments

Collegium Budapest, outside and inside.

PHOTO: CLAUDIA MARTINS



The victory of the counterrevolution means multiple victims. Kádár was particularly successful at this.

from the state and at the same time a Western standard of living and consumption. Hungarians are unhappy about paying taxes but expect the welfare state to continue.”

Who paid for all it all? Both goulash communism and Hungary’s premature welfare state, János Kornai points out, were to a large extent financed by the West. “Hungary managed to get huge foreign loans for two important reasons. One: Hungary always paid on time. Two: Hungary was a showcase, a model the West was hoping the rest of the communist bloc would emulate.”

Did Hungary’s goulash communism facilitate the transition after 1989, or did it in fact make the changeover more difficult? János Kornai has no simple answer.

“In one sense, transition became easier. Because of the goulash period, Hungary, when change happened, already had people with some experience of operating under market conditions. The state-owned enterprises were buying and selling without listening to commands from higher up.

“Even before 1989, Hungarians could travel. So the Western way of life was more familiar to Hungarians than to Russians or Georgians or Ukrainians. On Hungary’s National Day, even under communism, several hundred thousand Hungarians went to Vienna on a gigantic shopping tour. This is a well-known historical fact. But that also made the transition more difficult, because we had highly unrealistic expectations. Who did Hungarians think they were? Did they really see themselves at the level of Austrian consumers?”

Hungarians were naïve, says Kornai.

“They were also naïve about democracy. Many people hoped the multi-party system would work as smoothly as in Britain or in Sweden. But the West has a long democratic tradition. Hungary has never had an extended period of democracy. On top of that, we inherited a lot of corruption.”

But how far has the system really changed? In the Soviet Union, erstwhile communist comrades quickly learned the tricks of capitalism and became the new Russian oligarchs. Are there such examples in Eastern Europe as well, including Hungary? Kornai admits that such people exist.

“But it would be a gross misunderstanding to think that those who were high up in the old hierarchy are now the richest people under the new system. That is absolutely not true. Among the *nouveaux riches* under the new system, there are many who were not members of the old ruling elite, and if they were members, they didn’t pull rank.

“What did we actually have? One Hungarian sociologist, Tamás Kolosi, has called it the revolution of the deputy section leaders. He is referring to technocrats or bureaucrats in the communist hierarchy who had a fairly high position in the communist hierarchy but in fact were at least four or five levels below the top of the top.

“The currently most influential Hungarian oligarch was in charge of a department store under Kádár. Another person, really a high-level technocrat, is now retired with a very modest pension. Don’t think the big shots of the old system are now the big shots of the new system. That’s much too simplified.”

Those at the top, were they too rigid, too stuck in the old system?

“They had qualities which served them well under the old system but do not serve them well today. Under a tyranny, how do you get to the top? You have to be obedient. You have to be loyal to Number One. You have to say yes. You don’t say no. This is much more like a military system. Certainly, you have to be very cautious. Don’t lose the benevolence of the tyrant. But to become rich under a capitalist system, you have to be innovative. You must be a risk taker.”

Lennart Samuelson, a Swedish economic historian, has described the crude competition which did exist within the Soviet command economy. State-owned companies fought viciously to lay hands on what they needed for their own production. There were special agents, called *tolkach*, who knew how the system worked, whom to bribe and how to get things. Does Kornai see the *tolkach* as budding capitalists before the transformation?

“Yes, there were such people. But in the new system the *tolkach* are facing a very different task. Under communism they struggled to find raw materials and spare parts – they even recruited labor – but they didn’t have to sell cars. Under the old system there was a six-year waiting list if you wanted a car. So there was no problem selling cars. Now sellers face competition from Toyota, Nissan, Fiat,

Volkswagen. Marketing to the public is not the same as networking with those who provide parts and materials. So the *tolkach* are out of business. In the new system you need a different kind of person.”

How, finally, does Kornai explain what must be seen as the sudden implosion of the communist bloc?

“The system finally cracked up when Mikhail Gorbachev told Eastern European leaders: ‘Don’t count on us, we’re not going to come in with our tanks!’ That opened the way for Václav Havel and all the others.”

Did the Soviet Union collapse because Ronald Reagan and the US pushed for higher defense expenditures, while Moscow could not compete?

“There is an element of truth in that, but you also have to remember the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, which was as bitter as the US defeat in Vietnam. But the Americans survived, and the Soviet Union was not able to digest being defeated by a small and poor country.”

Kornai believes there is also another explanation, a combined effect of political and psychological factors.

“In view of my own life experience, I find the change of mind of the ruling Soviet elite particularly important. A repressive system, communist or otherwise, doesn’t rely exclusively on its military or police. The system also needs enthusiastic supporters. Hitler survived until the last day of the Third Reich, because all the time there were people who believed and followed him with enthusiasm.

“Now, if the believers are disenchanted, the game is over. That happened to me and my friends in the early 1950s, and it happened four decades later to a large number of the Soviet intelligentsia and a large number of Soviet functionaries and party apparatchiks.

“These were people who realized their country was not winning the world-wide struggle for primacy and dominance. Their life under communism was far from being the best imaginable. As long as a regime is very repressive, it can maintain the status quo. The dictator tells himself: ‘Don’t allow demonstrations, drive the students away from the main square. That way you can maintain your regime.’ I think that is the lesson Deng Xiaoping drew from the Soviet experience. I quote him: ‘A little bloodshed might be of good use.’ If you are soft and allow people to do a bit of autonomous thinking, then there will be a softening up and ultimately your system will collapse. That is what happened in Gorbachev’s Russia and that is what the ruling Chinese communists wanted to avoid.”

Is this also what is going on in Northern Africa these days?

“I am more cautious than many others who address this subject. I know a bit about Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and even China. As a scholar, as someone in the business of making serious, considered statements, I have no comment about what is happening in the Arab world.”

But János Kornai certainly knows the complexities of Hungary.

“I can give you one lesson from my Eastern European experience. In October 1956, there were four or five very different groups on the streets of Budapest, participating in the same demonstrations. Four decades later, those groups have become parties opposing each other. If you ask them what ought to be done about Hungary, they have completely different perspectives. Shouting ‘Down with this!’ or ‘Down with that!’ didn’t turn them into a homogenous group.

“Don’t make crude generalizations. Each country is different from the others. Don’t speak about Egyptians or Moroccans or Syrians as collectives. They are very heterogeneous groups, including significantly different parties, movements, and sub-groups. They dislike each other; they may even hate each other. The fact that they shout the same slogans for two days doesn’t mean they will be marching together for a long time. So I don’t know. You have to talk to experts of those countries who know more precisely the composition of the rebellious crowds and the different groups of the opposition. Listen to a more accurate analysis before you hastily draw superficial and perhaps misleading policy conclusions.” ■

björn kumm

freelance journalist and writer, Malmö

Note: The interview was conducted in late March 2011.

A new class in power: former department store heads. Now, they have learned how to sell.

FRANCE AND THE BALTIC STATES

DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND

(1988–1995)¹

BY TILO SCHABERT
ILLUSTRATION RAGNI SVENSSON

I

On March 11, 1990, Lithuania, until then a part of the Soviet Union, declared its independence.² The Soviet Union, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, saw this as an illegal act and reacted by threatening economic sanctions. Would Lithuania have to retract its proclamation of sovereignty – and thus, in practical terms, retract its departure from the political regime of the Soviet Union – as Gorbachev was demanding? Lithuania needed support. Its hopes were directed at the West, and particularly at France. How did France react? What was its foreign policy regarding the “Baltic question”,³ that is, the demands of the Baltic States for the restoration of their sovereignty, which they had lost in their forced annexation by the Soviet Union in 1940?

François Mitterrand, who as the president of France determined its foreign policy, answered this question during a press conference on April 26, 1990. He was asked about Lithuania, but his response applied equally to the other two Baltic States. He was asked how he would respond to those who “fear that the current position of the West on the situation in Lithuania might lead to another spirit of Munich”. Mitterrand replied:

From the French side we have already taken steps [...] along two axes. The first concerns Lithuanian sovereignty. France is one of the few countries that have never recognized the loss of Lithuanian independence in 1939. [...] Therefore, the intention [of France’s foreign policy] is absolutely clear and straightforward. Second point: for several centuries, during the time of the Russian Empire as well as during the time of the Soviet Empire, Lithuania has been annexed by its powerful neighbor. Today Mr. Gorbachev is the heir to these two historical traditions. He is faced with a problem: not only Lithuania, but also how to deal with

the problem of nationalities. [...] The Soviet Union has to make an extraordinarily difficult adjustment to the new conditions it now faces. And nobody, particularly not the Lithuanians, wants to see the current developments falter, and a return to a climate of tension that could bring who knows what. This is why we are encouraging dialog.⁴

Accordingly, France’s foreign policy regarding the Baltic question took two principles into consideration: (1) France has never recognized the annexation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania by the Soviet Union, and it would not do so in the future. “The legal entity of the affected states has survived annexation, even if these states are not in fact able to exercise their sovereignty.”⁵ François Mitterrand repeatedly held fast to this position.⁶ (2) France was, however, at the same time conscious of the reality that the Baltic States belonged to the political federation of the Soviet Union. A decision about these two opposing claims – the claim of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to independence, and that of the Soviet leadership to the retention of the Baltic States in the Soviet Union – could be made only by means of dialog between the two parties.⁷

II

On the issue of their independence, then, France under Mitterrand’s leadership was on the side of the Baltic States⁸ – but not in all circumstances, and not without conditions. As long as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were still part of the Soviet Union, they could only break away from it by negotiating with it. They had sovereignty in the sphere of law, but not – or not yet – in reality. And so, in his typical dual attitude as a rebellious spirit on the one hand and an admonitory realist on the other, Mitterrand sympathized with the Baltic people and at the same time argued that one should understand Gorbachev’s difficulty in simply setting

them free, and act in accordance with this reality. Mitterrand based French policy on the Baltic question on this orientation. While difficult for outside observers to interpret, it was logical to Mitterrand. It was the same position he took on German reunification, and was misunderstood then too.⁹ The conflict would have to be solved, certainly, but everything should be done to prevent the use of force – civil war, or military occupation. “We believe that these crises should not lead to the use of force.”¹⁰

III

Rather, according to Mitterrand, *political* means should be used to achieve these objectives: 1. stabilizing the area, that is, the Baltic region; 2. solving the conflicts in the region, without the use of force; 3. supporting Gorbachev in his effort to continue his policy of perestroika and to maintain his position at the head of the Soviet Union; 4. successfully assisting efforts of the Baltic States to achieve general recognition of their sovereignty; 5. introducing the Baltic States, after their achievement of independence, to institutions of European and international politics (CSCE, UNO, EU).

IV

France followed the developments in the Baltic region by means of three “observation posts”. These were the French embassy in Moscow, the USSR section in the European department of the French foreign ministry, and a team of Mitterrand’s advisors in the Elysée Palace.¹¹ The initial papers on the virulence of Baltic unrest were written in the foreign ministry, one in November 1988 with the heading “Wave of protest in the Baltic States against the new project of a reform of the Soviet constitution”¹² and a second, six pages long, in September 1989 on the situation in the Baltic States.¹³ In the first paper, it was reported under the item “A Challenge to Central Soviet Power” that the Estonian Supreme So-



viet had decided on November 4, 1988, to call an extraordinary session of the Estonian parliament. The Estonians were “in an uproar”, because, contrary to the resolutions that had been made at the congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at the end of June 1988, the reform project for the Soviet constitution published on October 22 made no mention of greater sovereignty for the Soviet republics. On November 16, the paper went on to report, the Estonian parliament declared a right of veto over all Soviet laws, and announced the sovereignty of the Estonian Republic.

In the second paper, written barely a year later, it was stated that the situation in the three Baltic republics had developed dramatically. Strong Baltic nationalist movements had sprung up and established many contacts with the outside world, particularly the Scandinavian countries, and their presence had given rise to a political-social dynamic that brought with it a strong desire to break free from the political structures of the Soviet Union. “The demand for autonomy is transforming into a demand for independence.”¹⁴ And Moscow reacted harshly.

V

What did Mitterrand and his government do to translate the information they were receiving about the developments in the Baltic region into political action? How did they attempt to attain the goals that they had set themselves for coming to grips with those developments? First of all, they thought of the people who were or could be the leaders in the process of these developments. What counted most for them in the pursuance of policy was the personal element.¹⁵ Furthermore, they were active in that sphere of politics that is configured purely personally, and that is formed by those involved in international politics for the purpose of information, exchange, and decision making; I have called this the “workshop of world politics”.¹⁶ Let us draw from this case the first example of what concentrating on the personal element would amount to. “Because of our close agreement on the Lithuanian question”, German Chancellor Kohl wrote a letter to President Mitterrand on May 15, 1990, to inform him of “the discussion I had with the Lithuanian prime minister, Mrs. Prunskiene, on May 11”.¹⁷ In this letter Helmut Kohl first compared the prime minister with the parliamentary president of Lithuania, Vytautas Landsbergis: “I had the impression that the Lithuanian prime minister is showing political level-headedness and that [she] is in principle open to dialog and to compromise, an attitude that to a certain extent contrasts with that of the president of the parliament, Mr. Landsbergis. This is why I suggested to her that she should personally carry out the upcoming negotiations with Moscow.”¹⁸ The second example shows even more how Mitterrand thought about the people he was dealing with, and shared those thoughts, sometimes even solicitously, with others (for the important thing is to come to grips with current developments and not let them get derailed); this from a conversation between Mitterrand and the Romanian prime minister, Petre Roman: “The problem is that the Balts are not wise. We do not recognize the annexation and we kept the Baltic gold safe.¹⁹ Every time I am called upon to write to Landsbergis, to Latvia, to Estonia, I have to recommend that they be patient. Otherwise the Soviets will attack them, to make an example of them.”²⁰

As the two quotations show, Mitterrand and his government were not acting alone in Baltic matters – on the contrary. They dovetailed their policy with that of other governments, by means of the discussions (with the exchange of ideas, information, and reflections), agreements, initiatives, and decision making of which the work in the workshop of world politics consists. One example of this sort of dovetailing, Helmut Kohl’s letter of May 15 to François Mitterrand, has already been mentioned. Let me add another. It shows Mitterrand, his American counterpart, President George Bush, the French foreign minister, Roland Dumas, and his counterpart, the American Secretary of State, Jim Baker, at work in the workshop at a moment when their work was focused on, among other problems, the problem of Lithuania in particular. The place was Key Largo. The date was April 19, 1990. Bush and Mitterrand had already had discussions in the morning, as had Baker and Dumas, separately. The four came together for lunch, so now there was a four-way conversation. Dumas began, saying “We talked about Lithuania”, “We talked about Lithuania, too”, Bush reported. And he added, “I have learned a lot from François about the history [of the Baltic world]”.²¹ (Mitterrand, it must be noted here, frequently took on the role of history teacher in the workshop, especially in relation to President Bush, because of his excellent education in history.) But Lithuania did not immediately become the topic of conversation; it was only later that Mitterrand brought the subject up again, but then significant things were said, particularly by Mitterrand:

FM [Mitterrand]: On the subject of Lithuania: let’s not demand from Gorbachev what we will not demand from the dictator who will succeed him.

Bush: We demand of Gorbachev that he not betray moral principles.

FM: I’d like to remind you that France has never recognized Soviet sovereignty in Lithuania. What sanctions can we impose?

Baker: The Lithuanians could accept going to Moscow, but not as part of the Soviet of Nationalities.

FM: The events have moved too fast for Gorbachev. In Kiev²², as I recall, Gorbachev was thinking of a federative system, even of independence. Lithuania may perhaps have shown ill-considered haste.

Dumas: They have no more room to maneuver.

FM: If they are fanatic, it will end in a blood-bath. And we won’t send our army.²³

VI

After Lithuania’s declaration of independence, France’s priority was to calm everyone down, in both Vilnius and Moscow. “We don’t want to do anything that will add fuel to the fire”, explained Bernard Kessedjian, cabinet chief of Foreign Minister Dumas,

to O. Krivonogov, the Soviet ambassador in Paris.²⁴ He had called the ambassador to the foreign ministry for a confidential briefing and asked him to pass on the information to Dumas’s counterpart in Moscow, the Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze. France, Krivonogov (and with him, the Soviet leadership) was informed, was very concerned about the situation that had arisen. It would welcome any efforts that would lead to a solution of the “problem”, that is, the conflict between Vilnius and Moscow, by negotiation. This delineation of France’s position (which referred to the conversation between Kessedjian and Krivonogov) was repeated by Jean-Louis Bianco, Secretary General of the Elysée, in a handwritten submission to President Mitterrand on March 24 on the subject of Lithuania.²⁵ In this document, he described the situation in Lithuania for the president in these short phrases: (a) an increase in intimidating gestures on Moscow’s part, (b) an undiminished determination in Vilnius to hold to its policy of independence, and (c) a refusal by Moscow to negotiate with Vilnius.

Immediately after March 11, in both the French foreign ministry and the Elysée Palace, information on the situation in Lithuania and its possible political, economic, and military consequences, as well as on the historical background, was assembled, and was analyzed and summarized in memoranda for the purpose of arriving at a course of action.²⁶ As we can see from notes, sometimes handwritten, that were made on them, these memoranda were read by Jean-Louis Bianco and then by President Mitterrand. The decision-makers were informed, and particular roles were assigned. Moscow was addressed by Foreign Minister Dumas, Mitterrand acted by making public statements on March 20 and 25, April 26, and May 25²⁷ – for example, on March 25 he explained in an interview with the television station TF1, “Our role consists in not adding fuel to the fire”²⁸ – and in direct communication with the leading figures involved. On February 20, 1990, two representatives of Lithuania had come to him with a letter: Juozas Urbšys, who signed the letter as “the former Foreign Minister of independent Lithuania”, and Vytautas Landsbergis, who signed as “President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the movement for Lithuania’s Reforms”. In the letter, they explained: “We hope to successfully restore the independence of the Lithuanian state”, and, reminding Mitterrand of the special relationship between France and Lithuania, they asked him for his “moral support for the Lithuanian cause”.²⁹ The letter was, however, not given to the president until March 16. Mitterrand answered it on April 19. The “right of Lithuania to its independence”, he said, was “not in question”, but “fifty years of history” had “woven complex relationships between Vilnius and Moscow”, and only a “process of negotiation” was appropriate “for peacefully solving the various problems that [had] arisen”.³⁰ France and the other member nations of the European Community would recommend this path of dialog. That was the “message” that the French foreign minister had sent to the Soviet leadership on his behalf.³¹ Mitterrand was here referring to the decision made by the foreign ministers of the European Community on March 24, 1990, in Lisbon: “The Twelve have heard with concern the reports from Lithuania. They appeal for maximum restraint on all sides. They hope for a respectful, open, and fair dialog between Moscow and Vilnius, avoiding the use of force or the

threat of the use of force on the basis of the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.”³²

And yet the situation in Lithuania was coming to a head. Two days before Mitterrand met with President Bush on April 19, on Key Largo, he received from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher a four-page letter, in which she summarized for him the contents of the discussion she had had with George Bush in Bermuda. The first half page right at the beginning of the letter talks about Lithuania, for it “naturally was at the center of our concern”, said Thatcher, because of Gorbachev’s threat to resort to economic sanctions against the state, particularly in the area of gas deliveries to Lithuania. Margaret Thatcher wrote that she hoped that they would have close consultations about further action. George Bush and she had agreed that the progress achieved in the previous few years in East-West relations must not be put at risk by the Lithuanian crisis, and that they “must do their utmost to encourage the two sides to find a solution by means of dialog and discussion”.³³

VII

However, on April 18, 1990, the chances for such a policy were gone, for the time being. On that date, the Soviet Union cut off gas supplies from three of the four pipelines carrying its gas to Lithuania. The state received only barely a fifth of the quantity of gas previously delivered. “Moscow has made the blockade really painful”, wrote Mitterrand’s advisor Anne Lauvergeon as the first sentence of her memorandum of April 20, in which she briefed the president about Moscow’s action and suggested practical ways to help to Lithuania out of this difficult situation.³⁴ The French government took political action on the morning of April 21, when the official representative of Lithuania, Stasys Antanas Backis, met with Foreign Minister Dumas, as requested, to receive from him a message to the Lithuanian leaders. In it, they, particularly Mr. Landsbergis, were encouraged to “put in parentheses”, that is, to temporarily suspend, the decisions that had followed from their declaration of independence. Moscow would be expecting this “gesture” before negotiations between Vilnius and Moscow could begin. Dumas had first informed his Soviet counterpart Shevardnadze of this step, which was taken in the name of the United States as well, as American Secretary of State Jim Baker wished.³⁵ On the afternoon of the very same day, at 3 o’clock, Stasys Backis came back into the French foreign ministry to give Landsbergis’s answer. Dumas wrote to Mitterrand immediately that Landsbergis was “prepared to freeze all laws, without exception, that had been enacted since March 12. [...] A public announcement would be made [...] as far as the opening of negotiations was concerned, this announcement would not be tied to any conditions”.³⁶ Dumas also let Mitterrand know that he would inform Baker and Shevardnadze of this result of the French action.

A further political initiative was taken, this time a joint German and French one. During a conversation between Mitterrand and Kohl on April 25, the German Chancellor suggested send-

ing a letter to the Lithuanian leadership: it should be made clear that the same mistake must not be made in Lithuania as in the Prague Spring; “they went too fast there”.³⁷ As early as April 26, Mitterrand and Kohl sent the following document to Vytautas Landsbergis. It rephrased Mitterrand’s letter of April 19 in even more urgent terms:

Dear Mr. President,

We both have the same concerns regarding the development of the situation in Lithuania. We would like to inform you of our views. The Lithuanian people have made it clear that they intend to practice their right to sovereignty. They cannot be blamed for this. But history has created a complex situation consisting of numerous elements of a political, legal, and economic nature. The solution demands time and patience, and necessitates following the classical path of dialog. Therefore, we want discussions between you and the Soviet leaders to begin as soon as possible, so that the current crisis ends in a solution that is acceptable to all sides.

It would no doubt be appropriate to suspend for a certain time the consequences of the decisions your parliament has made, so as to make these discussions easier; they will lose none of their significance, since, after all, they are based on a universally accepted principle, that of self-determination for all nations.³⁸

A copy of the letter went to the Soviet leaders; its contents were not made public in Paris and Bonn until after Gorbachev had been informed about it.³⁹ On April 30, the deputy prime minister of Lithuania, Romualdas Ozalas, let it be known during an interview with the Danish newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* that Lithuania (as France had previously suggested) would “temporarily suspend” its declaration of independence of March 11 and ask Moscow to negotiate.⁴⁰ The conditions seemed to be favorable: Gorbachev had responded positively to the idea of a moratorium, which Mitterrand and Kohl had put forward on April 28. *Berlingske Tidende* further

reported that Landsbergis was thinking of a moratorium of two years but had also pointed out, in an interview with an American television station on April 29, that there was as yet no sign of any moderation in the blockade by the Soviet Union.⁴¹

At the beginning of May, however, the situation was still unclear. On May 2, President Landsbergis sent a letter to President Mitterrand, in response to the one from Mitterrand and Kohl, in which he stated Lithuania’s intention to negotiate with Moscow on everything except the state’s independence. And he asked Mitterrand and Kohl to inform the Soviet leaders that Lithuania was ready to “consider” a temporary suspension of the recent decisions of the “sovereign” parliament of Lithuania.⁴² So Vilnius and Moscow were still not talking to each other at all, which was also clear from a report of May 3 from the French ambassador in Moscow, Jean-Marie Mérillon, about a conversation with the Lithuanian representative there, Egidijus Bickauskas: the problem for the Lithuanians was contact with Moscow. “We want to negotiate. We say that every day. Moscow refuses. [...] I [Bickauskas] cannot even reach anyone [in the Soviet government].”⁴³

The other Balts wanted to free themselves from Moscow, too. On May 7, Anatolijs Gorbunovs, president of the Supreme Soviet of Latvia, and Imants Daudiss, secretary of the Supreme Soviet, sent a letter to Mitterrand – which Mitterrand received on May 14 – in which they informed him that the Supreme Soviet of Latvia had passed a declaration in favor of the restoration of Latvia’s independence.⁴⁴ They asked the French president for his support for Latvia’s efforts to regain its full independence. “The Baltic issue”, they said, “is an international issue.” It must “be solved, if Europe is to be united”.⁴⁵ Mitterrand answered the letter on May 23; his reply was much the same as his answer of April 19, already mentioned above, to Vytautas Landsbergis.

Mitterrand remained a significant player in the conflict between the Baltic States – particularly Lithuania – and the Soviet leadership. On May 10, he received Prime Minister Prunskiene of Lithuania in the Elysée Palace for a discussion. On May 25, he met Gorbachev in Moscow. Negotiations between Vilnius and Moscow still had not taken place. According to Mitterrand’s diplomatic advisor Caroline de Margerie in a memorandum to him of May 10, both the Lithuanian and Soviet sides declared themselves “ready for dialog” but were setting “antithetical conditions” for beginning. Her memorandum stated that Mr. Landsbergis accepted the principle of a suspension of certain laws that were passed after their declaration of independence, but he would not withdraw the declaration itself. Moscow, on the other hand, took the position that the mere fact that it was negotiating with Lithuania gave it special status. Everything was proceeding as if the endpoint of the negotiations – independence – was unavoidable, but the starting point had not been found.⁴⁶

In his conversation with Prime Minister Prunskiene, Mitterrand stressed immediately that Lithuania was very important for France and that the Lithuanian nation clearly had a right to its sovereignty. But – the “but” came from Mitterrand the realist, who, seeing the problems ahead, spoke as the admonisher – the reality was that Lithuania had been absorbed into the USSR. And the USSR, despite its other difficulties, had military forces at its disposal. Lithuania, on the other hand, did not. And he did not want a trial of strength,



which could only harm the Lithuanian people, the weaker side, as it would harm the relationship between the USSR and Europe. But he told the Lithuanian prime minister, to her face, “You reacted badly to the German-French letter.” He saw no other way, he continued, than that of dialog. “Gorbachev was steamrolled by your populist demands.” And he did not intend to be a mediator. “I am not working on anyone’s behalf, but if I can help, I will do so.”⁴⁷

That was his intention. At the end of his conversation with Mrs. Prunskiene he said to her: “Our German-French initiative can have one of two effects: make dialog easier, or irritate the Soviets, for when a head of state and a head of government consult the president of Lithuania, which according to the strict interpretation of the law is part of the USSR, this confirms Lithuania’s existence. Did this letter anger Gorbachev? I don’t know. The Soviet emissaries have been really friendly since then. I plan to visit [Gorbachev] on May 25. It seems likely that the possibility [of negotiation] exists.”⁴⁸

In Moscow Mitterrand did not achieve a breakthrough in this matter. Nonetheless, he was able to tell President Bush in a letter of May 28: “Gorbachev is open to dialog, but he is not ready to yield on the basics. He does not exclude the possibility of negotiation, *it seems to me, but [will be open to it] only after a certain period of time has passed.*”⁴⁹ This “certain period of time” lasted a month. On June 29, the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet declared a moratorium on Lithuania’s declaration of independence of March 11. And on July 2, the Soviet government lifted the economic sanctions against Lithuania. In a conversation with François Mitterrand on October 11, 1990, in the Elysée Palace, Vytautas Landsbergis told him, “We have made very significant progress since April – as a result of your help.”⁵⁰

VIII

Yet on the night of April 12 and the early hours of the 13th, and in the days that followed, there was a regression to the earlier situation – with violence, in Vilnius, as well as in Riga and Tallinn. In a series of telegrams from Moscow, Ambassador Mérillon described in detail what was happening. The following excerpts will give an idea of the situation:

January 12: January 12 was a night of confusion and uproar in Vilnius. [...] Defenders of independence set up guards around government buildings, the parliament, radio and television buildings, telephone offices. [...] The Soviet army surrounded buildings of the Lithuanian police. [...] The leaders of the Communist Party that remained faithful to Moscow demanded that a state of emergency be declared.⁵¹

January 13: The coup d’état is evident. The Soviet army is in the process of removing the government of Mr. Landsbergis from office and forcing on Vilnius a power – “the Committee of National Salvation” – that answers to Moscow. [...] There is one unknown: Gorbachev. Despite the dramatic nature of all these events, the Soviet president, strangely, has remained silent for exactly 24 hours.⁵²

January 13: The first deputy foreign minister [of the government of the Soviet Union] summoned, in addition to me, the ambassadors of the United States, Germany, Finland, Great Britain, and Italy. He wanted to give us a “message” from Mr. Gorbachev. [...] This message is: “The situation in Lithuania is being made very clear in the dissatisfaction of the masses. [...] President Gorbachev wants to deal with the situation by exclusively political means. [...] But the events on the spot are developing their own dynamic. [...] A Committee of National Salvation has been formed, with which the delegation sent from Moscow has made contact. This committee, not the Soviet military, enforced the curfew.”⁵³

January 14: The situation in Vilnius is like that of an incomplete coup d’état. The Soviet army resorted to violence in the night of Friday and early Saturday with dire consequences (at least 10 dead and 130 injured). It has installed a puppet regime, the Committee of National Salvation. [...] The legitimate government organs, President Landsbergis, the government, the Supreme Soviet, continue to sit daily in the parliament. [...] Time seems to be playing into Mr. Landsbergis’s hands. He has survived three days of the storm. In Vilnius, people now believe victory will be theirs. The crisis is dragging on. [...] Tallinn and Riga are taking measures to secure their safety. Finally, and notably: Mr. Yeltsin is finding an opportunity to play to the gallery.⁵⁴

January 14: The coup d’état in Lithuania seems to be failing. [...] After 48 hours of absence, the Soviet president [Gorbachev] has reappeared in public. . . . His first reaction was to disclaim any responsibility [...] and to blame those on the spot in charge of the military. Mr. Yeltsin has announced the results of his trip to Estonia. He met the three Baltic presidents and signed a declaration with them that condemns the acts of violence and confirms the “sovereignty” of the four signing republics [the three Baltic States and the Russian state].⁵⁵

January 14: The credibility of Mr. Gorbachev [...] is compromised. The Balts will not forgive him. [...] The Lithuanian drama is speeding up the formation, now in progress, of a coalition of republics, united around Mr. Yeltsin, against the [Soviet] Union.⁵⁶

According to the observations of Jean-Marie Mérillon, it became apparent after this that, as far as the development of the Soviet Union was concerned, a winner and a loser emerged from the “Lithuanian drama”: the winner was Boris Yeltsin, who positioned himself and Russia against Gorbachev and the Soviet Union; the loser was Mikhail Gorbachev, who attempted to hold the Soviet Union together.

As shown by notes that Mitterrand made on Méril-

lon’s telegrams, he – not only his staff – followed the events in Vilnius on January 12 and 13, and what was generated by them, in great detail, from report to report, day after day. The American president had immediately reacted strongly, on the afternoon of January 13, at a press conference called for that purpose.⁵⁷ The foreign ministers of Germany and France, in a joint statement on the same day, also condemned the actions of the Soviet Army in Lithuania and called upon Gorbachev to stop the use of force, in accordance with his own statement of the previous day. Mitterrand took up his pen and wrote a letter to Mikhail Gorbachev, which he sent to him on January 17. Mitterrand expressed the belief that Lithuania, like the other two Baltic republics, would regain its sovereignty in the course of the “democratization of their country and of the new organization of Europe”. But at the same time, he said that this development could only take place by means of dialog. He wrote that he was aware of Gorbachev’s determination to create in his country a “democratic state under the rule of law”, and so he was appealing to him with the aim that in the Baltic States “the normal conditions of democratic life be restored and that a constructive dialog with the freely elected representatives of the Baltic peoples be resumed”.⁵⁸

At the end of January the Baltic crisis moved to Riga. On the evening of January 21, there was shooting in the city, which left five dead and ten wounded.⁵⁹ The French foreign ministry reacted immediately with these words: “France condemns the use of force in the Baltic republics. After Lithuania, now Latvia is the scene of oppression against a nascent democracy. France confirms once again that police and military violence cannot be an answer to the legitimate desire of the Baltic people to regain their sovereignty, and renews its calls for dialog.”⁶⁰

The Soviet leadership under Gorbachev had to look for a way out. First, on January 22, Gorbachev called a press conference, in which he planned to absolve himself of all guilt for the events in Vilnius and Riga. These were, he explained, in no way an expression of the policy of the government he led.⁶¹ And second, a plebiscite on the question of independence was organized in each of the Baltic States. In the referendum in Lithuania on February 9, 90.47 percent of qualified voters voted for independence, and in the referendums held in Latvia and Estonia on March 3, 73 percent and 78 percent respectively voted for independence.⁶²

In the next few months Paris remained vigilant and committed in regard to the Baltic question, as is documented in Mitterrand’s written and personal consultation with Margaret Thatcher and George Bush, as well as the visits the French president received from the presidents of Latvia and Lithuania (on May 16 and June 20, respectively), and his written communication with leading Baltic politicians.⁶³ And they were watching Gorbachev. “We’re handling Gorbachev well. Still, I do wish that he would free the Baltic States!” said Bush to Mitterrand on July 14.⁶⁴ But the initiative for further developments now came from other players. On July 29, Russia, led by President Boris Yeltsin, recognized Lithuania’s independence.⁶⁵ And on August 19, there was a putsch against Gorbachev, which, as it turned out on August 21, was unsuccessful. Gorbachev’s position was now even weaker than before.⁶⁶ On August 20, Estonia declared its independence, and the next day

Latvia followed with the declaration that its independence, which it had proclaimed previously, was now in full effect.

France's foreign minister, Dumas, thereupon demanded an extraordinary session of the foreign ministers of the twelve EC states. Its aim was to issue an official declaration by the EC in which (a) the restoration of the Baltic States' sovereignty would be recognized and (b) it would be decided to resume diplomatic relations with them, and (c) the desire of the EC countries for the Baltic States to join the UN quickly would be expressed. The twelve foreign ministers passed this declaration on August 27 and announced it in a communiqué: "The European Community and its member states welcome most warmly the restoration of the Baltic States' sovereignty and independence, which they lost in 1940. [...] It is now time, after more than 50 years, for these states to take up once more their proper place in the community of European states."⁶⁷

President Mitterrand commented on the event in the Council of Ministers, in the session of August 28, 1991, recalling the letter that he, together with Chancellor Kohl, had sent to President Landsbergis on April 26: "The idea of this letter was the right to independence, yes, but [also] an appeal for patience, in order to prevent them from 'massacring each other'. Until now, it was too dangerous for the Balts themselves to take this step. After the failure of the putsch this risk no longer exists."⁶⁸

IX

For the next three years, during which François Mitterrand was still president of France, relations between France and the Baltic States followed the normal paths of international affairs. Mitterrand received the presidents of Lithuania and Latvia and the prime ministers of Estonia and Lithuania in Paris, and from May 13 to 15, 1992, he himself made a state visit – the first Western head of state to do so – to each of the three states, during which he met with all the leading politicians there for discussions. With Lithuania he signed a treaty of friendship, and with Estonia and Latvia he signed economic agreements. Loans in the amounts of 20 million francs and 10 million francs were made to Estonia and Lithuania respectively. According to the assessment of Foreign Minister Dumas, given in the Council of Ministers on May 20, 1992, Mitterrand's speech before the Lithuanian parliament was the highlight of the trip. However, Dumas also reported that the predominant concern of the governments of all three states was the issue of the complete withdrawal of the Russian troops who were still stationed in each of their territories.⁶⁹

France made this issue another particular concern of its foreign policy regarding the Baltic region and Russia during Mitterrand's presidency. On the occasion of his state visits, the French president made France's position clear, in public appearances in Vilnius as well as in Tallinn and Riga: the presence of Russian troops in the territories of the three Baltic States was "unusual and shocking".⁷⁰ In addition, he did not agree to the deal that Russia's President

Yeltsin tried to persuade him to accept. On November 7, 1992, Yeltsin wrote him a three-page letter on "the question of the withdrawal of the armed forces of the Russian Federation from the territory of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia".⁷¹ Yeltsin emphasized that the Russian leadership had "the clear and plain intention" of "withdrawing the troops in as short a time as is reasonable from the territory of the Baltic States". Yet then he linked this decision to two preconditions: financial and technical aid in accommodating the forces brought back to Russia from the Baltic States, and the creation of guarantees of the rights of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic States. Concerning the first point, he asked the French president expressly for a contribution from France. He also wanted France's support regarding Russia's plans for representation in the CSCE and the UN.

Mitterrand answered the letter on December 10, with the clear intention of putting Russia on the spot. He was happy, he wrote, that Yeltsin had stated Russia's intention "to withdraw these troops completely and in an orderly fashion within a short time".⁷² This was, by the way, the aim that "we all" had agreed to at the CSCE conference in Helsinki in July 1992. Consequently, France welcomed the agreement that Russia had made with Lithuania on September 8, according to which the Russian troops would be withdrawn by August 31, 1993, and hoped that Russia would make similar agreements with Latvia and Estonia without delay. Regarding the accommodation of the forces withdrawn to Russia from the Baltic States, France and its partners in the European Community would work on a project to prepare 10,000 former officers for a return to civilian life. Any further help from the community could not be considered. Mitterrand said not a word to suggest that France would give the aid demanded by Yeltsin.

The complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic States dragged on until long after Mitterrand had left office, until the summer of 2004. In the case of Lithuania, though, it took place within Mitterrand's period of office, at the end of August 1993. On this occasion, the president of Lithuania and the president of France exchanged letters. Algirdas Brazauskas wrote from Vilnius on September 3: "Excellency, I would like to share with you my joy and that of the whole of Lithuania: a few days ago the last troops of the Russian army left our country. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you wholeheartedly for your effective

support in the fulfillment of the legitimate concerns of Lithuania."⁷³ Mitterrand replied from Paris on September 29: "France is happy about this withdrawal, which it has supported, and which can now contribute to a strengthening of security and peace in Europe. [...] France hopes that the withdrawal of Russian troops will be carried out in Latvia and Estonia as well, so that the Baltic region may become a region of stability and prosperity. Two years after the restoration of its independence, a new era is now beginning for Lithuania."⁷⁴ ✕

Note: The quotations can be found in the French original at www.balticworlds.com.

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- 1 The choice of the period considered here can be explained as follows. My focus is "the Baltic question" faced by the Mitterrand government. Although Mitterrand was elected in 1981, it wasn't until 1988 that demands for independence, which at that time were becoming virulent in the Baltic republics in the Soviet Union, were beginning to cause a problem for French foreign policy. And, although not all foreign policy dilemmas were solved by 1995, that was the year Mitterrand left office.
The information presented here comes from sources to which the author had access in the archives of the French presidential office (Elysée Palace) before Mitterrand left the Elysée. The collection regarding Mitterrand's presidency is now housed in the French National Archives. I would like to thank Françoise Carle for all her advice and help in relation to my studies of sources. The original German version of this article was published in N. Götz, J. Hecker–Stampehl & St. M. Schröder (eds.), *Vom alten Norden zum neuen Europa: Politische Kultur im Ostseeraum; Festschrift für Bernd Henningsen*, Berlin 2010, pp. 315–333.
- 2 From the Lithuanian point of view, this declaration was legitimated by the first (since 1940) free parliamentary elections since 1940, which had taken place on February 24.
- 3 In October 1988, mass movements, called "popular fronts", sprang up in the Baltic States; their objective was the autonomy of these states (which were still within the Soviet Union). On October 2, 1990, these popular fronts in all three states declared that after the successful resolution of the "deutsche Frage" another problem remained unsolved: the "baltische Frage", that is, the issue of the Baltic States' sovereignty.
- 4 Office of the President of the Republic (henceforth PdR), Press Service, *Joint press conference of Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the Republic, and Mr. Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, at the end of the 55th French-German talks*, Elysée Palace, 1990-04-26, p. 11 f.
- 5 Caroline de Margerie, *Note to the President of the Republic: France and the Baltic States*, 1990-03-23. Specifically, this memorandum states: "France has never recognized the validity of the annexation of the three Baltic States, which took place in August 1940. [...] This position was reaffirmed by France and by the other Western powers at the time of the signing of the final agreement of the CSCE in Helsinki in August, 1975. [...] In 1982 Mr. Cheysson, minister of Foreign Affairs, made it clear that France 'had not given any sort of express or tacit recognition' and that the government 'had no intention of reconsidering this position'."
- 6 See for example, PdR, Press Service, *Interview of Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the Republic, by Mrs. Anne Sinclair, for the program "Sept sur Sept" on TF 1*, 1990-03-25, p. 36 f: "France has always refused to recognize the annexation [of the three Baltic States]. [...] The law of Lithuania cannot be



- contested. Its law is that of sovereignty”: PdR, Press Service, *Joint press conference of Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the Republic, and Mr. Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic*, Elysée Palace, 1990-03-20, p. 3: “France has never recognized the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union. And we have always felt that this country was in a position to justifiably reclaim its sovereignty”; record of the conversation between Mitterrand and Hermansson (prime minister of Iceland), 1990-08-22: “P.R. [Mitterrand]: ‘The annexation of the Baltic States has no legal basis.’”
- 7 Cf. *Interview TF1*, 1990-03-15, p. 37: “But [the Baltic States] are a part of the Soviet Union. [...] The only possible way is that of dialog.”
- 8 From the session of the French Council of Ministers on September 4, 1991, the following statement by President Mitterrand was recorded: “From the beginning, the president has encouraged the president of Lithuania to move forward, but with prudence, on the path of independence.” (Record of the session of the Council of Ministers on 1991-09-04).
- 9 See Tilo Schabert, *Wie Weltgeschichte gemacht wird: Frankreich und die Deutsche Einheit*, Stuttgart 2002, especially the section “Das Lied des Rebellen, der Refrain des Mahners”, p. 321 ff., and the revised and extended French version, *Mitterrand et la réunification allemande: Une histoire secrète* (1981–1995), Paris 2005. An abridged edition of the French version is available in English: *How World Politics Is Made: France and the Reunification of Germany*, Columbia, Mo. and London 2009.
- 10 This was Mitterrand’s statement at a press conference with Václav Havel in March 1990. See PdR, Press Service, *Joint press conference of Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the Republic, and Mr. Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic*, Elysée Palace, 1990-03-20, p. 3.
- 11 Among Mitterrand’s advisors who worked on the Baltic question were Loïc Hennekine, Pierre Morel, Jean Vidal, and Caroline de Margerie for foreign policy, and Anne Lauvergeon, Serge Lafont, and Philippe Bastelica for economic policy.
- 12 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Wave of protest in the Baltic States against the new project of a reform of the Soviet constitution* (November 1988).
- 13 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Branch, Deputy Director USSR, *Note. A/s: Situation in the Baltic States*, 1989-09-22.
- 14 Ibid., p. 3.
- 15 See Tilo Schabert, “Ein klassischer Fürst: François Mitterrand im Spiegel einer vergleichenden Regierungslehre”, in Brigitte Sauzay & Rudolf von Thadden (eds.), *Mitterrand und die Deutschen*, Göttingen 1998, pp. 78–106, especially the section “Primat der Personen”, p. 91 ff., and the revised English version, “A Classical Prince: The Style of Mitterrand”, in Charles R. Embry & Barry Cooper (eds.), *Philosophy, Literature, and Politics: Essays Honoring Ellis Sandoz*, Columbia, Mo. and London 2005, pp. 234–257; Karl-Heinz Nusser, Matthias Riedl & Theresia Ritter (eds.), *Politikos: Vom Element des Persönlichen in der Politik*, Berlin 2008.
- 16 See *Wie Weltgeschichte gemacht wird: Frankreich und die Deutsche Einheit*, pp. 63 ff.
- 17 Letter from Helmut Kohl to François Mitterrand of 1990-05-15 (quoted from the French translation received by Mitterrand).
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 In 1939, the central banks of the Baltic States had deposited 3,246 kg of gold in trust with the Bank of France. France withstood the later attempts (constantly renewed) of the Soviet Union to have this money handed over to it, unlike Great Britain, which sold the Baltic gold deposited there, and Sweden, which handed it over to the Soviet Union. At the end of August 1991, Lithuania, the first Baltic state to regain its independence, got back the gold it had stored in the Bank of France – 2,200 kg, with a value at that time of 150 million French francs.
- 20 Record of the conversation between Mitterrand and Roman on 1991-01-30.
- 21 Record of the conversation between Mitterrand, Bush, Dumas, and Baker on 1990-04-19.
- 22 Mitterrand is referring here to his meeting with Gorbachev on 1989-12-06 in Kiev. See *Wie Weltgeschichte gemacht wird: Frankreich und die Deutsche Einheit*, p. 433–435, or *How World Politics Is Made: France and the Reunification of Germany*, pp. 255–258.
- 23 Record of the discussion between Mitterrand, Bush, Dumas, and Baker on 1990-04-19.
- 24 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director of the cabinet of the Minister of State, *Note for the Minister of State alone*, 1990-03-24, p. 1.
- 25 JLB [Jean-Louis Bianco], *Topic: Lithuania*, handwritten note, addressed: “for the President”, 1990-03-24.
- 26 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Branch, Deputy Director, USSR, ed. O. Adim, *Note, A/S: Lithuania*, 1990-03-14; Anne Lauvergeon, *Note for the President. Topic: Independence of Lithuania*, 1990-03-12; Anne Lauvergeon, *Note for the President*, 1990-03-15; Caroline de Margerie, *Note for the President of the Republic, Topic: History of the Baltic States*, 1990-03-23; Caroline de Margerie, *The Baltic States*, [1990-03-23]; Caroline de Margerie, *France and the Baltic States*, [1990-03-23].
- 27 See *Joint press conference, Mitterrand and Havel*, 1990-03-20; Interview “Sept sur Sept” (TF1), 1990-03-25; *Joint press conference, Mitterrand and Kohl*, 1990-04-26; PdR, Press Service, *Joint press conference of Mr. François Mitterrand, President de la Republic, and Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, Moscow, 1990-05-25.
- 28 Interview, “Sept sur Sept” (TF1), 1990-03-25, p. 37.
- 29 Letter of 1990-02-20 from the Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sajudis, signed by Juozas Urbys and Vytautas Landsbergis, to François Mitterrand.
- 30 In the course of the German reunification, Mitterrand similarly reiterated that this must take place “peacefully” – and also “democratically”. See *Wie Weltgeschichte gemacht wird: Frankreich und die Deutsche Einheit*, p. 158 f., p. 377 f., or *How World Politics Is Made: France and the Reunification of Germany*, p 208f.
- 31 Letter of 1990-04-19 from François Mitterrand to Vytautas Landsbergis.
- 32 Quoted from the French diplomatic telegram TA Coreu Dublin, 1990-03-24, 18:59, entry no. 22819.
- 33 Letter (in the official French translation) of 1990-04-17 from Margaret Thatcher to François Mitterrand.
- 34 Anne Lauvergeon, *Note for the President, Topic: Economic blockade in Lithuania*, [1990-04-20].
- 35 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister of State, *Note for the President of the Republic*, 1990-04-21.
- 36 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister of State, *Note for the President of the Republic*, 1990-04-21.
- 37 Record of conversation between Mitterrand and Kohl on 1990-04-25.
- 38 Letter of 1990-04-26 from President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl to President Landsbergis.
- 39 Cf. Loïc Hennekine, *Note for the President of the Republic, Topic: Lithuania*, 1990-04-26.
- 40 Cf. Reuters report from Copenhagen on 1990-04-30.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Letter of 1990-05-02 from Vytautas Landsbergis to François Mitterrand.
- 43 Diplomatic telegram, TD Moscow 3522, 1990-05-03.
- 44 With this declaration a “transition phase” was established, in which independence would not yet be in full effect. This did not happen in Lithuania.
- 45 Letter of 1990-05-07 from Anatolijs Gorbunovs and Imants Daudiss to François Mitterrand.
- 46 Caroline de Margerie, *Note for the President of the Republic*, 1990-05-10.
- 47 Record of conversation between Mitterrand and Prunskiene, 1990-05-10.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Letter of 1990-05-28 from François Mitterrand to George Bush.
- 50 Record of conversation of 1990-10-11 between Mitterrand and Landsbergis.
- 51 TD Moscow 164, 1991-01-12.
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- 53 TD Moscow 181, 1991-01-13.
- 54 TD Moscow 183, 1991-01-14.
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- 56 TD Moscow 213, 1991-01-14.
- 57 As reported by the French ambassador in Washington on January 13 (TD Washington 85).
- 58 Letter of 1991-01-17 from François Mitterrand to Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev answered Mitterrand in a letter of 1991-02-05. In five pages the Soviet president complained mostly about the perception and media reports of his position and policy regarding the “events in the Baltic region”, which he saw as completely distorted. “Gorbachev was not aiming to be a dictator” who wanted to give up “perestroika and glasnost”. He recognized Mitterrand’s genuine interest in the reform process in the USSR, and he was counting on his “authority and influence” in international politics. For the “Baltic events” were “a hard nut to crack.” (Letter of 1991-02-05 from Mikhail Gorbachev to François Mitterrand; quoted from the unofficial French translation).
- 59 This, according to the report to Paris by the French ambassador in Moscow (TD Moscow 335, 1991-01-22).
- 60 Communiqué from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1991-01-21.
- 61 TD Moscow 355, 1991-01-23.
- 62 TD Moscow 717, 14 February 1991; TD Moscow 1030, 5 March 1991.
- 63 Letter from Margaret Thatcher to François Mitterrand, undated [March 1991]; letter of 1991-05-03 from George Bush to François Mitterrand; conversation between Mitterrand and Bush in Rambouillet on 1991-07-14; letter of 1991-06-03 from Arnold Rüütel, president of the Supreme Council of Estonia, and Lennart Meri, foreign minister of Estonia, to François Mitterrand; letter of 1991-07-12 from Meri to Mitterrand; letter of 1991-07-15 from Gediminas Vagnorius, prime minister of Lithuania, to Mitterrand.
- 64 Record of conversation between Mitterrand and Bush on 1991-07-14.
- 65 For details, cf. “La Russie reconnaît l’indépendance de la Lituanie”, in *Le Monde*, 1991-07-31.
- 66 On 1993-06-15, Mitterrand said in a conversation with the Lithuanian president, Algirdas Brazauskas: “Gorbachev doesn’t much like talking about the Baltic issue, because that’s where his downfall began.” (Record of conversation between Mitterrand and Brazauskas on 1993-06-15.)
- 67 For the full text of the communiqué, see *Le Monde*, 1991-08-29.
- 68 Record of the session of the Council of Ministers on 1991-08-28.
- 69 Record of the session of the Council of Ministers on 1992-05-20.
- 70 Cf. Reuters report (Marie-Bénédicte Allaire) from Riga, 1992-05-15.
- 71 Letter of 1992-11-07 from Boris Yeltsin to François Mitterrand.
- 72 Letter of 1992-12-10 from François Mitterrand to Boris Yeltsin.
- 73 Letter of 1993-09-03 from Algirdas Brazauskas to François Mitterrand.
- 74 Letter of 1993-09-29 from François Mitterrand to Algirdas Brazauskas.

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THE ADMONITORY AUTHORITIES AND THE FOOLISH SUBALTERNS

THE CPSU POLITBURO AND THE POLISH CRISIS 1980–1981

The Polish leadership verbally bowed to Soviet pressure, but was passively obstructive.

I “We cannot lose Poland.” Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Union Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1957, was utterly resolute when he took the floor at a meeting of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) Politburo on October 29, 1980. “In the battle with the Hitlerites, while liberating Poland”, he continued, “the Soviet Union sacrificed 600,000 of its soldiers and officers, and we cannot permit a counterrevolution.”¹

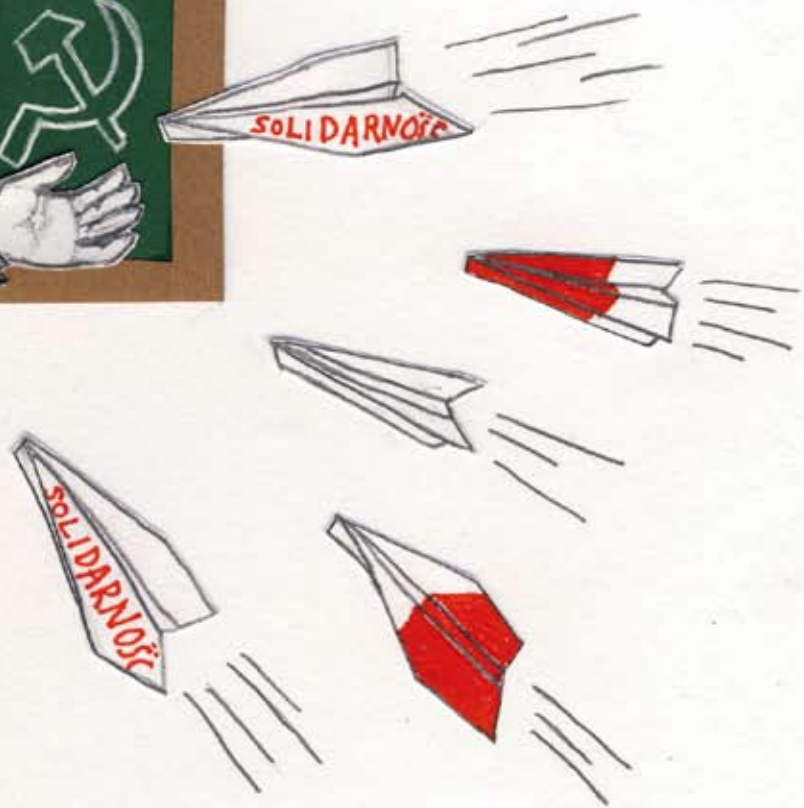
This was not the first time Gromyko and his colleagues in the Politburo had experienced convulsions in the Eastern European countries that had been forced into the Soviet empire in the years following World War II. As far back as 1953, after the death of Stalin, a

half million East German workers had participated in strikes and demonstrations. In 1956, Hungarian reform communists had taken power and declared their withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, and in 1968, Czechoslovakian Communists under the leadership of Alexander Dubček had once again tried to revitalize and put a human face on communism. In all cases, the situation had been “normalized” after Soviet military intervention.

The People’s Republic of Poland had also had its share of protests and unrest. Demonstrations in Poznań in June 1956 had led to bloody conflicts in which seventy-four people lost their lives and hundreds were injured. Price hikes on food triggered nationwide unrest in 1970. The Communist Party headquarters and

the railway station were set ablaze in Gdańsk. Party leader Gomułka ordered the police to open fire on the demonstrators and several hundred were killed. Peace was restored, but Gomułka was swiftly replaced by Edward Gierek, who, it was believed, propounded a Polish path to socialism. In June 1976, Gierek also tried to implement drastic price hikes and the result was once again demonstrations and riots. The price hikes were rolled back, but that did not stop the demonstrators from being assaulted by the militia or given long prison sentences.

What had now happened was that a renewed attempt to raise food prices had once again led to nationwide strikes and demonstrations. The Interfactory



Strike Committee (MKS) was formed behind the spearhead of Lech Wałęsa, an electrician from Gdańsk. MKS drafted a list of 21 demands to the authorities, the right to free trade unions first among them. The government engaged in talks with MKS and the parties signed an agreement on August 31.

Under the Gdańsk Agreement, the demand for free and independent trade unions would be acceded to. Workers' right to strike would be acknowledged. Political prisoners would be released. The public would be fully informed about political and social issues and given the opportunity to influence economic policy.² The agreement noted that the central principle under Soviet ideology of the Party's leading role still applied, but in practice the very existence of an independent trade union was a challenge to the Party. From the Soviet point of view, the agreement was gross blasphemy.³

Representatives of more than three million workers gathered in Gdańsk on September 17 for a first national congress.⁴ They resolved to create a national organization under the name "NSZZ Solidarity", but the new organization had to be registered by a court in order to act. The registration process was the subject of lively debate at the CPSU Politburo meeting on October 29. The next day, the Polish head of state, Józef Pińkowski, and the First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, Stanisław Kania, were to arrive in Moscow for consultations.

The minutes of this Politburo meeting are included in one of the most extraordinary collections of documents from the Soviet era that have yet been made public by the Russian State Archives. It covers the period between the outbreak of strikes in 1980 and the imposition of martial law on December 13, 1981, a period known as the "Polish Crisis".⁵ As a whole, the material shows that it was the following rather clear message that the Soviet leadership conveyed to their Polish Party comrades: We (that is, the leadership in Moscow) are highly disturbed by the events in Poland and it is our firm conviction that a counterrevolution is happening in the country. We believe the Polish leadership should take all necessary measures to restore order. We also believe the Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw Pact have the right and the duty, as a last resort, to protect socialist gains in Poland using military force.

II

The Politburo minutes demonstrate the fundamental inequality that existed between Moscow and Warsaw. When the Politburo discussed the upcoming meeting with the Polish leadership, it was made abundantly clear that this was not a meeting between two independent and equal states. Gromyko's quoted statement implied that the Soviet Union, by virtue of its efforts during the war, had the right to regard Poland as part of its empire.⁶ But it was also obvious that the Politburo believed it possessed a higher degree of political and ideological wisdom than its Polish comrades. In reference to Kania and Pińkowski's visit, Comrade Rusakov indicated how the division of roles at the meeting would play out: "Let them listen closely to Leonid Il'ich [Brezhnev] and take notes", he said.⁷ After the meeting, Brezhnev related that Kania had indeed taken "meticulous notes" and that he would now inform the Politburo of what he had heard.⁸

With great confidence, the Soviet leadership played the role of experienced and benevolent teacher. They saw the Poles as the foolish and recalcitrant pupils. Advice and instructions from Moscow, which had thus to be carefully noted, rained down constantly on the Poles during the entire period from August 1980 to December 1981.

This was a period that was long distinguished by the government's concessions in face of the new independent trade union Solidarity, which was soon able to boast ten million members, and the winds of reform that followed in its wake. The principle regarding the Party's leading role was tottering. Following bitter negotiations, the Polish Supreme Court agreed on November 10 to register – and thus legitimize – Solidarity, even though this principle was not expressly written into the trade union's bylaws. New concessions followed in the spring and summer of 1981: in March, facing the threat of a general strike, the government admitted that it had abused Solidarity activists in the Bydgoszcz City Hall; on May 12, the Supreme Court registered Rural Solidarity as an independent trade union for Polish farmers; in mid-July, the Polish Communist Party (PUWP) held a congress that was preceded by free election of delegates and which appointed a largely new Politburo; in September, Solidarity gathered for a congress and adopted a call to support independent trade unions throughout the Eastern Bloc. Throughout the period, free debate on current issues was conducted in the Polish mass media. It was a period described in historiography as a carnival, as an era of euphoria when the oppressed dared speak the truth to their oppressors.⁹

Soviet views on the events in the People's Republic of Poland were communicated in various ways. The sharpest and from the Polish standpoint most worrying form of contact was the written correspondence. In early June, after the Polish Party Congress, the CPSU Politburo sent a strongly admonitory letter to the central committee of the Polish Party.¹⁰ On other occasions, Brezhnev sent telegrams to Polish leaders or ordered Ambassador Aristov in Warsaw to read aloud to them detailed written communications.¹¹ The communications were supported by the ambassador in personal conversations with Kania and later with Wojciech Jazurkowski, who succeeded Pińkowski as head of state in February 1981.

However, most contact took place as direct conversations between the leaders of the two countries.¹² Some of these talks took place at meetings arranged by the Commission under the leadership of Mikhail Suslov, who was tasked by the Soviet Politburo with monitoring developments in Poland. On a couple of occasions, members of the Commission held personal talks with the Polish leadership. The most dramatic of these meetings took place in early April 1981 at the Brest border station.¹³

But the one who engaged in talks with the Poles the most was Leonid Brezhnev himself. Two talks took place during the Soviet leader's traditional summer sojourn in the Crimea, where the Polish and other Eastern state leaders went every summer to visit and hold talks.¹⁴ Most often, however, Brezhnev talked to the Poles by phone.¹⁵ These telephone calls were mentioned and remarked upon countless times in the minutes. At a Politburo meeting in March 1981, Rusakov praised Comrade Brezhnev's telephone diplomacy. Rusakov related that Brezhnev talked to Kania by phone

almost every week and gave him advice. He tactfully brought up the central issues and gave him instructions on how he should act.¹⁶ Brezhnev himself described the conversations as a difficult balancing act. He had to avoid making Poles so nervous that they threw up their hands in despair while tactfully drawing their attention to the errors and weaknesses in their policy and offering comradely advice.¹⁷

III

The Soviet Politburo's message to the Polish comrades was thus that they should mount a decisive strike against the counterrevolution using both political and administrative means. "Political means" referred to things like presenting clear political programs of action to solve the political and economic crisis and launching propaganda campaigns. The advice on the program of action found in the Politburo material is, however, vague. In general terms, the Politburo spoke of a detailed, positive program and of a program everyone would be able to understand.¹⁸ The advice about propaganda was somewhat clearer. The main thrust here was to show that the events in Poland were not caused by shortcomings of the socialist system, but by individual mistakes and oversights and certain objective factors, such as natural disasters. Obviously, it was also important to show clearly how the acts of the counterrevolutionaries – Solidarity – were exacerbating the already dire problems of the Polish economy.¹⁹

Another key objective of propaganda was to remind people of all the advantages Poland derived from cooperation with its socialist fraternal countries and particularly the USSR. The slander that the shortages of food and other consumer goods were due to massive exports to the USSR must be sharply refuted. The Poles should be enlightened that their country was dependent on Soviet aid and support. Likewise, the misrepresentation of Soviet-Polish relations should be rebuffed.²⁰ A third goal of the propaganda should be to stop the wave of Polish nationalism. Patriotic slogans such as "All Poles in the world are brothers" must be dealt with, as well as efforts to idealize the prerevolutionary past of Poland.²¹

But political means were not enough. The Politburo constantly reminded the Poles that they must also use administrative measures. The simple idea behind the advice was that an authoritarian regime cannot survive without authoritarian methods. "Administrative measures" was a euphemism for various repressive interventions such as control of the media and imprisonment of dissenting elements. The latter measure was also referred to as a strengthening of the "socialist legal order".²² But the most important administrative measures had to do with something else – the declaration of a state of emergency or, in other words, the imposition of martial law.²³ This would stop the counterrevolutionary forces; strikes and anarchy in the economy would cease, production would be resumed, the economic crisis would be turned around, and the position of the Party would be reestablished. In short: Polish socialism would be saved.²⁴

The demand for a state of emergency had already been made before Kania and Pińkowski's visit to Moscow. The only reservation then heard was that it not be imposed too soon after the trip to Moscow, which would make the driving role of the Politburo appar-

ent.²⁵ On December 5, Party leader Stanisław Kania declared in Moscow, in front of the leaders of all Warsaw Pact nations, that preparations were being made for introducing martial law in Poland. They were studying how mass media and communications should be organized and creating special forces made up of particularly trustworthy Party members, which, if necessary, could be armed. The initiative gained the guarded approval of Brezhnev.²⁶

The imposition of martial law was the Soviet leadership's key demand and it was to be repeated countless times in the following months.

IV

The Soviet leadership's deep concern about events in Poland was linked to the understanding that Moscow-faithful communism enjoyed little support, if not total repudiation, among the masses not only in Poland, but in all Eastern European states. For this reason, radical reforms could easily have repercussions throughout the Soviet empire. This was, of course, something the Russians thought the Poles should understand and take into account.²⁷ They became that much more outraged when the Poles took their duties so lightly.

The problem was that the Poles were refusing to play the role of obedient subaltern that the Russians had assigned them. They talked about political solutions and stressed that bloodshed must be avoided. In the reports to the CPSU Politburo, irritation and disappointment over the Poles' reluctance to take the "necessary measures" grew. As early as January 1981, Gromyko complained that the Poles, despite the recommendations that had been given them, did not want to adopt emergency measures. They had essentially abandoned the idea altogether, he complained.²⁸ In early March 1981, Rusakov stated in the Politburo that the massive "advice" given in the autumn had not been enough to activate the Polish leaders. They had yet to grasp "the need to implement a number of cardinal measures for bringing order to the country".²⁹ On April 2, it was Brezhnev's turn to give vent to his frustration. "Worst of all is the fact that our friends listen to and agree with our recommendations but do practically nothing at all. And the counterrevolution is advancing on all fronts."³⁰

It now became ever clearer that a brutal war of nerves was playing out behind the "comradely" exchange of views. The Polish leaders were subjected to heavy pressure, which left its marks. On April 2, Gromyko reported that Jaruzelski was "completely crestfallen" and did not know what to do. Andropov added his bit: Jaruzelski had "gone limp" and Kania had recently "begun to drink more and more". "[A] very sad phenomenon", said Andropov.³¹ Therefore, it looks like more than just a coincidence that, a few days later, the two hard-pressed Poles were taken under ominous circumstances to a secret meeting with envoys of the Soviet Politburo. They were not told in advance where the meeting would be held. In Warsaw, they were made to board a Soviet flight that, after diversionary movements, landed at an isolated airfield. From there, the journey continued in covered KGB vehicles. They finally reached the Polish-Soviet border station at Brest. A blacked-out railway carriage was parked on a siding with Politburo members Andropov and Ustinov waiting inside. The meeting began at nine in the evening and

ended six hours later, at three o'clock in the morning of April 5. As reported to the Politburo, the Poles – hardly surprisingly – had seemed visibly nervous and disheartened.

The main purpose of the meeting in Brest was to induce the Poles to adopt more stringent methods. Andropov and Ustinov had brought a document with them to the railway carriage concerning the declaration of a state of emergency in Poland, which they wanted Kania and Jaruzelski to sign. In doing so, they would demonstrate that they agreed with the Politburo's assessments and knew what should be done when martial law was imposed. But the Poles refused on the grounds that the document must first be approved by the Sejm. Finally, they said they would look over the document and sign it later.³²

In late April 1981, Suslov and Andropov were in Warsaw for talks with Party comrades. In his report to the Politburo, Suslov emphasized that they had criticized the Polish leaders for their indecisiveness and efforts to gloss over the situation. Brezhnev remarked once again that there could be little trust in them. "Even though they listen to us, they don't do what we recommend", he said.³³ A couple of weeks later when Erich Honecker, Party leader in the GDR and Gustáv Husák, Party leader in Czechoslovakia, were visiting the Crimea, Brezhnev vented his disappointment again. He complained that Kania and Jaruzelski had not followed the advice of the fraternal parties, but had on the contrary encouraged the degeneration of the Party and the state apparatus. Husák agreed and said that Kania could not be trusted. Andropov summed up his own and his colleagues' opinions of the Poles: "They speak, promise, but do nothing."³⁴

As trust in Kania degenerated, so did the tone of Brezhnev's telephone diplomacy. The tact Rusakov had praised faded into the past. On April 2, 1981, Brezhnev recounted for the Politburo a telephone call that had taken place a couple of days before. Kania had complained about being subjected to strong criticism at a meeting of the Polish Party's CC. Brezhnev related:

I immediately said to him, "They acted correctly. They should not just have criticized you but taken a cudgel to you. Then perhaps you would understand." These were literally my words.³⁵

At a meeting of the Politburo on June 18, 1981, Brezhnev announced that he had been reluctant to speak with Kania for a long time. But the Polish Party leader had tried to reach him every day from Friday through Monday, and on Tuesday, Brezhnev finally let him through. Judging by his report of the conversation, he was angry and impatient.³⁶

In continued frustration over the Poles' disobedience, Brezhnev declared again to the Politburo on September 10, 1981, that he had no great desire to speak to Kania, since nothing would come of it. Chernenko agreed. Sound instructions were issued, he said, "[b]ut to what use? Comrades Kania and Jaruzelski are doing things their own way".³⁷

V

But if the Polish comrades were so impossible, could not the powerful leadership in Moscow see to their re-

placement? The Politburo was not averse to the idea. Jaruzelski was the first to be suggested for replacement. At a meeting on May 16, 1981, Erich Honecker suggested that the Polish head of state should be replaced with a more effective leader. The problem was finding a suitable successor. Brezhnev, who presided over the meeting, was pessimistic on that point.³⁸

Jaruzelski was not replaced and sights were instead set on at Kania. Mistrust in him had, as shown, grown during the spring of 1981. Minutes of a meeting on September 17 show that Brezhnev and his Party colleagues Husák, Kadar, Zhivkov, and Honecker were agreed that Kania had displayed "unacceptable liberalism". The same minutes show that Honecker had spoken with the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, Pyotr Abrasimov, about the Kania case. Honecker had his solution ready: "to gather in Moscow with the leaders of the fraternal parties, to invite Comrade Kania and tell him to submit his resignation, and in his place as first secretary of the PUWP CC to recommend Comrade [Stefan] Olszowski". But Brezhnev was doubtful about the proposal. Other Party leaders and various Soviet organizations should be consulted first.³⁹

Despite Brezhnev's hesitation, Honecker got his way. Kania was forced to resign at the plenary meeting of the Polish Central Committee of October 16–18. But his successor was not Olszowski, but General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who could now add first secretary of the PUWP to the list of his previous posts as minister of defense and prime minister.

On October 19, the day after the transfer of power, Jaruzelski had Brezhnev on the line. After due congratulations, the advice continued. The message was unchanged: take action to stop the counterrevolution. "And, of course, it is important, without wasting time, to take the decisive measures you intend to use", Brezhnev exhorted. But first of all, Jaruzelski should gather around himself reliable assistants from the ranks of committed and worthy Communists who could spur the Party into action and imbue it with the spirit of struggle.⁴⁰

But the hopes for a swift change of scene came to naught. Ten days after the transfer of power, the usual impatience was back. Brezhnev complained that Jaruzelski had done nothing constructive and lacked courage. Andropov added that Jaruzelski had been advised to remove the reform Communists Barcikowski and Ku-biak, who were both "obstacles" within the Politburo. But he had refused, claiming that he had no one to replace them with.⁴¹ A few weeks later, the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw was instructed to pass on an oral message from Brezhnev to Jaruzelski. Brezhnev reminded Jaruzelski of the hopes that had been pinned on him when he took over the post of Party leader and the previous indecisive leadership had been removed. He mentioned the advice regarding personnel replacements and decisive measures that he had previously given and to which Jaruzelski had agreed. He also shared a number of other opinions about how Jaruzelski should solve Poland's problems, advice that consistently entailed more or less explicit criticism of what Jaruzelski had done thus far.⁴² The pattern thus remained the same. Brezhnev admonished while giving vent to his annoyance that previous advice had not been followed and promises had not been kept. The strains of impotence in the mighty one's anger became ever clearer.

VI

Neither the psychological warfare nor the replacement of the Party leader yielded the results Moscow was after. Why not, then, solve the problem the same way as in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968? This was, of course, a perspective that deeply worried the Polish leaders. Without the threat of a new military intervention hanging over them, they would have had greater opportunity to reach an agreement with Solidarity and the Party's reformist comrades. But now the threat was there and it had a name: the Brezhnev Doctrine.⁴³

In November 1968, a few months after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops, Brezhnev had declared in a speech that when anti-socialist forces arose in one country, it was not only a problem of the country concerned but a common problem and concern of all socialist countries. Hence: if political currents such as those that had come into power in Czechoslovakia asserted themselves in another Eastern state, one could expect the tanks once again to roll.

But it was not clear that the Brezhnev Doctrine was still relevant. A lot had changed since 1968 to indicate that it was not. The USSR's international position was circumscribed. Militarily, the conflict with China had transformed the Soviet-Chinese border into a heavily guarded zone of tension that tied up almost a half million of the country's armed forces. In addition, an estimated 85,000 men had been engaged since 1979 in a prolonged and seemingly futile war in Afghanistan. That same year, NATO had decided to deploy 572

cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe if the Soviet Union did not withdraw its SS-20 missiles.

On the political plane, the Soviet leadership, or at least part of it, thought it had made tremendous gains through the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, by which the borders drawn after the Second World War would be regarded as inviolable. But the Final Act also meant that the USSR had agreed to respect civil rights and facilitate international communications. This entailed an inherent threat to Soviet orthodoxy, further underlined by the fact that the communist parties in Italy and Spain had emerged as defenders of democratic rights and of the Czechoslovakian reform communism that Moscow had drowned in blood.

Last but not least: compared to Czechoslovakia, Poland was a populous country with strong anti-Russian and anti-communist traditions, with an army whose loyalty to the regime was uncertain, and with an opposition movement, in the form of Solidarity, that was ten million strong. If Moscow were to attempt a reprise of the 1968 invasion, the result might be a prolonged civil war instead of a swift takeover of power. The effects on the Soviet Union's military policy situation would, all things considered, be extremely burdensome and the consequences for the country's political position devastating.

But no one could know how the leadership in Moscow reasoned and it did its best to make everyone believe the Brezhnev doctrine still applied. Military exercises were held near the borders of Poland in the winter of 1980 and spring of 1981 as a reminder that what happened in 1968 could happen again. Speaking at the XXVI Congress of the CPSU on February 23, Brezhnev declared that anarchistic, antisocialist elements, aided by foreign powers, were driving Poland to disaster. But the Soviet Union was firmly resolved to stand up for Poland and would not leave its socialist brother country in the lurch.⁴⁴ This was a promise entirely consistent with the Brezhnev Doctrine.

Naturally, Brezhnev's renewed promise spread fear in Poland and the West, as intended. At a meeting in April, the Poland experts in the Soviet Politburo stressed that reminders of Brezhnev's statements should be made on appropriate occasions. It was imperative, they believed, to maximally exploit the fears of internal reactionaries and international imperialism that the Soviet Union might send its troops into Poland.⁴⁵ Brezhnev himself declared on May 16 that only fear of intervention was restraining Solidarity's attacks and holding back the disintegration of the Party.⁴⁶ The reminders of the Brezhnev Doctrine were intended for consumption both inside and outside Poland.

Armed intervention in Poland may for a while have been considered an option in the Politburo. Gromyko's flat statement that Poland must not be lost, as well as a decision as early as August 1980 to prepare selected military units for intervention in Poland can be interpreted thus.⁴⁷ But if intervention was seriously considered at first, the idea, as far as can be judged by

the available material, seems to have been later abandoned. At a meeting in mid-May 1981, Tikhonov said that intervention in the present international situation was out of the question. In late October, Andropov and Ustinov unequivocally declared that the Politburo must adhere firmly to its line that troops would not be sent to Poland. Andropov, Ustinov, Grishin, Gromyko, and Suslov said the same thing on December 10, 1981 when it was also claimed that the Politburo had precluded military intervention from the outset.⁴⁸

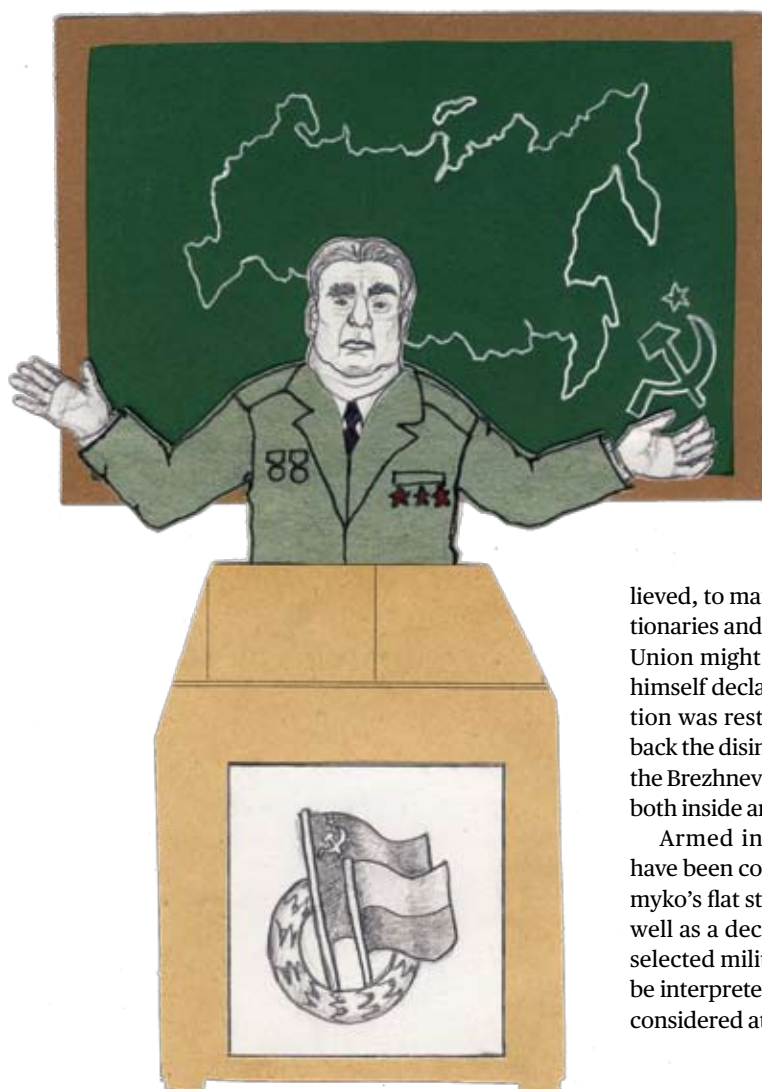
The Politburo's main line was the threatened military intervention. The threat was the USSR's strongest argument against the intractable Poles. But judging by appearances, the threat was a bluff and the more time passed, the greater became the risk the bluff would be exposed. By December 1981, the Polish Crisis had gone on for a year and a half.

VII

The PZPR CC Politburo met on December 5, 1981. After long debates, it was agreed to give General Jaruzelski, then Party leader, prime minister, and minister of defense, the authority to impose martial law. When Jaruzelski concluded the debate, he did not wrap the decision in the rhetoric of socialist struggle. Instead, he declared that it was "a horrible, monstrous shame for the Party that after 36 years in power it has to be defended by the police. But there is nothing else left ahead of us."⁴⁹ With those words, he denoted that the Polish leadership had finally decided to follow the advice imprinted by the comrades in Moscow for eighteen months under threatening forms.

The last meeting of the CPSU CC Politburo before martial law was imposed took place on December 10. It was confirmed at the meeting that the PCPR Politburo had given Jaruzelski the authority to introduce martial law, but the final decision lay with Jaruzelski and nobody knew whether he would really take action. First the Poles had said martial law would be imposed after midnight on December 11, then on the next night of the 12th and then, again, somewhere around the 20th. At the same time, Jaruzelski had said that the operation must be approved by the Sejm, but the next session was not scheduled until the 15th and there was no mention of the introduction of martial law on the agenda. Jaruzelski had also declared that they would resort to martial law only when Solidarity forced them to do so. Andropov said that either Jaruzelski was concealing his intentions or was simply abandoning the idea of martial law. Jaruzelski had fallen back into a vacillating position, Gromyko said. At first he had somewhat stiffened his spine, but now he had begun to soften again.

But the discussion was also evidence that the Politburo in Moscow suspected the Poles of having switched tactics: no longer content to promise tougher action with their fingers crossed behind their backs, they had started to make counter demands. Jaruzelski had said that the imposition of martial law was predicated on Russian economic assistance. He had talked about goods worth about 1.5 billion dollars in the first quarter of 1982 – iron ore and other metals, fertilizer, oil, and many other goods. Andropov had a hard time understanding what martial law had to do with fertilizer and expressed his view that Jaruzelski was trying to find some way to extricate himself. If the Poles did not get what they asked for, they would be able to blame



the Russians for the failure to take tougher measures. Andropov found the behavior insolent. Suslov also believed Jaruzelski wanted to blame the Soviet Union for the operation having come to a standstill. By making requests the Soviet Union could not fulfill, he could cancel the state of emergency and say: “Well, look here, I turned to the Soviet Union and requested help but didn’t receive it.”⁵⁰

Underlying these accusations of extortion, there was probably suspicion that the Poles had realized the Russians would never take up arms against them and that the regime in Poland would never be restored. Nevertheless, there was never any suggestion that the threat of intervention would be carried out. As mentioned, several speakers repeated earlier positions against Soviet intervention. If the threat were to be exposed as a bluff, so be it. Andropov also said that even if Poland fell under the control of Solidarity that was the way it would be. Military intervention would be followed by heavy economic and political sanctions from “the capitalist countries” and they would be very burdensome for the Soviet Union. “We must show concern for our country, for the strengthening of the Soviet Union.”⁵¹

The situation on December 10 was thus that both parties in the prolonged Polish-Soviet war of nerves were ready to give up. As the Soviet leadership was preparing for its threatening bluff to be exposed, the Poles decided to give into the pressure. They never saw the Russians’ cards. Arrests of Solidarity activists began on the night of December 12 and in the morning, Jaruzelski announced on television that martial law had been imposed.

VIII

Today, knowing how it turned out, it is easy to think of the events in Poland of 1980–1981 as the beginning of the end of communism and the Soviet empire. Martial law could only temporarily stymie the people’s demands for change. And Polish historiography is inclined to present the matter thus. If one tries instead to see the events from a contemporary angle, the picture changes. Then, the interpretation is determined not by what would happen in 1989, but by what happened in 1956 and 1968. For many at the time, the Polish euphoria seemed to be a new reform communism project related to those crushed in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Polish Politburo member Kubiak said in October 1981 that the Communist Party now had both the opportunity and the duty to create something that had never before existed – a socialist and democratic industrial society at the heart of Europe. He believed that an opportunity had opened up for socialism, not only in Poland but in the entire world.⁵²

What Kubiak’s speech reminds us is that through the 1989 revolution, Poland and the other Eastern European countries adopted an already existing democratic, capitalist model. They were not launching anything new; the democratic socialist model that had never existed was never realized either. One who looked back with regret at lost opportunities was General Jaruzelski. In his 1993 memoirs, he wrote that part of the Party’s base wanted to blow up the centralist, Warsaw-controlled Party machine. In its place, they suggested a model featuring decentralized intermediate levels that were not subordinate to the power of the central committee apparatus. This was the idea of democra-

tization using “horizontal structures” applied to the Party organization. Jaruzelski’s judgment in hindsight was that such a reworking of the Party’s structure and functional approach would have entailed a real chance for the communist movement. But far too few could bring themselves to question “democratic centralism” and the “Leninist” Party model.⁵³

But if it was true that the ideas of 1980–1981 encompassed the saving of socialism, it was actually the Soviet Politburo – the center of power in the leading socialist state – that had main responsibility for ensuring that the ideas were implemented. The only problem was that the Politburo, as shown, was not inclined to change its mind. The cadre of Soviet politicians who survived Stalin’s purges was, according to Robert V. Daniels, “by virtue of its origin, experience, and ossification in office, conservative and self-protective in its reflexes”. On its capacity for innovation, he writes: “It resisted or sabotaged innovation and clung to sterile bureaucratic methods and ideological formulas in the face of the new problems and potential of modern society.”⁵⁴ The characterization is consistent with the picture provided by the Soviet material from the Polish Crisis of 1980–1981.

And yet this is not the whole picture. In this ossified Soviet Politburo, where the average age was about 70, there was actually a callow youth of 50, who had with his own eyes seen the inefficiency of the Soviet command economy, who had anguished over its inability to convert enormous resources into a good living standard for the masses, and who had long been discussing the need for reforms with friends and confidantes. But the future reformer Mikhail Gorbachev seldom spoke out in Politburo debates about Poland and when he did, it was only to agree with criticism of the wishy-washy Poles. Many circumstances may have lain behind his conformism. But one thing he knew for sure was that anyone who openly showed sympathy for Polish ideas about socialist renewal was putting his political life in jeopardy. When the Politburo chose Gorbachev as its leader in March 1985, after having buried three Party leaders in less than two and a half years, it was perhaps ready to accept certain ambitions for change as long as it did not have to deal with another funeral any time soon. But if it had known that the Polish ideas would rise again, the choice might have been different. ✖

ACRONYMS

CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CC	Central Committee
CPCz	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
CWIHP	Cold War International History Project
NSZZ	Independent Self-Governing Trade Union (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy)
PUWP	Polish United Workers Party (Polish Communist Party)
SED	[East German] Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands)
FMA	[Swedish] Foreign Ministry’s Archive
HSWP	Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party

MAIN PEOPLE INVOLVED

Abrasimov, Pyotr Soviet ambassador to Poland 1957–1961, to the GDR 1962–1971 and 1975–1984

Andropov, Yuri Chairman of the KGB 1967–1982; member of CPSU Politburo 1973–1984; member of the Politburo Commission on Poland; general secretary of the CPSU Nov 1982–Feb 1984

Aristov, Boris Soviet ambassador to Poland 1978–1983

Barcikowski, Kazimierz Member of PUWP CC 1968–1990; member of PUWP Politburo 1980–1989

Brezhnev, Leonid Ilyich General secretary of the CPSU Oct 1964–Nov 1982

Dubček, Alexander Reform communist; first secretary of the CPCz 1968–1969

Gierek, Edward First secretary of the PUWP Dec 1970–Sept 1980

Grishin, Victor Member of CPSU Politburo 1971–1986; first secretary of Moscow party committee 1967–1985

Gromyko, Andrei Soviet minister of foreign affairs 1957–1985; member of CPSU Politburo 1973–1988; member of Politburo Commission on Poland

Honecker, Erich First secretary of the SED 1971–1989

Husák, Gustáv President of Czechoslovakia 1975–1989; first secretary of the CPCz 1969–1987

Jaruzelski, Wojciech Army general; PUWP first secretary Oct 1981–July 1989; prime minister of Poland Feb 1981–Nov 1985; minister of national defense 1968–1983;

Kádár, Janos HSWP first secretary 1956–1988

Kania, Stanisław PUWP first secretary Sept 1980–Oct 1981

Kubiak, Hieronym Member of PUWP Politburo and PUWP secretary from July 1981

Olszowski, Stefan Member of the PUWP politburo; PUWP CC secretary for media information Aug 1980–July 1982

Pińkowski, Józef Polish prime minister Sept 1980–Feb 1981

Rusakov, Konstantin Head of CPSU CC Department for liaison with communist and workers’ parties of socialist countries 1968–1973 and 1977–1986

Suslov, Mikhail Member of CPSU Politburo 1955–1982; chairman of the Politburo Commission on Poland

Tikhonov, Nikolai Member of the CPSU Politburo 1979–1985; prime minister Oct 1980–Sept 1985

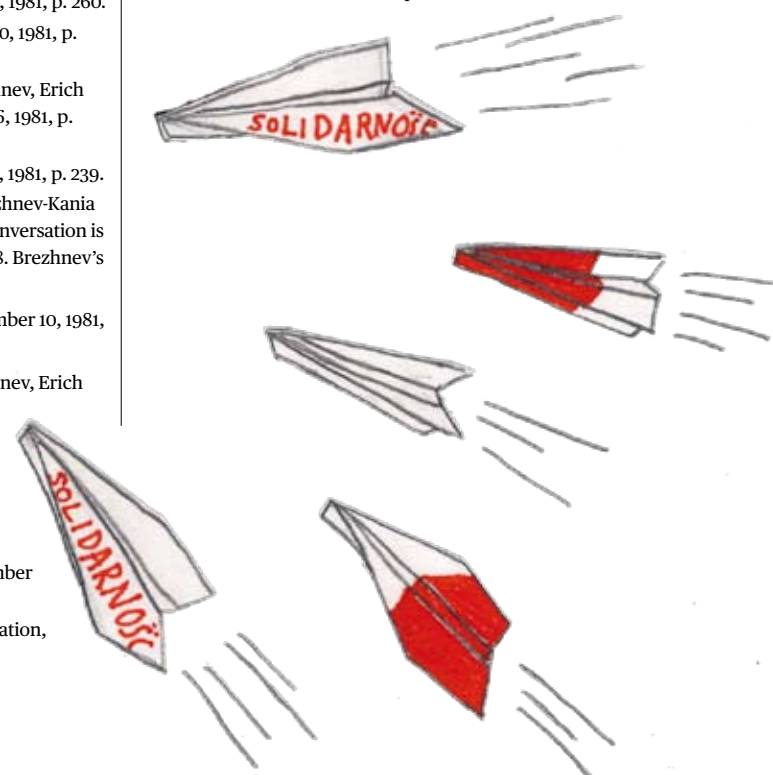
Ustinov, Dmitri Soviet marshal; member of CPSU Politburo 1976–1984; minister of defense 1976–1984; member of the Politburo Commission on Poland

Wałęsa, Lech Electrician; chairman of Solidarity 1980–1990

Zhivkov, Todor President of Bulgaria 1971–1989; first secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party 1954–1989

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- 1 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, October 29, 1980, p. 125. The minutes of Politburo discussions about Poland were published in English translation in 1998 by the Cold War International History Project. They can be accessed at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/> (go to *Virtual Archive 2.0* and then *1980–81 Polish Crisis*). With a few exceptions, the material has also been published in Andrzej Paczkowski & Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981; A Documentary History*, Budapest 2007. Paczkowski and Byrne's English usage differs somewhat from that of the translators of the material of the Cold War International History Project, and they have augmented the Soviet documents with material from Poland, other WP states, and the US. It should be noted here that the Soviet archives have still not been made public in their entirety and the material published to date may appear in a different light when minutes and memoranda from other bodies become available. In this essay, I have presumed that the speakers' contributions are accurately reproduced, but understand that the same speaker may have said something else in another context and thought something else again privately. The page numbers provided in the notes after document titles refer to Paczkowski & Byrne, *From Solidarity*.
- 2 Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History*, Cambridge 2008, p. 268. See also Anthony Kemp-Welch (ed.), *The Birth of Solidarity*, London 1983 (1991), pp. 180–187.
- 3 Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, p. 62.
- 4 Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, p. 278 f.
- 5 See note 1. The collection has been used by CWIHP historians Mark Kramer and Wojtech Mastny primarily in their discussion of the likelihood of a Soviet military intervention in Poland. The same documents play an important part in Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy*, Chapel Hill 2003. For a view of the Polish crisis from a Polish insider's point of view, see Mieczysław F. Rakowski's diary notes published in his *Es begann in Polen: Der Anfang vom Ende des Ostblocks*, Hamburg 1995. For a bibliographical overview see Paczkowski & Byrne, *From Solidarity*.
- 6 The same claim was expressed, for example, in the note of protest to PUWP in mid-September 1981. See CPSU CC Communication to the PUWP CC, "Intensifying Anti-Soviet Feelings in Poland", September 14, 1981, pp. 358–359.
- 7 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, October 29, 1980, p. 125.
- 8 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, October 31, 1980, p. 130.
- 9 See, for example, *Solidarność 1980–81: A Carnival Under Sentence*, Warsaw 2006, p. 5.
- 10 CPSU CC Letter to the PUWP CC, June 5, 1981, pp. 294–298.
- 11 Regarding Aristov, see Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Hinter den Türen der Macht: Der Anfang vom Ende einer Herrschaft*, Leipzig 1996, p. 426.
- 12 An overview of contacts is found in "Information on the Position of the CPSU Regarding the Polish Situation", October 1, 1981 (<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/>, Virtual Archive 2.0, 1980–81 Polish Crisis).
- 13 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 9, 1981, pp. 259–264.
- 14 The conversation with Gierek in 1980 was mentioned by Brezhnev on December 5, 1980; see Minutes of Warsaw Pact Leadership Meeting in Moscow, December 5, 1980, p. 158. Brezhnev mentioned the conversation with Kania and Pińkowski on August 3, 1981, in conversation with Honecker; see Record of Brezhnev-Honecker Meeting in the Crimea, August 3, 1981, pp. 330–333. Brezhnev said there that the Polish leaders were expected in the Crimea on 14 August 1981. See also Rakowski, *Es begann in Polen*, p. 42, where Jaruzelski is reported as saying that he expects Brezhnev to give him a dressing-down (*Strafpredigt*) when they meet.
- 15 The significance of telephone calls is also confirmed by Michael Voslensky in Voslensky, Michael, *Nomenklatura: Die herrschende Klasse der Sowjetunion: Studienausgabe*, 3. ed., Vienna 1980, pp. 162–163; see also the chapter "Die Ballade von den Telefonen", pp. 318–325.
- 16 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, January 22, 1981, p. 186. See also Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 30, p. 276.
- 17 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 16, 1981, p. 265.
- 18 CPSU CC Politburo Report on Topics for Discussion with the Polish Leadership, September 3, 1980, pp. 83–86; Minutes of Warsaw Pact Leadership Meeting in Moscow, December 5, 1980 (speeches by Kadar and Ceaucescu).
- 19 CPSU CC Politburo Report on Topics for Discussion with the Polish Leadership, September 3, 1980 p. 86; Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 9, 1981, pp. 83–86; Extract from Protocol No. 37 of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, November 21, 1981, pp. 401–403.
- 20 CPSU CC Politburo Report on Topics for Discussion with the Polish Leadership, September 3, 1980, p. 86; Extract from Protocol No. 7 of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 23, 1981, pp. 267–271.
- 21 CPSU CC Politburo Report on Topics for Discussion with the Polish Leadership, September 3, 1980, p. 86.
- 22 Ibid, p. 85.
- 23 The Polish Constitution did not anticipate a situation of internal unrest where a proclamation of a state of emergency could be needed. But it did prepare for war and the imposition of martial law.
- 24 For a typical argument in favor of martial law, see Brezhnev's Speech to CPCz CC Politburo, April 7, 1981, p. 256 f.
- 25 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, October 29, 1980, p. 124 f.
- 26 Minutes of Warsaw Pact Leadership Meeting in Moscow, December 5, 1980, p. 161.
- 27 The risk that the "Polish disease" would spread was addressed by, among others, Brezhnev in conversation with Kania on September 15, 1981. See Information on the Brezhnev-Kania Telephone Conversation, September 15, 1981, p. 362.
- 28 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, January 22, 1981, p. 186.
- 29 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, March 12, 1981, p. 222. See also Information regarding meeting between Karel Hoffman ...and Stanislaw Kania ...March 17, 1981 (Cold War International History Project, Virtual Archive, 1980–81 Polish Crisis).
- 30 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 2, 1981, p. 239.
- 31 Ibid, pp. 241, 243.
- 32 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 9, 1981, p. 260.
- 33 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 30, 1981, p. 276.
- 34 Memorandum of meeting between Leonid Brezhnev, Erich Honecker, Gustáv Husák et al., in Moscow, May 16, 1981, p. 291.
- 35 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 2, 1981, p. 239.
- 36 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting on Brezhnev-Kania Conversation, June 18, 1981, pp. 307–309. This conversation is also related in Rakowski, *Es begann in Polen*, p. 38. Brezhnev's conduct is described as "icy".
- 37 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, September 10, 1981, p. 348 f.
- 38 Memorandum of Meeting between Leonid Brezhnev, Erich Honecker, Gustáv Husák et al., in Moscow, May 16, 1981, pp. 280–293. For earlier expressions of discontent with Kania, see for example Record of Brezhnev-Honecker Meeting in the Crimea, August 3, 1981, pp. 330–333.
- 39 Excerpt from CPSU CC Politburo Meeting Regarding Brezhnev-Kania Conversation, September 17, 1981, pp. 368–369.
- 40 Notes of Brezhnev-Jaruzelski Telephone Conversation, October 19, 1981, pp. 392–394. Jaruzelski describes the conversation in *Hinter den Türen*, p. 269. According to Jaruzelski, Brezhnev repeated the fateful promise "We will not leave Poland in the lurch" during the conversation.
- 41 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting on Rusakov's trip to Eastern Europe, October 29, 1981, pp. 395–399.
- 42 Extract from Protocol No. 37 of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, November 21, 1981, pp. 401–404.
- 43 For a general account of the history of the Brezhnev Doctrine, see Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine*.
- 44 Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, p. 306 f. For allusions to Brezhnev's statement, see Extract from Protocol No. 7 of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 23, 1981, pp. 286–287.
- 45 Extract from Protocol No. 7 of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, April 23, 1981, p. 271. On January 22, 1981, Ustinov emphasized that it was important to hold military exercises in Poland to "let them know that our forces are ready" (Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting, January 22, 1981, p. 187). See also Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, pp. 306–307.
- 46 Memorandum of Meeting between Leonid Brezhnev, Erich Honecker, Gustáv Husák et al., in Moscow, May 16, 1981, p. 280.
- 47 CPSU CC Politburo Commission Order to Enhance Readiness of Military Units for Possible War in Poland, August 28, 1980, pp. 64–65.
- 48 For May 1981, see Memorandum of Meeting between Leonid Brezhnev, Erich Honecker, Gustáv Husák et al., in Moscow, May 16, 1981, p. 291; for October 1981, see Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting on Rusakov's trip to Eastern Europe, October 29, 1981, p. 397 (see also Record of a Meeting between Representatives of the CPCz CC and SED CC International Relations Department in East Germany, 8 October 1981, CWIHP, Virtual Archive, 1980–81 Polish Crisis); for December 1981 see Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting December 10, 1981, p. 450 (Andropov), 451 (Gromyko), 453 (Grishin), 452 (Ustinov and Suslov).
- 49 Protocol No. 18 of PUWP CC Politburo Meeting, December 5, 1981, p. 443.
- 50 Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting December 10, 1981, pp. 446–453.
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- 52 The speech is cited in the Swedish Embassy's report; see Cryptogram Warsaw to Stockholm, October 15, 1981 (342), signed Thyberg, file 151, HpiEp, FMA.
- 53 Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Mein Leben für Polen: Erinnerungen*. Munich & Zurich 1993, p. 252.
- 54 Robert V. Daniels, *The Rise and Fall of Communism in Russia*, New Haven & London 2007, p. 322 f.



THE NATION AS A MORAL SUBJECT

Estonian freedom fighter kept women and the left at arm's length

BY ERKKI TUOMIOJA

EESTI RAHVAMEELNE Eduerakond, founded by Jaan Tõnisson in 1905, sought to gather Estonian nationalist, democratic, and liberal forces together into a single national party. The term *rahvameelne* – literally “popular- or folk-minded” – refers to democracy as much as it does to nationalism, and the term was clearly incorporated into the name of the party in the spirit of the radicalism of this revolutionary year. At this time, the party also identified strongly with the Kadets of the liberal Russian Constitutional Democratic Party founded slightly earlier, to whose central committee Tõnisson was elected and whose manifesto Eduerakond adopted on general national political issues with only minor modifications. Tõnisson and the other Eduerakond representatives sat in the Kadet group in the Duma. Eduerakond was, however, organizationally independent of the Kadets, although the Kadets considered its 1,000-strong membership and the Tartu section extremely large in terms of the nation as a whole, as its local organization in the Governorate of Livonia.¹

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN Eduerakond and the Kadets represents the way in which nationalism, in opposition in the nineteenth century, joined forces with liberalism in Eastern Europe. At the turn of the century, however, their paths often started to diverge. This was also the case in Estonia, where Tõnisson's nationalism was socially, and particularly culturally, so conservative that some of the Eduerakond Party's founders considered him too right-wing. His unassailed position as party leader was not affected, however, and he had no rivals in the party prepared to challenge him. It seems that potential challengers switched to other parties rather than trigger conflict with the temperamental “chief”.

Land reform was a challenging problem for liberals. The principle of protecting private ownership was such a strong element of Tõnisson's philosophy that he did not support large-scale forced expropriation of the manors' arable land until he was compelled to revise his opinion in 1917 amid the pressures of a new



Jaan Tõnisson (1868–1941).

year of revolution. He took a moderate line on radical land reform more because of legal principles than because it conflicted with economic liberalism. In Tõnisson's worldview, the economy was always subordinate to national needs and aspirations.

To Tõnisson, national self-awareness was the epitome of human development. His folk philosophy emphasized ethical motivation in the spirit of Immanuel Kant's moral theory. The nation was a moral being, subject to inner compulsion and a sense of duty. In this respect, Estonian-ness was, as Toomas Karjahärm writes, “above all a moral norm, a duty and a high ethical ideal, to which each Estonian should aspire”. From it, instructions and rules could be derived which would regulate the behavior of individuals and society.

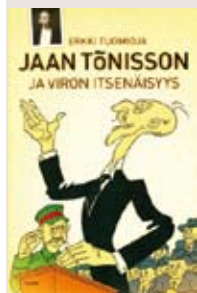
Direct instructions for organizing the economy were, however, harder to find. Tõnisson later defined himself as a social liberal, but before the 1920s, such terms had not yet entered his vocabulary. Dogmatically emphasizing the free market was never part of his ideology. He did emphasize the importance of free trade, but at the same time was often prepared to support, in practice – or at least to tolerate – various kinds of protectionist measures. He generally opposed the transfer of Estonian property and national wealth into foreign ownership. However, cooperation always took center stage when economic issues were at stake.²

Tõnisson's nationalism, with its emphasis on education, was moderate, and he frequently expressly warned against expressions of hatred and discrimination targeted at other nationalities and ethnic groups. Considering Jaan Tõnisson's entire life's work, Toomas Karjahärm's listing him with Jakob Hurt and Villem Reiman as a representative of “ethnic fundamentalism” with a completely ethnocentric worldview is unjustified. The fact, for example, that he was often antagonistic towards the Baltic Germans comes down to nothing more than a desire to achieve rights equal to theirs. It is true that he opposed the law on the cultural autonomy of minorities passed in 1925, but he did not do so on grounds that could have been interpreted as indicating that he denied them their rights. Later, during Päts's ascendancy in the Riigikogu, for example, Tõnisson opposed discrimination against foreign labor.

ONE MEANS OF EXPRESSING Estonian nationalism was the campaign for Estonian surnames that began following Estonian independence, along the lines of Finland's major campaign to Fennicize Finnish surnames launched on the centenary of J. V. Snellman's birth in 1906. Tõnisson was sympathetic towards but not passionate about voluntary Estonianization – in the view of those keener to Estonianize surnames than he, his name should have been changed to the Estonian form, Tõnisson. However, when a law was proposed in

BIG MAN IN A SMALL COUNTRY

THE FORMER FINNISH Foreign Minister, Erkki Tuomioja MP, has long been a recognized scholar who has contrib-



uted through several biographies to the understanding of Finnish political history in the 20th century. His biographies of Finnish left-wing socialist Karl Harald Wiik and government minister and diplomat Sakari Tuomioja (Erkki Tuomioja's father) were noted in professional circles, while his biographies of his grandmother, Hella Wuolijoki — colorful businesswoman, author, and broadcast radio executive, among other things — and her sister, Salme Pekkala, later married to British Communist Party leader Rajani Palme Dutt (cousin of Swedish prime minister Olof Palme's father), also garnered the attention of the educated public. Interest was of course piqued by Wuolijoki's role as intermediary in Finnish peace overtures during the Finnish Winter War of 1939–1940.

While researching Hella Wuolijoki's and Salma Pekkala's (née Murrik) early years, including their childhood milieu in Estonia, Tuomioja became even more familiar with Estonian history, and learned Estonian. The research process brought him into contact with a prominent figure in the modern history of Estonia: Jaan Tõnisson, newspaper publisher, public educator, party founder, and minister on several occasions in the government of independent Estonia. Tuomioja's interest in Tõnisson has resulted in another biography, *Jaan Tõnisson ja Viron itsenäisyys* [Jaan Tõnisson and Estonian independence] (2010).

TUOMIOJA'S WORK fills a gap. Jaan Tõnisson (1868–1941) was a prominent figure in the national Estonian awakening and a leading politician in the first Estonian republic, but despite several articles about him as well as publications in his honor, no scholarly biography of Tõnisson has yet been published. This is somewhat surprising, but is perhaps due to the difficulties still presented by *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in Estonia. While Tõnisson certainly personified the Estonian national awakening in the late 19th century, he was also convinced as long as he lived of his own irreplaceability. He has often been compared to the Finnish national philosopher, journalist, and statesman Johan Vilhelm Snellman (1806–1881), whose self-image was similar. Tõnisson always insisted on calling the tune, which pushed away a long line of gifted colleagues and fellow party members.

The difficulties cooperating in Estonia, however, did not extend to external relations. Tuomioja shows that Tõnisson was willing to negotiate with almost all parties: Tsarist Russia, the parties in the Russian Duma, the revolutionaries in Estonia in 1905 and 1917/1918, the entente powers (especially the British), the Finnish Whites, Sweden, and the Soviet Union. Tõnisson seems to have been aware of where the boundary lay, which meant that, except for a brief stint in prison in 1908 and transient exile in 1918, he could continue his publishing and political activities. Ironically enough, it was his native country that put a gag on him after the coup d'état organized by Konstantin Päts in 1934.

The history of the first Estonian republic has sometimes been reduced to a constant duel between Konstantin Päts and Jaan Tõnisson, who each held the post of prime minister several times in their lifetimes.

Tuomioja's picture is more varied, but he also keeps one eye steadily on Päts in his detailed presentation of Tõnisson and the rather complicated Estonia of the 1910s and 1920s. It is perhaps to be expected that parliamentarian Tuomioja's picture of the pragmatist and subsequent dictator Päts does not exude the same warmth as his picture of Tõnisson, the politician of ideas. Nevertheless, Tuomioja does not gloss over the fact that Tõnisson could also make dubious political alliances and he shows that the two men, despite everything, could work together when they had to. Tõnisson even supported Päts's policies for a while after the 1934 coup d'état, in response to extraparlimentary threats, but became increasingly critical as time went on. Jaak Valge and Magnus Ilmjärv's hotly debated findings on Päts's financial affairs and connections with the Soviet Union are reported in detail.

THE SECOND HALF of the work's title highlights the core issue of Estonian independence. Tõnisson was in exile when Estonia declared its independence on February 24, 1918, and actively sought Finnish, Swedish, and British support for his country's independence. Germany (and the neighboring country of Latvia) remained anathema to Anglophile Tõnisson, who was unable to do much to fend off the German threat in the latter half of the 1930s. It was, in his view, greater than the Soviet threat. Tuomioja writes in detail about Tõnisson's attempts, starting at the end of 1938, to gain Soviet support and protection for Estonia, against Germany. The unofficial meetings with Soviet representatives toward that end, including those held at Hella Wuolijoki's home in Finland, remained overtures that lost all meaning after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of August 1939. The personal consequences of the pact for Estonia and Tõnisson are recounted in a section that makes for painful reading. Jaan Tõnisson was executed by the Soviet NKVD around the first of July, 1941.

Who, then, was this exceptional man, who during a long political career lived to see his domestic policy crash in late 1933/early 1934 and his essentially solitary foreign policy efforts amount to nothing in 1939? In one section, Erkki Tuomioja has drawn a picture of him around 1910 during the phase when he came to be called "Estonia's uncrowned king". The portrait captures Tartu resident Tõnisson at a turning point when his status as the sole architect of the Estonian paradigm had begun to be challenged by younger cultural circles, socialists, and women's rights activists, often from the growing industrial city of Tallinn, which had begun to take over the role of Estonia's leading city. It goes without saying that Tõnisson, purely for tactical reasons, was forced to adjust his opinions in many respects in order to get them in line with the demands of the times.

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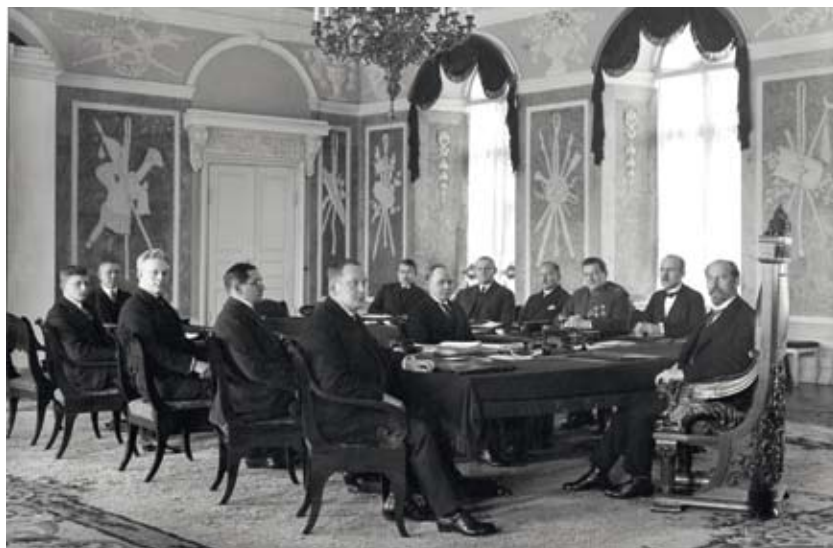
1938 to make it easier to adopt an Estonian surname, Tõnisson opposed the bill in the Riigikogu and did not approve of the pressure he thought had been brought to bear in drafting the bill.³

TÕNISSON AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Tõnisson's strict Protestant morals emphasizing sobriety, decency, and frugality came to the fore on issues concerning the family and gender roles. The more conservative elements in Tõnisson's character were evident in his attitudes towards women and women's rights. Although his national enlightenment program included promoting the education of girls, and although he did take the initiative to establish the first Estonian language grammar school in 1906, it was far from his intention to bring women into the workforce. In his education policy, the purpose of the education of women was expressly to support the role of women at home in bringing up children and strengthening the national spirit. He would have preferred women's suffrage not to have been included in Eduerakond's manifesto but remained in the minority. Two women, Aino Kallas and Marie Reiman, were elected to the party's first governing body. However, it was to be decades before Estonia's women started to play a role in politics that was in any way significant.

The first period of awakening of the Estonian women's movement began around 1904–1905 and was clearly connected to the revolutionary movement of the time. This was also the case across Russia as a whole, where the modern women's movement was organized during this period, and where in bourgeois circles it was greeted with the same suspicion as it was in Estonia.

AT THAT TIME, FURTHERING women's rights was not a matter of course even for liberals. At the first congress of the Russian Kadet party, held just before the founding of Eduerakond, the only significant item on which a vote was taken was the demand for women's suf-



The Estonian government with Tõnisson at its head. 1927.



Jaan Tõnisson with his wife and children. 1920.

frage. The party's undisputed leader, Pavel Milyukov, had opposed including the item because it was thought that it might antagonize peasant voters; however, following the intervention of his wife, Anna Milyukova, who had been involved in founding the Russian women's rights movement earlier that spring, and after a close vote, the demand was included in the manifesto. Milyukov tried to water down this commitment to women's rights at a subsequent party conference, but once more suffered an equally narrow defeat.⁴

In a letter to her friend Ilona Jalava in April 1904, Aino Kallas judged that the position of women in Estonia was the same as it had been in Finland 30 years earlier. At about this time, however, she also wrote in her diary the optimistic view that women were now awakening, which would have a positive impact on the development of the whole of Estonia between the "Scylla of Germanness and the Charybdis of Russianness". By the end of the year Kallas was writing in a letter to Jalava that "here otherwise the women question is the most burning issue, it is discussed everywhere, in private families, in groups, in general everywhere that people come together. Heated confrontations and collisions often occur. King Jaan I is against it and for that reason many are hesitant".⁵ Estonia's first women's organization, Edasi, was founded in Tartu in March 1905.

THE MOST HEATED confrontations lay ahead. They culminated in a nine-part series of leading articles published in spring 1905 on the front page of Tõnisson's newspaper *Postimees*. Although these were written anonymously, as was the custom of the paper, it was well known that they were penned by Tõnisson himself – under the heading "Vaba armastus" (Free love) – and they led to what was known as the "pruuniseelikud" scandal.

"Pruuniseelikud" refers to the brown skirts that the students of the Tartu girls' grammar school wore as their school uniform. New, more liberal, nationalist, and even revolutionary winds were blowing through the school of Tartu at the time. Ella Murrik, who left the grammar school in 1904, was one of the leading lights. In December 1902, she had run into trouble for organizing a patriotic evening event in honor of Lydia

Koidula together with Gustav Suits, a former student of one of the town's boys' grammar schools. This was a dangerous enterprise in the eyes of the Russian authorities. Suits was expelled and Ella Murrik was interrogated for a whole day, but thanks to the intervention of Hugo Treffner and Tõnisson, suffered no worse consequences.⁶

Radicalism among the girls' grammar school students continued, followed by new kinds of behavior and cultural liberalism. Many girls had their hair bobbed and identified with the liberal ideas of the Noor-Eesti (Young Estonia) group from which Tõnisson disassociated himself. Finally, when a suspicion started to spread that, in the presence of the opposite sex, the girls' behavior had taken on attributes viewed as unhealthy, they lost the sympathy of Tõnisson and the *Postimees* newspaper. It was this suspicion that was the source of Tõnisson's series of articles on free love, which made serious accusations about the immoral behavior of the schoolgirls. "It has happened that the girls have employed particularly specific 'freedoms' by the railway lines with youths of foreign origin – recently schoolgirls consorted at a station with strange boys and when the lights were extinguished the bestial young people exercised 'freedom' indeed under cover of darkness. It is also said that young girls are hardened before their time and tales are told of 'artificial incidents' and so on."

These coy circumlocutions were well understood to mean pregnancy and abortion, the consequence of associating with Russian students.⁷

TÕNISSON CONSIDERED such moral laxity and increased sexual urges to be caused by a lack of exercise and excessive meat in the diet. He did not see the same laxity in the young English students who practiced healthy and athletic habits. *Postimees'* local social democratic competitor, *Uudised*, took up the cudgels in defending the young people against these extreme accusations, which did not appear to have any basis in fact. However, the former did not retract the accusations but instead colorfully accused its competitor of being a "free love bureau".

Postimees also immediately followed up the campaign with a four-part series of articles entitled "We and the womenfolk", which pointed out, among

other things, that the female skull was an impediment to attaining a higher level of civilization because its capacity was smaller and its structure different from that of the opposite sex and that, if, by obtaining education, some women who aimed higher did manage to achieve material and spiritual benefits, "it must, however, be asked whether the damage to health caused is greater than the benefits gained [...] It must also be asked whether interest in society and the agitated intellectual activity that derives from it has such a detrimental effect on women that they are no longer sufficiently fit for motherhood". Thus, "Let marriage remain the consummate vocation of womankind." The greatest safeguard and deterrent put forward by the writer was that "women going to work flies in the face of motherhood", describing how for this reason even a pregnant woman would be rendered completely financially independent in a manner which would leave the upbringing of children to the whims of fate.⁸

Uudised and many of the students' parents demanded that Tõnisson produce evidence to support his writings slanderous the students. Tõnisson refused to give in although he could not produce any evidence in support of his insinuations. But as the polemics continued he asserted without any foundation that many of the people who had protested against his writings in *Uudised* had had their names published without their consent and had withdrawn them, he was finally forced to recant his accusations and apologize.⁹

The articles in *Postimees* attracted attention outside Tartu and even outside Estonia. The St. Petersburg newspaper *Rus* mocked Tõnisson, and when progressive reporters met at a national conference in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1905, he was not invited. Tõnisson even went deliberately to St. Petersburg to ask for an invitation, at which point he was told that due to the "pruuniseelikud" scandal he was not included among the group of liberal reporters. This did not persuade Tõnisson to change his mind. In February of the following year, he still wanted to state in his newspaper that women were less intelligent than men because their heads were smaller.¹⁰

AFTER THIS, HOWEVER, Tõnisson appears, if not to have revised his opinions about women's participation in society, at least to have restrained most of his

polemics. No separate debate on women's suffrage took place in Estonia after 1918, when it was achieved, in line with the trend elsewhere in Europe. Women's participation in public life in Estonia remained more marginal and was clearly less than that seen in Finland during the same period. Furthermore, Estonian family law accorded women a weaker status than that of men.

Hot-headed by nature, in debates Tõnisson could also insult women, as is said to have happened at the founding conference of the Rahvaerakond group. When the group discussed family law he attempted to silence his fellow group member, and the key leader of the Estonian women's movement, Marie Reisik, who had spoken on the subject, by saying that a person who has not given birth to children should not become involved in the matter. Reisik, who had twice been forced to abort a baby for medical reasons, silenced Tõnisson, however, by stating that "to judge by how much and with what great authority you speak on the subject, anyone would think you had given birth to 12 children". Nevertheless, in 1937, on the 50th birthday of Reisik, known as Estonia's first feminist, Tõnisson wrote about her with great appreciation emphasizing – and elaborating on his own role – that the Rahvaerakond party he led could not, of course, have remained watching from the sidelines while the rising women's movement demanded women's rights.¹¹

Irrespective of his conservative views on women, Tõnisson did not feel uncomfortable with strong and independent women themselves, as is borne out by his friendships with Aino Kallas and Hella Wuolijoki, as well as his marriage to Hilda Lõhmus in 1910. In fact, marriage and the growing family of five children that followed over the years had a calming effect on him. Close friends considered that the marriage had released Tõnisson from the inner stress that had plagued and tormented him since his first engagement had been broken off, driving him to constant work and occasionally to fervent rhetorical exaggeration.

TÕNISSEON'S IDEOLOGY ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

If one were to seek to define Tõnisson's political profile by placing him in the Finnish political spectrum of his day, he would without a doubt be a Finnish Party man. Although it is not known whether Tõnisson was ever particularly familiar with the philosophy and political theory of J. V. Snellman – he never referred to it – points of contact with Snellman's teachings can be seen in his many policies emphasizing national politics and education. In Finland, he has sometimes also been termed the Snellman of Estonia. Nationality and language policy, a peasant moral conservatism, a moderate supporter of land reform, a cautious attitude to the Russian governing power, rejection of collaboration with radicals and the left, a major emphasis on popular education, cooperation and developing national enterprise, and an emphasis on peasant values are all similar elements to those seen among the Suometar group in Finland. They also distinguished Tõnisson from the left wing of the Young Finland group and the economic liberalism of the right wing of the same movement. Another trait shared with the Finnish Party was a firmly held Christianity, although

it was never as pious or politically intrusive as it was for many Finnish Party candidates. Tõnisson often made a clear distinction between faith and church.

HOWEVER, THE RADICAL liberalism, let alone free thinking, around which cultural circles gathered in the Finland of the Young Finns, was something Tõnisson could not understand. He viewed the Noor-Eesti (Young Estonia) literary group with suspicion and when Anton Hansen Tammsaare published *Noored Hinged* [Young souls], thought of as a daring work, in 1909, he condemned it vehemently at the meeting of the Estonian Literary Society, Eesti Kirjanduse Selts.¹²

The agrarian group Maalaisliitto, which in Finland became organized as a party only prior to the first Eduskunta elections in 1906, had not been a Finnish home for Tõnisson's ideas before that point, nor was it afterwards. Judging by appearances, Tõnisson and Maalaisliitto founder Santeri Alkio did seem similar, a point to which at least one of their contemporaries, Väinö Tanner, drew attention, on one occasion stating that Tõnisson was "the more sophisticated looking".¹³ They were also like-minded in many of their social opinions, and in their commitment to temperance, but Alkio's background lay in the Young Finland movement and he was also sympathetic towards the workers' movement. Tõnisson was a politician who promoted peasant values and voiced the concerns of rural areas and farmers, but the interest group emphasis that characterized the Finnish Maalaisliitto was very alien to him, which is why he also opposed the equivalent agrarian party Maaliit/Pöllumeestekogua later founded in Estonia.

BEFORE THE FIRST World War Tõnisson held firm opinions and opposed all left-wing groups with striking vehemence. Both the Teataja group and the social revolutionaries were the subject of his disapprobation, as, quite separately, were all social democrats. The fact that before the October Revolution he did not make any particular distinction between the two wings of the Russian Social Democratic Party, which split in 1903, is not unusual in itself as the true nature and extent of the split was not even known by all party members at the time.

Tõnisson's criticism was directed at those procedures and manifesto issues on which the views of Eduerakond and the left differed, and his criticism of the left also had a strong moral pathos to it. Tõnisson challenged the worldview of the social democrats and attacked Karl Marx's ideas and materialistic worldview. In 1905 he also published a separate flyer entitled *Mis Sotsiaaldemokraatiast Arvata* [What social democrats value], in which he saw social democrats as damaging and dangerous enemies of the people who wanted to make the workers "dependents of the state". His criticism of the left was relentless in the days of the first Duma and deviated from the line of the Kadets at the time, who sought to collaborate with all the left-wing groups.

This also attracted the attention of competitors on the left. They underlined the fact that Tõnisson's party was clearly located to the right of the Kadets and cited the fact that in Tallinn "the real Kadets" were already leaving the party. True party disintegration did not take place, however, but Eduerakond's poor success in Tallinn also influenced Tõnisson's nega-

tive view of the idea of joining forces with left-wing groups, whether in a coalition or otherwise. All in all, Tõnisson's uncompromising criticism of the left led representatives of the left in turn to evaluate Tõnisson with equal vehemence, regularly accusing him of being "reactionary". ✖

Note: This article is an extract from Erkki Tuomioja's recent biography.

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NEW MEANING

TO URBAN SPACE

BY BEATE FELDMANN EELLEND

A **YOUTUBE VIDEO** shows young men in Tallinn practicing something called *parkour*. They climb, jump, balance, run, roll, and swing over, under, on, and along walls, ladders, stairs, and ledges on the medieval city wall in the Old Town of Tallinn and in the new developments near the docks. A few minutes into the clip, they have reached Linnahall, a sprawling arts and culture center built in 1980. The video from the spring of 2009 shows a grand but dilapidated building where the young men sprint across the crumbling slabs on the vast entry level one floor up. They swing up onto the graffiti-covered walls and throw themselves down on ledges where grass and small shrubs have pushed through the concrete. The Baltic Sea can be seen in the background, a constantly present backdrop. The video ends with a panorama of the Tallinn urban space, with the men in the foreground, running across the flat, open concrete roof of Linnahall.¹



The urban landscape is a *mélange* of spaces used in diverse ways. In the “spaces in-between” that exist within regulated, private spaces, public and open spaces are shaped by definitions and expectations that are less exclusive and more mobile.² There is also greater access and freedom to engage in alternative activities here. What these interstitial spaces in-between are and how they are understood is not cast in stone, of course: they are mutable, as a result of how people use the spaces and how these human actions inform the identity of the places. These activities are often entirely different from the intended use, but sometimes occur in parallel with the originally intended practices. Other places perhaps no longer have a usable function and maybe never did – spaces like shut-down bomb shelters, abandoned factories, or the gaps in traffic circles. All of these are examples of what can be termed *loose space*.³

IN PREPARATION FOR the sailing and water sports competitions during the 1980 summer Olympics in Moscow, the Linnahall concert and sports hall was built down by the Port of Tallinn, just outside the medieval city wall. With a concert hall seating 4,600, an ice rink with room for 3,000 spectators, an exhibition and dance hall, a bowling alley, and several cafés, Linnahall was the biggest and most admired Olympic venue built that year.⁴

Patios, stairs, and walking paths were constructed for visitors on the rooftop of several hundred square meters. The post-Olympiad future looked bright for the expansive three-story palace in Tallinn with its myriad of possibilities for cultural events. But even though Linnahall had garnered a great deal of media attention and won several Soviet architecture prizes in the 1980s, local artists and architects were not nearly as enchanted with the building. It was described as a foreign monument with a strong Soviet feel and was regarded with contempt rather than pride.⁵

Over the next ten years, until Estonia regained its independence in connection with the fall of the Soviet Union, Linnahall was the main youth and cultural center in Tallinn. But even as the center’s activities were revitalized with a seaplane pier for trips to and from Helsinki, a helicopter pad, a nightclub, and an unofficial outdoor kiddie pool, the original building began to deteriorate. The need for renovation worsened while the local economy sagged. The last concert was held in Linnahall in 2009, after which the building was closed to the public. The city of Tallinn had by then tried repeatedly to sell Linnahall to cover the city’s large budget deficit. But the huge building that imbues the urban landscape with memories of the Soviet area is hard to sell. Since potential buyers have been mainly interested in gaining access to the land Linnahall stands on, and

Even modern societies create ruins. Tourists get a very close view.

not to the building, which was put on the cultural heritage list in 1992, it has so far been impossible to finalize a deal. Intensive media campaigns have been run by potential buyers aimed at persuading the people of Tallinn that, due to its controversial history, Linnahall will be torn down sooner or later anyway and that the building, a place claimed to be only for the elite of the Communist Party, no longer serves a function. The campaigns have not gained traction among the citizens of the city. On the contrary, there has been a swell of local criticism against the idea of tearing down the building as a Soviet monument and replacing it with luxury homes with private docks where wealthy residents can moor their yachts. For many of the inhabitants of Tallinn, Linnahall is an important part of the city's past and is seen as a meaningful contrast to the glass and metal high-rises that have rapidly transformed the cityscape a couple of decades after the fall of the Soviet Union. The marked urban transformation of Tallinn in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is characterized by unswerving focus on retail and office buildings. Despite its former character as a Soviet monument, Linnahall may be perceived as an important part of Tallinn's history. Thousands of city residents have attended concerts and other cultural events here that have shaped their personal memories of everyday life in the Soviet Republic of Estonia. These memories of the everyday are not easily erased by demolishing the physical representations of the epoch.⁶

THE PRACTICE OF LOOSENING

Parkour is an urban pastime that started in a suburb of Paris in the 1990s. The term is derived from the expression *parcours du combattant*, which means obstacle course. The object of the activity is to traverse all physical obstacles in the urban landscape as smoothly and quickly and in the most controlled manner possible.⁷

Parkour, as you may have realized, is really all about space. Or, rather, the use of space. Whether you are slicing through it at pace, filling it with motion-art, sizing it up for the upcoming vault [...] it's all space. Never thought about this? Well, do.⁸

Parkour is not about obliterating or defacing the urban space, it's about liberating and reclaiming it. Traceurs – practitioners of parkour – describe the activity as a sport in which vandalism and destruction have no place. With their activities, they challenge the repetitive and standardized functions of the city and reinterpret the urban space from economically productive to creatively non-productive. With this form of unregulated urban activity, they both participate in and criticize the shaping of the urban community.⁹ Using a determined physical topography to enable new and distinctive ways of using the space is of central importance to traceurs.

For a space to be loosened from its original function, the people themselves must discover, acknowledge, and use the potentialities of the space for their own purposes, and thus also be willing to accept the risks associated with the use. Opportunities to use spaces for

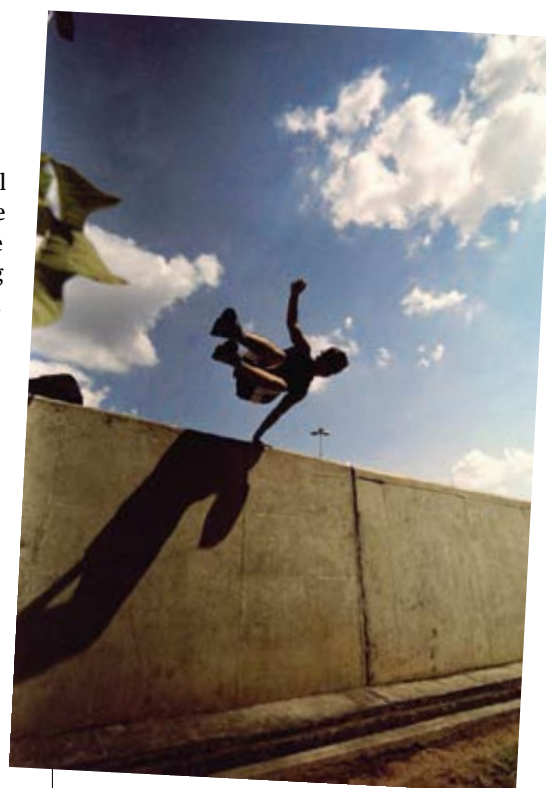


PHOTO: ALEXANDRE FERREIRA/CREATIVECOMMONS.ORG

something other than that for which they were originally intended to be used may be reduced through official restrictions, such as limiting or banning opportunities to hang, climb, or sell merchandise in certain spaces. Some spaces are by definition looser than others, but it is people's activities that loosen them. The activities are neither productive nor reproductive and do not involve consumption. Instead, they occur in people's spare time, as entertainment, in the form of social encounters, as cultural self-realization, or as expressions of political action. Such practices are often outside the formal economy and arise without official sanction or any assurances of continuity or permanence from public authorities or landowners.¹⁰

THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre facilitates an understanding of how Linnahall was reshaped materially and symbolically. Lefebvre believes that spaces in the urban landscape should not be understood as isolated from one another, even though they are physically and socially separated. If one instead sees them as mutually linked and interrelated, it becomes apparent how these spaces are filled with different meanings and values and how they function as arenas for social actions. Lefebvre's spatial theory is particularly useful not simply because it lays bare perceptions and interpretations of space. It also highlights the life that is lived in the spaces, and it is only then that it becomes possible to see how spaces are shaped in the exchange between the symbolic and the material.¹¹ In the analysis of Linnahall's meanings and values in the city, the linkages between time and space become clear. This kind of relational understanding of time and space puts emphasis on the political content of social actions. By understanding changes and transformations in time and space, one can explore the political terms for the concrete historical and geographical preconditions within which human actions become manifest.

BETWEEN RISK AND POTENTIAL

Linnahall is a space that has not been used for its intended purpose for a long time. It can be characterized

as an urban landscape in waiting, but we have seen that this waiting is not passive. While negotiations and controversies about the future of Linnahall continue, people, not only traceurs but also beer-drinking youths and lovers, are mounting an opposition to the visions of investors and planners of remaking the space into an attractive enclave for the affluent. Linnahall is only one of the breathing spaces of city life that offers potential for exploration and discovery, for the unexpected, the unregulated, the spontaneous, and the risky. Even though Linnahall has been blocked off and is falling into disrepair, the building is anything but forgotten and abandoned. When the traceurs discover, acknowledge, and use Linnahall's potentialities for their own purposes, and are thus ready to take on the potential risks this involves, they are loosening the space from its planned uses.

LARGE PARTS OF the urban landscape in Tallinn have been reshaped since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Estonia. Linnahall is only one of the spaces that major structural transformations have made different, since they do not quite fit into visions of the future. In 2009, when Linnahall was finally closed to the public, there was intense debate in the media about the sale of the building. The refurbishment and transformation of the building became even more urgent when Tallinn was named the Cultural Capital of Europe for 2011. Promises were given that the renovation and renewal of Linnahall would be ready by the inauguration of Tallinn's year as Cultural Capital, but no such exterior signs were evident as the New Year of 2011 was rung in. ✕

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Preservation consists in active steps. Inactivity leads to devastation.

THE BALTIC BERLUSCONI

RECOVERY TAKES PLACE IN SILENCE

Since last year, Latvia has quietly been graduating from its IMF program. After a fall in GDP of 25 percent and two and a half years of hard budget slashing, Latvia's economy is growing again.

In this moment of hope, the country is suddenly thrown into political turmoil.

Corruption has grown out of hand, and the Latvian president has decided that enough is enough. On May 28, Valdis Zatlers dismissed the parliament and asked for new elections, accusing the MPs of representing special interests rather than the people.

After rule of law had been compromised in several votes, the last straw was a decision by Parliament to block an anti-corruption investigation against a wealthy and influential MP, a so-called oligarch. President Zatlers moved swiftly, almost shocking the nation, a few days before he was up for reelection by the very parliament he decided to dismiss.

The president's decision has to be confirmed in a referendum (July 23), and so the distrusted MPs used this respite to get back at Zatlers. On June 2, he was voted out of office, and replaced by parliamentarian Andris Berzins, a wealthy former head of Latvia's Unibanka, now SEB.

The president-elect, who will take over on July 8, is a member of the Greens and Farmers Union, a party alliance under the heavy influence of another oligarch, Aivars Lembergs. Behind the scenes, it is Lembergs who has been pulling the strings in Latvia's power struggle lately. Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis has become number two, with limited maneuvering room. And this was the deepest reason for president Zatlers to move for new elections.

Aivars Lembergs is the mayor of Ventspils, with a seemingly eternal smile on his face, and on the surface a modest man. His family is the richest in Latvia. He has been on trial since 2009, accused of bribery, money laundering, and tax evasion. He is said to be part of shady privatization schemes, secretly controlling oil-transit business and hiding away hundreds of millions of euros in offshore tax havens like Switzerland, Luxembourg, the Bahamas, and the Antilles.

But regardless of the accusations, Lembergs is one



Aivars Lembergs.

of the most popular politicians in Latvia.

Political scientist Nils Muiznieks at the University of Latvia: "The criminal cases against Lembergs have not borne any fruit and he is immune to the stigma of being under criminal investigation – voters don't care. Within the coalition, he has the power to block appointments he does not like".

Valts Kalnins, also a political scientist and senior researcher at the leading think tank Providus, goes a step further. "Lembergs is the most influential single individual on the political scene. He holds the most power in the government. Dombrovskis may come in as number two", says Kalnins.

Yet Aivars Lembergs is not even in the government. His formal power is limited to the well-kept port city Ventspils on the Baltic shore, where 88 percent of the local population approves of his work, according to a recent survey. Lembergs's local party For Latvia and Ventspils is one of four groups in the Greens and Farmers Union (ZZS), junior partner in Prime Minister Dombrovskis's government coalition. But Lembergs holds the upper hand in ZZS – and in the government.

Dombrovskis's center-right alliance Unity won the election last October on an anti-corruption platform. But Unity's cooperation with ZZS has limited the prime minister. "The most direct impact is the inability to fight corruption", says Valts Kalnins.

Lolita Cigane is Unity's most profiled anti-corruption parliamentarian and a former colleague of Kalnins. She confirms what the critics are saying. "Unity and ZZS have had divergent voting patterns in such crucial decisions as the election of the new ombudsman, the election of a High Court judge, the criminalization of illegal political party financing, and other decisions."

On these occasions the coalition partner ZZS has voted with the opposition, making it difficult for Unity to fulfill the election promises, admits Lolita Cigane.

Latvian unemployment is still high, tax evasion is growing, and Latvians are emigrating and the population is thus shrinking. In recent polling, Dombrovskis's party alliance was only in third place, and the prospect of new elections is worrying. The prime minister seems to lack the ability to manifest a clear vision

beyond the IMF project of budget consolidation, and his so-called Unity alliance is almost as fragmented as the nation.

"It is our fragmentation that allows skillful guys like Lembergs to get their share, and at the moment his is bigger than it deserves to be", notes Inese Voika, chairperson of Delna, the Latvian chapter of the anti-corruption organization Transparency International. "Society is in transition. One third values the rule of law and wants clean politics. One third supports Lembergs, the 'survival Latvians', and one third is either afraid of Russians or holds on to the feeling of being neglected as Russians."

Lembergs's popularity comes with populist rhetoric. Lembergs labeled as blackmail the strict conditions of the IMF, the EU, Sweden, and others for 7.5 billion euros in loans in order to avoid state bankruptcy. Claiming that foreign lenders determined economic policy, social policy and health policy, Lembergs gave voice to a bitterness felt by many Latvians.

"We are being lied to", he claimed in an interview I conducted with him.

"Talks are secret, people are not informed. This is similar to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1939 between Hitler and Stalin."

Some foreigners laughed. The politicians accused shook their heads. But many poor people who were made poorer by draconian budget cuts nodded in agreement. In their vulnerable hour, Lembergs managed to strike a most impressive minor chord with them.

"Lembergs is an excellent demagogue. He is like Berlusconi. After TV debates I heard people reminding themselves: Come on, be careful – don't buy this stuff!" says Valts Kalnins at Providus.

The comparison with Berlusconi does not stop at

IN LEMBERGS'S WORDS, THE MONEY LENDING TO LATVIA WAS NEOCOLONIALISM.

Populism is a commodity on the political market. It needs its financiers.



demagoguery. Lembergs is the richest and mightiest politician in his country. He is on trial for corruption, he is surrounded by women, he controls a large share of the media, and he is the financier behind his city's victorious soccer team.

In Lembergs's words, the moneylending to Latvia was neocolonialism, aimed at saving the Swedish banks in Latvia at the expense of the poor people, who took the brunt of the budget cuts.

"The state and the government serve the financial oligarchy, and the rich countries exploit the poor countries, first by brain drain and then by drafting aborigines from these colonial countries to do the dirtiest jobs and hard manual labor", he said in my interview with him.

This self-proclaimed

paladin of the poor is Latvia's foremost oligarch. His earnings have been officially declared to be from around 10 million euros in 2005 to 324,000 euros last year, in a country where the average salary has remained around 500 euros a month. Confronted with the accusations of massive fraud and economic crime, Lembergs brushes them aside as Silvio Berlusconi does: they have no basis in fact, and they are simply the work of sinister political enemies, orchestrated by George Soros, trying to destroy an innocent man.

"I have been acquitted in two trials, and I will pass the rest also", he told me.

Inese Voika from Transparency points to the fact that many voters who support Lembergs's party ZZS don't see a link between the money he has amassed and the poverty haunting part of Latvian society:

and Parliament for decisions and laws that could benefit his business.

Business rivals have now taken the legal battle against Lembergs to the High Court in London. A suit has been filed against Lembergs to compensate for huge losses caused to the Latvian Shipping Company, when Lembergs and another oligarch, Andris Skele, agreed on the privatization of the company.

The press in Latvia has a huge task as watchdog. But since the Swedish Bonnier Group sold Latvia's main daily *Diena* to undisclosed owners two years ago, the media landscape has become more fragmented. Of the three main dailies published in Latvia, *Diena* is now controlled by a business associate of the controversial politician and oligarch Ainars Slesers, *Neatkarīga Rita Avize* is popularly known as "Lembergs Times", and *Latvijas Avize* is owned by Lembergs's opponents.

Inese Voika: "The media world was shaken by Bonnier's sale of *Diena*. On the other hand, TV NET was bought by Schibsted, a Norwegian media conglomerate. The Web portal Delfi is also independent, and so are public radio and TV."

The sale of *Diena* prompted several high-profile journalists to leave the paper. One result was the birth of a new quality magazine, *IR*. Another was the launching of the investigative Web portal *pietiek.com*. The latter has taken on everyone in the establishment and broken many stories on corruption.

KNAB, the anti-corruption bureau, was meant to be a beacon of light in Latvia's murky political waters. But KNAB has also become a scene of conflict, with politicians vying for control. In the midst of internal turmoil though, the bureau managed to pull itself

"They don't have a realistic view. They praise the city of Ventspils, which looks nice, and say that Latvia would be like Ventspils under Lembergs's rule.

"Another group of those voting for ZZS is more rational, but also cynical, because they know that Lembergs is corrupt. But since they believe in two kinds of politics, 'stealing and sharing' and 'stealing and not sharing', they support Lembergs because he also shares."

Latvia's version of Wikileaks, the investigative portal *pietiek.com* (*pietiek* = enough), has published a great number of documents from the trial against Lembergs. These have proved many years of suspicions to be true. Lembergs has provided Latvian politicians with generous "stipends", buying their support in government

together in late May, organizing 42 raids, mostly at businesses connected to the country's three powerful oligarchs. Despite Parliament's refusal to allow one of the searches, criminal proceedings have been launched on charges of money-laundering, bribery, tax evasion, abuse of authority, and more.

Corruption has worsened in Latvia with the economic crisis. Between 2008 and 2010, the country fell from 5.0 to 4.3 in Transparency's Corruption Perceptions Index (where 10 is very clean and 0 is highly corrupt). Latvia is number 23 among EU members and trails even Turkey. At the top of the list is Denmark, with an index of 9.3 points.

Inese Voika explains: "When GDP drops, officials have fewer resources, and the temptation of abuse of office grows. Also, people don't want to risk their income for the sake of principles, like fighting for a cleaner government."

A recent report from the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga shows that the shadow economy in Latvia was 38.1 percent of GDP in 2010, an increase from the previous year.

Tax evasion is widespread and has increased with the economic crisis. Corruption is very difficult to root out in the health sector and among lower-level public officials. The police force and the border guards are vulnerable to temptations to engage in corrupt acts, even more so after having taken hard blows because of the budget cuts during the crisis. At risk are also local government officials, in particular those involved with land transactions and building permits.

The trial of Aivars Lembergs is seen as a test of the capacity of Latvia's judiciary to fight corruption.

Inese Voika voices hope that the suit filed in London will boost chances for a conviction of Lembergs: "It may prove to be his last battle."

Another battle is now being fought on political ground. With new parliament elections expected in September, Prime Minister Dombrovskis Unity alliance is disunited. An end to corrupt oligarch power would mean that Unity has to govern with the social-democratic party Harmony Center, dominated by ethnic Russians. A strong nationalist wing, led by foreign minister Girts Valdis Kristovskis, fears that eventuality. "Right now it would paralyze government work", says Kristovskis.

His opponents call for the most nationalist politicians to leave Unity, making cooperation with Harmony Center possible. "Taking Harmony Center into the government would have a stabilizing effect", says defense minister Artis Pabriks.

According to the outgoing president's adviser, Roberts Kilis, Harmony Center's participation in government is even a question of Latvia's security. "The ethnic divide is damaging and threatens the very basis of the state", says Kilis.

Many Latvian politicians fear that Russian speakers in government would be a security risk. Roberts Kilis insists on the opposite view. "The risks are greater with Harmony Center outside than inside the government", he says. ✕

arne bengtsson

foreign correspondent for the Swedish news agency TT



TO SHED LIGHT ON THE COD

**A BALTIC JOURNEY WITH A CAMERA
AND A DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE**

As a child, I could hardly wait for lunch when my mother told me that on Friday we would be having cod with mustard sauce and potatoes. Fifty years later, a film has engendered almost childlike surprise in me at the link between my appetite for this Baltic fish, a fish that at times has been almost eradicated, and strange global developments.

It drives West African fishermen across the Mediterranean to Europe, turns Polish fishermen into petty criminals or drives them to their deaths, and insults the moral sense of well-to-do Swedish fishermen. It turns a friendly student from Umeå in northern Sweden into an uncompromising adversary of established scientists and experienced EU politicians.

FOLKE RYDÉN AND Ryszard Solarz, from Sweden and Poland respectively, investigated the ebb and flow of the cod stocks for the film *For Cod's Sake* (2010; *Alla torskar* in Swedish and *Dorschs Dilemma* in German). In 2006, there had been an urgent warning: environmental organizations demanded a moratorium on all cod fishing, since stocks were threatened with a drastic decline because of overfishing. The EU imposed limited restrictions, and in 2009, the news was good: the cod is back, the stocks are recovering, and all will be well.

The filmmakers asked themselves whether this was in fact the case. For them the cod is the “most important inhabitant of the Baltic”. Together with the herring, it has been the most important source of protein in this small sea for a few thousand years. Rydén and Solarz show pictures of the strange consequences that arise from EU fishing guidelines: for example, cod catches (and cod is the best food fish) are thrown back into the sea by fishermen by the ton only to rot on the ocean floor – “fish that everyone claims they want to protect”, says the commentator. Yet this is what the EU regulations specify must be done when the quota has been reached. Not one fish too many can come on land and into the cooking pot. Yet, they are dead, nevertheless, and thereby lost forever.

The cod reporter, standing erect with hat and microphone in cartoon insertions in the film *The Cod Report*, is very lively. “Will we survive?” he asks, and explains why over the last 60 years his fellow cod have at times been nearly eradicated because of ever-bigger boats and nets. “Only a few of them up there understand that everything is connected with everything else and that we need each other”, the clever cod says with a sigh from the Baltic Sea bed. He explains these connections to us humans with patience and humor. For example, he remarks that strong cod stocks would be good for countering the algae blooms in the summer, which for many of us spoil the fun of swimming in the sea.

The filmmakers take us along with Lo Persson, the Swedish student from Umeå, on a two-year trip to learn about the cod, a trip that takes us to Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Canada. Twenty-six-year-old Lo knew nothing about the cod problem when she started working on a research project at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.

Just as I actually know nothing when I buy cod in the supermarket in Roskilde, the town in Denmark where I live. Year after year, I am amazed that it can be bought so cheaply. Although we keep reading headlines explaining that the stocks are in jeopardy.

THESE HEADLINES ARE PARTICULARLY glaring when Persson begins to uncover the human dealings with cod. Since 2006, environmentalists have been demanding a total moratorium on all fishing. In 2007, the EU fisheries ministers did not immediately accede to this demand, except in the case of Poland because of the illegal fishing that was formerly widespread there.

Yet the small fishermen affected do not keep the moratorium. Rydén and Solarz accompany a young Pole on his small cutter, illegally fishing for cod: “What does it matter whether I or some Dane catches the fish? It’s all business.” He knows that there are hardly any inspections and he sells right in the harbor. “Baltic gold”, remarks Marcin Cholewinski laughing.

The film shows the bizarre EU management of this now rare gold in an impressive way. While the Polish fisherman on his rickety cutter takes a few hundred kilograms of cod out of the sea illegally, Rickard Solander, a Swede, is allowed to take 1.5 tons from the water each week with his extremely modern trawler. His huge net invariably catches eight tons. According to EU rules, he must throw nearly seven tons back into the sea, all dead. “You turn your back and try to think about something else”, he says sadly.

“It’s crazy, but everyone says it’s OK”, Cholewinski says about this dumping. “But when a Polish fisherman catches 300 kilos, all hell breaks loose.” Despite the fishing moratorium, he is going to buy three completely dilapidated old cutters in Sweden – and then not use them. His government pays the cod fishermen a monthly premium of €2,500 for every boat that they do not go out in to fish cod.

Kenneth Bengtsson, another Swede, will get €1 million when he scraps his commercial trawler Nordia af Hörvik. In the 1990s, the EU subsidized a huge expansion of the cod fishing fleet. Because of the severely diminished cod stocks, many of these commercial trawlers are now moving down to the coast of West Africa. And either subsidized by the EU once again, or working illegally, they are now destroying the foundation of food and work in African coastal states.

The dual function of catch quotas: dumping and overfishing.



Doctoral student Lo Persson questions whether cod have really returned to the Baltic.



Fisheries inspection, Poland.



Marcin Cholewinski in front of his boat. He fishes for cod – illegally – which he sells openly on the docks.

Because no indigenous fish is laid on the table for food, the people must kill small wild animals, which have become rare. Fishermen from West Africa who are now out of work are getting into their boats and risking their lives, fleeing to Europe. There they are conveniently labeled “refugees of convenience”. What was it the behatted cod reporter said from the bottom of the Baltic Sea? “Only a few people up there understand that everything is connected with everything else.”

THE FILM IS NOT A simplistic condemnation or a black-and-white portrayal. The viewer learns – together with Persson – the chronology and contradictions of the developments. The long overdue EU resolutions arrived in 2008: fishing quotas for the eastern Baltic were halved and monitoring of illegal catches was intensified. In mid-2009, the media inform us that stocks are greatly increasing: the cod is back; we can catch more once again.

Persson asks: Can we really say that so hastily? She has learned in the meantime that the scientific estimates of stocks are “political compromises”. They only partially include the quantity of dead fish thrown back. Perhaps the cod stocks are much weaker than the levels officially estimated by the International Council for Ocean Research (ICES) each year? What conclusions should we draw from all this uncertainty?

It is officially estimated that seven percent of the catches are thrown back, dead, into the sea. Persson speaks with independent scientists who believe that 30 to 40 percent is a more realistic figure. She has gathered data for Sweden and presents her doubts modestly, but with determination, to Hans Lassen,

the relevant ICES member. “I have only been involved in fisheries for a year. But I think you are misleading people because of a lack of information”, Persson says. Speaking sharply, the ICES expert says, “Nobody gives a damn about somebody sitting in British Columbia and believing you are an expert in the Baltic. You are not credible.”

WHOM CAN I TRUST when buying fish in the supermarket nowadays? In the year that has passed since the appearance of Rydén und Solarz’s film, the cod stocks have continued to improve. Meanwhile the environmental organization WWF also says that consumers can buy cod from the eastern Baltic with a clear conscience. Since April, we also have held the internationally recognized certificate for sustainable fishing from the Marine Stewardship Council.

Dead cod are still thrown into the sea, however, perhaps five times as many as is officially accepted. If this is true, the stock estimates are far too optimistic. The film presents the ominous example of Canada: around Newfoundland, the stocks had also increased greatly again at the beginning of the 1990s. However, the cod then completely disappeared practically overnight.

RYDÉN UND SOLARZ hit the bull’s eye with the choice of Lo Persson as the film’s central figure, learning about the problems of the cod fishery. At the end, she presents her dissertation, full of informed doubts about the scientific mainstream view, and does not let the arrogance of the established scientists throw her. That is the way it is. You have to learn a bit about

problems like this if you want to understand them. But then you can also build on your own opinion.

The film does not conceal its intention to enlighten. The filmmakers use the medium of pictures to appeal to morality. Again and again, we see dead cod being thrown into the sea. That simply has to fill us with indignation. The pitiless hierarchy among the affected fishermen also enrages us. In rich Sweden, the somersaults of fishery politics lead to not-so-pleasant early retirement. In poorer Poland, it turns fishermen into day laborers, homeless people, and wrecks who drink themselves to death. The consequences in poverty-stricken Africa we have already seen.

A little postscript for all those who, like me, would like to eat fish with a clear conscience and enjoy learning more through outstanding documentaries: *Darwin’s Nightmare* (2004), directed by Hubert Sauper, shows what breathtaking global consequences the release of Nile Perch into Lake Victoria is having. This is also a must-see. ✖

thomas borchert

DPA correspondent, contributor to
BW II:4 with a review of the movie *Into Eternity*

The systematic overestimation of the stocks. Like the inevitable hierarchy among those cast out.



THE HOLOCAUST AND POLAND

FROM REPRESSED MEMORIES AND FEAR TO AN OPEN SOCIETY

BY **PETER JOHNSON** ILLUSTRATION **MOA FRANZÉN**

The Holocaust was a European phenomenon. Geographically, it began in Eastern Europe. The Jews of Vilnius, numbering 50,000 to 70,000, met their death with a shot to the head in Paneriai (Ponary), and in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine; 33,771 Jews were executed at Babi Yar in 1941.

The following year the Holocaust was transformed into industrialized murder in death camp gas chambers located on occupied Polish territory. This geographic planning was based purely on logistics. Most of the Jews to be exterminated lived in Eastern Europe, and no other country in Europe had a Jewish population as large as Poland's. According to British historian Martin Gilbert's calculations, a total of 7.8 million Jews lived in the nineteen countries that Hitler occupied. More than forty percent of them, or 3.2 mil-

lion, lived in Poland. Six million European Jews lost their lives during the Holocaust. At most, ten percent of Polish Jews survived, mainly because they either fled to the Soviet Union or had been taken captive by the coercive Soviet machine. It is likely that only 40,000–50,000 Jews survived the war within Poland's borders. In the country's capital, thirty percent of the population was Jewish and in several smaller cities in the eastern parts of the country the population was 50, 60, and sometimes more than 70 percent Jewish. Thus, for three years the Polish nation became Europe's closest witness to the Nazi Holocaust of European Jews. Meanwhile, a significant share of the Polish people bore their own anti-Semitism to this scene in history.

When the war was over and when the cities and

the countryside were emptied of the Jewish population that had, smoothly or otherwise, coexisted for centuries with the Polish people, the time had come to move from the front row seats at the crime scene into the witness stand.

The Holocaust – this European legacy from the darkest years of the twentieth century – played out in all its essentials before the eyes of the people of the Polish nation. “To witness murder on such a scale, at such close range, for such a long time, cannot lead to simple responses”, concludes Michael C. Steinlauf, Jewish-American senior researcher at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, in his book *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Ho-*



locust. “To inquire about Polish reaction to the Holocaust is to investigate the effects of a mass psychic and moral trauma unprecedented in history”, he writes.

It is true that, before the war, anti-Semitism had deep roots in Poland. This anti-Semitism drew nourishment primarily from traditional “Christian” accusations and prejudices. Roman Dmowski, leader of the National Democracy (Endecja) political camp, was overtly anti-Semitic and thus, often supported by spokespersons of the Polish Catholic Church, fomented attacks against the Jewish population by militant right-wing groups. The psychic and moral trauma to which Michael C. Steinlauf refers was emphasized and amplified by the country’s historical conscience.

The Polish people themselves were also among Hitler’s chosen victims. After Europe’s Jews – and Roma – no other nation or people were subjected to such repression and systematic murder as the Polish. An unbelievable 98 percent of Warsaw’s Jews died during the war – a staggering figure. One fourth of the city’s Polish population also died during the war – a significant figure.

I do not believe it is possible to describe, let alone understand, the public debate in postwar Poland about the relationship between Jews and Poles during World War II without taking the following into account: the anti-Semitic baggage, the trauma of witnessing the Holocaust, the repression of the immorality witnessed, perhaps even as an active participant, with respect to the actions of one’s people as well as the associated concentrated suffering of one’s own people.

The debate in the public sphere would certainly have been different during the 66 years since the Second World War if an open public sphere had existed. Instead of the democratic and open society essential for any free discussion and any form of historical investigation and societal catharsis, the Polish nation, like the Ukrainian and Lithuanian nations, but unlike for example the German or French, became entangled after the war in a new straitjacket: communism. The absence of open public debate in Poland, and in several other Eastern European countries, preserved the historical anti-Semitic baggage.

In prewar Poland, there was no paucity of voices in opposition to anti-Semitism. Nor was there a lack of such voices and groups after the war. In three recently published volumes, totaling over three thousand pages, *Przeciw antysemityzmowi* [Against anti-Semitism],

Adam Michnik compiled texts written in Poland between 1936 and 2009. It is hardly surprising that more than one third of the texts were written after the fall of communism in 1989. A new historical and political sphere, an open society in Karl Popper’s sense, would be required for the Polish nation to have a chance to seriously deal with the Holocaust in its own history.

One of the public commentators who for the past decade has asked the Polish people the hardest of all questions, whether parts of the Polish nation were not just bystanders and victims, but also perpetrators, is Polish-American historian Jan Tomasz Gross. In his internationally acclaimed book *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* (2000), Gross showed how in July 1941 some of the local population in the small eastern Polish community of Jedwabne murdered their Jewish neighbors by physically forcing them into a barn and then setting it ablaze. Although the older population was well aware of what had happened during the war, the entire city was at peace with the false inscription on the memorial erected after the war on the site where the barn once stood – an inscription proclaiming that the German Nazis had murdered the local Jewish population on this site. The contents of Jan Tomasz Gross’s book about Jedwabne came as a shock to the Polish nation. The book gave rise to intense and at times rancorous public discussion. Gross’s book was a major turning point in the whole of the Polish postwar debate on the difficult and traumatic relationship the Polish people have to the Holocaust.

In this discussion, Jan Tomasz Gross was supported by a variety of historians, publicists, and politicians, all representing the modern and open Polish society. The government-run Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) conducted a basic historical study. Poland’s president at the time, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, arranged for a replacement of the false inscription by a truthful one in connection with a joint Polish-Jewish ceremony. It is true that the discussion of what happened in Jedwabne challenged the “patriotic defenders” of the good name and memory of the Polish people; it is also true that the president’s words at the memorial service, when he apologized to the Jewish community on behalf of the Polish nation, met with harsh criticism from that part of Polish society. In light of Poland’s history over the past century, this was hardly surprisingly. What would have been surprising is if there had not been any criticism or patriotic-national accusations against Jan Tomasz Gross and his defenders.

Five years later, when Gross published his next book in the United States, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz*, the national-patriotic right was in power in Poland. On April 22, 2006, the Polish Sejm (lower house of the Polish parliament) held a plenary session that in modern Europe could almost be described as a curiosity. The discussion involved a proposal from the right-wing government to introduce a new article (132a) into the Polish penal code stating that “anyone who publicly defames the Polish nation for having participated in organizing or being responsible for communist or Nazi crimes shall be punished

with imprisonment for up to three years”. Polish parliament member Mateusz Piskorski spoke from the podium in the Sejm about Gross’s new book, which had not yet been translated into Polish: “According to statements, this book is scheduled to be released in Poland next year and perhaps the publisher should think through its plan a few times carefully in light of the bill that we are now adopting, before deciding to publish this book here.” The bill, approved by a majority of the Sejm, was a good fit with the new nationalism launched by Jarosław Kaczyński and his party in the context of what was known as a Fourth Polish Republic, as opposed to the Third Republic established after the fall of communism in 1989.

The new rule, which came into force in early 2007, faced severe criticism not just from the collective political opposition in the Sejm, but also from civic ombudsman Janusz Kochanowski, who reported it to the Constitutional Court for judicial review. That review took place on September 19, 2008, after Jarosław Kaczyński’s government had already been forced to resign and new elections had been held for the Sejm that brought the liberal-conservative Civic Platform to power. The Constitutional Court ruled against the article, which was thus removed from the Polish Criminal Code. However, before its removal it had time to serve as grounds for one judicial inquiry, which was conducted by the prosecutor in Kraków and directed against the publisher Znak’s publication of the Polish edition of Jan Tomasz Gross’s book.

The entire incident is remarkable, reflecting how deeply entrenched the tradition symbolized before World War II by Roman Dmowski and his National Democrats is in parts of Polish society. The second and equally important conclusion to be drawn from this sequence of events is that, ultimately, neither the country’s guardians of law and order, nor the majority of Polish voters, could accept any restrictions on the open society created after the fall of communism.

In his book *Fear*, Gross tried to find the deeper causes of Polish anti-Semitism after Auschwitz, based in part on the July 1946 pogrom in Kielce during which 42 Jews were murdered by Polish citizens, and based on the series of other murders and anti-Semitic actions against Jews in Poland during the first postwar years. One underlying cause, Jan Tomasz Gross argued, was the generally passive attitude of the Polish people to the Holocaust – a passivity that, after the war, gave rise to a collective sense of guilt, which in turn was partially repressed by a new hatred of the Jews who had survived the Holocaust. Gross argued that the anti-Semitic actions in postwar Poland were more strongly related to the historical narrative of the war and the relationship to the Holocaust than to the anti-Semitism that existed before the war. This thesis spotlighted the national guilt. *Fear* gave rise to a new discussion in Poland and it is indicative of the evolution in the public discussion over the past two decades that the tone was not as rancorous as it was five years earlier when Jan Tomasz Gross’s book about the murder in Jedwabne was published.

In a monograph, *Od Shoah do Strachu: Spory o polsko-żydowską przeszłość i pamięć w debatach publicznych* [From Shoah to Fear: Disputes about the past and the memory of Polish-Jewish relations], Polish

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political scientist Piotr Forecki describes not only the discussions that ensued in Poland in connection with the publication of these two books by Gross; he goes further back in time and explains the debate about the Holocaust and the “adaptation” of history as it relates to the Holocaust throughout the postwar period in Poland.

Professor Marek Kucia at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków has analyzed how the museum at the former Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp has been used and perceived by the Polish public sphere in the postwar period. Kucia’s study is essential in order to understand how the closed communist system during four decades helped to corrupt the picture of what happened during the war. The title of Kucia’s book alludes directly to Emil Durkheim’s theory of how structures and external reality affect the opinions and behavior of the individual.

Auschwitz was first built by the Nazis as a concentration camp located in the old industrial buildings in the Polish city of Oświęcim, which the Germans called Auschwitz. The first prisoners were German criminals and Polish political prisoners. They later came to be the largest group in this camp – Auschwitz I – throughout the war. Auschwitz II – Birkenau – was built on the other side of the railway, three kilometers from Auschwitz I, by the small village of Brzezinka. Unlike Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II was a pure extermination camp, built solely for the systematically industrialized murder of the Jews and Roma of Europe. The Auschwitz complex also included a forced labor camp and about forty satellite camps.

According to today’s historical knowledge, 1,100,000 people lost their lives in Auschwitz–Birkenau, of whom 90 percent – 1,000,000 – were Jews. The number of Poles who didn’t escape with their lives is estimated at 75,000 (7 percent of all those murdered in the Auschwitz complex), along with 21,000 Roma (2 percent of all those murdered), and 15,000 Russian prisoners of war (1.5 percent of all those murdered). Almost 100 percent of Russian POWs sent to Auschwitz–Birkenau were executed. Only ten percent of Jews and Roma survived. The Polish prisoners, who mainly landed in the concentration camp Auschwitz I, had the greatest chance of survival – 50 percent.

For the rest of the world, ever since the end of the war, Auschwitz–Birkenau, along with the Treblinka extermination camp, where almost exclusively Jews were murdered, has been the main symbol of the Holocaust of European Jews. The figures above provide good support for this. The situation in postwar Poland has been different.

One explanation is obviously that 75,000 Poles were murdered or died in Auschwitz and that 150,000 Poles were detained in this concentration camp; almost every fifth Pole in a survey in 1995 responded that at least one person in the family had been a prisoner or died in Auschwitz. The Polish experience stands in stark contrast to the historical memory preserved by the few Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust in Poland: two nations within the same land, the same war, with two diverse memories who were unable to meet together for free discussion until recent decades.

Marek Kucia and Piotr Forecki both describe how the memory of what happened in Auschwitz-Birkenau

during the war was deliberately misrepresented in communist Poland. In this process, the foremost victims were the Polish people. The Holocaust of European Jews, to say nothing of the Roma, was not remarkable in this interpretation of history. The almost three million Jews who met their death in the gas chambers were included in the figures for the total number of Polish citizens who died during the war. “The Holocaust”, writes Piotr Forecki, “was therefore erased from Polish history as a specifically Jewish experience”. The memorials to the horrors of war – including the current symbol for the Holocaust, the Auschwitz–Birkenau concentration and extermination camp – were designed in postwar Poland in such a way that the extermination of the Jews was subordinated to the murder of the Poles. Neither the name nor the words of the legislation that the Sejm adopted when the Auschwitz–Birkenau museum opened in 1947 reflected anything about the extermination of the Jews during the war. The museum was stated to be “the Memorial to the Martyrdom of the Polish and of Other Nations”.

When, as recently as 1967, memorial plaques in twelve languages, including Hebrew, were erected below the ruins of the crematories in the Birkenau extermination camp, the text made no mention of the Jews either. It read: “Four million people suffered and died here at the hands of the Nazi murderers between the years 1940 and 1945.” At the opening ceremony, Poland’s prime minister Józef Cyrankiewicz, himself a former Auschwitz prisoner, gave a speech in which he counted up the many nationalities that had fallen victim in the camp, but the Jews were not mentioned.

The exhibitions inside the Auschwitz museum were designed so that the Jews were mixed in and forgotten by naming the various barracks according to country: the Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, Danish barracks. Marek Kucia notes that the communist regime probably consciously avoided the German name Auschwitz–Birkenau in the official name of the museum, which instead was called Panstwowe Museum Oświęcim–Brzezinka: “This state and national symbol was intended to underscore the Polish [people’s] group identity and was used by the communist powers to legitimize a political status quo.”

Marek Kucia notes how this endeavor by the communist rulers to “nationalize” Auschwitz was reflected in the textbooks and guide books about the camp, which were printed by the millions. The textbooks most commonly referred to those who perished in the camp, with the exception of the Poles, in general terms such as “victims”, “prisoners” or simply “people”. “Not a single Polish textbook from this era states that mainly Jews were murdered at Auschwitz and only in a few of them can it be deduced that the Jews were deported there, and subjected to an annihilation”, says Kucia.

While school trips to Auschwitz were often included in the curriculum during these years, students rarely visited the Birkenau extermination camp. Even though half of all Poles have visited the museum at Auschwitz, by the early 1990s, according to Marek Kucia’s estimates, only one third of visitors to the exhibitions at Auschwitz I had also visited Birkenau.

Against this background it is hardly surprising that

for decades, in the public consciousness in Poland, Auschwitz and what happened there during the war differed from the historical truth. The first sociological study that tried to answer the question of how respondents perceive Auschwitz was carried out in 1995. Only eight percent of respondents said that they primarily associated Auschwitz with the Holocaust of the Jews. Half of the respondents mainly associated the camp with martyrdom of the Polish people, and one fourth with “martyrdom of various other nationalities”.

While it can be understood that Poles who had lost a relative or had a relative who was imprisoned in Auschwitz would make this association, based on the study by Marek Kucia it can be concluded that in this case communist propaganda and falsification of history could become deeply rooted among the Polish people.

It was the late Pope, John Paul II, who, with strong symbolism during his visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau in July 1979, signaled a break with the official rewriting of history when he was at the memorial and first stopped at the plaque with the text in Hebrew, a text that at that time made no mention of the Jewish people: “I pause a while together with you, dear participants at this meeting, before this plaque with the inscription in Hebrew. This inscription stirs the memory of the People whose sons and daughters were destined to total extermination. This People has its origins in Abraham, who is our father in faith. Precisely this People, which received from God the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill’, has experienced in itself to an exceptional degree what killing means. May no one pass this memorial plaque with indifference.”

Fifteen years later, five years after the fall of communism, the memorial plaques at Birkenau were replaced. The number of people murdered was corrected to the number that historians then felt to be well-grounded and the text explicitly states that mainly Jews lost their lives at Auschwitz–Birkenau: “This place shall for all time be a constant and loud



reminder of the despair of mankind. Here, the Nazis murdered about one and a half million men, women and children – mostly Jews from various European countries.”

Most Polish visitors to the museum in Auschwitz now also see the Birkenau extermination camp. The textbooks from the communist era have long since been replaced. There is no doubt that these changes led to the beginnings of a new collective consciousness in Poland. As early as 2000, 91 percent of students who visited the museum responded that they associated Auschwitz with the Holocaust of European Jews and 63 percent that they also associated the name with the genocide of European Roma. Of course, the Polish students also associated Auschwitz with the statement that many Poles had been imprisoned or met their deaths there. What was new was that the number of respondents who associated Auschwitz with Polish suffering was lower than the number who associated Auschwitz with the Holocaust of European Jews. Almost the same proportions were obtained in a nationwide sociological survey in which an impressive 88 percent of Poles responded that they associated Auschwitz with the Holocaust of European Jews. Thus twenty years after the fall of communism the open society triumphed over the blackout of the previous epoch.

But why had the blackout occurred? And why was it accepted?

As he attempts to find an explanation, Piotr Forecki uses concepts such as collective memory and collective forgetfulness as a theoretical basis, and shows in his empirical review how, soon after the war, “a period began that lasted several decades when the subject of Jews and the Holocaust was either effectively eliminated from public discourse and from Polish history, or, when it was present, was falsified and distorted”.

This official concealment of Jews in Poland’s history and thus the Holocaust was rooted, according to Forecki, in the efforts of the communist regime to legitimize its power by emphasizing the country’s new ethnic homogeneity: “The foundation in the construction of the collective memory of the war was shaped in communist Poland (PRL) by the nation’s own martyrdom, heroism, and antifascism. Remembering the Polish heroes and victims was of the utmost importance.”

However, the question must be asked, writes Piotr Forecki, whether this official concealment of the Holocaust imposed from above reflected a need from below, a need of the people for collective forgetful-

ness. Forecki’s answer is that this was indeed the case, precisely because the communist propaganda could be “an excellent binder for the nation’s collective identity”: “Polish society wanted to forget its role as spectator to the Holocaust [...]. Similarly, people wished to erase the memory of the Jews.”

Forecki is not the first Polish historian to write about this collective forgetfulness of the Holocaust and Jewish Poland. Feliks Tych, longtime director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, states in one of his studies of war memoirs from various Polish professional groups how noticeably absent the Holocaust is, even though the authors of these memoirs were “spectators” to the Holocaust. Among those who during the first years after the war already raised questions about passivity and forgetfulness were well-known authors such as Jerzy Andrzejewski, Kazimierz Brandy, Zofia Nałkowska, and Czesław Miłosz. The latter had, already during the war – in 1943 when the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw was in flames – written his poem “Campo dei Fiori”, in which he chains indifference to the Polish side of the wall, an indifference which he compares to that of spectators at the Campo dei Fiori in Rome when Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake:

**I thought of the Campo dei Fiori
In Warsaw by the sky-carousel
One clear spring evening
To the strains of a carnival tune.
The bright melody drowned
The salvos from the ghetto wall,
And couples were flying
High in the cloudless sky.**

**At times wind from the burn
Would drift dark kites along
And riders on the carousel
Caught petals in midair.
That same hot wind
Blew open the skirts of the girls
And the crowds were laughing
On that beautiful Warsaw Sunday.**

**“Those dying here,
the lonely Forgotten by the world,
Our tongue becomes for them
The language of an ancient planet.”**

Those in Poland who spoke in the name of the exterminated Jews in the early postwar years, however, soon found themselves on the outside of official Polish society, like Czesław Miłosz, the Nobel laureate, who entered a prolonged exile. It took an open society for anyone in the public debate to grasp the final words of the poem: “... when all is legend / And many years have passed, / On a great Campo dei Fiori, / Rage will kindle at a poet’s word”. In 1987, well-known literary critic Jan Błoński wrote an article published in the liberal Catholic weekly magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny*, launching the first real public debate in postwar Poland on the relationship of the Polish people to the Holocaust during and after the war. In the title of his essay, “Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto” [Poor Poles who look at the ghetto], Błoński alluded to another poem by Miłosz, “Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto” [a poor Christian who looks at the ghetto], also written

during the war. In the text, the poem “Campo di Fiori” becomes the starting point for Błoński’s analysis and reflection. He rejects the traditional Polish “defense mechanisms” and urges his readers to try to look the truth in the eye, to purify the tainted soil and the collective memory.

Jan Błoński’s essay marked the beginning of an intense debate in the Polish media, a discussion that Piotr Forecki aptly calls a major “break point” in postwar Polish discourse on the Holocaust. It became clear, according to Forecki, that the “main obstacle for the Poles as they tackle the problem of their relationship with the Jews before the war, like the Poles’ attitude during the Holocaust, is the psychological defense mechanisms buried as codes in the collective consciousness”.

Błoński’s essay and the debate it generated did not fade until the 1988–1990 dismantling of the communist system. Consequently, new doors opened not just for the public debate; with the fall of communism in the 1990s, Jewish culture and the Jewish heritage also began to make a strong “comeback” in Poland. Moving a large part of cultural activities in Kraków outside the “walls”, to the old Jewish district of Kazimierz, which had been neglected throughout the communist period, can be seen as a symbol of the real re-evaluation of the past that has taken place since the early 1990s in democratic Poland. Today any reputable bookstore carries a significant number of books on Judaism and Jewish history in Poland. Paradoxically, there was initially no direct link between this “revival” of Jewish culture for a broad Polish “audience” and the collective historical memory of World War II, the Holocaust, or the widespread anti-Semitism in Poland during the 1930s. This “revival” was much easier to link to the history of the liberal Polish Commonwealth during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries when the Jews were expelled from Western Europe and found refuge in places such as tolerant Poland. Henryk Szlajfer found for that reason in the early 2000s that the “one-sided (read: idealized) picture of the relationship between Poles and Jews” throughout history might play an “anesthetic role” for the Polish collective memory. For many years Szlajfer’s fear seemed justified. In 2011, I think we can conclude that the reviving Jewish culture played an indirect role in revisiting the difficult questions about the Holocaust.

It is symptomatic that the debate also often involves a “revival”. Just as Jan Błoński, in the previously cited essay from 1987, began with a poem by Miłosz from 1943, one of the starting points of Jan Tomasz Gross’s latest book is a quotation, “A gold tooth ripped out of a corpse will always bleed”, from a text by literary critic Kazimierz Wyka written soon after the war, referring to the desecration of Jewish cemeteries by the Polish population. Gross’s latest book was published last spring, at about the same time in English and Polish, with the title *Golden Harvest: What Happened at the Periphery of the Holocaust*.

In addition to the quotation from Wyka’s text (which could not be released in Poland until the “thaw”, after the October revolution in 1956 and then not until the mid-1980s, and which some years ago was published in a new edition), Gross begins with a photo, taken at the time that Kazimierz Wyka wrote

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his text. Probably – there is no certainty in this case, which has been taken by Gross’s constant critics within Poland to be a pretext for sweeping the book’s actual content under the carpet – the image represents part of the local population of villages close to the Treblinka extermination camp a few years after World War II came to an end. They sit lined up in a photo taken during harvest time in the fields, holding axes and shovels. In front of them, meanwhile, is a rather macabre sight: human bones and skulls. It is a photo of grave robbers, perhaps up in the hills by the Treblinka extermination camp, where during fifteen months from July 1942 to October 1943, 800,000 Jews were gassed to death.

Even if the picture were taken at another extermination camp, it would change nothing in the sad drama Gross describes – nor in the argument he now presents, which is formulated more sharply than it was in his book *Fear*. In *Fear*, Gross argues that the fear and guilt associated with the Polish takeover of Jewish property was one of the reasons for the anti-Semitism that erupted in Poland after the war. In *Golden Harvests*, Gross first goes back to the war years and depicts the systematic takeover of both possessions and real estate from the Jewish population in the Polish countryside, villages, and small cities. He also describes how parts of the local Polish population in the small communities outside Treblinka had a kind of symbiotic relationship with the executioners inside the camps. “The theft of Jewish property and murder of the Jews are two actions that are closely linked together”, writes Jan Tomasz Gross, who also carefully points out that this phenomenon was not limited to Poland. It was more extensive in Poland only because the Jewish population there was larger than in any other European country: “How many of the six million Jews annihilated during the war throughout occupied Europe were murdered by the local population?” he asks and concludes that historians today estimate the number to be between one million and one and a half million people. Within Poland’s borders from 1939 Jan Tomasz Gross estimates that several hundred thousand Jews were directly or indirectly murdered by representatives of the local population.

The picture of reality in the Polish countryside that Jan Tomasz Gross presents in his new book thus stands in sharp contrast to the picture that prevailed in Poland for half a century of a people who suffered with the Jewish population, but could do little to help their Jewish brethren, since the Nazis could impose the death penalty for such help. Gross does not deny the heroism of those Poles who, with or without compensation, risked their lives to save the lives of Jews. These stories are well-known. Also well-known and researched, and worth noting, are the more than seven hundred Poles who were executed because they hid one or more Jews in their homes.

Jan Tomasz Gross considers the flip side of this phenomenon and argues that the reason that these Poles, along with the Jews they chose to help, were executed was often betrayal by their Polish neighbors. He also shows how the Poles, especially during the phase of the Holocaust that Nazi Germany called “Judenjagd” – where the purpose was to locate surviving Jews in cities and the countryside as well as Jews

who had fled into the woods or had found a hiding place with a Pole – actively participated in this German action.

The German occupying forces and the German Nazis orchestrated the Holocaust and are therefore responsible. Jan Tomasz Gross’s book addresses what happened at the “periphery” of this organized Holocaust. The word “periphery” should not be ascribed a purely spatial interpretation: the “periphery”, Gross writes, was also in the middle of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust; this “periphery” was actually central to those who tried to survive. This “periphery” held the only chance of survival for the fleeing Jew. Usually, he was deeply disappointed by his Polish neighbor. The balance sheet that Gross compiles is new and heartrending. This is also why the new debate is already underway – and note that it is more calm and collected than when the book about Jedwabne was published. Today, Poland has years of solid historical research in the field in which Gross puts his poker to stir the ashes of debate.

About the same time that Jan Tomasz Gross published this book, two other books were on the shelves of Polish bookstores which, based on original source research, explain the participation of the local Polish population in the murder of their Jewish neighbors in the Polish countryside. One was written by Jan Grabowski, *Judenjagd: Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945: Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu* [Judenjagd: The hunt for Jews, 1942–1945: A study of events in one county]. The other book was written by Barbara Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień . . . Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* [It’s such a beautiful, sunny day . . . The fate of Jews seeking help in the Polish countryside, 1942–1945]. Both books were published by the Polish Center for Holocaust Research, which was established under the auspices of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 2003 and is the only Polish institution dedicated exclusively to research

and education about the Holocaust. The center has published a number of books in recent years. For the past six years the center has also published an excellent yearbook with studies and material about the Holocaust, *Zagłada Żydów Studia i Materiały* [Holocaust studies and material]. This new Polish research carried out by a new generation of historians also provides a solid foundation for Jan Tomasz Gross’s most recent book about the “golden harvests”.

Jan Grabowski has been reviewing materials from Dąbrowa Tarnowska in the southeastern part of today’s Poland since 1946. His sources are the testimony of surviving Jews recorded just after the war, material largely available in the archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, German archival material, and documents from trials shortly after the war. He explains how both individual Poles and Polish organizations, such as the Polish police, participated in the hunt for Jews and in the murder of Jews.

Of the total of 239 documented murders of Jews, only seven were carried out by the German Gendarmerie on its own; that is, the Germans themselves sought out and took the lives of Jews who were hiding in only seven cases. In 84 cases, the Jews were handed over to the Germans by the local population. In six cases, Polish farmers murdered Jews on their own, sometimes people whom they had first hidden, after which they received either money or valuables in compensation. In eleven cases the Polish police murdered the Jews on their own and in 82 cases the German Gendarmerie murdered Jews that the Polish police found and handed over to the Germans.

“There can be no doubt”, writes Jan Grabowski, “that the overwhelming portion of Jews who tried to hide were discovered and murdered because of betrayal”, and he concludes: “murdering Jews was business as usual for the Polish Police (Policja Granatowa) in the Tarnów district.”

Barbara Engelking reports in her book the results of archival research relating to rural areas in the German Government-General of the occupied Polish provinces, an area of Poland that included the capital of Warsaw, Lublin in the east, and Kraków to the south. In her research, in addition to material from several trials after the war, Engelking reviewed 473 Jewish narratives recorded immediately after the war. It should be noted that 391 of them are in the Jewish Historical Institute Archives in Warsaw. Like Jan Grabowski, Barbara Engelking can provide examples in which the



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Polish rural population participated in the Holocaust by handing Jews over to the Germans or conducting executions. In the more than five hundred cases that Barbara Engelking examined, a total of at least 1,599 Jews were handed over for execution to the Germans and 1,015 were executed by Polish citizens.

Both Jan Grabowski and Barbara Engelking provide frightening reading with their macabre depictions of how Jews were first taken care of by close Polish friends and later either handed over or executed, and on several occasions Barbara Engelking approaches the question in her strictly academic presentation of how this unimaginable evil can be understood or explained. She finds no answer, but can only say that after concluding her work more questions remain than the answers she can provide.

What began in Poland, with the publication of Jan Tomasz Gross's provocative essays, the most recent historical studies, and the research project initiated by the Polish Center for Holocaust Research, is a new phase in the public debate about the Polish nation's relationship to the Holocaust. What is totally new is that historians and researchers in Poland are now leading the way and providing the most difficult answers to the most difficult questions. Two decades after the fall of communism the public debate about the Holocaust and the Polish nation has progressed farther than in any country in the democratic part of Europe during the first twenty years after the end of the Second World War. Such a claim cannot be made in any other country in Eastern Europe. ❌

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BOTH VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR

UKRAINE'S PROBLEMATIC RELATIONSHIP TO THE HOLOCAUST

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FOR VARIOUS REASONS, Ukraine's relationship to the Holocaust and the Jews has been overshadowed by the similar, but more striking situation in Germany and Poland. The question deserves attention, however, because it is still a serious moral and political dilemma in Ukraine, closely related to the country's endeavor to build a national identity. The dilemma is clearly reflected in Ukrainian historiography and current politics, though government museums and public memorials in Western Ukraine also bear witness to the vestiges of the Holocaust – or to the lack thereof.

These words are partly based on Western historical research about the Holocaust in Ukraine and how it has been treated¹, and partly – mainly – on research material gathered during two dedicated visits to Kiev and Lviv in 2007 and 2010.²

BACKGROUND

According to some estimates, over 900,000 Jews died in Soviet Ukraine between 1941 and 1944 as a result of the genocidal policies of Nazi Germany and its Ukrainian henchmen. This figure actually represents the largest number of victims in any country other than Poland, where the number of victims is estimated at 3.3 million.³ Holocaust victims included the Jews of Eastern Galicia, which the Soviet Union seized from Poland under the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. They comprised a relatively large minority (in 1931, 639,000, or 9.3 percent), and anti-Semitism was widespread.⁴ During the postwar period, particularly after 1991, many of the remaining Jews emigrated, primarily to Israel. According to the 2001 census, only about 80,000 Jews (0.2 percent of the total population) remained in all of Ukraine, and just 12,000–15,000 in what is now Western Ukraine.⁵ A rich culture, which through the centuries shaped parts of Ukraine and Poland, has almost entirely vanished or been forgotten.

UKRAINIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY ON THE HOLOCAUST

As Johan Dietsch demonstrated in a dissertation in 2006⁶, the official history of postwar Soviet Ukraine was not particularly interested in the Jews as an ethnic group or in the terrible fate they suffered during the

war. Rather, the remaining Jews were subjected to the Soviet campaigns against “Zionists” and “cosmopolitans” who were considered to be allies of Western imperialists, and historiography about the war primarily addressed the victory of the united Soviet people over German fascism, which served as a strong new basis to legitimize the socialist system. In the process the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its rebel army (UPA), which wanted an independent state, were attacked for helping the Nazi occupiers, and the anti-communist Ukrainian diaspora in North America, which defended the nationalists, was condemned.⁷

This diaspora sought to preserve its national identity by cherishing the Ukrainian Cossack tradition dating back to the seventeenth century, from Cossack leaders such as Bohdan Chmelnitsky, to leaders in the struggle for independence, such as Symon Petliura during World War I and the head of the UPA, Stepan Bandera, at the beginning of World War II. Their anti-Semitism, which led to repeated pogroms, was conveniently swept under the carpet. Instead of the Holocaust, the Ukrainian diaspora was particularly interested in the *Holodomor*, Stalin's intentional famine policy in Ukraine (1932–1933), which was considered to be a genocide directed at the Ukrainian people. It was claimed that more Ukrainians died in the *Holodomor* than Jews in the Holocaust and that Jews as prominent representatives of the Soviet secret police service NKVD were complicit in the *Holodomor*. The diaspora praised the struggles of the UPA and OUN for freedom, and some even held that the Soviet repression before the war justified the collaboration of certain Ukrainians with Nazi Germany during the war.⁸

PARTS OF THIS HISTORIOGRAPHY were adopted when Ukraine became independent in 1991. The quest to build a Ukrainian identity now emphasizes the national struggle for freedom since the 1600s and earlier. Lenin statues in the western parts of the country have been replaced by monuments of Cossack and nationalist leaders. Since the 1990s, Ukraine's political leaders have tried on several occasions to gain international recognition for the *Holodomor* as genocide against Ukrainians, and the famine is treated as a Ukrainian equivalent of the Holocaust.⁹ Although the official history books do not often stress ‘the responsibility

of the Jewish communists for the *Holodomor*, anti-Semitic literature is published and sold everywhere in today's Ukraine, including Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Ukraine's largest private institution of higher education, MAUP, with 30,000 students, has published a series of such works.¹⁰

At the same time that the official interpretation of history in contemporary Ukraine highlights the national struggle against Soviet power, it has also stressed, as in Soviet times, Ukraine's active struggle against Nazi Germany and Nazi atrocities. The enormous Rodina-Mat' victory monument thus still stands in Kiev, and the 9th of May is still celebrated. Ukraine is therefore regarded as a victim of the two totalitarian regimes that entered into the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. According to one textbook from 1994, although many people welcomed the Soviet occupation of eastern Galicia in 1939 as liberation from Poland, it also led to sovietization and deportations to the east, driving many people to welcome the subsequent German invasion. When the Nazi Germany occupation became even worse than the Soviet, Ukrainian partisans began to resist.¹¹ It is rarely noted that Ukrainians could be found on both sides of the front lines.

THE TRUTH ABOUT the Nazi mass murder of Jews in Ukraine is no longer suppressed, but is mainly associated with Babi Yar in 1941 (see below). The Nazi racial ideology is not explained and the tragedy of the Jews is still overshadowed by the suffering of Ukrainians. For example, another textbook from 2004 admitted that Jews in particular suffered at the massacre at Babi Yar and added that each city had its own Babi Yar. The Nazis pressured the Ukrainians not to help the Jews, but many are claimed to have done so anyway and were executed and therefore honored posthumously by Israel. The Uniate (Greek Catholic) Metropolitan Sheptytsky was mentioned in particular.¹² It is hardly made clear that Ukrainian nationalists helped with the extermination of the Jews.¹³ Viktor Yushchenko, who as Prime Minister participated at the Holocaust Conference in Stockholm in 2000, declared that the experience of millions of Ukrainians as victims of a Holocaust of their own meant that the Ukrainians well understand the ordeal of the Jews.¹⁴ When Yushchenko was elected president in 2004 after the so-called Orange Revolution, he was mainly supported by na-



tionalist and Western-oriented groups in western and central Ukraine.

Johan Dietsch concludes that the official image of Ukrainians as both heroes and victims does not allow other people to have suffered more than the Ukrainians or that the Ukrainians were accomplices in the extermination of the Jews in Ukraine. However, Ukrainian history books, which address *other* countries, depict the Holocaust more objectively as genocide specifically directed against the Jews and label it a purely European trauma. It should also be mentioned that during a state visit to Germany in 2007, Yushchenko deviated from protocol by visiting a concentration camp, where his father had been a prisoner. In such a way the Ukrainians circumvent the problem of their participation in the Holocaust on their home turf and present an impression that Ukraine shares European values and fits in with the European community.¹⁵

THE BABI YAR MASSACRE AND ITS MEMORY

The Ukrainian view of the extermination of the Jews can be illustrated by the case of Babi Yar, considered the single largest massacre in the history of the Holocaust and which became a symbol of its early, non-industrial phase.¹⁶ After the Nazi German invasion, an *Einsatzgruppe* executed over 33,000 Jews in the Babi Yar ravine in two days in late September 1941. The executions then continued and were expanded to include communists, Roma, mental patients, and Ukrainian nationalists interned in the concentration camp set up at nearby Syrets. The perpetrators included Ukrainian policemen. In all, between 70,000 and 120,000 people were murdered.

When the Soviet Army approached in 1943, the Nazis tried to cover their tracks by ordering the concentration camp prisoners to dig up the corpses and burn them, after which the prisoners were killed. When the Soviet army arrived in November 1943, a concentration camp was transformed into an internment camp for German prisoners of war until 1946, when it was demolished. In the 1950s, a residential complex and a stadium were built in the area, as well as a dam in the ravine, a dam which then burst with hundreds of deaths as a result. When Nikita Khrushchev was head of the Communist Party in Ukraine, he opposed a proposal from the Jewish author Ilya Ehrenburg to erect a monument to the victims, but internal and external pressure to do so increased over time. A breakthrough occurred with the publication of Yevgeny Yevtushenko's famous poem of 1961, which began with the words "No monument stands over Babi Yar." Shortly thereafter, Dmitri Shostakovich set the poem to music in his thirteenth symphony.¹⁷

In 1966, the authorities set up a small memorial, and a decade later a typically pompous Soviet monument was erected at an incorrect location with the following text in Russian, Ukrainian, and Hebrew: "Here in 1941–1943 the German fascist invaders shot more than one hundred thousand Kiev citizens and military captives." The Jews were not specifically mentioned. Not until fifty years after the massacre was a menorah monument erected at the correct place by the ravine, with the participation of Western organizations, in memory of the Jewish victims.¹⁸

However, the impact of this monument was di-



Monument to the Jewish victims at Babi yar in Kiev.

luted, when several other memorials were erected in various locations in the area: to the executed Ukrainian nationalists (1992), two Orthodox priests (2000), murdered children (without nationality, text only in Ukrainian) and – with German involvement – a monument in memory of the Ukrainian *Ostarbeiter* and concentration camp prisoners in Nazi Germany (2005).¹⁹ It may be added that it is difficult to find the monument because the Ukrainian brochures lack maps of the area, no signs are posted, and the local population is unable to answer questions. Although President Kuchma laid the cornerstone for a Jewish memorial and meeting center at Babi Yar in 2001, funded by U.S. organizations, it was never built, and after long debate, in 2009 the Jewish congregation decided instead to build its own memorial center.²⁰ In the run-up to the 2012 European Football Championships, a plan was launched that included building a new hotel next to the monument, but it was vetoed by Kiev's mayor in response to intense criticism from Jewish groups around the world.²¹ In short, the Ukrainian treatment is both depressing and outrageous.

THE HOLOCAUST IN LVIV AND ITS AFTERMATH

Similar observations apply to Lviv, the current regional capital of Western Ukraine, a beautiful city with a rich multicultural history. As American Holocaust scholar Omer Bartov points out in a book on traces of the Holocaust in Western Ukraine, during the interwar period the Jews were a prominent ethnic group in Polish Galicia (639,000, or 9.3 percent in 1931, in Lviv 120,000 in 1939). Although their numbers steadily decreased due to a process of Polonization, secularization and modernization, they still suffered at the hands of rival anti-Semitic Polish and Ukrainian nationalists in the country and two murderous totalitarian regimes from outside it, while emigration to the United States and Palestine was made impossible.²²

AFTER THE NAZI GERMAN occupation of Poland in September 1939, 130,000 Jews fled to the Soviet Western Ukraine, most of them to Lviv, where they encountered communist oppression and class warfare instead. The NKVD actually deported a proportionately higher percentage of Jews than Poles to the east of the Soviet Union, because many were businessmen, craftsmen, or intellectuals. But even if 25–30 percent of them died during deportation, many lives were still saved. When Hitler's armies rolled into Galicia in the summer of 1941, they immediately instigated the genocide of the remaining Jews.

After the war, the Ukrainians soon became the pre-



Monument to victims of Soviet terror in Lviv.

dominant group in the city, while the Russians were second largest. Not many Jews returned, and only a single small synagogue still holds services in Lviv.²³ As Bartov shows in many photos, almost all traces of Jews in the former Galicia are now destroyed or in ruins, desecrated by contemporary anti-Semites. Lviv also provides scant information in the form of brochures or maps.²⁴ Streets have been renamed and only Vulitsa Staroyevreyska (Old Jewish Street) reveals that there was once a large Jewish settlement and ghetto within the walls of the center. All that remains of the great synagogue from the 1580s is the foundation and an empty vault behind an ugly metal fence. A small plaque in Ukrainian and English states that the synagogue was destroyed by German soldiers. In the spring of 2007, passers-by could see graffiti on a wall nearby, urging "smert zhidam" (death to the Jews) which no one had bothered to remove.²⁵

PROPOSALS TO REBUILD the synagogue and create a Jewish museum and cultural center on the site have not been realized.²⁶ Instead, a restaurant was built next door which bears the synagogue's beautiful name: the Golden Rose.

It also bears mentioning that the Lviv Historical Museum's department on the Ukrainian liberation movement during World War II depicts this struggle as directed against both Hitler and Stalin. It is not pointed out that the Ukrainians also therefore collaborated with either Hitler or Stalin, and the extermination of the Jews is not mentioned at all.

Nevertheless, some monuments related to the Holocaust have been erected in recent years. Beyond the railway line that separated the city from the ghetto established by the Nazis, a Holocaust Monument in typical Soviet style was erected in 1993 with a plaque in English, Ukrainian, and Hebrew stating "'through this road of death' in 1941–1943 were passing 136,800 Jewish victims martyred by German Nazi-Fascist occupiers in Lviv Getto [sic]." Several individual memorials also bear witness to shocking fates.²⁷ But it should be noted that the monument was funded by the city's Jewish congregation and is not well kept by the local authorities.

Another example is a monument at a former prison in the middle of the city, commemorating victims of the NKVD between 1939 and 1941 – after the Soviet conquest. The inscription on the monument specifically states that in the Lviv area more than 3,000 Ukrainians, Poles, and Jews were shot, and is illustrated by the national symbols: the trident, the eagle, and the Star of David.²⁸ It may be noticed, however, that the paint on the Star of David has been allowed to flake while the symbols of the other nationalities are touched up.²⁹ It is difficult not to suspect that the

reason is related to the fact that Ukrainian nationalists saw and see the NKVD as dominated by Jews and believe that the killings mainly affected Ukrainians.

What happened after Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union is also controversial. According to Jewish scholars and organizations, the Ukrainian Nachtigall battalion, together with German troops and local Ukrainians, massacred Jews in the first days of July before continuing their march. At the end of the month a new pogrom was carried out in the city, known as the "Petliura Days", named for the Ukrainian leader who instigated pogroms during the 1919 struggle for independence.³⁰ Even after Nazi troops retreated toward the end of the war, incidents of persecution by the Ukrainians against the remaining Jews occurred throughout Galicia.

THE MASSACRES LATER gained broader political implications. In 1959 a campaign was launched in the GDR and Soviet Union against Theodore Oberländer, who had commanded Nachtigall and now happened to be West German interior minister, for his participation in the first massacre in Lviv. Oberländer was forced to resign, but he and the battalion were acquitted in 1960 by an international commission of inquiry and the German courts.³¹ The issue was raised again in 2007, when President Yushchenko named Roman Shukhevych, who had led the battalion along with Oberländer, a "Hero of Ukraine" and dismissed accusations that he participated in the pogroms. Before his retirement in 2010 Yushchenko also awarded the same title to Stepan Bandera, who had been chairman of the Ukrainian independence movement until he was seized by the Nazis, but is also associated with anti-Semitic pogroms during World War I.³²

A FEW CONCLUSIONS

It can thus be noted that since independence, the Ukrainian authorities have not conducted any real *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – struggle to come to terms with the past – in relation to the Holocaust as Germany and to a lesser extent Poland have done. The rich Jewish culture in Western Ukraine was nearly wiped out during and after the war. Desecration of Jewish monuments and cemeteries testifies to the fact that anti-Semitism is alive and well in western Ukraine. Today's young Ukrainians know very little about the country's Jewish history or the crimes that Ukrainians committed or participated in.³³

To a small extent, however, this relationship is offset by a new factor: namely Ukraine's growing contacts with Western countries. Among other things, the number of Jewish tourists, mainly from Israel and the United States, who visit areas where they or (mainly) their ancestors lived, has swelled since the 1990s. Direct flights now connect Lviv and Tel Aviv. This tourism contributes a little to the economy in the area and reminds the residents of the part Jews played in the country's history.

Furthermore, one could expect that the desire of many Ukrainians to join the affluent and well-organized EU would contribute to a growing acceptance of the Western European view of human rights and democracy. Thus, after 2004, President Yushchenko conducted a clearly Western-oriented policy. On the other hand, as mentioned above, he derived most

support from the nationalists in western Ukraine with their anti-Semitic elements.

Yushchenko was succeeded in 2010 by the Russian-oriented Viktor Yanukovich, who is mainly supported by eastern and southern Ukraine. Like Russia and the Jewish organizations, he has criticized the glorification of OUN, UPA, and their leaders. Yanukovich promised during a visit to Moscow to repeal the hero status of Bandera and Shukhevych (which later occurred) and did not wish to call the Holodomor a genocide solely against the Ukrainians when he spoke at the Council of Europe.³⁴ Yanukovich then took part in the 60th anniversary celebration of Russia's victory in World War II. A museum director, who had played down the participation of Ukrainians in pogroms in Lviv, was fired.³⁵

The questions surrounding the resistance struggles of Ukrainian nationalists and the 1932 famine disaster thus remain hot political issues that engage not only historians, but also contribute to regional tensions in Ukraine and affect the country's foreign policy. However, the Holocaust of the Jews and Ukrainian complicity are still rarely addressed in this context. The world is still waiting for Ukrainian historians in general to admit that Ukrainians were not only victims, but also executioners. The Jews are waiting for their rightful place in Ukraine's history and contemporary life. ✖

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Gulag part of Europe's history

The new virtual Gulag museum in Paris appears in many languages and transcends national boundaries.

A new virtual Gulag museum was officially launched on March 11 in Paris (see <http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/>). The museum, part of the *Sound Archives—European Memories of the Gulag* initiative, is the result of a collaboration between Alain Blum, director of CERCEC¹, Marta Craveri, a researcher at CERCEC, and Valérie Nivelon, a journalist and the producer of Radio France Internationale's *La marche du monde*.

As the Web site clearly shows, many inhabitants of countries that have recently joined the EU experienced life in the Gulag. The museum seeks to make this experience part of Europe's collective memory in order to show that the Soviet labor camps and special settlements are not only part of Russia's history, but also part of Europe's history.

The project was coordinated by CERCEC and brought together thirteen European researchers from a variety of backgrounds. Anthropologists, geographers, historians, and sociologists collected archival materials, statements from survivors, and personal effects and documents connected with the deportation to the USSR of citizens from "countries in Central and Eastern Europe that were annexed, occupied, or 'liberated' by the Soviet Union before and after the Second World War".

VISITORS CAN NAVIGATE the virtual museum in three ways: by topic, by location, and by date. The topic option is based on two types of records presented in virtual "rooms": testimonies about deportation and a series of information pages organized by topic (work in deportation, places of resettlement, hunger, forest, death of Stalin, journey to resettlement, life after the Gulag, becoming Soviet, childhood in the Gulag, etc.). The date option has a timeline showing significant events in the USSR

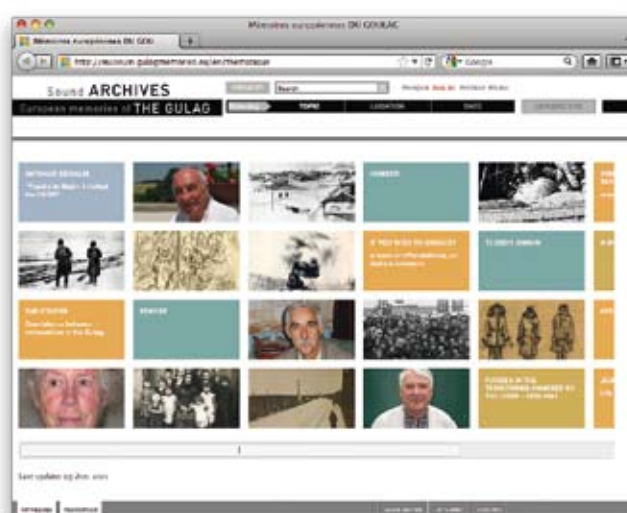
from 1939 until 1960 and the various periods of Stalinist repression. The location option is the most innovative of the three and allows visitors to gain access to testimonies according to deportees' place of origin, place of deportation, or current location. Visitors can also retrace the steps of a former deportee on a map of Europe.

THIS HIGHLY AMBITIOUS virtual museum project stands out from existing virtual, or online museums in the way that it takes the Gulag experience beyond the national level.² And unlike some of the other sites, it is available in four languages: English, French, Polish, and Russian.

However, the site would benefit from a few changes. For example, the sources and references for the documents available online could be made accessible in a more systematic way. The site's creators could follow the lead of the virtual museum of the Russian Gulag's site, where detailed information pages allow visitors to trace the path of the objects on display online, from their acquisition and use by detainees, to

their appropriation by a museum and subsequent appearance online at <http://gulagmuseum.org/>.

The audio material would also benefit from some improvements. First, the site users would gain more from the interview extracts about the concentration camp experience if some reflection on the problem of articulating a special settlement experience in language were present at the site. Second, further researchers would benefit from a presentation of the methods used by the interviewers to collect evidence, as well as the general context of the interview. Indeed, an unstructured conversation about one's life cannot be used in the same manner as a structured interview in which the researcher's questions provide the storyline. It would also be good to have access to the online corpus. This would give more credibility to the eyewitness accounts. How were the witnesses chosen? To what extent could the choice of witnesses influence the collection of memories and impressions, especially in light of the fact that many witnesses are active in associations seeking to preserve memories of



Experiences and testimony in many languages.

the Gulag, or that the vast majority of witnesses were children at the time of their detention?

Others might also regret that this new virtual museum of European memories of the Gulag, initiated by France, devotes only a few pages to the experiences of the thousands of French citizens who were forced into the German army and held in Soviet camps during and after the Second World War, especially given that the last, conscripted Alsatian was not returned from Soviet exile until 1955. Showing the existence of links between the Gulag and the GUPVI (Chief Administration of Prisoners of War and Internees) would have the advantage of showing that the Gulag system tried to extend its influence beyond its initial domain of internment based on a single criminal conviction. Not doing so could also plunge the fates of thousands of victims of Stalinism into oblivion. ✕

florence fröhlig

- 1 CERCEC: Centre d'Etudes des mondes Russe, Caucasiens, et Centre-européen, at EHESS/CNRS.
- 2 For Russia, see <http://gulagmuseum.org/> (Virtual Gulag Museum), <http://memorial-nic.org/> (St. Petersburg Memorial), and <http://www.memo.ru/> (Sakharov Center). For Latvia, see www.occupationmuseum.lv/ (Museum of the Occupation of Latvia). For Lithuania, see www.genocid.lt/muziejus (Museum for the Victims of Genocide). For Poland, see www.karta.org.pl (Karta Center). For Hungary, see www.terrorhaza.hu/ (House of Terror). For Estonia, see www.memento.ee/ (Memento Association). For the Czech Republic, see <http://gulag.szmo.cz/index.html> (Opava Museum).

MUSLIMS IN THE RUSSIAN LITERARY TRADITION

TOLSTOY CROSSING THE LINE

BY **BARBARA LÖNNQVIST**
ILLUSTRATION **KARIN SUNVISSON**

IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE, we can follow a theme that begins as early as the folk epic: the creation of an opposition between Orthodox Christianity and the Muslim creed. The year 1453 was made into a watershed in Russian historiography. For political reasons the newly arisen Moscow state claimed to be the inheritor and defender of true Christianity in its Byzantine version. The recapturing of Constantinople, “the center of the world”, was to haunt the Russian leaders through the centuries, well into the 20th, when, ironically enough, the Orthodox religion had already lost its position and been removed from the agenda.¹

In literature, the opposition between Russian Christians and Muslims was established early on in the folk epics, in the “historical songs” told by the bards in the oral tradition. Several of them deal with the capturing of the khanate of Kazan, the northernmost Tatar realm. The hero in these songs is Ivan IV, who beat the khan in 1552. The songs tell about Ivan’s siege of Kazan, and the arrogance of the Tatars, who, after the capture, are gruesomely punished. The khan is blinded but his wife who has welcomed Ivan “with bread and salt” is spared. She is christened and put into a monastery.

And Tsarina Elena guessed it,
She poured salt on the bread,
She gladly welcomed the Prince of Moscow,
Lord Ivan Vasiliyevich the Visionary.
And he rewarded the Tsarina accordingly
And brought her into the Christian faith,
So she took the vows.
And he punished Tsar Semion for his arrogance,
And not having welcomed the Grand Prince,
And with sharp straws tore out his bright eyes.

The epic songs were sung among the people for centuries and were not written down until the 19th century.

Russian written literature has a short history. It begins in the 18th century with the linguistic reforms started by Tsar Peter. From the beginning, it closely follows Peter’s attempt to create an empire. Since the Russian empire was built largely upon the capturing of areas previously under Ottoman rule, we can see a build-up of symbolic imagery that will influence poets and writers for centuries. This takes place especially in the odic

tradition, lyric poetry exalting “important events” such as the enthronement of rulers or the capturing of fortresses that increasingly expand the borders of Russia.

Interestingly enough, one of the *first* literary works written in the *Russian* language² is dedicated to the warfare between the Ottoman Empire and the expanding Russia. I am speaking of Mikhail Lomonosov’s ode “To the Victory over the Turks and Tatars and to the Capture of Khotin in the Year 1739”. In 1739, Mikhail Lomonosov, a fisherman’s son from Arkhangelsk, was studying natural science in Germany on a stipend from the Russian Academy of Sciences. When he heard that the Russians had captured the fortress of Khotin on the Dniester River, he wrote a lyrical praise of the Russian army and the ruler Empress Anna. In Lomonosov’s poem, the Turks are called “Tatars” – Tatars and Turks are thus equated through their Moslem faith.

The Tatar hosts have circled round,
thirsting for Russian power;
The steam from the horses hides the very
sky! What then? Headlong, they fall dead.

The Turks are furthermore called “the descendants of the rejected slave woman”, alluding to Hagar, the mother of Ishmael (Gen. 16, 21, 25), while the Russians are described as “the chosen people”.

Two earlier Russian rulers and war heroes are brought into the poem, Tsar Peter and Ivan the Terrible. Lomonosov refers to Peter’s warfare in the Black Sea area (the Azov Campaign) and Ivan’s triumph over the Kazan Tatars. These two are hailed as having laid the foundations for a great Russia that “will frighten the whole world”.

**Uttered then Hero to Hero:
“Not in vain have we two labored.
Neither your nor my feats were in vain,
To make the whole world fear the Russians.
Through us our borders have expanded
To North, West, and East.”**

The image of the moon is used to designate the Turks: “When the moon saw its people flee, it covered its face in shame”. Finally, Lomonosov even has recourse to images from the folk epic, and the enemy is depicted as a snake/dragon that tries to find refuge in the fortress away from the Russian eagle that flies high above.

**The snake winds itself into a ball,
Hissing, it hides its sting under a stone,
So fearful it is of the Russian eagle;
and escapes into its Khotin.³**

Lomonosov sent his poem to the Academy in St. Petersburg, but they decided not to publish it since at that point peace talks were underway with the Turks. But later the poem was published over and over again, not only in Lomonosov’s works, but in schoolbooks and anthologies as well. It set the standard for a certain kind of patriotic literature.

Gavriil Derzhavin sings a *laudatio* in his ode “*Na vziatie Izmaila*” (To the capturing of Izmail) to the bravery of the Russian generals, and especially to Grigorii Potemkin, who managed to besiege and storm the fortress of Izmail on the Danube in 1790. Here, we once again find the image of an “eagle shading the moon”: the Russian state symbol is taking over the sky and the Muslim half-moon is being put in the shade. The opposition between “eagle” and “moon” or “half-moon” is by now stock imagery in Russian literature. Russia is also presented as “the light from the North” that will make “Muhammad” “pale” and “turn his dark looks in another direction”:

**And at the northern light
Mohamed’s face grows pale,
And he turns his frowning glance away.**

The Russian mission is clearly defined (even if Derzhavin rhetorically puts it into a question): “Will the Russian fighting spirit, helped by the Christian faith, save the Achaeans (Greeks) and crush the sons of Hagar (Turks)?” The greatness of Russia is sung in different tones: a “forest of laurels” has grown up around the “invincible colossus” that has captured the Crimea and the Black Sea coast and soon will put its foot in “the center of the universe” (Constantinople), thus “reaching heaven”. (“I see laurel woods around you; / You make the Caucasus and Tauris bow [down], / And with

your foot in the center of the universe / You reach the far off heavens.”) The image of “reaching heaven” is symbolic of Constantinople/Byzantium as the haven of true Christianity. Such words refer to the text in the first *Russian Chronicle*, where we have a description of the people from Kiev coming to Constantinople to “find a religion” and being present at a ceremony in the Hagia Sophia where they were so taken with the liturgy that they “did not know whether they were on earth or in heaven”.

However, we can see from Derzhavin’s poem that there is a merging of the Christian mission (“fighting the sons of Hagar”, now sitting on the Byzantine throne) and the imperial aspirations of Russia. The Caucasus is also drawn into the sphere where Russia considers her rights to rule to be inviolable. In Derzhavin’s words: “You [Russia] make Caucasus and Tauris [the Crimea] bend the head and bow before you.”

THE MILITARY CAPTURE of the Caucasian areas takes place over the course of about fifty years in the 19th century, concluding around 1860. I will point to only one of the many literary works where the Caucasus is present, since it is such a widespread theme in Russia, up to this very day. I am speaking of the poet Mikhail Lermontov’s poem “A Cossack Lullaby”. It is written in the form of a literary lullaby (a genre that arose in Russia towards the end of the 18th century) with the refrain from folk poetry: *baiushki-baiu*. A Cossack woman is singing to her baby son about his future – the singing conveys her wishes for his future. The setting is the mountains of the northern Caucasus where the Russians were well entrenched (bringing with them the Cossacks) by 1840, the year of Lermontov’s lullaby. In the song there appears the treacherous Terek River, where the waves are “turbid” and “muddy” (“The Terek trills over stones, / And troubled waves are splashing”). But an even more precise reference to the enemy is in the following lines: “The evil Chechen creeps up the river bank, sharpening his dagger.” The Cossack mother soothes her child, a future fighter “in foreign lands”, and promises him a talisman that will keep him safe in battle – a holy icon. (“I’ll think about you missing me in foreign lands [...] / And give you a holy icon for the road: / So when you pray to God, / You will hold it before you.”)

Lermontov’s poem immediately entered the body of texts that for centuries made up schoolbooks in Russia. These texts are learned by heart by the young and, as early as the second half of the 19th century, non-literate Russian village people were singing it. Lermontov’s poem is a unique example of a literary text becoming folklore. In the schoolbooks, the texts are generally followed by instructions for the teacher about how to explain them. In a Soviet schoolbook from 1970 special attention is paid to the line, “The evil Chechen creeps up the river bank, sharpening his dagger.” The word

“creeps” (*polzet*) is underlined with the explanation: “to advance by stealth, like a snake, quietly. He prefers to attack by ambush”. (Golovin 2000, p. 391.) Thus the snake image from Lomonosov’s poem (there depicting the Turks) is repeated in the interpretations of Lermontov’s picture of the Chechens. Since Lomonosov’s poem also belongs to Russian chrestomathic school literature, we can see with what constancy the fiends of the Russian Fatherland are depicted.

IT IS AGAINST this literary background that Lev Tolstoy would write his stories about the Caucasus. But Tolstoy had an immediate experience of the area himself. As soon as he arrived in Chechnya in 1851 (aged 23) together with his brother Nikolai, he started writing in the genre of ethnographic sketches about the country and its peoples. He is clearly intent on “deconstructing” the images of the Caucasus that he has been brought up on (works by Lermontov and Marlinskii). In his draft “Notes from the Caucasus: A journey to Mamakai-Iurt”, he begins by explaining: “There are no Circassians, there are Chechens, Kumyks, Abazekhis and so on, but no Circassians. There are no plane trees (platanos), there are beeches, a tree well known to the Russians.” (Tolstoy 2002, p. 208)

Tolstoy’s message is clear: do not mythologize and generalize, speak about things as they are, *call everything by its true name* – a beech is not a platano.

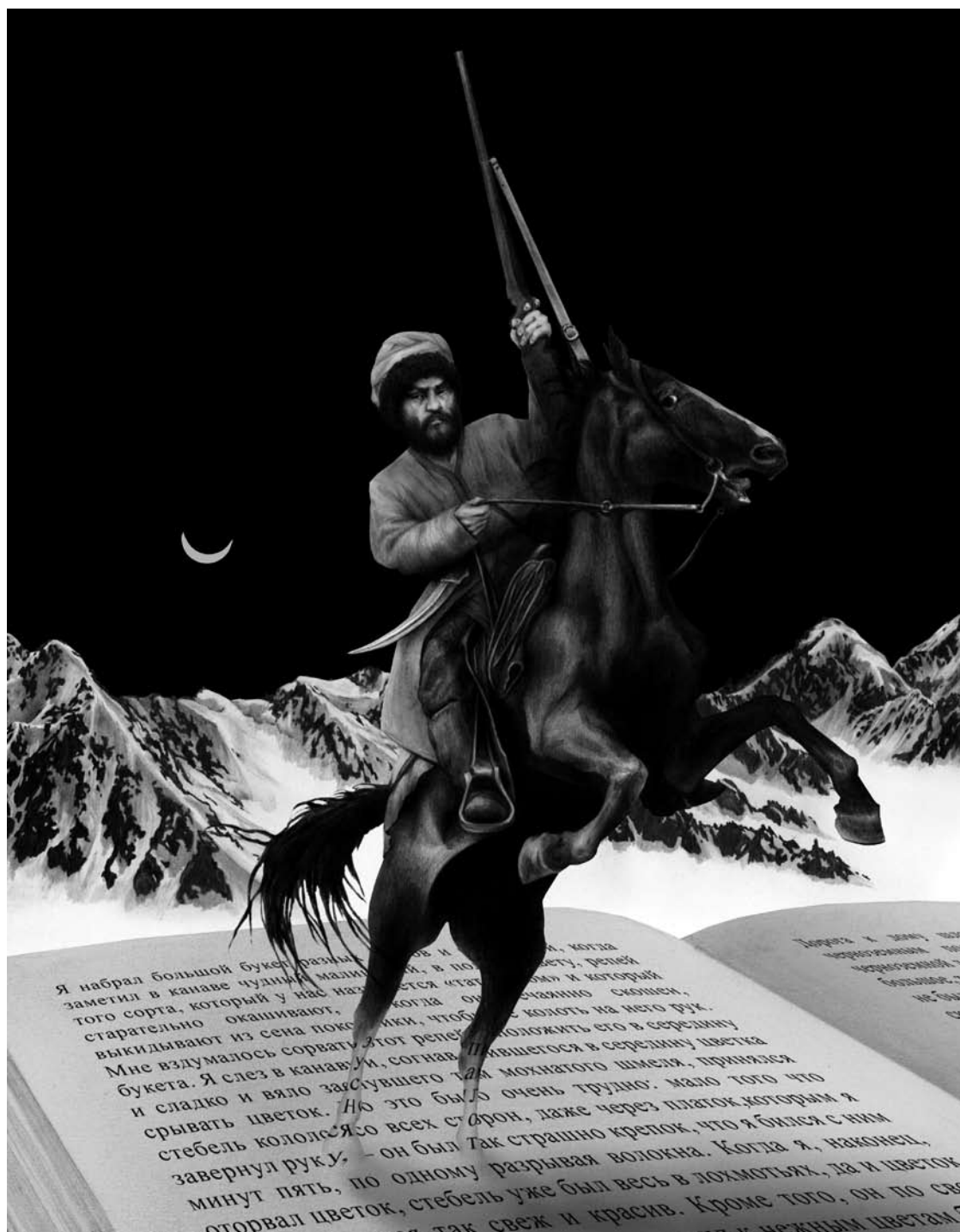
Quite soon, in 1853, the story “The Raid: A Volunteer’s Story” (*Nabeg: Rasskaz volontera*) was published in Moscow. Tolstoy’s focus is now on the war, on warfare, on the motives of people going to war. While writing the story, he was reading a historical account of the Napoleonic war in Russia (“Opisanie voyny 1813 goda” by A. I. Mikhailovskii-Danilevskii) and an opposition to descriptions of war started growing in him. Questions tormenting the young volunteer included “What is bravery?” and “How did a soldier kill another soldier and what did he feel?” War equals *killing, murder* – such was Tolstoy’s experience from his time in Chechnya, and the crucial question of the justification of warfare will stay with him for the rest of his life. It permeates, naturally, all of *War and Peace*, but we find it in the last part of *Anna Karenina* (Vronskii going to war in Serbia) as well.

However, Chechnya did not give Tolstoy any peace either. In the 1890s, when the writer had seriously questioned the meaning of writing artistic literature, he took up the theme again and embarked upon what was to become the short novel *Hadji Murat*. We find the last marks of Tolstoy on *Hadji Murat* in the year 1905. The novel was published in 1912, not long after his death.⁴

The story of Hadji Murat is based on real events in Chechnya in the 1850s when Russian rule, having begun in 1818 with the building of the fortress Groznaya, was finally established by crushing the “mountain fighters” (*gortsy*) and their leader Shamil (1798–1871). Shamil was captured in 1859, brought to live in Russian exile in Kaluga, from where he was allowed to go to Mecca in 1870. He died in Medina in 1871.

The fighting in the Caucasus Mountains was ferocious, especially in the 1840s. The siege of the village Salty in Dagestan in 1847 lasted for 52 days and the losses among Russian officers totalled several hundred, and well over two thousand soldiers of lower ranks were killed in the operation. Since the Russian

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army had great difficulties gaining control over Chechnya and Dagestan, a plan was devised to cut down the forests and build forts, army strongholds, all over the area. Furthermore, Chechen food supplies were to be destroyed by the army.

In his devastating critique of Tsar Nicholas I in *Hadji Murat*, Tolstoy brings in this side of Russian warfare:

Although the plan of a gradual advance into the enemy's territory by means of felling forests and destroying the food supplies was Ermolov's and Velyaminov's plan, and was quite contrary to Nicholas's own plan of seizing Shamil's place of residence and destroying that nest of robbers – which was the plan on which the Dargo expedition in 1845 (that cost so many lives) had been undertaken – Nicholas nevertheless attributed to himself also the plan of slow advance and a systematic felling of forests and devastation of the country. It would seem that to believe the plan of a slow movement by felling forests and destroying food supplies to have been his own would have necessitated the fact that he had insisted on quite contrary

operations in 1845. But he did not hide it and was proud of the plan of the 1845 expedition as well as of the plan of slow advance – though the two were obviously contrary to one another. Continual brazen flattery from everybody round him in the teeth of obvious facts had brought him to such a state that he no longer saw his own inconsistencies or measured his actions and words by reality, logic, or even simple common sense; but was quite convinced that all his orders, however senseless, unjust, and mutually contradictory they might be, became reasonable, just, and mutually accordant simply because he gave them. (Tolstoy 2004, pp. 619–629)

By bringing in an “in-between figure”, Hadji Murat, into his work, Tolstoy does not take sides in the Chechen conflict. He is free to criticize both the Russian ruler and the army as well as Shamil and his mountain fighters. Hadji Murat, who has earlier been in the camp of Shamil, has gone over to the Russians after having been betrayed and *humiliated* by Shamil. In his description of the Chechens, Tolstoy lifts to the foreground the big

role played by dignity and pride in the culture of the mountaineers. To humiliate another person is a deadly sin that demands retaliation. Tolstoy does not make Hadji Murat a hero with no blood on his hands. We are told, by Hadji Murat himself, about his murders. Tolstoy's merit is rather to investigate the inner life of the people entangled in the Chechen war. Why do they act as they do? Why do they take such decisions? As Tolstoy says himself in a letter (1899): for him as a writer “the main thing is the inner life expressed in scenes”.

Just like the tsar who is driven to take certain actions by his fears and likings³ so does Hadji Murat. As he explains to the Russian Loris-Melikov, the aide-de-camp of general Vorontsov:

I wrote [to the Russian commander Klügenau] I wore a turban not for Shamil's sake but for my soul's salvation; that I neither wished nor could go over to Shamil, because he had caused the death of my father, my brothers, and my relations; but that I could not join the Russians because I had been dishonored by them. (In Khunzakh, a scoundrel had spat on me while I was bound, and I could not join your people until that man was killed.) But above all I feared that liar, Akhmet Khan. (p.607) [...] The chief thing for me was to revenge myself on Akhmet Khan, and that I could not do through the Russians.) [...] Just then came an envoy with a letter from Shamil promising to help me to defeat and kill Akhmet Khan and making me ruler over the whole of Avaria. I considered the matter for a long time and then went over to Shamil, and from that time I fought the Russians continually. (Tolstoy 2004, p. 608)

We can see that Hadji Murat is guided in his actions by blood feud and vengeance for humiliation/dishonor, slander, and treachery. He cannot live without what he understands as his human dignity. By resorting to the Russians, he hopes to get their help to free his family which is in the hands of Shamil. Hadji Murat's conflict with Shamil is again based on a *lack of trust*, on false accusations, and robbing of property.

Humiliation, as a prime mover for arousing hatred and vengeance, is shown by Tolstoy not only on the personal level in his story. The picture of a Chechen village after a raid of Russian soldiers is appalling:

The *aoul* which had been destroyed was that in which Hadji Murat had spent the night before he went over to the Russians. Sado and his family had left the *aoul* on the approach of the Russian detachment, and when he returned he found his *saklya* in ruins – the roof fallen in, the door and the posts supporting the penthouse burned, and the interior filthy. His son, the handsome bright-eyed boy who had gazed with such ecstasy at Hadji Murat, was brought dead to the mosque on a horse covered with a *burka*: he had been stabbed in the back with a bayonet. The dignified woman who had served Hadji Murat when he was at the house now stood over her son's body,

her smock torn in front, her withered old breasts exposed, her hair down, and she dug her nails into her face till it bled, and wailed incessantly. Sado, taking a pick-axe and spade, had gone with his relatives to dig a grave for his son. The old grandfather sat by the wall of the ruined *saklya* cutting a stick and gazing stolidly in front of him. He had only just returned from the apiary. The two stacks of hay there had been burned, the apricot and cherry trees he had planted and reared were broken and scorched, and worse still all the beehives and bees had been burned. The wailing of the women and the little children, who cried with their mothers, mingled with the lowing of the hungry cattle for whom there was no food. The bigger children, instead of playing, followed their elders with frightened eyes. The fountain was polluted, evidently on purpose, so that the water could not be used. The mosque was polluted in the same way, and the Mullah and his assistants were cleaning it out. No one spoke of hatred of the Russians. The feeling experienced by all the Chechens, from the youngest to the oldest, was stronger than hate. It was not hatred, for they did not regard those Russian dogs as human beings, but it was such repulsion, disgust, and perplexity at the senseless cruelty of these creatures, that the desire to exterminate them – like the desire to exterminate rats, poisonous spiders, or wolves – was as natural an instinct as that of self-preservation. (Tolstoy 2004, p. 629)

The hero Hadji Murad's fate is sealed when he leaves the Russian camp, where his life has turned more and more into imprisonment. He has begun to understand that the Russians will not help him. Shamil is threatening to kill his son or blind him. Fleeing, Hadji Murat is surrounded by Russian militiamen joined by Chechens who are his enemies.

When Hadji Aga, who was the first to reach him, struck him on the head with a large dagger, it seemed to Hadji Murad that someone was striking him with a hammer and he could not understand who was doing it or why. That was his last consciousness of any connection with his body. He felt nothing more and his enemies kicked and hacked at what had no longer anything in common with them.

Hadji Aga placed his foot on the back of the corpse and with two blows cut off the head, and carefully – not to soil his shoes with blood – rolled it away with his foot. Crimson blood spurted from the arteries of the neck, and black blood flowed from the head, soaking the grass. (Tolstoy, p. 667)⁶

The crimson color of Hadji Murad's blood in the end of Tolstoy's story was prefigured in the beginning in the image of the crimson thistle that the narrator picks and tries to include in his bouquet of field flowers.

I gathered myself a large bouquet and was going home when I noticed in a ditch, in full bloom, a beautiful *thistle plant* of the crimson variety, which in our neighborhood they call “*Tatar*” and carefully avoid when moving – or if they do happen to cut it down, throw out from among the grass for fear of pricking their hands. (p. 549)

The author has great difficulty breaking the thistle – “I had to struggle with it [...] breaking the fibers one by one; and when I had at last plucked it, the stalk was all frayed and the flower itself no longer seemed so fresh and beautiful”. (Tolstoy, p. 549)

From the “Tatars” conquered by Ivan the Terrible in Kazan and depicted in Russian folk songs to Tolstoy's thistle called “the Tatar” (tatarin) there is a winding line of literary works. Under the name “Tartar” or “Tatar” a variety of peoples appear, joined together by their Muslim creed. But a constant trait of “the Tatar” as he appears in these canonic texts is that he is the enemy of the Russians. In earlier times it was the Russian Christian mission that made “the Tatar” into an enemy, but later it was the presence of “the Tatar” in areas considered to be “true Russian territories” after having been conquered in warfare. Tolstoy questions this historical stereotype in his story *Hadji Murat*. Long before the word existed, Tolstoy works as a great deconstructionist in his stories. Far into old age he appears as a heretic, fighting clichés and conventions, pointing at falsity and at outright lying. His dissident battle earned him an excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901. Tolstoy was then 73 years old. Fifty years had passed since he was first confronted with the trampling of human values in the Russian war in the Caucasus. He was finishing his story *Hadji Murat*. ❌

Note: The quotations can be found in the Russian original at www.balticworlds.com.

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- 2 Up until the 1730s, written texts were mainly composed in “Slavonic” (later called Church-Slavonic), a variety of Slavic heavily influenced by its South-Slavic origin (*Altbulgarische*). Russian was a spoken language, and the amalgamation of Russian and Slavonic took place in the 18th century.
- 3 Khotin is the name of the Tatar city besieged by the Russians in 1621.
- 4 There were deletions in the edition published in Russia, mainly in the parts where Tolstoy criticizes Tsar Nicholas I. The complete text was published abroad.
- 5 Nicholas's constant fear of Polish uprisings makes him, in Tolstoy's novel, decree a near-to-death sentence (to run the gauntlet) for a Polish student who attacked his professor with a pen-knife.
- 6 Ibid., p.667. After the real Hadji Murat's death in 1852, his head was not only taken around and shown in Chechen villages by Russian militiamen, as Tolstoy describes it in his novel. It was also brought to St. Petersburg and ended up in Kunstkamera, a museum of curiosities founded by Tsar Peter I. There it has stayed to this very day. The Russian writer Andrei Bitov recently made a pledge that the head should be buried in Hadji Murat's grave in the Caucasus.

**MUSLIMS IN
THE RUSSIAN
LITERARY
TRADITION**

Memories of a land of dissidents

Ever since the days of Marquis de Custine, the Russian travelogue has constituted a literary genre in itself. The curiosity of travelers has been directed to traditions as much as to contemporary phenomena. They have one and all encountered dissenters, dissidents, and enemies of the system.

BY **MAGNUS LJUNGGREN**

THE USSR IN 1969

More than forty years ago, in the summer of 1969, my friend and colleague Lars Erik Blomqvist and I took a road trip in an old Peugeot to Leningrad and Moscow, a journey we have since come to see as extraordinary. In many ways, it was to shape us and shape our interests. There were encounters whose true meaning we did not fully understand at the time, but which seemed to become even more important afterwards and proved to be signposts on the way to the dramatic evolution and ultimate breakdown of the Soviet state.

Perhaps we hit the road at just the right moment and perhaps there was a little luck involved. It was as if we had landed at the center of the Russian intelligentsia at the precise moment when the intelligentsia, in a narrower sense of a select few critical intellectuals, was about to give up its last illusions about the Soviet regime. Intellectuals were beset by increasingly burdensome remorse after the conviction and sentencing of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel and the invasion of Prague, and were beginning to suffer acutely from their isolation in the hardening society of Leonid Brezhnev. Doors were opened to us everywhere – and due to the Stagnation itself, it seemed like everyone we looked up was available. And so we were able to cover a lot of ground in a short time, sometimes in a single day. The conversations swelled and billowed – for this was (and is) an oral culture, where the intensified oppression



Konstantin Azadovsky.

and the halted advance of literature after the Khrushchev Thaw only further reinforced the eternal love of talk. Memories were awakened, since the lid had been put on recent history and made Stalin's Terror unmentionable. The need to connect to a "before" had at this moment – in the ideological resignation of the intelligentsia – only become more desperate.

We were relatively well prepared. We had devoted particular study to the civil rights movement that had begun to emerge after the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial and had translated its most important documents – for the autumn publication of the paperback anthology *Sovjet-Protest* [Dissent in the Soviet Union]. In the

spring, we had also started a little publication we called *Rysk bokrevy* [Russian Book Review] that provided information about the arts and culture in Russia on somewhat circumspect, Soviet terms; that is, we did not write about prosecutions of authors and growing political dissent. Before arriving at the border, we carefully memorized a few addresses we had been given by our older, more experienced colleague, Annika Bäckström. Then we threw them out, only to write them down again on the other side, but with code names.

It all started in Leningrad, where we got acquainted with the scientist Aleksandr Gitelson, "Sasha", and his wife Irya Hiiva, a guide at the Hermitage. Irya was of Ingrian origin and had remarkable stories about the deportations of the Ingrians (her memories can

now be found on the shelves of Russian bookstores). Sasha was a true Jewish Leningrad intellectual with a wide contact network. Much later, we understood that the Gitelson apartment had been a central "pocket of resistance". Here, we learned to understand that the core of the intelligentsia, particularly in Leningrad, had very strong Jewish elements. Samizdat and tamizdat were read, and magnitizdat listened to (especially Aleksandr Galich's songs, which, with their satirical melancholy, seemed to capture perfectly the mood and the state of stagnation).¹ Here, there was access to the *Chronicle of Current Events*, which had just started to be distributed as typewritten copies. It contained details of new arrests and new underground literature. Whispered conversations were held, and the

dialogue often continued on children's "magic slates", about everything that seemed to be going on beneath the surface. It felt almost like being in a pressure cooker. Only a few months later, the plan of a few Leningrad Jews to hijack a plane failed; the wave of Jewish emigration in the 1970s was a direct consequence of this. Later, Sasha and Irya also left and ended up in the United States after the customary detour through Israel.

Via the Gitelsons, we got acquainted with a young poet we had read quite a bit about, especially in connection with the 1964 trial that sent him into exile in northern Russia for his social "parasitism": Joseph Brodsky. The morning we called on him at his tiny apartment on Liteiny Prospekt, the situation was one of high drama. He was lying there on a couch, reading the seventeenth-century English poet John Donne. At the absolute margins of society, he could be arrested again at any time. He described his KGB watchers as "people kleptomaniacs": if they see a free person, their fingers start to itch. His friend Efim Slavinsky (later a familiar voice on the BBC's Russian broadcasts) had been arrested the same morning. Slavinsky's wife was suddenly standing there in the apartment in utter despair: she did not know what she should do or what would happen next. Everything gradually started to seem like we were in a Kafka novel. Josef K. lay on the couch. Two posters hung on the wall, gifts from American friends. One proclaimed "Wanted: Joseph Brodsky". The other promised a match for the heavy-weight boxing championship of the world between the reigning champion Cassius Clay (as he was called then) and the same "Joseph Brodsky". As everyone knows, Josef K. was thrown out of the Soviet Union in 1972 and became "Joseph Brodsky" for real.

When we left the oppressive atmosphere in the apartment, we were accompanied by Brodsky, who frequently looked around and seemed aware with every step he took of the KGB shadows surrounding him. Brodsky had been a close friend of the literary scholar Konstantin Azadovsky, the same age as him, but they were on the outs at the moment. When we met him, we were struck by how he was even more "retro-spective", constantly looking over his shoulder as we moved. "Kostya", now chairman of the Petersburg chapter of the Russian Pen Club, ended up waiting a long time for his arrest. It did not happen until 1980, but then it was more infernal: the KGB planted a few grams of hashish on his shelf and put him in a prison camp for three years for "drug distribution". His ethnic background is threefold: Russian, German, and Jewish. This has made him a brilliant investigator of Russian-German cultural ties. No one has written about Rilke and Russia more penetratingly than he. We wandered around the central areas of the city with him, which was also a way to avoid the constant threat of bugging.

The conversation often returned to Dostoevsky and we soon undertook a Dostoevsky tour. The highlight was the corner building where the master had sat and worked on *Crime and Punishment*, and the nearby buildings with garrets that were the model for Raskolnikov's milieu. Today these buildings, especially the stairwells, have been fixed up and are stops on guided tours. Back then, everything felt untouched, as if one



Nina Gagen-Torn and Tamara Khmel'nitskaya in the obligatory kitchen milieu of the intelligentsia.

"Brodsky described his KGB watchers as 'people kleptomaniacs': if they see a free person, their fingers start to itch."

had stepped a hundred years back in time.

One of the Gitelsons' friends was a physicist and former political prisoner, Yuri Mekler, who would eventually become a prominent professor in Israel. He was funny and acerbic – and utterly devoid of all illusions. He saw no light on the horizon for Russia. The scenario he was able to imagine was, we can say in hindsight, extremely prophetic. He sensed the birth pangs of a Russian patriotic movement – in a situation when the Marxist doctrine was definitely drying up. In the best case scenario, he could imagine a future sham democracy with two parties – one communist and one nationalist. It would probably not last in the end; the two would be conjoined in the best interests of Russia. Interests were awakened here in Lars Erik that led to a book, *Sovjet blickar bakåt: Den nya ryska patriotismen*. [The Soviet Union looks backwards: The new Russian patriotism], published in 1972.

Via the Gitelsons, we also got in touch with another former political prisoner, Sergei Bernatsky, and his wife. He was not Jewish. Instead, he was, typically enough, interested in Russia's lost cultural distinctiveness. In the summers, he took long bicycle tours in the north, where he collected remnants of old Russian folk culture. In the 1970s, this evolved into a movement among right-leaning parts of the intelligentsia. Another symptom of this was that his wife was reading Vladimir Nabokov in tamizdat and fomenting a cult around her favorite author. She had made a pilgrimage – as so many others would soon do – to his childhood home in Rozhdestveno, southwest of Leningrad, and searched for and photographed what was left of the Nabokov estate. Bernatsky, like Mekler, kept in close

contact with other former prisoners; there was an entire network here, which played a role in distributing all the banned underground information. In Bernatsky's kitchen we were told, in whispers, about the "All-Russian Social-Christian Union for the Liberation of the People", broken up six months earlier, and the subsequent harsh sentences. What we did not understand then was that its members, with their dreams of a religious/national revival, were to a certain extent moving toward fascism. It was always taken for granted that people communicated with each other and socialized in kitchens, not living rooms. The atmosphere could become incredibly tense over tea, or "zakuska" (a kind of Russian hors d'oeuvre – cold cuts, fishes, pickled vegetables, and various sweets).

"The Nabokov photographs" had made such a strong impression that we felt we had to try to get out to Rozhdestveno. The foray did not end well. On the way there, in Oranienbaum, we were picked up by the police and subjected to an interrogation that was carefully logged – in indelible pencil. We had strayed outside the permitted zone. We were eventually allowed to sign the record and we feared the worst. But in that moment, the comportment of our interrogator changed: we were released with a warning and cordially invited to return under different circumstances.

Komarovo was inside the permitted zone on the north shore of the Gulf of Finland. This was the site, in the midst of an airy pine forest, of the Leningrad writers' summer residence. Anna Akhmatova had often stayed here, and was buried here. We had read about her funeral in 1966 – attended by many (from which the photograph of the young Brodsky, his hand covering his mouth above the open casket, eventually became famous). Her youthful profile hangs carved in relief on a pale stone wall angled around the grave in a vaguely modernist design. Fresh flowers always lay scattered on the stone wall.

Following another thread, we looked up literary scholar Tamara Khmel'nitskaya, one of several older authorities for young intellectuals. These "mentors"

had personal experience of the 1920s, of an avant-garde culture that like a sunken Atlantis was on the verge of being rediscovered by the young. Khmel'nitskaya had written an insightful foreword to a sensational edition of the collected poems of Andrei Bely. Since I was then working on a thesis on Bely, we obviously had to get in touch with her. It turned out that she had once been a favorite student of the formalist Yuri Tynyanov. She had also managed to preserve – as far as possible – a formalist approach to literature. But in parallel with her analytical edge, she gave an impression of something approaching innocence. In one and the same person, we seemed to see a driven literary scholar and a dewy young girl. This must have been connected to her very unusual background: she had married a colleague at the time of the German attack of 1941. Her husband had gone to war the day after the wedding, never to return, and thereafter she lived her life through literature. She was arrested in 1946. The innocent understood nothing: her quiet amazement during the interrogation is said to have caused even the NKGB (as it was called then) to waver: she was perhaps not fit for the roll of enemy of the people and conspirator. After a while, she was released.

Now, Khmel'nitskaya could provide fascinating glimpses into the Bely archive. At that point, relatively little had been written about Bely, and the West was ignorant of the archive. She referred to his at the time completely unknown “intimate autobiography”, which in some parts, in the depiction of dramatic “supernatural” experiences, is reminiscent of Strindberg's *From an Occult Diary*. At her side was her close friend, Yekaterina Melior, classicist and one-time student of the symbolist Vyacheslav Ivanov. Melior began to read aloud to us from a novel she was working on that was set in fifth-century Rome. Suddenly, in the KGB-controlled city, our gaze was lifted toward symbolism and two of its luminaries, Bely and Ivanov, still

largely taboo personages in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, and toward Ancient Rome.

From Leningrad, we traveled through Novgorod to Moscow, where we met a young intellectual we later lost track of, Vladimir Kasaravetsky. He sat alone and meditated and expressed himself in highly categorical terms. His understanding was, we heard, that the entire Russian intelligentsia had failed, given in to the powers that be – with one exception: Boris Pasternak. Only Pasternak had been able to measure up, stand up to the test, by refusing to legitimize the death sentences in the Moscow trials, by persevering with *Doctor Zhivago*, and finally by dying a martyr's death. What Kasaravetsky probably did not know was that the same Pasternak had been considered in the mid-1930s for the post of chairman of the Union of Soviet Writers and was actually rather dependent on the power structures. At any rate, his attitude expressed pessimism in the same vein as Mekler's. There was no future in sight.

We picked up a few extremely fruitful suggestions at the Mayakovsky Museum. We were advised to look up two people with close connections to Mayakovsky: historian of art and literature Nikolai Khardzhiev, and the renowned ex-formalist and author Viktor Shklovsky. We would have probably thought of Khardzhiev, especially since Lars Erik had translated his article on Modigliani's sketches of Akhmatova for our first trial issue of *Rysk bokrevy*. We visited him at home, where we were met by devastating expertise in a cramped hovel bedecked with priceless canvases by Natalia Goncharova and Kazimir Malevich that were rotated from time to time. Khardzhiev had met them all – except the two he most admired: the futurists Mayakovsky and Velimir Khlebnikov. He had been the friend of authors and artists. He could talk about Akhmatova and Osip Mandelstam (who both esteemed him equally highly as an interpreter of lyric poetry; the latter had spoken of his perfect poetic pitch), about the Oberiunist Daniil Kharms (with whom he had once shared a room and who declared him a genius), and about Malevich (whose autobiography he saved as it was about to go up in flames to warm the bones of shivering people during World War II). He had collected many original works, paintings and manuscripts, an entire treasure of art and literature, and through all the Stalin years remained unswervingly faithful to this Russian modernism: this was a great deed of cultural heroism. There was something of the demonic about him. He spoke – and we listened. His judgments could sometimes be ruthless, but his aesthetic sense never failed him. With his difficulties in the Soviet Union (he utterly lacked an official position), he was now hoping for an opportunity in the West.

We went on to see Shklovsky, who had an apartment in the writers' quarter. Another monologue ensued, one even more worth hearing, if that's possible, although it was somewhat more difficult to follow because Shklovsky enunciated poorly. One fascinating aspect was that Shklovsky – a diminutive, bald and cherubic fellow surrounded by overflowing floor-to-ceiling bookshelves – talked exactly as he wrote: in an “estranged” fashion, to use his own famous literary term, deeply personal and laconic,

AUTHOR PRESENTATION MAGNUS LJUNGGREN



Magnus Ljunggren is one among many in the category of Westerners who fall in love with the Russian language at an early age – and later with Russians and all things Russian. Their ardor holds them captive for the rest of their lives, regardless of the

professional paths they choose. In the days of the Cold War, the group of Russophiles in each individual country might not have been vast (and there is no guarantee it is any bigger now), but it was characterized by devotion and determination.

These characteristics were, at least in the majority of cases, hardly directed at the prevailing political, economic, and social system in Russia and the areas incorporated into the Russian realm. They were likely often based on curiosity about the unknown, the partly hidden, partly maligned, partly misunderstood piece of culture on the other side of an imagined border between – say, civilization and lack of civilization, democracy and dictatorship, the market and planning. Many other things no doubt beckoned.

A cohort of these Russophiles was trained every year at the Swedish Armed Forces Interpreter Academy, a program for training a cadre of conscripts where the core subject was the Russian language. Afterwards, a considerable number of graduates moved directly into Swedish political and administrative elites, becoming diplomats, journalists, translators. Some went on to academia, where they remained as leading representatives of their research areas. Magnus Ljunggren can be counted among the latter category.

He was, to be sure, following in the footsteps of his academic forebears. One of his great-grandfathers, Gustaf Ljunggren (something so un-Swedish as an un-Hegelian), was vice-chancellor of Lund University, while another great-grandfather, Axel Key (a student of pathologist Rudolf Virchow in Berlin), was vice-chancellor of Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm (which has for the past 110 years awarded the Nobel Prize in medicine). The field he chose for his own research, Russian literature, gave him access in various ways to other – and wider – intellectual circles that were allied or acquainted with each other in one way or another and happened to end up in roughly similar situations when the building of the socialist society began in earnest.

Around 1970, the young Magnus Ljunggren met some of the survivors of these circles among dissidents in Moscow and Leningrad. He had discussions with them and took notes. Some of these notes ended up in the press, where Ljunggren – a professor of Russian at Gothenburg University for many years – has always worked extensively on the side.

He is an international authority on the works of Andrei Bely. *Literatura kak miroponimanie – Literature as a world view: Festschrift in honour of Magnus Ljunggren* (2009) was published upon his retirement. An article by him about Bely and his relationship to the Dostoyevsky tradition appeared in BW IV:1.



The house on the corner of Przhevalsky and Kaznacheyevskaya Streets, where Dostoevsky wrote *Crime and Punishment*.

almost aphoristic. He recalled Mayakovsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Sergei Eisenstein; he told the story of how when the Germans attacked Eisenstein risked his own life to save the executed Meyerhold's archive, hidden behind a roof beam in a dacha near Moscow, from the Germans. He tossed off incisive literary observations almost carelessly. We began talking about our own two main interests, Bely's *Petersburg* and Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, whereupon Shklovsky emphasized that both novels had been the objects of their authors' repeated revisions and that, strictly speaking, neither was a finished work. He found this typically Russian – since it also applied to *Eugene Onegin*, *War and Peace*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. The Russian novel project is so grandiose that the authors are never really satisfied. This was a fresh insight.

If symbolism had been in the foreground when we met the older intellectuals in Leningrad, the focus had switched to cubism and futurism in conversations with these Muscovite gurus. It seemed only natural to move on to Lili Brik, who happened to be out at her dacha in Peredelkino at the time. The Mayakovsky Museum had not given us any recommendations about Brik, whom (in her capacity as the revolutionary poet's Jewish lover) the museum kept at arms' length. Peredelkino lay slightly outside the Moscow Zone open to foreigners. We had already run into trouble on forbidden ground in Oranienbaum and were living dangerously again. But we took the risk, by train – and were richly rewarded. We were treated to strawberries on a balmy summer's afternoon on Lili Brik's veranda in rather illustrious company. Lili's husband, literary scholar Vasily Katanyan, was there, along with the poet Andrei Voznesensky and his wife, children's book author Zoya Voskresenskaya, theater director Valentin Pluchek and, last not but least, ballerina Maya Plisetskaya and her husband, composer Rodion Shchedrin. Despite Lili Brik's official non-status, it felt like we had been inserted into a privileged layer of the intelligentsia. Plisetskaya and Shchedrin soon left us in an elegant Citroën. Everyone's sense of distress and anguish was noticeable. Vosnesensky was morose and complained of writer's block. When he left the gathering with the almost incantatory remark, "I'm off to bang now" (on the typewriter, it is understood, to finally get something done), someone in the group immediately replied "On whom?" In prison camp slang, "bang" also meant "squeal/rat out". Such was the atmosphere: pervasive awareness of the KGB's invisible presence.

Living memories of the 1920s were ever-present. Lili Brik, in a rather desperate need to preserve something of her former beauty, could suddenly burst out to the tall Lars Erik: "Now you are standing there just like Volodya used to do." Valentin Pluchek recollected not only the Mayakovsky productions by Meyerhold, whose theatrical troupe he had belonged to, but could also vividly, with his entire body, reproduce Andrei Bely's dancing apparition when the latter visited the Meyerhold theater and lectured on Gogol. In the end, Pluchek accompanied us to the railway station. Before we left, he forced himself to express his sense of shame about what had happened in Prague less than a year before.

We continued in Moscow by visiting two friends of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, then in disgrace and about to be ejected from the Union of Soviet Writers: Lev Kopelev and Lidiya Chukovskaya. They stood up for civil courage and protest while the circle around the Peredelkino veranda were lying low (and only dwelling on their guilt). Both gave testimony about Solzhenitsyn as a personage and friend. Kopelev had known him ever since their time together in the *sharashka* (prisons for intellectual specialists) in 1949; it was already widely known that he was the prototype for the Marxist Rubin in *In the First Circle*, then making the rounds in tamizdat. He made it clear to us that Solzhenitsyn would not in any way object to a Nobel Prize – quite to the contrary, in fact. That was important information. In Kopelev, we met an overwhelmingly charming personality with warm eyes and a graying, Moses-like beard. His home was the typical intelligentsia setting, only more pleasant and well cared-for. Bookshelves were filled with Russian and German literature (the latter the subject of his professional interest) behind glass doors, where photographs of friends and spiritual authorities had also been placed: Solzhenitsyn, Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Marina Tsvetaeva, Heinrich Böll. Kopelev had just reread Goethe's *Conversations with Eckermann* – otherwise, he specialized in more recent German literature. Abstract paintings by his artist friends hung on the walls, yet another non-dogmatic indication. Vodka was served at the round table – for once, not in the kitchen. Among those sitting beside us now was Kopelev's wife, literary scholar Raisa Orlova. It felt like this was an open house, with people coming and going almost at will. A German newspaper correspondent suddenly knocked on the door, right

after the conversation about Goethe. He happened to be named – Schiller. Another visitor then showed up without warning: the poet Boris Slutsky.

Slutsky was a genuine representative of the intelligentsia. He had made one major political error in his life he had never come to terms with: he had participated actively in the expulsion of Boris Pasternak from the Union of Soviet Writers in 1958. His feelings of guilt about his singular diatribes against the Nobel Laureate (including spouting off about Swedish revenge for Poltava) were to be explored in his verse and finally, according to several commentators, would drive him to madness. His melancholic tendencies were palpable. The party finally broke up, and Slutsky acted as our very knowledgeable guide through the writers' quarter. He was able to point out the abodes of old, hibernating poets of the Silver Age.

Next stop Lidiya Chukovskaya. It turned out she lived downtown, near Gorky Street. She added new facets to our picture of Solzhenitsyn. Her father, children's book author Korney Chukovsky (who was still alive), had put up Solzhenitsyn in his dacha in Peredelkino after he had been increasingly isolated in the wake of his critical letter to the writers' congress in 1967 and with both *Cancer Ward* and *In the First Circle* banned by the censor and smuggled to the West. She described Solzhenitsyn as a nearly perfect creative personality: at once utterly concentrated on his work yet joyful and zestful. She did not speak a word about a nascent nationalism in her friend; instead he was presented in every way as "one of us", a liberal. One might remember that the linguist Vyacheslav Ivanov, Kopelev's son-in-law, later – looking back at the 1960s – emphasized the same qualities in Solzhenitsyn: an author who did not lock himself into any particular explanation of the world, a dialogically open fellow man. Did something nevertheless happen with Solzhenitsyn in the 1970s? She also painted a vivid picture for us of her long friendship with Akhmatova, which would soon gain its consummate literary expression in the now classic work in three volumes, in which she transforms herself into Akhmatova's own Eckermann. She made it pungently clear that it was Akhmatova who should rightfully have had Sholokhov's Nobel Prize in 1965, that "Sweden" had caved in to Soviet pressure. She herself was in the news in our own country that particular year, since her smuggled-out fictionalized account of Stalin's Terror, *The Deserted House* (also



Left: General Epanchin's house in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, where Prince Myshkin arrives in the novel's first chapter. On this corner is the building where Joseph Brodsky had his apartment – soon a Brodsky Museum will be opened there. Right: Former Sheremetev Palace at the Fontanka Canal where Anna Akhmatova lived. Today, the Akhmatova Museum.

known as *Sofia Petrovna*), had been published in Swedish translation.

Chukovskaya also recalled her 1941 evacuation to the town of Chistopol in Tatarstan, where she had gotten to know Marina Tsvetaeva. She gave a harrowing picture of Tsvetaeva's extreme humiliation: unemployed, banned from publishing, her husband and daughter imprisoned – just before her suicide.

Oddly enough, Chukovskaya did not seem terribly disturbed by the fact that her eyesight was at this point severely impaired. She worked just as hard as before, using tools like thick felt pens. On her walls hung the “iconic images” of course – of Solzhenitsyn and Akhmatova – but also of Frida Vigdorova, unknown to us. We later found out that it was Vigdorova who had secretly managed to write down almost every word of the trial against Brodsky in 1964 and thus generate a wave of international support for the “parasite”.

Finally, there was one meeting in Moscow that seemed utterly singular, but no less meaningful. We connected with Bely's friend and fellow poet Sergei Solovyov's daughter Olga. She turned out to be a professed Catholic, and completely estranged from the society that surrounded her. This is also one way life could be lived in the Soviet Union of the Stagnation, in small enclaves that preserved ties to the past (her father had by turns been both a Catholic priest and a Uniate priest before he was arrested and went mad in the GPU's interrogation facility). How did she keep her head above water? With embroidery and sewing work, by choosing to live at near-subsistence wages.

It was an overwhelming journey, brimming with impressions that we had to process over the course of many years. Looking back, I can say that it was pregnant with the entire Soviet disaster. A dying ideology, an intelligentsia that was slowly taking a stand, Jews on the brink of departing, nationalists coalescing. Solzhenitsyn's resistance struggle that would lead to *The Gulag Archipelago*, the bomb that would explode in the midst of the Stagnation of the 1970s, the overwhelming social importance of literature, the ties to the past that would only grow stronger. Two Nobel laureates in the making (of whom we managed to meet one), a third constantly in the limelight. All of this would culminate in glasnost and, almost overnight, erase the Soviet Union.

In hindsight, one might regret that we did not stay longer, that we did not do more. Everything was open to us. There was a massive need for contact on the other side. But others would come after us and establish new ties. We just happened to be among the first. ✖

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- 1 The Russian word *samizdat* refers to the process of copying and distributing a forbidden text. Often the copying was done by hand, by retyping the text, or with the use of carbon paper. *Tamizdat* refers to forbidden texts that were smuggled out, and then brought back in normal printed form. *Magnitizdat* refers to audio recordings of censored music, speeches, etc. that were copied and distributed illegally.



Magnus Ljunggren and Kazimiera Ingdahl with Pyotr Grigorenko in Stockholm, spring 1980.

THE USSR IN 1974

The summer of 1974 was made truly memorable for me by a journey to the Soviet Union in search of writers and intellectuals in Leningrad and Moscow. To some extent this was a reprise of the roadtrip

Lars Erik Blomqvist and I took to Leningrad and Moscow five years earlier. As before, I visited writers as well as colleagues who wrote about Russian symbolism, in particular those writing on Andrei Bely. I also performed some tasks for Amnesty International.

The country was mired in the Brezhnev Stagnation. Life was seemingly at a standstill, but below the surface, things were vibrating. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's showdown with the system had just reached its culmination.

Around the end of the previous year, Solzhenitsyn had let *The Gulag Archipelago* explode in the West. In February – after an intensive campaign (which also targeted Andrei Sakharov) – he was arrested and deported to points west. That spring, he sent out an essay, “Live Not by Lies”, in samizdat. At that moment, every Soviet intellectual was forced to define his or her personal relationship to the Lie. Solzhenitsyn was then living in Zurich and working on his new novel, *Lenin in Zurich*. He was expected in Stockholm that autumn to finally accept the 1970 Nobel Prize.

Anyone who could speak the language had some grasp of the social situation was welcomed – regardless of the unseen presence of the KGB. The obvious topic among the intelligentsia was the gauntlet thrown down by Solzhenitsyn. Samizdat copies of the *Gulag Archipelago* (possession of which put the reader in considerable peril) had begun to make the rounds. One must remember that the Stalin Terror was utterly taboo in the Soviet Union at that time. Stalin was never mentioned by name – nor was Khrushchev. The painful separation of the intelligentsia from the rest of the world was stronger than ever.

From Leningrad, I made my way to the writers' summer residence in Komarovo near the Gulf of Finland. Here, we were far from the stone desert of Leningrad and I got the feeling the writers became more outspoken among the whispering pines. We sat on the veranda and talked.

One of the people there was Leonid Panteleev, a nearly legendary children's book author who wrote instructive yet funny books about how street urchins in the 1920s were re-educated to become Soviet citizens. Now, leaning on a cane, he might have seemed removed from current conflicts. But such was not the



Grigorenko in lively conversation with Lev Kopelev.

case. He turned out to be a passionate supporter of Solzhenitsyn. He had, it emerged, as far back as Solzhenitsyn's expulsion from the Union of Soviet Writers in 1969, sent a strongly worded personal protest. His words reinforced a general impression that many more writers had shown courage and solidarity with Solzhenitsyn's appeal than we were aware of.

Efim Dobin had been a die-hard in the 1930s, a brutal critic and literary scholar who came to terms with dangerous ideological and artistic deviations. I later found out it was he who had, at a writers' meeting in 1936, with vicious mockery, pushed the original prose experimenter Leonid Dobychin out of the fellowship and drove him to throw himself into the Neva. Here, I met in Dobin a genial little man who had changed his mind and refocused his literary research on Anna Akhmatova. This was a sign of the times. Everything in the Soviet Union under Brezhnev was more complex than it looked on the surface.

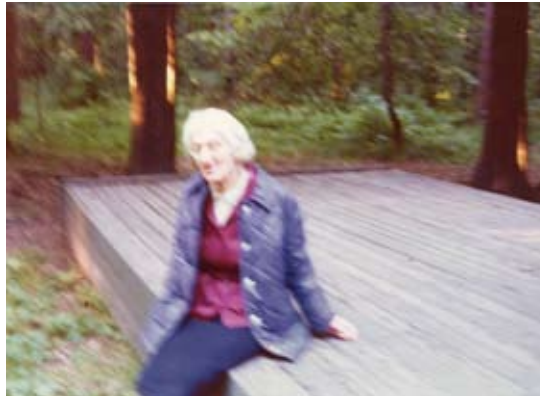
Emilij Mindlin – hair white as snow, eyes as open and inquisitive as a child's – had a long career as playwright and prose writer behind him. But while his work was not especially remarkable, his life story was all the grander, condensed in his memoirs, *Neobyknovennye sobesedniki* [Unusual interlocutors], which had, surprisingly enough, been published a few years previously.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Mindlin had come into close contact with nearly all the greats. He could tell the story of how Osip Mandelstam had climbed in through his window late one night in Feodosia on the shores of the Black Sea and how this Mandelstam then fairly filled the room with his poetry as he declaimed aloud, his head held theatrically high. He was there at the start of Mikhail Bulgakov's career: it was Mindlin whom Bulgakov had showered with causeries for the magazine *Nakanune* [The day before], the future Master's experimental workshop.

Those Mindlin became closest to, at different points, were Marina Tsvetaeva and Andrei Platonov. In 1921, at the tender age of 20, he had a love affair with Tsvetaeva that resulted in her cycle of poems *Otrok* [The boy], dedicated to him. He described her as the ideal guide in a Moscow that was still a mystery to him, hailing from the South and the Black Sea as he did. This was *her* city; she was able to tell the story of almost every building in her district. In the memoir, Mindlin presented Platonov as a “very, very great writer”. He had apparently always known this, before everyone else. He talked about Platonov's passionate



Grigorenko with his Down Syndrome son Alik and his wife, Zinaida, after his release from the mental institution.



Lidiya Chukovskaya sitting on the small outdoor stage for children next to her father's dacha in Peredelkino.



Nina Gagen-Torn.

sense of life and his deep melancholy, a man who had found it increasingly difficult to print his prose in the 1930s. He wrote and wrote – but with ever scarcer opportunities to publish. His son was sent to the camps and returned with TB, which led him to a slow and early death – and with which he infected his father. Mindlin had witnessed and lived it all.

It turned out Mindlin had a special relationship to Sweden. As a correspondent, he was there when the icebreaker Krasin saved the shipwrecked Nobile expedition at the North Pole. He had helped search for the remains of the lost Finn Malmgren – to no avail – and was later assigned to visit Stockholm on the way home and inform Malmgren's aged mother of the fruitless efforts. In Oslo, he took the opportunity to get acquainted with Alexandra Kollontai and later followed her path to the ambassadorial appointment in Stockholm from a distance, and wrote about her. He expressed hopes of being allowed to return to Sweden. We soon began to correspond, but it turned out his days were measured. He had become ill right there in Komarovo, and afterwards steadily declined.

It could be that, as a Swede, I was received with special understanding and trust. Inside Leningrad, I saw Nina Gagen-Torn again, whom I had gotten to know a few years before. She was of Swedish descent on her father's side. As a young ethnographer, she had been captivated by symbolist Andrei Bely's personality and worldview and had become – also as a poet – his student. She had ended up in the camps twice. The second time, after the war, she was held at Kolyma, where with her unusual fortitude and endurance she became a rock of support for her fellow prisoners. She was now retired and living in a collective apartment with her dog, hoping only to get her camp memoirs and camp poetry published. I got a few poems printed in *Kontinent*, but was unable to secure a place for the memoir vignettes. Unfortunately, it was only posthumously that it all turned around – today, she is often presented as a unique Gulag witness. Vitaly Shentalinsky writes about her in his book *Raby svobody* [Slaves of freedom] (2009), describing her as a remarkable prisoner who never lost her power to resist, who was able to find strength in a yoga-like state that in fact ultimately emanated from what she learned from Bely, the anthroposophist. On one occasion, she threatened to bite off the nose of her interrogator – unusual behavior in NKVD cells, to say the least. She was a powerfully built woman, somewhat squat, still with a twinkle in her eye. To see her force her way through the crowds on a bus platform on Nevsky Prospekt was an experience in

“The Russian civil rights movement was made up of a small group of people who were often related.”

and of itself. She worked methodically – age notwithstanding – with her entire body. A survivor.

In Leningrad, I also met the 25-year-old literary scholar Aleksandr Lavrov, whose academic interest was focused on Bely. He had found a new way to write, saturated with facts and hyper-objective, that was politically unexceptionable yet made not the least concession to the Powers. He eventually developed his “Bely-istics” to the level of mastery. Today, he has more than 500 publications to his name and was fêted in style when he turned sixty, an honored member of the Academy. Even then, his archival knowledge was impressive and it was to become unsurpassed. After a while, he sent me one of his comprehensive papers by mail. One word was stricken out: the description of Bely's anthroposophy as “reactionary”. He wanted to denote that this was the censor's contribution to a scholarly document otherwise devoid of value judgments.

I continued on to Moscow where new encounters awaited in a somewhat different climate, characterized by a palpably active struggle for civil rights, with Sakharov as the figurehead. I first looked up the Germanist Lev Kopelev, the prototype for Rubin in Solzhenitsyn's *In the First Circle*, who was still (as in the novel) a free-thinking Marxist. It felt like he was now moving away from his ideological ties – especially when Roy Medvedev suddenly dropped in, perhaps the last Marxist in the movement. Kopelev and Medvedev disagreed on much – but got along well nonetheless.

It was Kopelev who had introduced Solzhenitsyn to his friend Heinrich Böll and made sure that Solzhenitsyn, after his deportation, ended up in safe hands with his German fellow Nobel Laureate. As a result, Kopelev was living under threat and pressure and his expulsion from the Writers' Union would eventually become inevitable. At this moment, the civil rights movement was showing serious fissures. On the one side, there was Medvedevian Marxism, on the other, Solzhenitsyn, who before his exile wrote with such defiant criticism of the academic intelligentsia that

Kopelev's own stepdaughter had repudiated him. But Kopelev was distinguished by his conciliatory spirit; he could point at a photograph on the shelf of the prototypes of the three protagonists in *In the First Circle* and fix his gaze particularly on the third, Dimitri Panin (Sologdin in the novel) and try to soften the impression of Panin's hardcore nationalism with the judgment “What a wonderful face!”

But at the moment, Kopelev was most worried about Vladimir Bukovsky, who was reportedly in poor condition after several hunger strikes for prisoners' rights in Vladimir. Only writers lived in the building. Oddly enough, on one floor lived Bukovsky's own father – a mediocre writer of Siberian rural vignettes. Kopelev exhorted us in the West to try in any way we could to support the young champion of human rights – who would eventually be exchanged for the leader of the Communist party in Chile.

When Kopelev heard that I was writing a dissertation on Bely, he called his colleague Vladimir Piskunov. Piskunov's earlier work had focused mainly on socialist realism. His works of literary scholarship had hopelessly clichéd titles like “World, Man, Art”. Now he, like Dobin, had changed tack and switched Gorky for Bely. As a result, he was then essentially published only in translation – in Ceaușescu's Romania, where he soon had an entire volume of texts by and about Bely published. He was also involved in a beautifully designed special issue of a Romanian arts journal about Bely. All of this was still impossible in the Soviet Union.

The translator Tatiana Litvinova, daughter of Stalin's foreign minister Maxim Litvinov, became another Moscow acquaintance. She sat there in a cramped studio apartment, furnished almost exclusively with books. The Russian civil rights movement was made up of a small group of people who were often related. Litvinova's nephew Pavel had instigated the demonstration on Red Square protesting the invasion of Czechoslovakia and was sent to Siberia for it. He was married to Kopelev's daughter. Tatiana herself was the widow of the sculptor who had designed Boris Pasternak's original headstone.

Litvinova did not sign protest letters. She worked underground to support political prisoners. She talked about *The Gulag Archipelago* as an utterly overwhelming reading experience. She had read it at one sitting, through the night, in carbon copy – soon passing it on. She, the former foreign minister's daughter,



On a country lane outside Vladimir.



On another country lane near Vladimir.



Vladimir prison.

said she had not until now understood the scope of the Soviet regime's crimes, including those beyond Stalin. She was also deeply concerned about the fate of Vladimir Bukovsky; he may have aroused her maternal instincts. It is a fact – as I could tell her – that there were several older women members of the Swedish branch of Amnesty International who had adopted Bukovsky as their particular cause. One was the opera singer Gurli Lemon-Bernhard, who was trying to exert pressure on the Soviet authorities via her husband, Carl Gustaf Bernhard, permanent secretary of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

I soon proceeded and caught the suburban train to Peredelkino and Lydia Chukovskaya. In the autumn of 1973, she had made sure Solzhenitsyn was given sanctuary in her father Kornei Chukovsky's dacha in Peredelkino. That also meant she had grappled with the powerful and was ultimately, at the same time Solzhenitsyn was deported, expelled from the Writers' Union. She was nearly blind and wrote only with difficulty using fat felt-tip pens. She sniffed at the Powers that had tried in every way to curtail her freedom of movement. Now she was caught up in a struggle to convert the dacha in Peredelkino into a museum dedicated to her father, every Russian child's "Grandpa Kornei".

Chukovskaya showed me around the creaking stairways, every inch of space on the walls hung with framed photographs and manuscripts. We sat down in "Solzhenitsyn's room", where I was given a situation report. The Writers' Union was out to take the dacha away from her. But she refused to yield an inch: she was a tiger. She already saw herself as the victor when she was expelled from the union. At the meeting, she declared that it was only a matter of time before Russia would be given its Solzhenitsyn Avenues and Sakharov Squares (something I remembered 25 years later when I suddenly found myself on the way into the huge library of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, located on – Sakharov Square).

When Chukovskaya stood there and read her speech, the text held very close to her eyes, she had – she told me – suddenly dropped the paper, which fluttered to the floor in a whirlwind. None of the old fuddy-duddies who had fallen over each other in the rush to condemn her could bring themselves to assist her, a helpless, half-blind woman. She had to pick it all up herself, and I am sure she did so with dignity. Despite her disability, she was still working as hard as ever and was then writing an entire book about her ex-

pulsion. Obviously, she eventually won her battle and the dacha is now a popular museum.

Pyotr Grigorenko, a prominent figure in the civil rights movement, had recently been released after five years in isolation at KGB mental hospitals with the diagnosis of "insidious schizophrenia". This was actually a gesture of goodwill on the part of the state in preparation for Richard Nixon's visit to Moscow. I went to see Grigorenko on Komsomol Prospekt, where I encountered a vigorous and humble social critic. Litvinova had prepared him for my arrival and the table was already laid with cognac glasses and hors d'oeuvres in the Russian style. We drank to Grigorenko's newfound freedom and then I was privileged to hear his summation of what had happened to him. He described how his political awareness had evolved in three phases. First came understanding of the true meaning of the Terror in 1937, then the discovery during the war that hundreds of thousands of human lives had quite simply been needlessly sacrificed, and finally there was the perception in the early 1960s that the pendulum, after a few hopeful years of de-Stalinization, seemed inexorably to be swinging back again.

Of significant help to Grigorenko in enduring his imprisonment was his reading – of a dedicated Böll volume and of Goethe's *Faust* in the original, which Kopelev had given him. In a room with about 40 terribly ill and noisy patients, he had conquered Faust with the help of a dictionary. I got the impression of unusual strength of mind.

Grigorenko stood out as a confirmed "homo politicus". He was well informed about world events during the time he was interned. He talked about the generals in Chile and the colonels in Greece. In the midst of the accelerating Brezhnev repression, he declared his belief in the possibility of a democratic evolution in the Soviet Union. I heard him say that the Russians are actually a peaceful people: they have had enough of violence and bloodshed; there is no need to fear that dark forces in the ranks of the people will be released if the bounds of human liberty are extended.

The spirit of Solzhenitsyn hovered over everything. Grigorenko told me that Solzhenitsyn – at their one and only meeting – had encouraged him to write the true story of "the Great War of the Fatherland". This was a gargantuan task that he said was beyond his ability, but he eventually was able to produce a worthwhile memoir that included detailed sections about the war. He was well aware that there was an Amnesty

International group in Sweden – again, mainly women – working energetically on his behalf. The group had supported the family with visits, letters, and phone calls during the long period of internment.

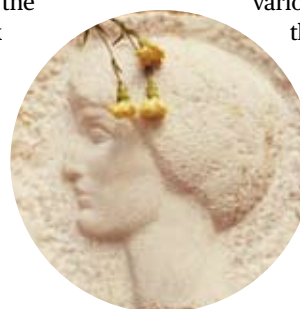
A few years later, Grigorenko would be sitting – in an embroidered Ukrainian shirt – in a house on Lidingö, guest of his Swedish guardian spirits. This was at almost the same time Bukovsky came to visit the Bernhard family on the very same island of Lidingö. I would never have dreamed this was possible in 1974. Everything seemed so petrified then.

Finally, only the indirect encounter with Bukovsky himself remained, in Vladimir. We took a bus tour with the group to the "Golden Ring", and once I was in Vladimir, a fellow passenger and I could make our way to the prison and photograph it from a stand of trees, where we concealed ourselves. Vladimir seemed to encompass the entire Russian paradox. The heartbreaking beauty of the golden church domes and the notorious prison. In the gutter, we met a terribly downtrodden alcoholic who knew every poem Sergei Esenin had ever written by heart. Our hired bus driver knocked back a few glasses of vodka and said, bleary-eyed: "Of course Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn are telling the truth about our society. But what need do I have for the truth?"

Everything seemed interwoven with everything else: literature with civil rights activism, humanities research with the ideological death throes. Defenders of the dogma of socialist realism snarled themselves in ever more impossible contradictions as they justified Dostoevsky as a great national writer. The inexorable process of ideological dissolution was in full swing.

When I came home, I published an article about Bukovsky, illustrated with the photograph of the prison. And interview with Grigorenko was printed. In yet another commentary on Human Rights Day on the 10th of December when Solzhenitsyn accepted his prize, I wrote about Vladimir Prison: "It lies out of the way, hidden among lush greenery. Nearby – only five minutes away – Western tourists amble, all unaware of the most feared prison in the Soviet Union." I used various pseudonyms: I had to assure myself the possibility of being allowed to return to this strange and wondrous country. ✖

Bas-relief profile of Anna Akhmatova beside her grave in Komarovo by the Gulf of Finland.



Using the classics to understand Europe in the present

Identity, borders, and politics

Sven Eliaeson &
Nadezhda Georgieva
(eds.)
*New Europe: Growth
to Limits?*

Oxford: The Bardwell
Press 2010
454 pages

THE BOOK CONTAINS contributions from the third in a series of symposia held in honor of the late Polish sociologist Edmund Mokrzycki (1937–2001). The volume is the brainchild of the extremely imaginative Swedish sociologist Sven Eliaeson, of Uppsala University. Eliaeson has worked for years in Warsaw, which has inspired his efforts to bring Polish research and policy into the European mainstream, where it so obviously belongs. Communism and the Soviet Union never managed to regiment Polish society, although the nearly fifty years of repression after the widespread devastation of World War II left deep wounds, wounds the country is only now beginning to overcome under Donald Tusk's liberal-conservative government and a vibrant economy, one that survived the financial crisis surprisingly well. Despite all attempts at communist regimentation, Polish sociology and historical research held up well and maintained their independence to a surprising degree.

One of the most influential Polish sociologists was Stanisław Ossowski (1897–1963), whose most important work, *Class Structure in the Social Consciousness*, was published in English in 1963. Ossowski had a profound influence on Mokrzycki, who was allowed several sojourns in the West even before the fall of communism, including visits to Oslo and Gothenburg in 1972, and later Berkeley, Chicago, and Wassenaar in the Netherlands. Mokrzycki's own magnum opus, *Philosophy of Science and Sociology*, in which he attempted to add a humanist dimension to positivist sociology, was published in English in 1984. After a stay at the European University Institute in Florence in 1992–1993, he became a leading figure at the Warsaw satellite campus, established in 1995, of George Soros's Central European University. His sudden death in 2001 left a tremendous void, which Eliaeson and other of his friends and students have tried to fill with a series of symposia aimed at bringing Eastern and Western Europe together to examine the significance of the former communist countries to the new EU after the enlargement of 2004. Eliaeson was assisted with the editing by a young Bulgarian scholar, Nadezhda Georgieva of Trakia University in Stara Zagora, who has studied in Poland.

The main thrust is a refreshing and interesting shift of intellectual emphasis

toward the East created by gathering scholars from Germany and Poland along with a few other mainly Western European researchers. As a Dane, I must admit that it is shameful that Denmark has not been more involved in such efforts with Polish intellectuals. The Danish opening to the east has primarily been aimed at the Baltic countries, which, because of the Danish small-country syndrome, are easier to cope with than large and self-assured Poland. It was only the independence of the Baltic countries in 1990–1991 that led Denmark to stop officially calling itself a small country and start talking about itself simply as a country, i.e. a country that pursues its interests in the world and doesn't simply adapt to those of others, as is the normal small-state behavioral pattern. This semantic change was soon followed by a militarily activist foreign policy. But the activism has not engendered much Danish interest in neighboring Poland as anything other than a supplier of highly skilled labor during the economic boom that lasted until 2008, and as a promising object of investment for Danish agriculturalists. There is virtually no political and intellectual interest in Poland and the few Polish language courses that existed during the Cold War have stopped being offered, even though Poland is Denmark's second-largest neighboring country after Germany – a country whose language young Danes also seem unable to work up the enthusiasm to learn. This lack of interest in Poland is often blamed precisely on the fact that Poland is a large country now making increasing efforts to take its rightful place in the European project and play a role commensurate with its size. This does not sit well with Danes, who have always had difficulty with large (non-English-speaking) countries. Hopefully, this book is evidence that mysophobia is less prevalent in Sweden than in the other Nordic countries, and not simply evidence of the energy and open-mindedness of one individual.

HAS ELIAESON MANAGED to produce an interesting contribution to a changed understanding of the new Europe? Only partially. My main reservation is that he has been too faithful to the original symposium concept. The ideas and presentations are generally of good quality, even though not everyone has added something new or interesting. Such is always the case with conferences, which is exactly why one must maintain a steady hand when transforming conference proceedings into a book. This is not to say no work has been done on the contributions. They have been technically reviewed and are presented in mainly comprehensible English. However, the editing has taken such a long time that the entire anthology already seems a bit outdated, since most of the contributions were thought out and written before the crisis of the euro and European integration in 2008 and the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. The wise reader will, however, do well to ignore this deficiency, and can do so all the more easily, given that most papers rise above the topical and institutional details of the European project. This applies particularly to the first thematic section, which is dedicated to national identity and borders. The key contributors are heavy-

weight Western European scholars such as Jürgen Kocka, Dieter Gosewinkel, and Jan Zielonka, who are always worth reading even if, here, they mainly repeat what they have written elsewhere.

IT MUST BE admitted, however, that Jürgen Kocka, one of the leading comparative historians and for many years the driving force behind one of the most influential efforts at writing comparative history on a world scale in Berlin, has taken the easy way out in delivering a short contribution with no footnotes nor references. The result, however, is still full of ideas and interesting suggestions about the meaning of inner and outer borders in Europe. His piece belongs to an intense German debate about Turkey's and Ukraine's past, present, and future relations with Europe. In a well-argued text, Kocka explicitly dismisses all essentialist cultural understandings of Europe, such as those propounded by some of his colleagues in the circle around the journal *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, primarily Heinrich August Winkler and Hans-Ulrich Wehler, who oppose any consideration of Turkish membership in the EU because of their reading of Turkey's history, and present Muslim character. Yet none of these scholars, however good they may otherwise be as social historians, has any particular expertise on subjects like national identity and ideas in southern and southeastern Europe.

This lack of specialist knowledge also characterizes Kocka's sympathetic contribution, even though he rightly states that borders are prerequisites for collective group identity and thus democracy – the “social cohesiveness” political pundits have begun talking about in recent years. This is true for individual states and the EU as a whole. This insight, though, does not prevent Kocka from making a mistake in his discussion on the Ural Mountains as the perceived border of Europe. His formulation is correct insofar as the idea first emerged in eighteenth-century Russia as a consequence of Peter the Great's shifting of Russia toward the west in 1703 by moving the capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg – on then Swedish territory where the Neva River empties into the Baltic! Kocka writes that the Russian historian and geographer Vasily Nikitich Tatishchev was the first to suggest, in the mid-eighteenth century, that the eastern border of Europe should be drawn at the Urals. It is true that Tati-

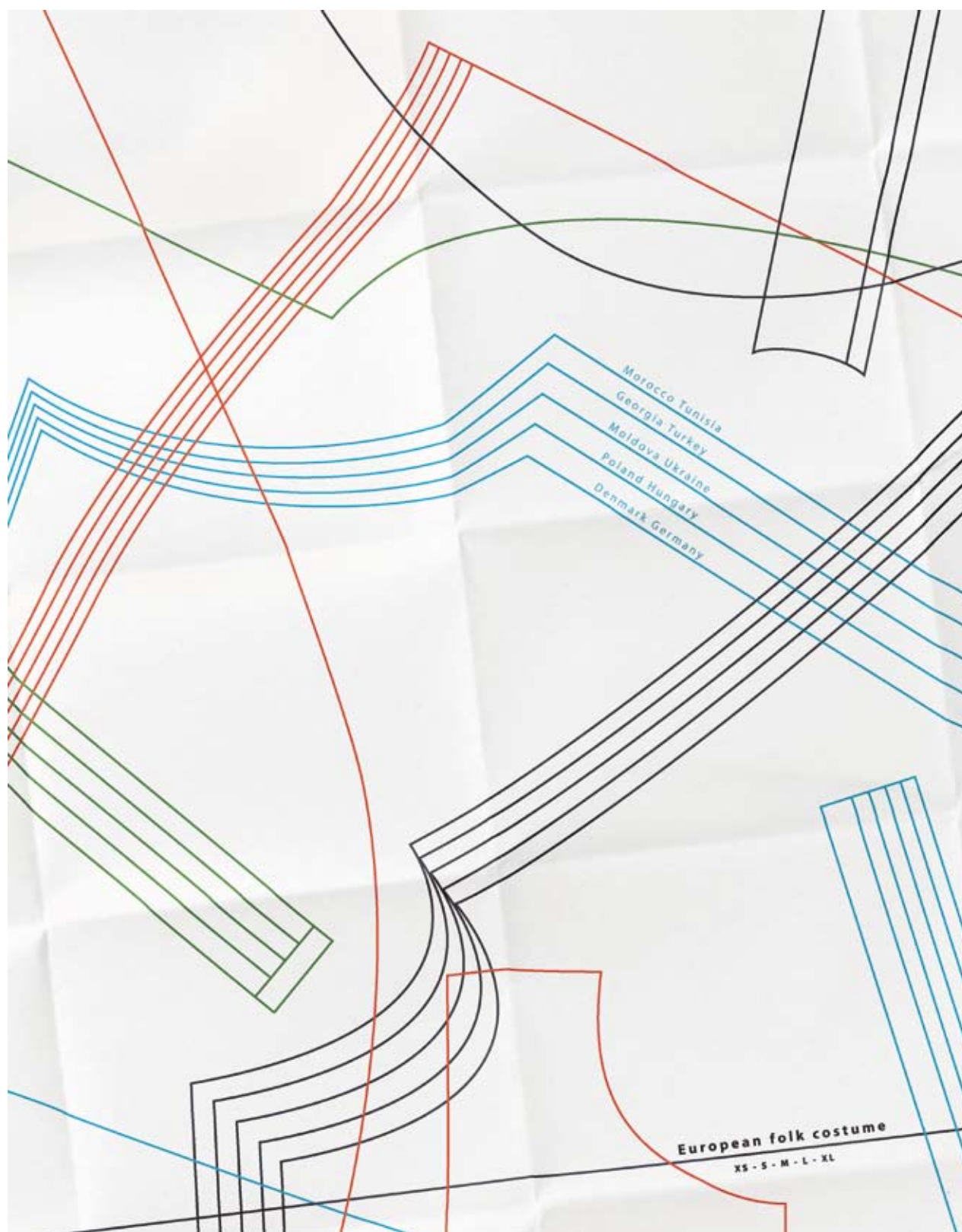


ILLUSTRATION: KARIN SUNVISSON

shchev suggested this, but he was not the first to broach the idea. That honor belongs to a German officer serving in the Swedish military who spent many years as a prisoner of war in Siberia.

AS PART OF his attempt to “Europeanize” Russia, Peter the Great ordered the Swedish officer (of German descent) Philip Johan von Strahlenberg to redraw the map of Russian possessions in Asia. Strahlenberg was taken prisoner by the Russians in connection with the devastating Swedish defeat at Poltava (in Ukraine) in 1709. He spent his time in captivity in Siberia, where he worked as a cartographer and ethnographer.

After his return to Sweden, he published two works, of which the first in particular, *Das nord- und östliche Theil von Europa und Asia*, published in 1730 (reprinted in Hungary in 1975), became a source of inspiration for many later geographers. For reasons unknown, this demarcation became decisive for the perception of the political geography of Europe among ordinary Europeans ever since. Before Strahlenberg’s book was published, Europeans had drawn the line to the East at the border of Poland, somewhere in Ukraine, often along the Dnieper. But after Strahlenberg’s contribution, it became customary to draw the border along the otherwise unassuming Ural Mountains. It was as a consequence of this new drawing of the map of Europe that a location in Lithuania was named the geographical center of Europe after the Baltic countries had fallen to Russia as a result of the partitions of

Poland. This geographical demarcation of Europe is commemorated today with a monument near Molėtai, about 100 km north of the capital city of Vilnius, marking the “center of Europe”. It was at this time that Poland/Lithuania and other central European countries began to be called “Eastern Europe”, a designation that eventually was extended to cover Russia as well, a country that previously had been considered part of “Northern Europe” along with Scandinavia and Poland, as convincingly demonstrated by Larry Wolff in *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (1994).

THIS FACTUAL OBJECTION, however, does not lessen the value of Kocka’s general observations on the relativity involved in determining the geographic borders of Europe, this is particularly true given that his observations invite further consideration. In reality, Russia straddles Europe and Asia and has done so ever since the principality of Moscow conquered Tatar Kazan at the River Volga in the middle of the 16th century and began expanding into Siberia in the 17th century. All of the vast territory along the Trans-Siberian Railway is nowadays just as Russian as the “European” parts of Russia. The border at the Urals can thus be considered both arbitrary and invented for political purposes at a particular moment in history. But on the maps, it has been elevated to the status of a boundary between cultures and civilizations. The notion of the Ural Mountains as the border of Europe was revived by French President de Gaulle around 1960. His object was not to give a lesson in geography, but rather to undermine the multinational Soviet Union by pointing out that its polity, in addition to being communist and hostile to Europe, was also “unnatural” in that it encompassed both “European” and “Asian” peoples.

The best contributions in the book thus invite the reader to further reflection, including topics not addressed explicitly, such as Turkey’s relations with the EU. The position of Turkey in Europe is constantly present as a sub-text and frame of reference, but is not explored in depth by any of the authors. That is a shame, because the method of combining historical, sociological, and political insights can take scholars a long way, especially on a topic like discussions of the geographical borders of Europe. This debate is informed by

Reviewers



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Continued.

Using the classics to understand Europe in the present

widespread beliefs that Turkey lies outside Europe in purely geographical terms, while Russia – up to the Ural Mountains – belongs to it. Every child has come to learn the borders of Europe as the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, the Urals and the Mediterranean. Looking at the EU's official formulations on the nature of Europe over the years, however, does not provide any clear answers. The Declaration on the Future of the European Union adopted at the EU summit in Laeken in December 2001 expressed it thus: "[Europe is] the continent of liberty, solidarity, and above all diversity, meaning respect for others' languages, cultures, and traditions. The European Union's one boundary is democracy and human rights." And Article 58 of the Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe of 2005 stated: "The Union shall be open to all European states which respect the values referred to in Article 1–2, and are committed to promoting them together." This wording is retained in the Treaty of Lisbon, still with no closer definition of what constitutes a "European state". To reach such an understanding one is compelled to study the actual decisions of the EU.

WHEN MOROCCO APPLIED to accede to the EU in 1987, the application was rejected by the Commission on the grounds that "Morocco is not a European country". Opponents of Turkish membership have since used the rejection of Morocco as an argument against Turkey's membership, even though the country has been associated with the EU since 1963 when the EU was just the Common Market. Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, member of the French center-right UMP previously led by President Jacques Chirac, for example, said before the French vote on the EU Treaty in 2005: "Turkey is, after all, not in Europe. So, we should also include Morocco. And Tunisia. Those countries are much closer to us. But they are all countries in a completely different economic situation, and the idea of a European Union would be lost."

The Anatolian Peninsula that forms the majority of Turkey is often called "Asia Minor", portrayed by some as a menacing encroachment from the Asian continent toward Europe. Others see Turkey as culturally alien, an emblem of the Asia that has been perceived as the opposite of Europe ever since Herodotus's description of the clash be-

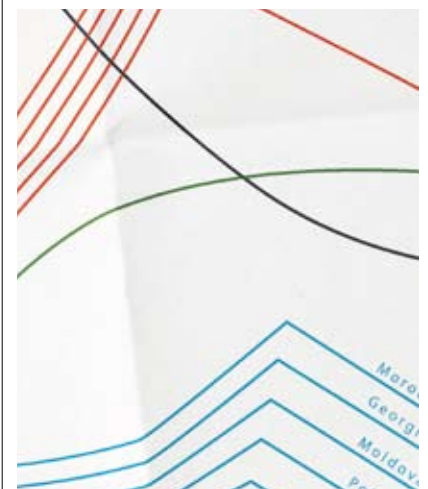
tween the Greeks and the Persian Empire in 480 BCE. "Hellespontos", as the strait was called by Greeks, was more of a conceptual – and occasionally a political – boundary, not a cultural, economic, or in any other way "natural" border. The Bosphorus serves the same function in contemporary political debate. Ostensibly, there is a clear and distinct border. But if one travels in the area, one finds the same culture on both sides of the straits, i.e. in "Europe" and in "Asia". The main part of Istanbul, home to millions of inhabitants and one of the largest cities in Europe, now spreads into both continents, connected by two bridges across the Bosphorus and a railway and metro tunnel to open soon. Turkey, in other words, is as much or as little part of Europe as Russia, geographically as well as culturally, is part of Asia. Much the same can be said of the rest of southeastern Europe – politically incorrectly referred to as "the Balkans" – but that is another matter, which I have dealt with in the first 2010 issue of the Danish Foreign Policy magazine, *Udenrigs* [Abroad].

IN THIS WAY, one can be inspired by the many and varied contributions to the anthology. One of the themes closely related to Eliaeson's own research is the revival of social scientific classics and the use of them in interpreting the new Europe we are now seeing emerge, caught up in financial crises, disagreement about foreign policy, and the generally declining influence of Europe in the globalized world. In this context, the readings of Max Weber attract particular interest. The German sociologist Bernard Wessels undertakes an intriguing new reading of Weber's theses on the connections between Protestantism and capitalist modernity. He expands the thesis to include Catholics and Orthodox Christians and examines empirically whether there is evidence that Orthodox Christians have more difficulty reconciling with capitalist modernity, as Samuel Huntington's thesis on the "clash of civilizations" would have it. The persuasive result is that there is nothing to indicate that such is the case. The late East German sociologist Helmut Steiner undertakes an interesting study of Max Weber's writings on Russia between 1905 and 1912 that were, in any event, unfamiliar to me, although they were published by Wolfgang Mommsen in 1989 as part of Weber's collected works.

One could go on and on pointing out interesting tidbits in this rich anthology. Göran Thernborn, for instance, provides an imaginative analysis of the function and evolution of capital cities as symbols of nation states, using Paris, London, and Stockholm as examples. The problem is only that the unifying context is unclear. Eliaeson has done his best with an introduction that gathers together themes about borders and the enlargement of Europe, as well as the reading of classics in the social sciences. But not even he manages to make the relatively numerous contributions by young and well-meaning scholars, especially from Poland, interesting. If only they had written about their empirical results or developed perspectives on familiar problems as seen from the east of Germany and dealt with in languages that few

western and northern Europeans know. One pleasing exception is Ukrainian sociologist Olga Kutsenko's paper containing an empirical study of individualism in Ukraine, Poland, and Germany. Unfortunately, most of the others provide fairly banal patchworks of general Western sociological literature. That is a shame. Yet the reader is still presented with a cornucopia of ideas and reviews, coupled with a clear sense of how things are going to change in the EU once the new countries find their place in the European Community. This is communicated by Sven Eliaeson in the best spirit of Edmund Mokrzycki. And that is saying quite a bit. The enlargement of the EU is already a success, even if it may not seem like it at the moment with the looming financial crisis and rising nationalism in the old member states. ✖

uffe østergaard



The end of neoliberalism — and the beginning of a new story?



ILLUSTRATION: KATRIN STENMARK

Kean Birch & Vlad
Mykhnenko (eds.)
**The Rise and Fall of
Neoliberalism:
The Collapse of an
Economic Order?**

London & New York
Zed Books 2010
280 pages

THE IDEOLOGICAL paradigm of neoliberalism that has dominated the economy and politics of the world for the last thirty years is being questioned. This is visible both in the increase in state intervention in the economy, and in intellectual debates. The current financial and economic crisis has undermined the credibility of neoliberalism. It has also revived the interest of those economists and social researchers who traditionally questioned the orthodoxy of neoclassical mainstream economics and the political recommendations prescribed by it. The anthology *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism*, with texts by British researchers, makes an important contribution to the

current debate and shows how neoliberalism influenced developments in the West, in the post-communist space and in the Third World, with varying results for the populations and countries involved.

Three groups of articles may be distinguished in the book. The first consists of texts by economists and sociologists (Bob Jessop, David Miller, Ben Fine, Jean Shaoul, and Elisa van Wayenberge) who base their analysis mainly on the methodological propositions of the Regulation School and other neo-Marxist theories. The second group of authors (Kean Birch, Vlad Mykhnenko, Shaun French, Julie MacLeavy, and Adam Swain) consists of economic and social geographers who take up the issue of different regional and national varieties of neoliberalism. Finally, several articles are written by political activists opposed to neoliberal policies.

The authors seem to share the common definition

of neoliberalism presented in the book as a distinctive political economic theory advocating the creation of a society governed by market mechanisms in the absence of state intervention (p. 136). Despite different variations of neoliberalism, it is characterized by an emphasis on five core principles: *privatization* of state-run assets; *liberalization* of trade in goods and capital investment; *monetarist* focus on inflation control and supply-side dynamics; *deregulation* of labor and product markets; and *marketization* of different aspects of society (p. 5). Neoliberalism as an ideological and political system rests on a contradiction. While rejecting an active role of the state in economic and social affairs, its very existence has been dependent on the state intervention. Thus, neoliberalism did not eliminate the welfare state in the core Western countries, but transformed it to make possible the functioning of “flexible”, i.e. insecure, labor markets based on part-time temporary jobs supported by strictly controlled and socially stigmatized welfare benefits (see Julie MacLeavy’s article on the neoliberal remaking of the welfare state, pp. 133–147).

THE BOOK TRACES ideological and political currents of neoliberalism since its emergence in the 1930s up to its triumph in the 1970s and 1980s. The crisis of the regime of accumulation based on mass production and Keynesian state policies made possible the ideological and political domination of neoliberal ideas. The main feature of the new accumulation regime that resulted from the spread of neoliberal ideology is the financialization of the economy and society in contrast to the previous regime based on the primacy of productive capital (p. 184). In this sense, as Jessop points out, neoliberalism privileges capitalism’s exchange-value moment over its use-value moment and puts hypermobile financial capital in the center at the expense of productive capital embedded in broader sets of social relations. The profit-oriented principles are introduced under such conditions in those spaces where they previously were absent. The commodification of all aspects of social life and its final securitization is a logical consequence of neoliberal ideology. While not giving priority to the creation of additional value by investing in physical assets, the neoliberal regime of accumulation is centered mainly on making profits

Continued. The end of neoliberalism

through a plethora of exchange mechanisms and speculations. This involves a high level of sophistication, abstraction, and virtualization of financial assets, of which an explosion of financial derivatives markets provides a good example. Neoliberal capitalism has demonstrated a capability of making assets from everything, including the climate itself, which neoliberalism attempted to privatize (see Larry Lohman's contribution on the rise of carbon trading, pp. 77–93). Naturally, the creation of financial bubbles without corresponding growth of productive assets finally undermined the strength of the Western capitalist economy and resulted in its current crisis, leading to, among other consequences, the collapse of a number of small economies such as Latvia and Iceland.

SOME WORTHWHILE contributions to the anthology are made by sociologists as well as economic and social geographers who problematize the diversity of modes of implementation and embeddedness of neoliberal ideology in different countries and regions. It is against this backdrop that the influence of neoliberalism in the post-Soviet space is presented. Bob Jessop identifies four forms of neoliberalism, with *neoliberal system transformation* as the most radical one. This was attempted in the states that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet block. A “creative destruction” of inherited state socialist institutions was expected to lead to a “spontaneous emergence of a fully functioning liberal market economy” (p. 172). Prescribed in accordance with the Chicago-style neoliberalism, this transformation led to considerable downfall of economic activity and social disaster in the countries affected by the process. Adam Swain, Vlad Mykhnenko, and Shaun French discuss the “corruption industry” created by the Western neoliberal centers of power and applied towards Eastern European states in order to align post-Soviet political economies with their interests (p. 118). The writers claim that this “corruption industry”, which involved a wide array of academic expertise as well as rating agencies like Transparency International, has much in common with the core concept of neoliberalism. The latter advocates a “universalist notion of the economy which is nowhere realized in a pure form” and a focus on the extent to which neoliberal ideas as a norma-

tive project are realized (p. 113). In the same fashion, the Western corruption industry invents an imaginary world where corruption does not exist and attempts to identify and stigmatize as corrupt non-Western and non-market economic practices. Thus, corruption is used to justify neo-imperial projects intended to reorganize the post-Soviet states and their economic organizations. However, as the writers note, the global financial crisis of 2007–2009, which originated in the core Western capitalist countries, challenged the assumption that the corruption is confined to the non-Western world. This undermines the credibility of the corruption industry and the indexes it produces (p. 128).

CONTRIBUTIONS MADE by political activists opposing neoliberal ideas are less successful. What a reader needs is a thorough academic analysis of neoliberalism as a political and ideological phenomenon, not political declarations. Nor is the attempt to “defeat” neoliberalism from a traditional Marxist position by economist Jean Shaoul convincing. While interesting in its analysis of the factors behind the current financial and economic crisis, her argumentation concerning the consequences of the crisis is transformed into a political declaration as well. Shaoul's appeal to the working class misses the point, because this class is split, weakened, and in some countries almost non-existent as a consequence of the de-industrialization imposed by the global neoliberal finance-led regime of accumulation. This upheaval has already taken place in most parts of the rich Western world and in Eastern Europe. Not surprisingly, the current crisis has rather strengthened the positions of the political right that adheres to neoliberal ideology. The costs of the crisis are currently borne by taxpayers in the form of massive socialization of private losses by “the all-too-visible hand of major Western governments” (p. 256). A period of new “austerity” for the majority of taxpayers has started and this can easily be just a beginning of deteriorating living standards in most Western and post-communist countries. It is quite probable that Latvia may be just the first victim of a neoliberal approach to the crisis. This despite the fact that the same ideology and political power centers associated with it bear direct responsibility for the emergence of the current crisis. ✕

ilja viktorov



Dissertation review Organizing civil society

Roosa Vihavainen
Homeowners'
Associations in Russia
after the 2005 Housing
Reform

Helsinki: Kikimora
Publications
Series A 20
2009
274 pages

ALL REAL ESTATE was nationalized after the 1917 Russian Revolution. State ownership and heavily subsidized housing led to a culture in which most residents felt no particular responsibility for collective concerns outside their own apartments. In conjunction with the 1991 privatization reform, a law was enacted that gave everyone the right to privatize flats or rooms in communal apartments, the *kommunalka*. By 2005, 85 percent of all housing had been privatized. As part of a new, large-scale housing reform in 2005, the private sector and citizens became responsible for managing and maintaining private housing – a phenomenon that can be described as a sort of experiment in democracy.

In *Homeowners' Associations in Russia after the 2005 Housing Reform*, sociologist Roosa Vihavainen has captured this relevant topic in empirical studies of homeowners' associations in St. Petersburg. Half of the book gives relevant background information. Here, Vihavainen discusses housing policy under the Soviet Union and afterward, and makes theoretical connections to the subject and her research questions. The remaining 100 or so pages comprise descriptions of the empirical work, the findings, and the conclusion. Her starting point is rooted in several lines of thought. Democracy and culture, power, individual/collective, self-government, rights, responsibility, social dynamics, and practical outcomes are key words and concepts representative of her work. Vihavainen brings three questions to the fore: whether homeowners' associations are successfully managing and maintaining property; whether collective work and decision making are creating social relationships and generating social capital or leading to conflicts; and whether the social dynamic and other factors outside the associations such as local authorities are promoting or impeding self-government by the associations.

AS SELF-GOVERNING organizations, homeowners' associations are new in Russian civil society. These associations become channels for decision making for residents, but the opportunity to act and exert influence also entails commitment and acceptance of responsibility. The large state systems that characterized the Soviet era provided no appreciable scope for people living in state-owned housing to affect their

environments. Consequently, there is still limited experience with the process of becoming engaged or initiating local management of collective concerns. How well adapted are post-Soviet people to the tasks imposed by the new law on self-management of property?

THE THEORETICAL underpinnings of the study are found partly in Elinor Ostrom's common pool resources theory, where trust is the key concept in a functioning organization. Clear rules and clear responsibilities, interim goals, and conflict-resolution mechanisms are beneficial factors, while overuse, heterogeneous groups, and poverty impede cooperation. Vihavainen also discusses the problem of free-riders as a relevant concept in the housing context. The other theoretical link is to the concept of social capital, where she refers to Robert Putnam, James Coleman, and Pierre Bourdieu. Social capital is also based on trust between individuals. According to Putnam, social capital is generated by social norms of networks of relationships, reciprocity, and trust. Social networks can be either vertical or horizontal in nature. Vertical networks are based on unequal and hierarchical relationships, horizontal networks on equality and distribution of power. Vihavainen argues that homeowners' associations are based on horizontal networks, even though not all members enjoy equal conditions, since their governing power is based on the size of their apartment.

The empirical evidence of the work is based on interviews conducted between 2005 and 2008 with 18 association chairs and property managers and 8 residents from a total of 17 homeowners' associations, as well as 11 housing experts. The sample of homeowners' associations represent 9 of the 18 districts in St Petersburg and a variety of old and new buildings, large and small multifamily dwellings, and a range of standards, including both average and "luxury" housing.

In her empirical work, Vihavainen uses Ostrom's design principles of a common property regime in order to study how self-government works in homeowners' associations and the extent to which the associations are democratic organizations. One of these principles has to do with having clearly defined rules, which Ostrom relates to things like membership. In homeowners' associations, however, this principle is

complicated by the fact that membership in the association is voluntary and that some homeowners use common pool resources but are not members of the association. Another principle is that of collective-choice arrangements in which most individuals affected by the rules of the system are also allowed to participate in its design. This is a vital prerequisite for democratic decision making. The material shows that several associations are struggling with free-riders – residents who use facilities, but do not contribute personally with commitment, time, or money. It is not unusual, for example, for some residents not to pay for heat and water, sometimes leading the heating company to shut off the heat for the entire building, since multifamily dwellings have central heating. Some homeowners' associations have implemented their own sanctions against free-riders, such as denying them a parking space or access to services like plumbing. Some have pursued these matters further in court and posted court orders in the stairwells.

VIHAVAINEN'S EMPIRICAL evidence also shows that, although there are significant differences between associations, cooperation is usually better in new buildings. The primary reasons for this are that the composition of the housing and the socioeconomic conditions are more homogeneous in new buildings than in old ones, resulting in fewer conflicts. The homeowners' associations have successfully created social capital among residents of similar social backgrounds through informal activities rather than official decision making. In many cases this has led to a stronger sense of community. One general problem, however, is the lack of participation in decision making, which a majority of the respondents explain as a legacy of the Soviet mentality. Inadequate knowledge of the reform, skepticism about new organizations, and fear of being swindled may be other likely reasons. The driving forces of the associations are usually a few very committed residents.

It also emerges that it is not unusual for authorities to act as impediments to the self-government of the homeowners' associations. Some local authorities do not acknowledge the associations' self-government and do not permit them to work independently. Meanwhile, according to some associations, good working relationships with authorities are important since they provide opportunities for financial aid and enable the authorities to support and defend the association should disputes arise with construction companies, difficult residents, or others. Finally, the results show that the new self-management reform has produced



ILLUSTRATION: KARIN SUNVISSON

results in the urban landscape, since one no longer expects to find rundown and dirty stairwells or cracked facades. Vihavainen finds that the homeowners' associations have succeeded where the privatization reform of the 1990s failed: in improving the condition of common spaces by making home-owners responsible for them.

The author elegantly interweaves the various empirical components with the theoretical concepts. I found the results section especially worthwhile reading. In offering many quotations, it gave an authentic picture of the reality and day-to-day affairs of the homeowners' associations. However, I would have liked to see a more detailed review of the methodology and discussion of the sampling

Continued. Dissertation review

process for respondents, districts, and homeowners' associations. The conclusion in the last chapter is largely a summary of what was already discussed, other than the part that deals with the results of the reform, which brings up new information that illustrates other developments.

Vihavainen's discussion is confined to the empirical evidence. It would have been interesting to elevate the discussion to a higher level, where analysis of her data is put into a broader social perspective with a focus on democracy and evolution of the civil society. *Homeowners' Associations in Russia after the 2005 Housing Reform* contributes to an understanding of the current state of democracy at the local level in Russia, which can also be set in a larger context, since the privatization of the housing sector and property management is a process that has taken place or is ongoing in all post-socialist countries. Might the 2005 housing reform be a successful experiment in democracy that has wider repercussions, and could perhaps even eventually erase the Soviet mentality? ✖

madeleine granvik

Note: The review was previously published in *Nordisk Østforum* (Oslo).



What remains in the labyrinth of islands and waters? A new network for literary scholars

WHAT VIEW OF THE Baltic province can be found in the German literature of today? asks poet and translator Klaus-Jürgen Liedtke in his essay "The Lost Baltic Sea of German Literature". The Baltic is the province of loss, he finds – but also a place of refuge. And it is a province of backwardness, a place left behind, poor and forgotten, when the wheel of history moved on to other regions.

In the world of cultural imaginations, the Baltic still seems divided – or in any case the object of conflicting interpretations. To Scandinavians and Germans, it is chiefly the repository of lost historical material and sunken realms, a melancholy sea before which the author contemplates the passage of time. To Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Finns, Russians, and Poles, the Baltic also sets waves of historical narrative in motion. But these narratives break upon contemporary shores with more devastating force.

IS THERE A STORY of the Baltic? If so, how should it be written? Are there two, one in the east and one in the west? Or are there as many stories as there are nations and provinces circling the inland sea?

In late May, young cultural scholars, from Siberia in the east to the United States in the west, met at a symposium at Södertörn University: "Dislocating Literature: Transnational Literature and the Directions of Literary Studies in the Baltic Sea Region", arranged by CBEES. That the symposium was held in English is perhaps nothing to get worked up about – English is the lingua franca of our time. And yet one is struck by the paradox: when bridges are built between the literatures of the Baltic Sea countries, it is done in a language that, strictly speaking, does not belong there, if one disregards the brilliant exception of Joseph Brodsky.

Due to the linguistic diversity, the focus of the symposium often shifted to translation itself. Klaus-Jürgen Liedtke illustrated the matter when he presented the Baltic Sea Library, where literature of the region is made available in the region's various languages. One of the great works in the virtual library is Tomas Tranströmer's "Baltic Seas", a poem that perhaps captures the dynamic of cultural meetings on the Baltic, whether between seafaring people, as in days gone by, or between scholars, as at Södertörn University in May 2011, quoted here in Robin Fulton's translation:

He took them out to the Baltic, through the
marvelous labyrinth of islands and waters.
And those who met on board and were carried
by the same hull for a few hours, or days,
how much did they come to know one another?
Conversations in misspelled English, understanding
and misunderstanding but very little conscious falsehood.
How much did they come to know one another?

There was understanding and misunderstanding at the symposium – and everyone got to know one another. The symposium was the beginning of a more permanent network for Baltic-oriented literary scholars, and the people who attended were agreed that there is reason to regard the Baltic Sea region as a cultural and literary region characterized by similarities and differences, bridges and barriers, that may be the springboard for transnational literary studies.

WHAT DIRECTIONS SHOULD such studies take? Four conceivable directions were identified over the course of the symposium. The first is historical, rooted in all the political and cultural ties that once existed, especially in the early modern era, and that can still be traced in the traditions of the countries around the Baltic Sea. The second focuses on transnational art and writing. Peter Weiss, who worked in the space encompassing Sweden and Germany, is perhaps the most salient example. But others belong here as well, such as Günter Grass, who, in *The Flounder*, combs the historical seabed that connects the countries of the Baltic Sea region, and Edith Södergran, with metrical feet in Sweden, Finland, Russia, and Germany. The third path takes perspectives from postcolonial theory, where cultures and identities seem rootless, impossible to fix within the confines of the nation-state, for instance. And so one studies instead how they arise from the relationships and conflicts *between* places. A fourth, similar direction was presented by the keynote speaker, Sven Rüdiger of Freie Universität in Berlin. He returned to Friedrich Nietzsche's exhortation, "Set sail, ye philosophers!" ("Auf die Schiffe, ihr Philosophen!"). According to Rüdiger, it is the sea, the water, the fluid – and not the country, the territory, or the terra firma – that must be the medium and the undulating basis of future studies in the humanities. ✖

stefan jonsson

associate professor, research leader in cultural theory, CBEES

Consequences of privatization

THE THEME FOR the second annual Baltic Worlds Round Table is “Market Reform and Socio-Economic Change in Russia”. The keynote speaker, Natalia Zubarevich from Moscow, a geographer, will speak on the subject “Modernization vs. Degradation”. Philip Hanson, Chatham House, London, will discuss “Big Business and the State in Russia: *Pas de Deux* or Tavern Brawl”, and Tina Jennings, St. Anthony’s, Oxford, “The Implications of the Yukos Affair in State-Business Relations”.

Other topics are “Market Reform and Freedom of the Press”, “Neoliberal Reform and Women’s Everyday Experiences”, “Privatization and Segregation”, “Mass Privatization and Post-Communist Mortality”, and “Social Change and Suicide”.

The Round Tables are organized by CBEES and this one will take place at Södertörn University on October 6. ✖

Karl Molin



Professor of history at Stockholm University. Has done research on Swedish politics during World War II, industrial relations in the interwar period, and the surveillance of communists that was conducted by security services. Coauthor of *Sveriges säkerhet och världens fred: Svensk utrikespolitik under kalla kriget* [Sweden’s security and world peace: Swedish foreign policy during the Cold War]. Currently working on the project “Sverige och den polska demokratiörelsen 1980–1979” [Sweden and the Polish democracy movement 1980–1989].

Beate Feldmann Eellend



Doctoral student in ethnology at BEEGS (the Baltic and East European Graduate School), and works as an instructor at Södertörn University and Stockholm University. She teaches and conducts research on cultural and physical urban transformations, mainly from the standpoint of landscape and cultural heritage theories.

Barbara Lönnqvist



Professor of Russian at the Åbo Akademi University and associate professor of Slavic languages at Stockholm University. Received a PhD in 1979 for a dissertation on Russian modernist poet Velimir Chlebnikov. Has written about the prose of Zamyatin and Babel (the skaz-problem) and the poetry of Pasternak, Tsvetaevas, Akhmatova. Is particularly interested in Russian folklore and the recasting of folk culture in the literature.

Ingmar Oldberg



Associate researcher in the Russia program at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (Stockholm). In 1981–2009 researcher and later director of research at Försvarets forskningsanstalt, now the Swedish Defence Research Agency (Stockholm). Has written several publications and articles on Russian foreign policy and Sweden’s relations with post-Soviet states, the EU, the Nordic region, Iran, and China.

Tilo Schabert



Professor emeritus of political science at the University of Erlangen. Visiting professor in Lisbon, Perpignan, Paris, Rennes, Salerno, and Naples. 1995–1996 Secretary General of the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (UNESCO). Honorary doctorates from the Universities of Perpignan and Rennes. In 2005 received the German-French Parliamentary Prize. Among recent books: *Wie Weltgeschichte gemacht wird: Frankreich und die deutsche Einheit* (2002) and *40* (2009).

Florence Fröhlig



Doctoral student in ethnology at BEEGS. Her dissertation will examine the current production of memory about World War II in Europe and analyze the memorial agitation taking place around the former Soviet prison camp of Tambov and its impact on collective memories in Russia and France.

from our Web site

Recently, while scrolling down the home page of Baltic World’s website, one article in particular caught my eye – “The Steklov legacy”, by professor Ulf Persson. That was because I spent some time at Moscow’s Steklov Institute in 1972–1973, nearly 40 years ago, as part of an exchange program between the Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA) and the Soviet Union Academy of Sciences (then AN SSSR, now RAN). I stayed at the institute for almost half a year, from the start of August 1972. Compared with Ulf Persson’s more recent experience, it was a different time with very different conditions.

THE REASON FOR my presence at the institute was that, in my Ph.D. dissertation on some stochastic processes with discontinuous trajectories, I had

applied some fundamental ideas that were originally developed by professor Jury V. Prokhorov. He had been head of the institute’s Department of Probability Theory and Mathematical Statistics since 1960. In 1972 he was a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, and shortly thereafter became a full member.

I was later to draw the conclusion that it had been presumptuous of me to aspire to one of the world’s foremost mathematical institutes; my colleagues there were extremely competent. Eventually, I decided that it was pointless for me to continue with pure mathematical research, and chose instead a career in applied statistics.

A FEW OF MY department colleagues at the institute were members of the Com-

munist Party, which was linked to the workplace. But I never regarded them as political beings [...]. If party members had any political inclinations, they were mainly conservative. I note this as a contrast to Ulf Persson’s description of non-party members as heroes of some sort. The party members I met were skilful, outgoing mathematicians who represented a sort of scientific avant-garde. The party secretary at the institute was the only exception; somewhat in his cups at a staff party just before the New Year festivities, he informed me that I came from a backward country. But he was neither a mathematician nor respected by my colleagues. Today, I cannot recall anything about his background.

One interesting point: Photocopying articles from journals was a major undertaking at the institute. You were

not allowed to do that yourself! You had to place a request, describe the purpose and, upon approval, receive a copy the following day.

FINALLY, I WILL note that my colleagues at the institute made it possible for me to participate in an All-Union Probability Conference in the Fergana Valley, an hour’s flight from Tashkent. There, as the one and only foreign delegate, I gave a lecture on my own limit theorems on stochastic processes. At the start of 1973, we also visited Lithuania’s Vilnius Mathematical Institute where we spent a week and were treated like a royal family.

Jan Hagberg, Stockholm

Read the whole commentary and make a comment yourself at balticworlds.com.

FOR THE SAKE OF QUALITY — AND JOY

ILLUSTRATION: MOA FRANZÉN



Scientific and scholarly work is a truly multinational, if not global, affair. It may be able to resist political repression, as illustrated by the eminent standards of Soviet mathematics and theoretical physics even in the Stalin era. Is this because there was no need to suspect them of subversiveness? Well, perhaps, or perhaps not. The example of the brilliant mathematician – and political reactionary – Igor Shafarevich (see BW IV:1) shows that such academic milieus could indeed harbor dissent, and even, to some degree, dissidents. After all, Soviet society did succeed in educating an intelligentsia (how could you have a

brain drain after the fall of communism, if there were no brains?), but it didn't manage to translate their ideas into practice. Academics and intellectuals of standing could be admired and promoted, but were less often listened to.

Of course, these groups fare far better in liberal societies, with freedom of expression and freedom of the press. However, even there the learned classes encounter restrictions and suspicions. They are constantly being evaluated, both inside and outside the academic establishment; their competitiveness tested; their honesty now and then

questioned, sometimes disproved. There is excellent science and murky science. There are scholars who earn respect from a wide community of equals and from an even broader general public of admirers, as well as those who fail to win respect, those who are mistrusted and rejected.

The selection process has more or less become a business in itself. It has forced members of academic circles and institutions to pay more and more attention, and time, to purely organizational activities, to fundraising, and to evaluation. A mass-scale referee system of international scope has developed. A culture of ranking leaves absolutely

nobody untouched and in peace. Junior scholars and scientists in particular dare not publish a paper without first having it scrutinized in detail. All this is for the sake of quality control, of “benchmarking”, to make sure that fakes or all too trivial results or, more simply, bad science are not tolerated. The system has many merits. The dangers of standardized production and threats to originality, however, must not be ignored.

This magazine adheres to the principles described above when it comes to scientific and scholarly material. We routinely ask for anonymous reviews from established experts and peers in the field. Our aim is twofold: to provide the authors with the most competent critique and support, and to guarantee that *Baltic Worlds* can be relied on as a peer-reviewed journal. At the same time, we are keen to strengthen the literary quality of each text; as a rule, we therefore recommend that our contributors deliver essays (and book-reviews) in their respective native languages. They will thereby be helping us, while helping themselves. After reviewing comes translation. Of course, we see to it that authors keep in close contact with the translator chosen, and they will have the final word before their text goes to print.

We strongly believe this to be a proper method of producing a widely readable, yet academically rigorous magazine. Furthermore, “Wissenschaft und Bildung” – science and learning – should be enjoyable; those who are not interested in the topics addressed in *Baltic Worlds* may turn then to other subjects, other joys. Our approach is, in the long run, the only way for academics to be respected, and protected, in societies that occupy themselves with all sorts of fashions and trivialities – as market-oriented societies are wont to do. ✖