

A quarterly scholarly journal and news magazine. June 2012. Vol. V:2.
From the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES)
Södertörn University, Stockholm

Academic life in newly
founded Baltic States

BALTIC WORLDS

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ILL. LARS RODVALDR

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Person, myth, and memory. The making of Raoul Wallenberg

IN AUGUST, the 100-year anniversary of Raoul Wallenberg's birth will be celebrated. The man with the mission of protecting the persecuted Jewish population in Hungary in final phases of World War II has become one of the most famous Swedes of the 20th century. There seem to have been two decisive factors in Wallenberg's astonishing fame, and both came into play around the same time, towards the end of the 1970s. The Holocaust had suddenly become the focus of interest for the mass media and popular culture, particularly in the US; and political relations between East and West had once again become icy. In the broader Holocaust narrative, Raoul Wallenberg became the great, lonely hero in the fight against Nazi evil. Ending up in Soviet captivity made him a victim, the victim of communist evil, and the object of tireless efforts lasting well into the 1980s to bring him home.

To put it cynically, this ended up being an unbeatable combination for posthumous fame. After the dissolution of state socialism and the fall of the Soviet empire, these



The Raoul Wallenberg memorial in Stockholm.

Photo: Boberger/Wikimedia Commons

forces maintaining a black-and-white dichotomy no longer exist. Is writing about Raoul Wallenberg thus no longer interesting?

The Wallenbergiana of recent years testifies to the contrary. In this literature, I see three main trends: biographical studies that

seek to explain what it is that makes someone ready to face extraordinary challenges; the culture-theoretical analyzes of myth, monuments, and heroes – here, the use of history and the need for moral exemplars become themselves the core of the analysis.

Finally: the historical studies that, by means of archival documents, seek to demolish the popular-cultural myths: Wallenberg worked together with other Swedes, and above all Hungarians, and was an "armchair hero" who negotiated over the lives of Hungarians with "armchair murderers" (Paul Levine and Attila Lajos). According to Levine, Wallenberg was a "minor figure in the Holocaust, who has grown into a central figure in the Holocaust memory". It is thus evident that Raoul Wallenberg as a person, myth, and memory lives on with a continued powerful ability to fascinate.

HELENE CARLBÄCK

Turbulence and normality

The European spring of 2012 has been turbulent and far from "normal", at least when it comes to certain Western European exemplary states, affected as they are by debt crises, currency concerns, extraordinary political solutions, and growing public support for extremist political parties. On the other hand, some Eastern European states have been characterized by more stable conditions. Is it still meaningful to distinguish between a Western and an Eastern, a modern and a less modern Europe?

Our coverage and analysis of the general elections in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Sea region (via balticworlds.com) is a way of answering that question. Civic activities mustn't be greater in countries where democracy has evolved over a long period of time than in the new European democracies, subject to intrusive scrutiny from what is somewhat euphemistically known as "the international community".

The presence of people from the previously Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe has meant a significant stimulus for the host countries. Södertörn University, where *Baltic Worlds* is published, now has a chairman of the governing board, a Swedish former Social Democratic career politician, who grew up the Montenegro of Yugoslavia. MarieLouise Samuelsson profiles him in an interview at balticworlds.com.

On the web, Hans Wolf reviews the latest publications on Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg (see above, left). ❌

Championship in Poland and Ukraine. Is there such a thing as fair play?

BALTIC WORLDS MONITORS the European Football Championship on *Baltic Worlds'* website <http://balticworlds.com/whats-up/>. A lot of questions are being raised.

What does co-hosting the European Football Championship mean for relations between the two countries? How has their cooperation functioned? What is the championship's importance for the countries' economies, as well as for those of the affected cities? What happens when the European Football Championship comes to the city? Or when football supporters from throughout Europe come to Ukraine and Poland?

Kutte Jönsson, senior lecturer in practical philosophy at Malmö University, writes about "Sports and Politics: An ethical approach":

"Ever since the dawn of modern sport, political leaders have seen the potential of making sport political. This is not the politicians' fault. No one can blame them for using sport for their own purposes, not

EURO 2012 WITHOUT PROSTITUTION!



An advertisement reminds that the EURO2012 should be free of forced prostitution and human trafficking. Image: Femen

least when we consider that the sport movements never have been shy to invite political actors into the sport family. In fact, at long times they have had mutual interests to continue working on their relationship."

Tove Stenquist, journalist, reports on the background to the historical relationship between Poland and Ukraine through a conversation

between Volodymyr Kulyk, Stanford, and Jacek Nowak (Jagiellonian University, Kraków):

"The positive and friendly attitude toward Ukraine at the official level is not consistent with the perception of Ukrainians among the Polish populace. The Germans used to be the nationality least liked by the Poles, reports Jacek Nowak, but the Ukrainians have assumed that role over the last ten or so years, according to polls conducted by the Polish Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS).

On the other hand, the Ukrainians' image of the Poles has moved in the opposite direction, becoming more and more positive."

Yuliya Yurchuk, doctoral student in history at BEEGS with roots in Ukraine, writes about feminist initiatives for counteracting increased prostitution in association with

the event: "EURO 2012 makes prostitution not just a Ukrainian problem, but a European issue. Advertising copy mentioning 'beautiful Ukrainian women' is used not only to sell trips to Ukraine, but also as a strategy to warn people against travelling to Ukraine. For example, a Dutch television commercial saying 'Keep him at home', shown on the first and second national channels, urges women to persuade their husbands not to go to Ukraine because it is a country full of beautiful women."

The women's protests are not only part of the struggle against prostitution according to Yurchuk. They are an effort to fight against violations of women's rights and for an alternative image of Ukraine.

Further reading: Nicholas Aylott on the social and political impact of football. Ann-Cathrine Jungar on racism and xenophobia in connection with the European Football Championship. Lars Johannsen on corruption and the European Football Championship's impact on the local economy. Henrik Bogdan on violence and football. Mike Dennis the Cold War in the GDR and football. ❌

Common terms

Multi-national empires possessed undeniable merits. The languages spoken were many, and loyalty was to one central power – call it emperor, tsar, or sultan – which demanded no national identity, but was often based on the fact that anyone showing allegiance was left more or less in peace. One did not need to profess faith in a particular nation, nor, often, in a particular religion.

Joseph Roth, who came from the border region between the Russian and Austrian empires, in what is currently western Ukraine, wrote about his homeland:

My birthplace was home to about ten thousand people. Three thousand of them were insane, if not dangerously so. A mild insanity wafted around them like a golden cloud. They carried on their business, and earned money. They married and had children. They read books and newspapers. They concerned themselves with the things of this world. They conversed with one another in all the languages that were used by the very diverse population of this part of the world.

All was not idyllic:

Where I came from, we lived at peace. Only near neighbors were enemies. People got drunk together and made it up. Commercial rivals did nothing to hurt one another. They took it out on the customer and the client. They all owed money to each other. None had anything to hold against any of the others. There was no tolerance of political parties. No distinctions were drawn between people of different nationalities, because everyone spoke every language. Only the Jews stood out on account of their kaftans and their hats and their superiority. There were the occasional little pogroms. In the general hurly-burly, they were soon forgotten. The murdered Jews were put in the ground, and the plundered ones denied that they had lost anything.

How did people survive in such circumstances? Perhaps by means of the realization that it could have been so much worse. Worse it became, in a number of places.

Philip Mansel's *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean* (London 2011) illuminates, from the standpoint of life in the metropolises of the eastern Mediterranean, how most people there during the 1800s, "the century of nationalism", preferred to keep to the established order, in this case the central government in Constantinople, instead of rebellious national elites in various parts of the empire, which was generally regarded with indifference. The latter, like present-day rebel groups in the same geographic area, could not achieve anything without the intervention of European nation-states, which themselves kept to empire, colonial power. It commenced with the Greek seces-

sion in the 1820s, and the interference was ideologically motivated by the need for humanity and compassion for the oppressed and downtrodden masses. (See David Rodongo, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in The Ottoman Empire 1815–1914*, Princeton 2011.) It ended a hundred years later when the Ottoman Empire was carved up and placed under the management of great powers.

"It's hard", as Middle Eastern expert Charles Glass has put it, "to dispute the notion that the subjects of the empire were better off under the Ottomans than under the British, the French and the later regimes in Damascus, Beirut and Tel Aviv." ("Hyper-Retaliatio", in *London Review of Books*, vol. 34:5, 2012)

SUCH REMINDERS may not be easy to take from a mob or an army drunk with victory. How can one demand restraint – when new interventions to avoid the excesses of revenge and violence are nowhere in sight? The most fortunate outcome would be that an empire, proved dysfunctional, dissolves mainly as a result of its own weakness. The fall of the Soviet Union seems to have been a historical example of this, even if the national elites in the republics quickly seized the moment, not waiting for popular uprisings against the remaining power in Moscow – which perhaps would never have materialized.

Is linguistic pluralism within the framework of the nation-state possible in the long run? Without conflicts of one sort or another, it has not been possible to look after the interests of minority languages. "Compulsory Swedish", the Republic of Finland's second official language, is still harped on in the part of the Swedish Empire cut loose in 1809. Most of the states founded after the fall of the Soviet Empire have chosen monolingual solutions.

THIS COULD prove fatal. Internal communication may then have to go through an external third language, or by completely eliminating linguistic diversity, or by segments of the population becoming permanently handicapped linguistically. In the best-case scenario, the awareness will – slowly – ripen that a society where many languages are spoken can be so much richer than one that sticks to one domestic language, and one imported and necessarily impotent language. ❌

Sponsored by the Foundation
for Baltic and East European Studies



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Subscription

Sofia Barlund

Printed by

Vitt Grafiska AB, Stockholm

contents

feature

4 Baltic academic life

essays

7 Universities in the Latvian nation-building process

33 Russian orphanages – then and now

40 The struggle for and against homosexual rights in Lithuania

focal point

11–31

Dislocating literature: Fiction crossing borders

commentary

32 Magnus Ljunggren on Strindberg and Russian symbolists

reviews

48 Bulgarian historiography

51 New Estonia and its peculiarities

51 The Srebrenica events revisited

report

54 A library with geography as the selecting principle, from a German point of view

misc.

56 György Dalos on the Hungarian newspeak of today and yesterday

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ISSN 2000-2955

WELL-EDUCATED BALTIC STATES

MERGERS HAVE BECOME A NECESSITY

by **Påhl Ruin** illustration **Ragni Svensson**

In order to ascend another rung on the development ladder, all three Baltic countries are engaged in higher education reform. Latvia has the furthest to go.

As the resurrected nations in the Baltic region began their journey to catch up with the West more than 20 years ago, higher education was not a top priority. It was more important to create a market economy and build democratic institutions. And as the common wisdom had it, even back in the Soviet years, “the Balts are poor – but well-educated”. There is a longstanding academic tradition in the region, which is home to some of the oldest universities in Northern Europe. The university of Tartu was founded as early as 1632. As far back as 1897 in Tsarist Russia, for example, 96.7 percent of Estonians could read and write – a considerably higher literacy rate than in many independent nations in Western Europe at the time.

Clearly, the education system sustained serious injury during the Soviet era. First came the deportations: In Lithuania alone, 1,200 teachers were sent to Siberia between 1945 and 1948. The next blow was the ban on independent research, especially in the social sciences, where teaching suffered under the pressure of state ideology. Not all teaching was substandard; the Soviet Republics were among the elite in mathematics and hard sciences like physics. For this reason, what happened in higher education after the liberation was less about the actual knowledge content of education than about setting it free. Let all the flowers bloom, the message seemed to be, and a host of new institutions of higher learning saw the light of day – far too many, according to most estimates today.

Latvia has more than 60 institutions of higher learning, Lithuania 45, and Estonia 30. Resources were diluted and spread among too many academic institutions, and the quality of both research and teaching suffered. The inability to concentrate resources at a few leading universities has put all three countries behind in the education race with other countries in Europe.

“The mistakes made in the 1990s have caused greater damage to higher education than all the years of Soviet rule”, is the scathing criticism delivered by Latvia’s new Minister of Science and Education, the Cambridge-educated philosopher Robert Kilis.

The ability to reverse the trend and reform education has differed markedly among the three countries. As in so many other social dimensions, Estonia has taken the lead. The reduction in the number of institutions – goal number one in all three countries – is a good illustration. In 2002, Estonia had 49 institutions of higher learning; today, that number has been cut to about 30. The turnaround did not come to Lithuania until 2008, and so far only a handful of institutions have been eliminated or merged with others. There has been no reduction in Latvia, but at least the proliferation has been stopped.

HOW THINGS STAND: Estonia has made the most progress, followed by Lithuania, with Latvia last of all. There are several factors underlying Estonia’s lead. Unlike the other two, Estonia started with a cleaner slate in several social dimensions after the liberation. Everyone in leading positions was new, young, and extremely focused on creating ties with the European Community. There was also less faith in authority and hierarchies in Estonia than in Catholic Lithuania. The proximity to Finland made it easier to quickly modernize the country, including higher education. The Estonians realized sooner than the other Balts that mistakes had been made in the crazy years of the 1990s when new institutions of higher learning started rolling off the assembly line, even as coffers were drained and the course offerings grew beyond control.

This led to a backlash and the introduction of standards, regulations, and quality controls. Some believe the regulation of higher education in Estonia has simply gone too far and is impeding universities in their efforts to develop unique profiles and adapt their course offerings to their particular student bodies.

“We have standardized education to the point that

it is stifling creativity and innovation”, says Krista Loogma, head of the Centre of Educational Research at Tallinn University.

The effort to cut the number of institutions – perhaps the most important change to higher education in the Baltic region – is still proceeding in Estonia, but it is even more important that progress on this front be made in Lithuania and Latvia. Attempts to get university rectors and teachers to go along with their schools being merged with others or closed down entirely, however, are not entirely easy. The ministries of education in Riga and Vilnius are also facing opposition from local politicians and other powerful interests who do not want to lose “their university”. As is so often the case, higher education policy becomes regional policy. The ministries are using both carrots and sticks to persuade the reluctant. The smaller institutions that agree to mergers can count on funding from the EU Structural Funds.

The governments hope that fewer institutions will lead to a smaller overall course offerings and that the most glaring anomalies will be eliminated. Students in Latvia can take courses in “banking”, for instance, which in somewhat simplified terms is about counting the cash. In most Western European countries, courses like this would be offered in secondary school. Lithuania has made a bit more progress in weeding out the programs. Once numbering about 1,000, they are now down to 700.

To a certain extent, declining student populations will put a natural end to the problem of too many institutions of higher learning. Birth rates in the Baltic region have been among the lowest in Europe for many years, so the cohorts reaching student age are diminishing. In addition, immigration is low and emigration high – and families with children make up a growing percentage of emigrants.

REDUCING THE NUMBER of institutions is only one of several aims of the higher education reforms currently underway in all three countries. Another goal

is to change how degree programs are funded. For a long time, funding for institutions of higher learning was based on the number of students enrolled the previous year. This is now being rethought, and Lithuania is in the forefront. For the past couple of years, all institutions, private and public, have been allocated funding based on how many students choose a particular school.

“We wanted to send an unmistakable signal to the universities: your funding is entirely dependent on how good you are”, says Lithuanian education and science minister Gintaras Steponavicius.

The effect has been that giants like Vilnius University have attracted more students, while smaller institutions have gained fewer. The new funding model becomes another way to reduce the number of institutions of higher learning. The hope is, of course, that this will lead to higher quality in education when the institutions drop their least popular programs.

THE THREE COUNTRIES

believe quality can also be improved by reviewing how students are personally financing their studies. For many years, financial aid has been so low that almost all students have been forced to work their way through school, sometimes in full-time jobs. As a result, it has taken students a long time to complete their degrees and the quality of education has declined.

This in turn has made ambitious students reluctant to study at institutions in their own country. The Stockholm School of Economics satellite school in Latvia, SSE Riga, demands a completely different pace from its students. I asked a few SSE students about their friends’ studies at the country’s own university.

“Do they actually study there? I hadn’t noticed. My friends who go to the state university just study for tests a few times every term”, says student Ramona Ornovska. “They don’t seem interested in actually learning anything, they just want their diplomas.”

Lithuania has now introduced a student loan system that has quickened the pace of education. The system has encountered criticism, as loan repayment terms have been considered too onerous. Latvia has an eye on the model, and Estonia is in the process of

introducing a similar system, which sparked vociferous student protests last winter. Students say the loans are not sufficient to live on without having to work, which in turn makes it difficult to manage the new, stricter time frames.

Research is another area where all three countries are reviewing their funding models. As in many small European states, it is hard to amass adequate research funds. State budget appropriations declined during the financial crisis of 2009–2010, and the countries are not home to many large corporations with in-house R&D resources. Support for R&D and innovation from the EU Structural Funds has been critically important – but these programs also require co-funding, and finding money has not always been a simple matter.

Latvia came last in the latest EU Innovation Union Scoreboard for “innovation performance” and Lithuania was just a couple of steps higher. Ranking is based on indicators including the size of public sector R&D expenditure, the amount of venture capital available, the number and performance of researchers, and the number of patents.

The countries anticipate that having fewer institu-

tions of higher learning will free up new resources. Further hopes are pinned on an increased partnership with business, particularly in Silicon Valley – like clusters where new research-intensive enterprises will be able to grow and flourish. However, Finnish higher education expert Tero Autio, a professor of curriculum theory at Tallinn University, cautions against making research too dependent on the needs of business: “The outcome is very strong focus on science and technology and on short-term needs. What happens then to the independent, long-term basic research, particularly in the humanities and social sciences?”

This conflict shows up clearly in a third goal of higher education reform in the Baltic countries: educating people for occupations for which there is actually a need.

The Estonian Human Development Report came out last summer. This year’s edition takes an overall look at development since independence in a large number of social dimensions in all three countries. The verdict on education is harsh: “None of the Baltic countries has found the best way to create synergy between higher education, science and innovative economic development.”

To put it bluntly, higher education has not been adapted to the needs of the knowledge society. As Reuters reporter Nerijus Adomaitis in Vilnius puts it, “We are educating slews of business managers while business is crying out for engineers.”

A degree in business management has conferred high social status, especially in Lithuania. However, there have not been enough companies where

people with these degrees could put their skills to use. The social sciences and humanities have also been popular choices, especially since the subjects finally have cast off their ideological shackles. But again, the employment opportunities were just not there. The effect has been that many companies have had to hire people whose qualifications were far too high – but wrong – for the job.

AS MANY COUNTRIES – not just Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania – have learned, adapting higher education to labor market needs is a balancing act. There is always a risk that a particular industry for which there had been high hopes will be hit by a crisis just as hundreds of hungry recruits are churned out of the university factory. “Listening anxiously to the needs of business all the time can steer you wrong”, says Estonian academic Krista Loogma, whose main research interest is the relationship between education and the labor market.

Yet the problems businesses face finding competent, university-educated employees concern not only the subjects of education, but also its quality. Architect



Lukas Narutis was educated in Lithuania, England, and Holland. He found there were tremendous differences: “The program in Lithuania did not correspond to the demands put on architects today. I worked harder there than at the foreign schools, but I studied things I would have no use for, such as advanced mathematics.”

Minister of Education and Science Kilis has spoken to many employers. He says, “When they hire highly educated staff, they often have to give them further training before they can start working. We simply cannot have that.”

On the subject of education and the labor market, it should be noted that one area where all of the Baltic countries are far behind the rest of Europe is adult education, or, as the EU prefers to call it, lifelong learning. And that applies to both advanced education at the tertiary level and purely vocational training. This kind of further education is four to five times more common in the neighboring countries of Sweden and Finland – even though it is perhaps even more important in the Baltic countries, considering that so many young people are leaving the countries for points west to seek their fortunes, while older people with their inadequate educations stay behind. Kilis says, “I believe continuing education for adults could be a crucial future niche for institutions of higher learning. And technology is making distance learning easier all the time.”

A fourth goal for higher education in the Baltic countries is to improve quality in the teaching profession, especially in Latvia. There are many skilled and highly motivated university teachers in the country, of course, but many of the older teachers, educated during the Soviet era, have had a hard time learning to think in new ways. They were fostered in a hierarchical education system where authority is meant to be obeyed. A common teaching approach is for 200 students to sit and listen to a lecturer whose theories are not open to discussion. “The teachers act too much like lecturers and too little like coaches. They should not only transmit knowledge, they also need to organize seminars and group projects and coach the students to become critically thinking individuals”, says Kilis.

It is obvious that students have been schooled in traditional hierarchical education when they enroll at university, according to Rector Anders Paaltzow of SSE Riga. To date, he has experienced twelve co-

hort years of secondary school graduates from the three countries, most of them Latvians. “They are talented and highly motivated”, he says. “They complete their degrees faster than the Swedish students at SSE in Stockholm. But they still question too little and do not take enough personal initiative.”

The authority-bound education system is not only a legacy of the Soviet years. In Lithuania, the Catholic Church and the

Jesuits have had strong influence on education. Sarunas Radvilavicius, who teaches at Vilnius University and has spent extended periods teaching in Norway, sees a great difference between the students: “My students in history and Nordic society are talented, but they never challenge me. They seldom ask the critical questions I became accustomed to in Norway.”

IN ORDER TO improve teaching, teachers must help students develop critical thinking skills. They must tell them about new research that turns old theories upside down. Yet, this is difficult if they do not conduct their own research alongside teaching – and far too few of them do. There are only about 6,000 teachers in Latvia with PhDs. “That is no more than at a single medium-sized European university”, sighs Kilis. “Far too many of them are leaving academia. I have at least five friends with PhDs who are working in banking. It is absurd. You don’t need a PhD to work at a bank!”

One of the biggest challenges is raising the status of university teachers – and their pay. This is no easy task in an economy that is only now starting to recover after the free fall during the financial crisis, a tumble that could not be stopped without a bailout from the EU and the IMF. Kilis, however, believes the money can be found if priorities are rearranged: “Too much money has been spent on shiny new buildings, administration, and functions that have nothing to do with the actual teaching or research. Why should a university have 12 people in a PR department?”

One way to increase the skills of the teaching profession is to expand the university’s international networks and get stimulus from the outside, which is a fifth goal for higher education in the Baltic countries. The quality of research being conducted at Baltic universities varies, of course, as in many other European countries. One obvious problem, at least in Latvia and Lithuania, is that some research lacks any international outlook. Anders Paaltzow at SSE Riga, who keeps abreast of the economic literature, notes that “academics refer far too rarely to current international research reports. A great deal is written in Latvian only, and as a result, the system reproduces itself. Professors who learned the old way are passing this on”.

Kilis thinks the situation has improved, but much remains to be done. “Some teachers are leery of international competition. In some places, being able to speak fluent Latvian is a requirement, which precludes these important outside stimuli”, he says. “But I still see that people are beginning to think anew.”

The internationalization of higher education is progressing in Lithuania too – but not to universal acclaim. Publication in international journals is not especially prized, according to a young academic who wants to remain anonymous to avoid offending his older colleagues. “Getting published here in Lithuania is considered more important. And people who talk about their international scholarly networks are met with envy rather than appreciation”, he says.

CONCERN ABOUT protecting the national language is one explanation for the resistance to allowing English to make inroads in academia. Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian were threatened by the tidal wave of Russian during the Soviet era. In Lithuania, Polish has also been considered a threat, considering that Vilnius and large parts of southern Lithuania were part of Poland

during the interwar years. However, the desire to attain international status will probably outweigh these concerns in the long run. These days, protecting the language is something of a non-issue in Estonia. Lithuanian education and science minister Steponavicius says that Lithuania is not at risk and his ministerial colleague in Latvia says – in perfect British English – that the capacity to attract foreign students and researchers is a matter of survival for universities.

Today, only 1–2 percent of students in all three countries are foreign, which translates to about 2,000 students in Lithuania, the largest of the three. The target is at least 10 percent, which means they must expand the number of courses taught in English. “If the Nordic universities can internationalize without any harm to their languages, we should be able to also”, says Steponavicius. He believes that most foreign students could be drawn to the Baltic region from countries in the east, such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

The Erasmus program has brought students from elsewhere in the EU to the Baltic countries since they became member states in 2004, and not only from the neighboring Nordic countries. There are 70 Spanish Erasmus students in Latvia this year, for example. More teachers are coming to the Baltic countries as guest lecturers, and more Baltic teachers are spending time at other European universities. In addition, the European partnership in higher education has accelerated thanks to the Bologna Process, in which the Baltic countries are included. The aim of the process is to make academic degrees easier to compare, which facilitates cross-border studies and research.

IT IS NO SURPRISE that efforts to bolster higher education have been given increasingly high priority in the Baltic countries. After having positioned themselves as low-wage countries in the 1990s, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia have realized since the turn of the century that their future is not in attracting labor-intensive production. That type of production, in the textile industry for example, has already moved eastwards, where wages are lower still. The Baltic countries can certainly still give shelter to simpler manufacturing industries, but to equip the countries to take the next step they must develop their own high-performance enterprises that can sell their products and services in the global market. For this to become a reality, they must have a top-notch education system.

Countries with the best universities are countries that have become wealthy and achieved a high level of development. The correlation is crystal clear: the top 20 universities in the world are all in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, according to QS World University Rankings. Baltic universities have quite a way to go to reach the top of the European heap. None qualifies for the Top 500 list, which includes a few institutions in former Warsaw Pact countries like the Czech Republic and Poland. Yet, after a couple of stormy decades, several of the universities have at least begun the journey towards European excellence. ✖

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CREATING A “CASTLE OF LIGHT”

THE FORMATION OF LATVIA'S UNIVERSITY DURING THE FIRST REPUBLIC

by **Per Bolin** illustration **Ragni Svensson**

In the aftermath of World War I, the new Latvian state emerged as a result of the simultaneous implosion of the Romanov and Hohenzollern empires.¹ The Baltic Germans, the former hegemonic group, were almost completely replaced by politicians and intellectuals of the new nation's ethnic majority, the Latvians. Not surprisingly, this had radical implications for the academic sphere. The crucial matter of creating a Latvian “national” university may be seen as an example of the way this new nation was structured in both symbolic and practical terms. This academic institution provided an arena for rewriting the nation's past history and recreating its folklore customs – both essential to Latvian culture. Moreover, education at this university would now be conducted in Latvian, a language that had hitherto been seen as a simple peasant vernacular, entirely unfit for the purpose of scholarship and abstract reasoning. In these various ways, the new university would ensure the cultural independence of the new autonomous Latvia, making the earlier predominance of the Baltic German and Imperial Russian cultural spheres obsolete.

At the same time, it should be recognized that those in charge of the formation of the new university had to handle a number of problems and dilemmas. One of the major problems was the recruitment of a sufficient number of well-qualified academics, preferably fluent in Latvian, in order to make the university operational. Since ethnic Latvians had traditionally been a subordinated peasant population, the stratum of trained academics among them was very thin. In addition, the existing group of academics with a Latvian background had spent their university careers primarily in the Imperial Russian system, using Russian as the language of instruction and, in most cases, posted at universities in Russia. Their academic work had therefore been done within an Imperial Russian “knowledge regime” or epistemic community, based on

their academic experiences at Russian universities. To what extent would established ethnic Latvian academics be able to embrace and adapt to a new national knowledge regime at the Latvian university in Riga? Would they be motivated to join the unknown and unproven *Latvijas Universitāte* at all?

IN REGARD TO ethnicity, the organizers of the new university in Riga certainly faced a serious dilemma. While Latvian academics were relatively scarce, there was no lack of well-qualified Baltic Germans, the previous hegemonic group. To what extent would they be welcome among the staff of *Latvijas Universitāte*? Here, it seems, the national aspirations embodied in the university would conflict in some way with what I will call the “academic agenda”: the university's task of providing higher education based on solid scholarly and scientific research. European academia in general adhered to a specific knowledge regime: a set of notions of scientific quality and scholarly excellence, and the idea of an international community based on reason and enlightenment. These notions and ideas were hardly compatible with narrow and over-emphasized national aims.

MAKING THINGS WORK: NATIONAL AND ACADEMIC CONCERNS

The Organizing Committee for the new university was formed in the summer of 1919 and consisted initially of representatives from three groups: academics belonging to the former Riga Polytechnical Institute, delegates from key government ministries, and representatives of several Latvian professional organizations. At the first meeting in August, seven Baltic German academics represented the faculties.

The ministries represented on the committee were the

Treasury and the ministries of Trade and Industry, Communication, and Agriculture. The convening Ministry of Education was represented by Minister Kārlis Kasparsons and the ethnic Latvian Pauls Valdēns, former head of the Tsarist Riga Polytechnical Institute. The Latvian professional organizations invited were those connected to the fields of engineering, law, education, and agronomy. Subcommittees for each faculty were swiftly put together to plan the further recruitment of academic staff.

VERY SOON, ETHNIC Latvians replaced the Baltic German academics as provisional deans of some of the emerging faculties. Of the seven Baltic Germans representing academia at the inaugural meeting of the Organizing Committee, only four were appointed as provisional deans for the first academic year. The very composition of the Organizing Committee, comprising prominent Baltic German academics, representatives of the provisional Latvian government, and Latvian professional organizations, probably created a basic uncertainty regarding the principles on which the new faculties would be constructed. In recruitment matters, should academic merit have priority over the government's political concerns or the Latvian organizations' nationalist ambitions? Moreover, the committee's electoral procedure required a two-thirds majority for new appointments, which meant that a sizable minority in the committee could block any controversial candidate. In addition, all academic appointments had to be approved on the political level by the Ministry of Education.

A key figure on the Organizing Committee was the young psychologist Pauls Dāle, who, in the absence of Kasparsons and Valdēns, acted as chairman and representative of the Ministry of Education as early as the committee's third meeting in August. After taking part in the War of Liberation in the summer of 1919, Dāle assumed a dual role as an elected



academic and chief official of the department of higher education at the ministry.

Practical problems facing the committee soon proved to be substantial. The material situation of the new Latvian government was precarious. It could command the resources of the former Riga Polytechnical institute, which consisted primarily of its buildings. Much of the laboratory equipment and most of the library had followed the institute's wartime evacuation to Moscow. Moreover, most of its academic staff could only lecture in German and Russian, the established university languages during Tsarist times – not in Latvian.

The language issue was tied to the dilemma of the university's dual aims: to provide academic excellence in education and research, and to participate in building the new Latvian nation-state. That the new university was designed to fulfill a national agenda is unquestionable. For many of the nationalist activists, a dream was coming true: the creation of an institution of higher education using the Latvian language. At the inaugural ceremony on September 28, 1919, this fulfillment was expressed symbolically in the choral version of the nationalist poem *Gaismas pils*, "Castle of Light", which prophesies that the "spiritual riches" of the Latvian people will one day be manifest after a long period of foreign oppression. The expressed aim of the new university was to gather a "national treasure of knowledge" on matters concerning the land, its history, geography, language, and spiritual culture.

Naturally, besides serving the national agenda, the new university was required to serve the needs of the new Latvian state by educating a new stratum of Latvian-speaking scientists, scholars, administrators, and professionals. In order to do this, however, academics would have to be found to staff the new faculties and make the whole educational structure operational. These academics also had to be qualified for the university's second aim: to provide education and to perform research of a very high standard. Here, the explicit ambition was to establish the University of Latvia among the best academic institutions in the world.

RECRUITMENT MATTERS: FINDING SUITABLE ACADEMICS

One of the main problems facing the Organizing Committee in 1919 was how to bring "home" established Latvian academics from various parts of the Russian Empire. No efforts were to be spared. All prominent academics employed at Russian universities received telegrams telling them that they had been elected professors at the new national university in Riga, and exhorting them to return to their "fatherland".

Due to the persistent turmoil in Russia, however, not all of these messages reached their destinations. To facilitate matters, the Foreign Ministry was instructed to provide papers and material assistance to those Latvian academics who desired to leave Russia. Not all responses were positive. Some of the academic "exiles" who received telegrams apparently no longer perceived themselves primarily as ethnic Latvians. A thorough Russian or German education had led many of them to cross ethnic demarcations and assume another national identity – or a "supra-national" imperial identity. To their disappointment, the organizers of the new university in Riga found that some of the people they approached at Russian universities were rather skeptical about the whole project. Doubt about the new Latvian state's ability to provide adequate funding, and the serious lack of academic textbooks in the Latvian language, seem to have been major concerns among these skeptics. For others, the move to Riga was fraught with practical difficulties, especially if it involved the

transportation of scholarly collections and libraries, and the scholars' families.

Francis Balodis, for example, a renowned archaeologist and Egyptologist, was a professor at the University of Saratov on the Volga when he was summoned to Riga by the Organizing Committee. According to his autobiography, Balodis actually received the summons considerably later, and was given the choice by the Cheka of remaining in Soviet Russia in his capacity as professor, or leaving within twenty-four hours, without his archaeological collection, and also without his wife. Under these circumstances, Balodis maintains that he chose to remain in the Soviet Union as professor and vice-rector until 1924, when he finally managed to obtain permission to leave Russia together with his wife in order to participate in an archaeology conference in Vienna. Their true destination was Riga.

HOWEVER, THE CASE of Francis Balodis may have been slightly more complicated than he chose to express in his memoirs. As a student, he moved to Moscow University in 1906, and was clearly very well received. "In spite of the fact that I always emphasized my Latvian nationality", he wrote in his memoirs, "no doors were ever closed to me in Russia, up to the point when I was summoned to take up the post in Riga." At Saratov, he had an influential position in the faculty, and also occupied a new archaeological niche, excavating the ancient cities of the Golden Horde on the Volga. He states that he did not resolve to attempt the move to Riga until 1922, when he had established contact with Vice-Rector Razums at the University of Latvia. It appears that, for a long time, he found it quite rewarding to continue his academic work in Russia. The University of Saratov continued to operate without any major interference from the Bolshevik government until 1923, when matters changed drastically. Balodis's faculty was transformed into a teacher training college, and his academic work was subjected to political censorship. Only then, it seems, was Balodis convinced that serious scholarly work at Saratov had become impossible.

In a nationalist narrative it would, of course, be entirely natural for Latvian academics abroad to aspire to return. It should be borne in mind, however, that many of these academics had previously considered the entire Romanov Empire as the arena of their careers. In addition to those who were unwilling to leave their Russian universities, some of the invited Latvian professors, such as Francis Balodis, were prevented from doing so.

ON THE OTHER HAND, some Latvian academics arrived unexpectedly. One of these was the eminent economist Kārlis Balodis, who had served as a professor in Berlin since 1905. Apparently he was not among the invited scholars, but nevertheless received a warm welcome from the Organizing Committee. Balodis was actually given the honor of making one of the inaugural speeches when the new university was officially opened in September 1919. Several of these high-ranking Latvian academics were immediately inducted into the Organizing Committee, clearly adding to its academic weight.

The official histories of the University of Latvia have, of course, emphasized the "successful" recruitment of established Latvian academics, these histories in fact being themselves significant contributions to the nationalist project surrounding the creation of Latvijas Universitāte. They therefore tend to omit some phenomena and persons who do not fit the general picture. One person often conspicuously absent in the official histories is the eminent professor of chemistry Pauls Valdens (Paul Walden), who had been employed at the Riga Polytechnical Institute between 1885 and 1919. A Latvian

by birth, Valdens had made a distinguished career in the Tsarist university system and had become firmly integrated in Baltic German society. Valdens took an active part in the initial meetings of the Organizing Committee, and was even elected chairman by a huge majority in September 1919. It seems clear that Valdens was regarded as the prime candidate for the office of Rector of the new university. He was also the major link between the Baltic German academics of the former RPI and the Latvian provisional government.

Shortly after his election as committee chairman, however, Valdens went to Germany for research purposes and, to the obvious chagrin of his committee colleagues, did not reappear when expected. Naturally eager not to lose one of the figureheads of the new national university, Dāle sent a number of missives exhorting Valdens to return and resume his position in Riga. Valdens replied with various promises but for different reasons the journey homeward was always postponed.

Within the Organizing Committee, Valdens's evasions gave rise to some dissension. The economist Kārlis Balodis maintained that every effort should be made to secure Valdens's return. Other members, however, described him as "uncommitted" and argued that people with more courage and enthusiasm were needed to develop the new Latvian university. Valdens was formally removed as chairman of the Organizing Committee in November 1919 and replaced by the psychologist Pauls Dāle. Still, Valdens's chair in chemistry was left vacant, and efforts to persuade him to return to Riga continued.

In a letter in German to the Ministry of Education, Valdens declared that he was willing to return to Riga, but only on the condition that his scientific, juridical, and material circumstances were not in any way compromised. He demanded conditions similar to those he presently enjoyed in Rostock as the director of a department of chemistry at a 500-year-old university. In addition, he demanded the right to pick his own scientific collaborators and to lecture in the language of his choice, i.e. in German. The national cause appears to have been of very little importance to him. In his letter, Valdens openly declared that, in the interests of science, he had for decades held himself aloof from all kinds of "national and political chauvinism".

IN THE END Valdens chose to remain in Rostock permanently. He was one of the very few ethnic Latvians who enjoyed a solid reputation in the international scientific community, and would no doubt have been an excellent figurehead for the new university. Valdens would have performed admirably in the role of an academic national hero, and his "defection" was certainly a great setback for the organizers. However, the Valdens case also clearly shows that not every academic was interested in complying with the university's national agenda. For Valdens, apparently, material conditions, resources for scientific work, and participation in a first-class academic community were more important than helping to realize the old dream of the Latvian nationalists: to create a university in Latvian territory using the Latvian language.

LANGUAGE MATTERS

One of the crucial elements of the nationalist agenda was the use of Latvian as the language of instruction. In some faculties this proved to be difficult, especially in Mechanics, Chemistry, Medicine, and Law and Economics. The lack of qualified Latvian-speaking academics made it virtually impossible to give the Latvian language monopoly status at the new university.

This problem was apparent right from the start. The Organizing Committee had decided in September 1919 that Latvian

should be the main language of instruction, but that Russian or German could be used “when necessary”. A particular dilemma was posed by the predominantly Baltic German academics associated with the former Riga Polytechnical Institute. The Organizing Committee had access to a set of established professors and lecturers, some of them of considerable international reputation. Unfortunately, many of them could teach only in Russian and German.

The agronomist Paulis Lejiņš suggested in September 1919 that, in order to secure its national aims, the new university should primarily select young, competent candidates who could speak Latvian. This, he maintained, had already been done in his own faculty. Only two established Baltic German academics were offered positions in agronomy, and the staff was predominantly Latvian. This was evidently achieved in close cooperation with the provisional government’s ministry of agriculture, where Lejiņš had played a key role before his own academic appointment. In addition, the provisional dean, Jānis Bergs, was closely connected to the Latvian farmers’ cooperatives. The political influence of the ministry and the farmers’ associations was exceptionally strong in the formation of the Faculty of Agronomy.

In the committee, Paulis Lejiņš proposed that similar principles should apply when selecting staff for the other faculties. Younger and academically less distinguished Latvian-speakers should be given preference over more qualified candidates who could not teach in Latvian. A majority of the committee initially backed Lejiņš’s proposal, and only approved candidates whom they knew for certain to be Latvian-speakers.

This elicited a vigorous backlash from the predominantly non-Latvian staff in the Mechanics Faculty. The dean, the Baltic German professor Paul von Denffer, threatened to resign immediately if the faculty was not allowed to select candidates based on their scientific merit. In the face of this resistance, the committee back-pedaled. Chairman Pauls Dāle described the incident as a “misunderstanding”, and maintained that the faculty naturally had the final say in selecting academic candidates. Paul von Denffer was unanimously asked to remain as dean.

JUST A FEW WEEKS after the exchanges between von Denffer and the committee, there was a renewed discussion about whether to condone lectures in German. The Faculty of Architecture wanted to elect von Stryk, an established academic from the previous RPI who was clearly incapable of lecturing in Latvian. The committee member from the Latvian Society, Spricis Paegle, strongly argued against the election of staff who were not proficient in Latvian, and a majority of the committee postponed the appointment, deciding that every effort should be made to find Latvian-speaking academics. The appointment was then rejected at a subsequent meeting. It is quite possible that the prolonged and somewhat unexpected absence of Pauls Valdēns, the main link between the Baltic German academics of the RPI and the provisional Latvian government, considerably weakened the bargaining power of von Denffer and the other Baltic German deans.

Paulis Lejiņš and Spricis Paegle continued to press the language issue on several occasions during the autumn of 1919. Eventually, the Organizing Committee adopted the policy that former staff of the Riga Polytechnic should be employed if there was a unquestionable need for their particular qualifications. Otherwise, Latvian-speakers should be given preference. Former staff of the Polytechnic who opposed the Latvians’ national strivings should also be disregarded. Loyalty to the newly emerging state was obviously seen as crucial – this is not surprising, since at that time several hostile armed

forces were still present on Latvian soil. Not until spring of 1920 did the provisional Latvian government actually have full control over its territory.

THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE: NATIONAL, ACADEMIC, AND PRAGMATIC CONCERNS

Paulis Lejiņš seems to have followed a nationalist principle relentlessly during the initial years. When academics belonging to one of the ethnic minorities were put forward for appointment, Lejiņš frequently questioned the faculty’s choice and insisted that Latvian candidates be given preference. He appears to have been quite content to advocate the selection of Latvians who did not have the requisite academic qualifications: this should be remedied, he argued, by arranging for them to study abroad. Such a long-term strategy, however, certainly did not satisfy deans who urgently needed qualified academic staff to manage their teaching assignments.

Lejiņš’s nationalist priorities, and perhaps his quarrelsome style, appear to have involved him in conflicts with several other committee members. In the aftermath of a sensitive recruitment issue, Lejiņš complained that a Latvian professor in the Medical Faculty had called him a “German-hater” and “chauvinist”. Feeling the need to explain his position, Lejiņš declared that he was in no way hostile to Latvian citizens belonging to other “nationalities” if they had supported the Latvian government during the recent War of Liberation, or at least had remained neutral and were now loyal “in thought and deed”. He nevertheless felt it reasonable that all government institutions, including the newly founded university, should contain a representative proportion of ethnic Latvians. That meant that at least seventy-five percent of the academic staff should be of the majority ethnicity. Moreover, the university must, he argued, be infused with a Latvian spirit.

Lejiņš’s nationalist stance went further than merely promoting the use of Latvian as the academic language in all faculties. His agenda was clearly ethnically motivated. However, in the Organizing Committee’s discussions, Lejiņš and other members on the “national” wing always framed their arguments in terms of language proficiency, not ethnicity. Openly advocating an ethnic principle in recruitment was clearly not an option, because it would have been incompatible with established academic norms and practices. To some extent, the requirement that recruited academics should be proficient in Latvian appears to have served as a cloak for what was really a selection based on ethnicity. Considerations of academic excellence, and the practical need for qualified lecturers, seem to have been a secondary concern.

However, Paulis Lejiņš’s influence in the Organizing Committee appears to have weakened by the autumn of 1920. On September 1, Ernsts Felsbergs was elected the first acting rector, and Lejiņš, who had fulfilled these duties during the first year, resigned as vice-rector in November. By that time, some influential ethnic Latvian professors had returned from Russian “exile” and joined the Organizing Committee, changing its composition considerably.

ONE OF THESE “returnees” was the distinguished professor of linguistics Jānis Endzelīns. While his “national” inclinations cannot be doubted, he nevertheless stood out as the main proponent of a recruitment policy based primarily on academic merit rather than ethnicity. He consistently argued for criteria of expertise and academic excellence in the selection of candidates. As one of the university’s most acclaimed

scholars, Endzelīns’s opinions on these matters naturally carried great weight.

These new circumstances appear to have greatly reduced the influence of Paulis Lejiņš and the Faculty of Agronomy. After his resignation as vice-rector, Lejiņš seems to have become relatively marginalized in university politics. He was not elected to the newly established University Council in 1922, and did not hold any other posts at the university level during the rest of the 1920s.

Members of the Organizing Committee clearly believed in the university for a variety of reasons. The deans of the Medical Faculty appear to have been the most pragmatic, advocating the appointment of Baltic German specialists, condoning the continued use of German as a teaching language, and continuing to use German textbooks because they were the best available. For them, the main priority was to create a national university that would provide medical students with up-to-date scientific knowledge – and thereby provide Latvian hospitals with good doctors. Dean Roberts Krimbergs was also well acquainted with German medical academia, having received his scientific training at the universities of Heidelberg and Berlin.

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES were voiced most frequently by the deans of the faculties of engineering, natural sciences, and law and economics. These departments were led by academics with ample experience of the Russian and German university systems. As professional scientists and researchers, they were pragmatic about the choice of teaching languages. As the incident with von Denffer shows, they also disliked considerations of candidates’ ethnicity interfering with the process of staff selection. These faculties were clearly dominated by Baltic Germans in the early years. Latvian academics were usually in the minority and generally belonged to a younger generation.

Some of the Latvian scholars in the Organizing Committee also defended fundamental academic aims. The Latvian linguist Jānis Endzelīns in particular repeatedly questioned the committee’s refusal to endorse the appointment of distinguished Baltic German or Russian candidates. Endzelīns seems to have championed the ideals of academic excellence; because of his unquestionably Latvian credentials he was probably able to advocate this view from a stronger position than most of the other deans. For Endzelīns, evidently, the significance of a national university was strongly connected with its reputation as an institution of high academic standards.

The committee’s “national” wing, on the other hand, particularly Paulis Lejiņš, evidently saw its mission in promoting the Latvianness of the new university and thereby realizing the hopes and dreams of the nationalist movement. Lejiņš was certainly the most outspoken member of the “national” wing, advocating an ethnically motivated selection of Latvian candidates over more academically qualified Baltic Germans. In the tug-of-war between these diverging interests, the University of Latvia was formed. ✖

reference

- 1 This article is a shortened version of a chapter in the author’s recent monograph *Between National and Academic Agenda: Ethnic Policies and “National Disciplines” at Latvia’s University, 1919–40*, in the Södertörn Academic Studies series. For full references, please consult the book.

Dislocating literature

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Introduction. Transnational literature and literary studies in the Baltic Sea region

Crossing the boundaries in the Baltic Sea region inevitably involves crossing the tracks of vikings and tradesmen, smugglers and duty free ships, politicians and armies, nomads and crusaders, working-class activists and aristocrats, communists and fascists, refugees and economic migrants, scholars and artists, diplomats and spies. Any literary protagonist, author, motif or stylistic device that can be argued to reflect such modes of movement is of relevance for the discussion.

More than a year ago, we addressed literary scholars with a call for papers including the above lines. It was an act of curiosity: we wanted to gather pieces of literary criticism that make the linguistic and historical diversity of the Baltic Sea region palpable; that either reflect movements across the borders within and around the region, or offer destabilizing approaches to literary texts that have so far been seen in a more rigid national or regional context. In this issue of *Baltic Worlds*, we present the results: a selection of seven articles from, depending on how one counts, around ten different nations – as it turned out, most of the contributors live and work in more than one country and more than one language. While five of the articles represent different styles of literary scholarship, the other two offer alternative vantage points on literature: philosophy and historiography.

There are good reasons why the Baltic Sea region is usually not understood as a unit of analysis in literary studies. When scholars from the Nordic countries, the Baltic states, Russia, Poland, and Germany come together, they bring different linguistic, national and institutional traditions with them, traditions that have existed in geographic proximity but have often had astonishingly little to do with one another. Apart from the linguistic boundaries, there are long-term effects of political divisions as well as specific traditions regarding who is expected to know which cluster of languages. Furthermore, there is a tendency of smaller literary fields to seek to connect with a more dominating aesthetic core rather than with each other.

Yet places, languages, and stories tend to connect in ways one would never expect. We decided neither to define a clear subject nor a specific school of thought, but to enter our own region as something unknown and amorphous, to welcome multiple perspectives and paratactic relations and try to handle whatever came our way. Although we were happy not knowing what to expect, we were not merely rubbing our hands together in excitement anticipating chaos. The editors come from Finland and Sweden, each of us grew up within different linguistic communities: we all have a close relation to both Finnish and Swedish, yet in three very different ways.

Having studied German and comparative literature partly or entirely abroad – all three of us in Germany, two of us in the United States – we wanted to get in touch with scholars who have crossed our own paths from other points of origin and in other directions. We began to discuss whether the American and Western European debates on comparative literature can be related to the lives and writings in the smaller countries surrounding this large body of brackish water known as the Baltic Sea.

But why comparative literature – what is comparative literature? While this field of scholarship is practiced in many countries, with decisive local differences, it has its strongest institutional tradition in the United States, where the work of exiled scholars has been formative: the early comparative literature departments were mostly staffed by European expatriates. Since the late 19th century, the history of the discipline includes very different approaches to comparison – from attempts at systematizing the literary output of the world in exhaustive evolutionary models to the so-called “theory years” in the 20th century, when comparatists tended to rely on a very small canon, working mostly on Western European literatures. Over the last decades, the traditionally small canon has been expanded towards the inclusion of non-Western literatures. One of the most influential developments has come from postcolonial theory – along with a corresponding sensitivity towards hierarchies and more complicated orders and disorders. As a discipline, comparative literature is now often understood quite broadly, as a study of intercultural relations and interactions between literature and other forms of human activities, such as historiography, the arts, philosophy, and politics. Along with this development, comparative literature has all but ceased to be seen as a supplement to national philologies, which would only confirm the existence of clearly defined entities to be compared.

Applied to our endeavor, a comparative approach in the above sense would mean avoiding the temptation to construct an entity and call it “The Literature of the Region”, and instead bearing with the differences and complications one comes across as soon as one sets out to think comparatively. Accordingly, rather than comparing for instance a Swedish novel with an Estonian one, the task would be to historicize or destabilize the notion of what is Swedish and what is Estonian. Far from being explicitly thematized in the following contributions, all these questions form a subtext of the current issue; we have been discussing them while choosing the contributions and while analyzing them. By presenting selected samples of scholarly writing, we want to put up for discussion the question of which specific criteria might be

meaningful for a comparative approach. Furthermore, in posing questions of the location of literature, we are not only talking about literary texts but also about the literary scholars who set out to read and perhaps compare them. In this way – as readers of literature and of scholarly contributions – we face a dual task: On the one hand, we seek to reconfigure and “dislocate” conceptualizations of literary texts and literary relations in the Baltic Sea region. But perhaps we are also re-locating ourselves while looking into questions that pose themselves particularly strongly here.

Bringing together literary scholars with such diverse backgrounds inevitably involves dealing with language barriers. For now, the English language serves as a mediator: it is foreign to the Baltic Sea region and yet in a way may be our strongest point of comparison since it is the only language we have in common. We use English, and yet we hope to allow some space for the different points of enunciation, different approaches to language, and different scholarly traditions and styles, as well as their possible resonances. While translation can be seen as a way to level out differences, it has also been argued that certain meanings can only be made visible through the process of translation.

The main focus of this issue is literature in relation to the history of the 20th century. After the first essay, which deals with literature and the Holocaust, we move on to a series of articles about the Soviet era: the Cold War division and its aftermath from several different perspectives. At the end of the issue we have two articles that offer reflections on philosophical and aesthetic questions such as the relation between the written and the spoken word, and between solidifying and liquefying concepts of thought.

We are not striving towards an exhaustive representation of scholarly approaches, much less literatures, in the region, but hope that the multitude of approaches presented in the following articles will form a new point of departure for unexpected and fruitful readings. A number of themes, literatures, and languages are left unmentioned in our current selection, such as literature written by migrants from other parts of the world, to name but one example. Acknowledging the impossibility of accounting for every important aspect of our topic, our aim has been to highlight the particularities that do not easily lend themselves to generalization. In accordance with this vantage point, we have left the relations between the individual articles open for discussion, regarding the gaps between the texts as productive. ✖

In the shadow of Rumkowski

essay by **Olaf Haagenen**

The period of September 5–12, 1942, will leave indelible memories among the portion of the ghetto's population on whom fate smiles and who survive the war.

One week, eight days that seem an eternity!

Even now it is difficult to grasp what has occurred. An elemental force has passed through the ghetto and swept away some 15,000 people (no one knows the exact number yet) and life appears to have resumed its former course.¹

In the literature on the Łódź Ghetto, these eight days in early September 1942 are referred to only as “the Sperre”, derived from the general curfew (“Allgemeine Gehsperr”) ordered by the Germans while they rounded up children, the elderly, the infirm, and the unemployed for deportation to Chelmno (German: Kulmhof), a death camp about 55 kilometers away. *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, from which the quotation was taken, was a sort of collective diary written in secret by a group of ten or fifteen people in the Jewish Administration. It describes life in the ghetto, major events – such as the Sperre – and minor occurrences. (For instance, in a short entry from June of the same year, one reads that a recital had been held, “das einem klassischen Repertoire gewidmet war, im Programm u.a. Bach”.²) With its 3,500 pages, *The Chronicle* has been called “a source unparalleled among writings on the destruction of [the] European Jews”.³ Without it, Swedish writer Steve Sem-Sandberg could not have written his novel *De fattiga i Łódź* (2009; English translation, *The Emperor of Lies*, 2011). The two texts are so closely interwoven that it would not be unreasonable to argue that the novel is a rewriting of *The Chronicle*.

In retrospect, one man has become inextricably linked to the Sperre, and he was not among the 15,000 forced to leave the ghetto. The day before the deportations started, the Chairman of the ghetto, Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski (perhaps the most important character in Sem-Sandberg's novel), delivered a speech known in the Anglo-American reception only as “Rumkowski's ‘give me your children’ speech”. In front of the fire station in the ghetto, he informed the inhabitants – or the 1,500 of them who had assembled to hear him – that all children under ten and adults over sixty-five must leave Łódź.⁴ In the English translation of Sem-Sandberg's

book, the speech is reproduced over the space of four pages. Rumkowski explains that he has no choice. Either they take care of the matter themselves or the German soldiers will. He tells the crowd that he has negotiated the number who must leave the ghetto down from 24,000. And he defends his decision: by sacrificing some, he can save the ghetto. In Sem-Sandberg's version, the speech ends as follows:

So what is best? What do you want? For us to let eight or nine thousand people live, or look on mutely as all perish [. . .] Decide for yourselves. It is my duty to try to help as many survive as possible. I am not appealing to the hotheads among you. I am appealing to people who can still listen to reason. I have done, and will continue to do, everything in my power to keep weapons off our streets and avoid bloodshed . . . The ruling could not be overturned, only tempered.

It takes the heart of a thief to demand what I demand of you now. But put yourselves in my shoes. Think logically, and draw your conclusions. I cannot act in any way other than I do, since the number of people I can save this way far exceeds the number I have to let go . . .⁵

The deportation of children, the elderly, and the sick transformed Łódź from a traditional ghetto to an industrial slave city and established the motto for which Rumkowski would become known: work is our only way out.

Rumkowski's position in the ghetto and his role in the deportations have – naturally enough – attracted a great deal of attention in the literature on the Łódź Ghetto. Primo Levi brings up Rumkowski in his reflections on “the grey zone” and interprets him as an example of what absolute power does to a man.⁶ Rumkowski ran the ghetto like a dictator – with the help of an extensive police force – and talked about “his city” and “his Jews”. He printed his own ghetto currency with his image on it and got his own “court poets” to compose poems and songs about his accomplishments. In her critique of the *Judenräte*, Hannah Arendt places Rumkowski at one end of the scale and Adam Czerniakow, leader of the Warsaw ghetto, at the other. When Czerniakow was given the same order as Rumkowski, he took his own life.⁷ Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer devotes a few pages to Rumkowski in *Rethinking the Holocaust* from the early 2000s and asks: What

if the war had played out differently? What if the Red Army had stopped the advance only three or four days later than it did in July 1944? If it had, Soviet forces would probably have reached Łódź while there were still about 70,000 Jews in the ghetto instead of the fewer than 1,000 they found in January 1945. Would we then have erected a statue in Rumkowski's memory or executed him for having sent thousands of Jewish people to their deaths? Bauer's answer is, “Frankly, I would vote for the gallows, not the statue.”⁸

Sem-Sandberg has talked about Rumkowski in interviews as the “black hole” in his novel, that towards which everything is inexorably drawn, and has said among other things, “Immer heißt es in den Erinnerungen an Łódź: Rumkowski entschied dies oder das. Als ob keine Deutschen dagewesen wären”⁹. The observation is important, not as an absolution of Rumkowski but more as a reminder that a historical event must be interpreted against the horizon of its time. Ruth Klüger writes about the distorted image of the Holocaust that survivor stories are always in danger of producing. At one place in her memoir *Landscapes of Memory*, she stops and reflects:

Now comes the problem of this survivor story, as of all such stories: we start writing because we want to tell about the great catastrophe. But since by definition the survivor is alive, the reader inevitably tends to separate, or deduct, this one life, which she has come to know, from the millions who remain anonymous. You feel, even if you don't think it: well, there is a happy ending after all.¹⁰

In the encounter with the history of the Łódź Ghetto, posterity faces a similar problem: how should we regard all of those who stood in Rumkowski's shadow, all of those who did not step onto the stage of history, but went to their ruin in the wings? Or, taken to the extreme: how can we avoid reducing Łódź to an example of Levi's grey zone or the role of the *Judenräte* in the Final Solution? How can we look past the arguments in Rumkowski's speech outside the fire station on the 4th of September, 1942, and catch sight of his audience?

In his essay “Even Nameless Horrors Must Be Named”, published in autumn 2011,¹¹ Sem-Sandberg argues that it is time to lift the “aesthetic state of emergency” that has surrounded witness literature and made it a forbidden area for anyone who has not personally and physically experienced a Nazi

concentration camp. He discusses the Russian writer Varlam Shalamov's suite of short stories, *Kolyma Tales* (published in Russian in 1954), which describes life in a Russian labor camp, and suggests Shalamov as a possible role model. When Sem-Sandberg describes the world of the camp in Shalamov's work, it is tempting to read it as an indirect interpretation of the ghetto he himself has created in *The Emperor of Lies*:

The world of the labor camp with its gigantic superstructure and the barren landscape all around does not merely serve as a backdrop, but develops by degrees into a hellish space with clearly delineated boundaries, governed by its own laws. Here are the mines to which a constant supply of new work brigades are sent, to be used up like so much dross; but also the camp hospitals, a clinical world within a world, to which those with the right contacts might have the good fortune to be temporarily or permanently transferred. And last but not least: the world of professional criminals that constitutes the foremost circle of the camp, those with the true power, its aristocracy.¹²

As one reads the book, the map provided at the back of *The Emperor of Lies* changes from a collection of street names to precisely that which Sem-Sandberg finds in Shalamov: a world apart, one with its own inner context and logic. Roughly in the middle of the ghetto lies Baluty Square, a neutral barbed-wire enclave where raw materials are brought in and finished products taken out, the only place where there is any interaction between Germans and Jews. Rumkowski's office and the Central Office of Labor, which coordinates all production in the ghetto, are here. "You could call this square the stomach of the ghetto."¹³ Just a few streets away, we find the ghetto's Department of Statistics, often called simply The Archive. This is where the ID cards all Jews must carry at all times are made, and where various pieces of informational material supposed to document the work done in ghetto factories and workshops are published. But it is also where a small group of people secretly compile *The Chronicle* and describe everything that does not fit the official image of Łódź: the food shortages and diseases, the deportations and violence. A historical narrative for the future is written in the archives, "the heart of the ghetto."¹⁴ Marysin, in the northeastern part of the ghetto, is an area of wooden houses, garden plots, and greenhouses where the upper echelons of the ghetto go to escape the summer heat and dust trapped between the tenements in the center of the ghetto. The cemetery is located at the edge of Marysin where the ghetto borders on the rest of the city. It is hidden behind high walls. While the more affluent residents of the ghetto take a vacation, the gravediggers work seven days a week. They have to in order to keep up: thousands of new graves are needed every year. The Green House, one of the orphanages Rumkowski has set up in the ghetto, is just a stone's throw from the western wall of the cemetery. In addition, there are places like the hospital and police station (also known as the Red House), the homes of the various families we come to know – and, lest we forget, the private apartments of the Rumkowski clan, where an utterly disastrous family life plays out in the midst of the surrounding catastrophe.

Sem-Sandberg has built a world around Rumkowski and populated it with persons from all levels of the ghetto hierarchy – the list of characters at the back of the book contains more than 80 names. Łódź is seen through the lives of people who are often far from the center of history, regardless of

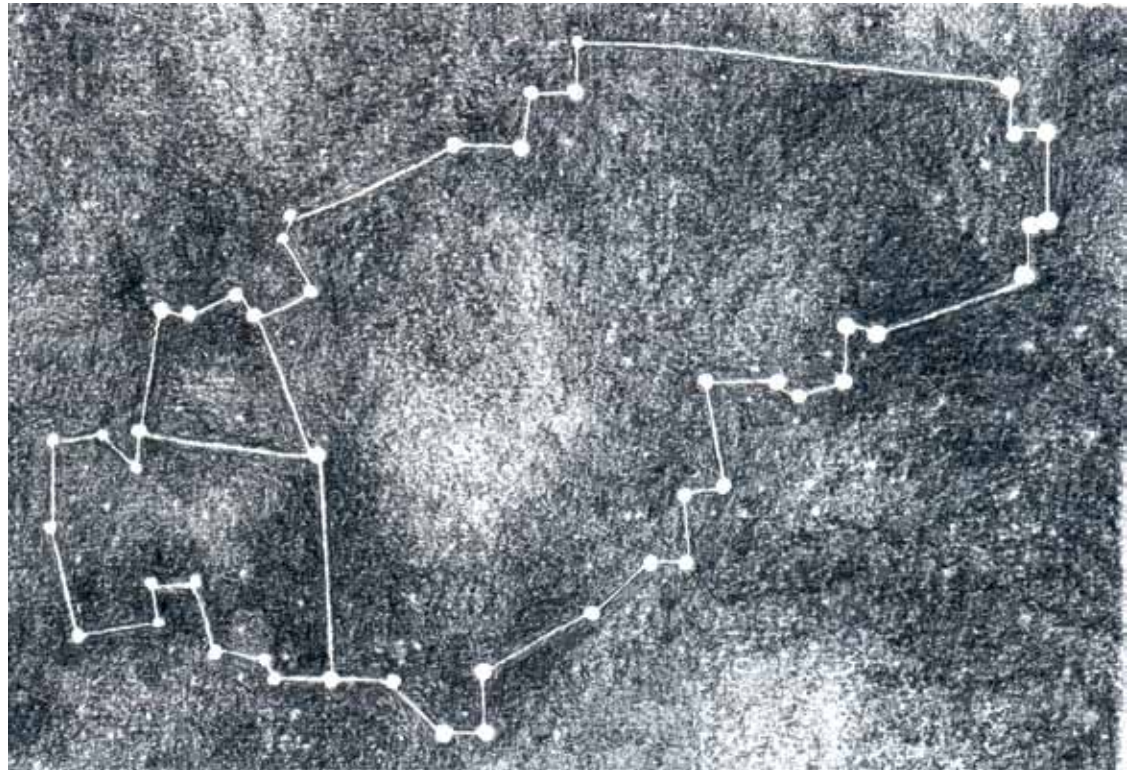


Illustration: Moa Thelander

whether placed in the German ghetto administration offices or in Rumkowski's office.

This is an unfamiliar (yet recognizable) world for most of us, and the few who can claim first-hand knowledge of it – the survivors, the witnesses – are dying out. Sem-Sandberg and *The Emperor of Lies* have – in the otherwise largely positive reception – met with the same objections made against all works of fiction by writers who have not personally *been there*: Why fiction? By what right?¹⁵ Sem-Sandberg has little to say in answer to the second question. He is a non-Jewish-Swedish citizen born to Norwegian parents, and he has no biographical or familial ties to the destruction of the Jews. And, one might well add, not only is he a product of neutral and innocent Sweden, but he made his first literary forays in the most unrealistic of all genres: science fiction.¹⁶

Let us linger a bit on this last point. Let us try, for a moment, to amalgamate two types of texts that seldom or never intersect, the survivor testimony and the science fiction story, and ask whether there are any parallels between the two that might be productive of further reflection. One striking characteristic of the testimonies is in fact how often arrival at the camps is described as being like landing on another planet, a place outside and disconnected from the world as we know it. In his essay "Orfeus i spegelstaden" [Orpheus in the city of mirrors], published in 2003, Sem-Sandberg argues that the defining characteristic of science fiction is the creation of worlds: the science fiction author cannot rely on our shared, presupposed reality (as a traditional realistic novel can), but must build a new world from the ground up for the reader, a world that may encompass everything from linguistic peculiarities (neologisms) to metaphysical superstructures.¹⁷ In one interesting passage, Sem-Sandberg discusses the work of Polish writer and journalist Ryszard Kapuściński and argues that Kapuściński's position on the borderline between journalism and literature is comparable to the science fiction author's attempts to conjure up an unknown world:

The genre in which Kapuściński works, literary reporting, is found between two other genres/ languages, news journalism and fiction, and it is precisely because it is there, *in the middle*, marginal in a way to both, that it must constantly rediscover and repopulate the world. Simply referring to an existing reality, as the journalistic text does, is not enough. Relying on conventional literary forms and means of expression is not enough either. It is precisely the position of literary reporting *on the margin* that helps release a slew of literary energies that would otherwise have remained latent. In this case, it resembles science fiction.¹⁸

Can we imagine a similar position *on the margin* for the literature that attempts to describe twentieth-century camps? A literature that does not attempt to meet Medusa's gaze (Primo Levi), but instead attempts to recreate in literature – with all forms and means available – the world, the strange planet where Medusa might roam? Elie Wiesel's repudiation of any form of fiction in the encounter with the Holocaust ("A novel about Treblinka is either not a novel or not about Treblinka"¹⁹) is well known. Imre Kertész's utterly opposed contention has received less attention. A concentration camp, he argues, is imaginable only and exclusively as literature, never as reality. "Auch nicht – und sogar dann am wenigsten –, wenn wir es selbst erleben."²⁰

In one place in her previously mentioned memoir, Ruth Klüger writes about Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* and ponders over Lanzmann's obsession with the specific places where the exterminations took place: he wants to know what they looked like then, down to the last detail. "Lanzmann's greatness", she writes, "depends on his belief that place captures time and can display its victims like flies caught in amber."²¹ One might well make a similar argument about Sem-Sandberg and *The Emperor of Lies*. The world of his liter-

ary creation in the novel would not have been much more than a “simple backdrop”, to use his own words, if it had not also captured the peculiar temporality of ghetto life. From the privileged viewpoint of posterity, it is obvious that the Sperre was a watershed in the history of the ghetto. This interpretation is confirmed by *The Chronicle*, in which the historic significance of the deportations is immediately established. The articulative stance and perspective of the author behind the diary entry of September 14, 1942, is, however, quite interesting. Seen in the light of the institutionalized memorial culture surrounding the extermination of the Jews that has emerged over the last 15 or 20 years and the insistence upon the unique and incomprehensible nature of the Holocaust, the following sentence is noteworthy: “Noch heute fällt es schwer, sich bewusst zu machen, was es eigentlich war.” *The Chronicle* diarist writes this entry only two days after the deportations, and in the very next sentence, he or she adds that life is moving on “im alten Flussbett”, despite the typhoon that has struck the ghetto. In the next entries in *The Chronicle*, the deportations are briefly mentioned on a few occasions, but by October, there is scarcely a trace of them anymore. The difference – and it is a world of difference – between our own recognition of the historical significance of the deportations and that of the ghetto inhabitants (as portrayed in *The Chronicle*) is that the inhabitants did not have the opportunity to rest upon this recognition. If those who remain are to have any chance, they must find their way back to the rhythm of ghetto life. The remembrance work – which we are so inclined to talk about today – had to wait until after the war, and for those who were lucky enough to survive.

The conflict between the ghetto’s horizon and that of posterity is already clearly discernible in the first section of the prologue to *The Emperor of Lies*. We are in the first days of September 1942, the beginning of the Sperre, and we find ourselves in Rumkowski’s office on Bałuty Square. Rumkowski has just received the order that children and the elderly are to be deported:

That was the day, engraved for ever in the memory of the ghetto, when the Chairman announced in front of everyone that he had no choice but to let the children and old people of the ghetto go. Once he had made his proclamation that afternoon, he went to his office on Bałuty Square and sat waiting for higher powers to intervene to save him. He had already been forced to part with the sick people of the ghetto. That only left the old and the young. Mr. Neftalin, who a few hours earlier had called the Commission together again, had impressed on him that all the lists must be completed and handed over to the Gestapo by midnight at the latest. How then could he make it clear to them what an appalling loss this represented for him? *For sixty-six years I have lived and not yet been granted the happiness of being called Father, and now the authorities demand of me that I sacrifice all my children.*²²

The temporal space that opens here is vast and complex. The first sentence puts us in a place in the future, looking back: The day that has passed is already part of collective memory (“engraved for ever in the memory of the ghetto”). But the perspective changes over the next two sentences, and by the fourth sentence, we are in a *now* (“That only left the old and the young”), that is, before the inscription in the col-

lective memory of the ghetto, at an unspecified time on this particular day. The lists have to be ready by midnight, but it is impossible to know whether that time is two hours or ten hours away. In the two final sentences, historical time utterly dissolves and we move – in a two-part movement from direct discourse to free indirect discourse – into Rumkowski’s mind (“*For sixty-six years I have lived*”).

What is going on in this very first paragraph of the novel? Isn’t it that the temporal structure of *The Chronicle* is being written into the novel and, one might add, that the first building blocks of what will be the novel’s depiction of the ghetto world are being laid out: Bałuty Square, Mr. Neftalin, etc.? We move from the retrospective position of the historian to the immediate perceptions of those involved, from the history of the ghetto to the uncertain horizon of events as they unfold. The observation that Rumkowski has been sitting in his office “waiting for higher powers to intervene to save him” underlines this transition. Rumkowski longs for a glimpse into God’s book in which all the events and days ordained for him are written (Psalms 139:16). He wants to know whether Divine Will is controlling what is happening around him, a confirmation that he is making the right decisions. Or, in more secular terms, he wants to see himself from the retrospective viewpoint of posterity.

It is here that Sem-Sandberg’s novel unfolds: in the intersection between the knowledge history has given us and the perspective from inside the ghetto, between the documentary reconstruction and the creative power of fiction, between that which is now a city district in Łódź and that which once was, for 140,000 people in July 1941, the entire world. ✖



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- 10 Ruth Klüger, *Landscapes of Memory: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*, London 2004, p. 164.
- 11 I have quoted the essay “Even nameless horrors must be named” as it was published on Eurozine.com on 2011-09-23 and accessed 2011-10-05: <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2011-09-23-semsandberg-en.html>. The essay is a revised version of two texts, “Även de onämbara fasorna måste namnges” [Even nameless horrors must be named] and “Snart är vi alla vittnen” [Soon we will all be witnesses], published in *Dagens Nyheter* on 2011-01-27 and 2011-04-26, respectively.
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Illustration: Moe Thelander

Songs from Siberia

The folklore of deported Lithuanians

essay by **Vsevolod Bashkuev**

The deportation of populations in the Soviet Union during Stalin's rule was a devious form of political reprisal, combining retribution (punishment for being disloyal to the regime), elements of social engineering (estrangement from the native cultural environment and indoctrination in Soviet ideology), and geopolitical imperatives (relocation of disloyal populations away from vulnerable borders). The deportation operations were accompanied by the "special settlement" of sparsely populated regions in the hinterland. At least six million people of different nationalities were relocated by force in the USSR from the 1930s to the 1950s.¹

This article focuses on the texts of songs, poems, prayers, and jokes created by Lithuanians deported to Eastern Siberia in large-scale relocations from the Lithuanian Soviet Republic in 1948 and 1949. They suffered repression at the hands of Stalin's regime for alleged active aid to the nationalist Lithuanian resistance known to historians as the "forest brothers". *Vesna* [Spring] is the name given to the most massive deportation operation in Lithuanian history, conducted on May 22–23, 1948, resulting in the exile of 11,233 families, 39,482 men, women, and children, to Krasnoyarsk Krai, Irkutsk

oblast, and the Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. A year later, in March, April, and May 1949, in the wake of Operation Priboi, another 9,633 families, 32,735 people, were deported from their homeland to remote parts of the Soviet Union.²

The deported Lithuanians were settled in remote regions of the USSR that were suffering from serious labor shortages. Typically, applications to hire "new human resources" for their production facilities were received by different ministries a few months before a major deportation.³ In the area of exile, the bulk of those deported were settled in separate communities supervised by the MVD (Ministry of the Interior) district command post. The displaced were provided with employment without any consideration for their occupation before exile. For example, in Buryat-Mongolia, most of the Lithuanian peasants were employed in the forestry sector, felling trees and handling lumber, while in the Irkutsk region, some of the exiles worked at collective farms and "sovkhoz".⁴

Special settlements were quite close to local population centers and did not differ from them externally. The displaced were commonly accommodated in the dwellings of local residents, or even lodged with them as part of the forced

accommodation-sharing program. Whatever the housing arrangements, the exiles were in permanent contact with the local population, working side by side with them at the factories and collective farms and engaging in barter; the children of both exiled and local residents went to the same schools and attended the same clubs and cultural events. Sometimes mixed marriages were contracted between the exiles and the local population.

A special status that existed only in Stalin's USSR was assigned to the displaced Lithuanians as well as to other ethnic groups. The term "special settler" used in the Soviet legal reprisal lexicon meant "administratively exiled for an indefinite term without deprivation of rights". Translated into normal language, it meant that people were exiled without a proper court ruling, without announcing the exile term, with only limited freedom of movement, but with some of the elementary civil rights and duties enjoyed by the Soviet people. Hence, special settlers were not allowed to leave special settlements without the express permission of the command post leader and were obliged to work at the jobs assigned

them, but they enjoyed the right to vote and the right to education, medical assistance, and social security. Naturally, in real life, the special settlers were second-class citizens, stigmatized as ideologically unreliable.

Most of the Lithuanian special settlers had been self-supporting farmers, including many peasants of average means and sometimes even members of the working poor.⁵ Therein lies the tragic peculiarity of the internecine “war after the war” that broke out in Lithuania in the course of sovietization and collectivization (1945–1953). What was described by the Soviet government as a class struggle was, in fact, a civil war provoked by Stalin’s regime, in which those who suffered most were common people, who simply longed above all else for a peaceful life.

The bulk of exiled Lithuanians were included in the lists of people to be relocated because of denunciations. Exile orders were approved on the basis of only four signatures – often those of close friends, neighbors, or fellow villagers. A few liters of homebrewed vodka, a sack of flour, or a piece of smoked fat given to another person could provide sufficient reason to suspect a farmer of links with the nationalists.⁶ Without taking the trouble to look for proof, the Soviet authorities launched the punitive mechanism, and in the course of the next special operation, the whole family would be exiled, together with thousands of other unfortunate companions.

The only supporting document given to the local supervising authorities in the place of settlement was a deportation certificate. Flimsy though it may have been compared to today’s multi-volume files, this single sheet of paper was a sentence and determined the subsequent destiny of the exiled families. This sterility characterized all of Stalin’s deportations: their mass scale, extrajudicial nature, machine-like detail, and soulless indifference to human fates.

Inside the mechanism of repression, the situation changed dramatically. Total control and all-permeating surveillance were at the heart of the forced labor system. Once there, the person was immediately surrounded by numerous invisible informants who scrupulously took notes to report anything that could be perceived as a threat to the Soviet regime. Selection of informants from among the special settlers began in the early stages of their transportation to the place of exile. In addition to the lists of deportees, the train officers would hand over to the receiving MVD officers supplementary lists of enrolled informers, who, from the first days of exile, began to provide information regarding those among the contingent of special settlers who showed signs of wanting to escape.⁷

The ordeal of exile brought out both the best and the most ignoble in people. The vast majority of secret agents who reported on the moods of special settlers were Lithuanian. In return for their services, they were given money, work exemptions, and other minor forms of preferential treatment that acquired significant value in the exile environment. But denunciation was risky, and, if unmasked, such informants were at best subjected to unspoken ostracism from the entire Lithuanian community, such that the MVD agencies often had to transfer them to other places of special settlement.⁸

Great importance was attached to the formation of the informer network and scrutiny of the attitudes of the special settlers until the Lithuanians were released from exile in 1958. Multiple factors were taken into account when selecting informants: age, willingness to cooperate, agility,



Special settlement of Barun, Khorinskii region, Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Socialist Republic, 1956. Photo from the private archive of N. D. Grebenshchikov.



Dedication of a monument to deceased Lithuanian

awareness, and a command of Russian. The latter ability is particularly important given the context of this article. The poems and lyrics quoted below were translated into Russian by Lithuanian informants, apparently in advance, as they are attached to the documents in verse. But the Lithuanian originals are missing.

The reports on special settlers’ attitudes received from informants were gathered at the lowest level of the MVD system, at village and district special command posts where they were first evaluated, interpreted, and systematized. “Surveillance files” formed at the district command posts, using memos and reports received from village command post leaders, were then sent to the MVD’s regional department or head office. Once received, the information was analyzed and, based on the analysis, decisions were taken to investigate particularly unreliable special settlers. An abridged summary of the surveillance file materials was used to prepare reports for the Soviet Ministry of the Interior.⁹

One result of all this activity is the vast collection of documents that form the basis of this study, containing the most diverse data from surveillance of people who had been forcibly relocated. This study used only a small portion of the collection kept in the “special files” of the Information Center of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Buryatia. Various segments of the most extensive archival records made it possible to reproduce every detail of life in a special settlement in Buryat-Mongolia. This provided a strong empirical foundation for correlation with the real features of special settlement life in other parts of Eastern Siberia and for further generalizations. Most importantly, thanks to accurate records of carelessly dropped phrases and utterances, songs, prayers, poems, and jokes overheard, it was possible to recreate the thoughts, attitudes, and even emotions of the people who found themselves in the extreme environment of distant exile.

Naturally, the secret informers only recorded manifesta-

tions of negative emotions against the Soviet system and the gray reality around the special settlers. MVD officers also focused on manifestations of hostility, disobedience, slander, and freethinking, since that was what their key supervisory and repressive responsibilities implied. However, behind the flow of choleric, accusatory, and disparaging words, one can discover, like particles of gold in river sand, the overtones and images, hopes and aspirations, ideas and views of the people who had fallen under the wheels of repression.

Art reflected the negative features of their existence, personified in caricature and sometimes even demonic imagery. The songs of exiled Lithuanians often combined images of their Mother Lithuania and disparaging epithets aimed at Russia and Russians as aggressors. On formal occasions such as elections, Lithuanian youth would sing songs with “nationalist content” to spite the Soviet system. Thus, on December 16, 1951, on their way back from voting, young Lithuanians were singing the song below (the original document is a Russian translation):

A linden tree is bowed down by the roadside;
My old mother bursts into tears:
Ah, my son, your Motherland is calling you;
Once again my Lithuania will be free.
And if I am to die
At the Russian butchers’ hands,
Ah, lassie, adorn my tomb
With white locust blossoms.¹⁰

The old mother and the Motherland are identical in the song’s context, while the array of images is made vivid by the symbol of the bending linden. The linden tree, typical of Lithuania, is long-lived, and in this instance forms the heart of an extended metaphor: a mother calling to her exiled son and the Motherland bent under the aggressor’s heel. The victim’s



deportees. Village of Chelan, Buryat-Mongolia, 1957. Photo from the private archive of K. Mikulskene.

fate, possibly awaiting the song's protagonist, is reinforced by the image of a girl adorning the tomb with white blossoms, a symbol of youth, innocence, and eternity.

Jhukas Kazis, who was under surveillance as the son of a kulak and ex-member of a gang, was seen singing a similar song:

**Your old mother is crying;
Your Motherland awaits you,
A merry spring will blossom,
The happy day of freedom will come to Lithuania.¹¹**

The array of images used in the above songs is identical. Quite likely, it was the same song translated differently into Russian by informers among the exiled Lithuanians. Or the exiles who sang it may have added appropriate words here and there, modifying the form but leaving the meaning unchanged.

While the images of the Motherland, the mother, and the blossoms and trees symbolizing them formed a sacralized context, their antagonists, Russia, Russians, Soviet reality, and Soviet power, were portrayed with caricatures or demonic images.

One of the informants reported that on July 16, 1949, Kirsha Alexas gathered a group of Lithuanians at his place, and joined them in singing songs with "counterrevolutionary, nationalist, anti-Soviet, and slanderous" content, one of which is quoted below:

**The sun has set, the evening has come,
Our land has been robbed by the pauper Russia;
It seized our land
And does not let our sisters sow rue grass.
[...] Asians came up to the mother's window
And asked: Where is your son?
But she kept silence and did not betray her son;
So she was exiled to Siberia forever.
Spring will come; the cuckoo will start cuckooing;**



Work brigade of Lithuanian women deportees clearing a path in the forest. Buryat-Mongolia, 1950s.



Easter, 1950s. Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Socialist Republic. Both photos above from the private archive of A.V. Arefyeva.

**We'll cover all the roads with the bodies of Soviet partisans;
A time of blood will come, and our sufferings will end;
We'll oust the pauper Russians from the Lithuanian land.¹²**

In the above context Russia is presented as an enslaver. The rue grass normally sown in the spring by Lithuanian children is associated with the national traditions being oppressed, and possibly even with children yet unborn whose potential mothers were exiled to Siberia. Two distinctive features that parody Russia are the epithet "pauper" and the direct reference to "Asians", personifying wildness and poverty in the eyes of that generation of Lithuanians.

Once again, in the image of a mother who did not betray her son, one can recognize thousands of Lithuanian women exiled in punishment for their sons, husbands, and brothers, members of the nationalist resistance, and Lithuania itself raided by "Asians".

Interestingly, the image of Siberia is more neutral in the exiles' songs and poems. It is undoubtedly a harsh place, ill-suited for human life, but descriptions of it contain less hatred and rejection. For instance, another song, recorded by a Lithuanian woman named Pranya, goes as follows:

**Don't ask me why my face is sad;
Between the high mountains of Siberia
I cannot see the sun setting;
I cannot hear the lark's song,
It may be that I will not see my brothers
mowing hay in a green meadow;
It may be that I will not hear my sister
Singing a song of freedom.
You living over there in our homeland
Have neither nests nor sentinels,**

**Only the rustling of young birch trees
And the echo of a boring song.
Cold blizzards are raging in Siberia;
Our brothers have long been suffering there.¹³**

Like the lines quoted earlier, the above song was based on contrasting images: Siberia is severe, a place of fierce suffering; Lithuania is a quiet homeland, with birds warbling and trees rustling in the wind. But no derogatory attitude towards the land of exile is present here. This song rather conveys sadness and alienation, representing Siberia as a cruel but monumental natural purgatory where the firmness of the exiled Lithuanians is tested.

Other verses of the song contain an interesting image of Lithuanian partisans that becomes clear in the context of the "war after the war":

**Don't ask me, dear sister
Why I was exiled to Siberia;
[For] loving my native fields
And serving food to my brothers.¹⁴**

The girl was exiled to Siberia for aiding members of the nationalist movement, as described in the last verse of the song. The "brothers" to whom she was "serving food" are definitely her relatives or friends who fought in the "forest brothers" detachments. For exiled Lithuanians, their memories were precious because some of their "forest relatives" remained at large; moreover, resistance meant the survival of deeply rooted traditions and the will for freedom, and instilled hope during conditions of exile.

It was vigorous and aggressive march-like songs that helped to mobilize the exiles' will and physical strength to survive and resist the system. Thus in July 1949 an informer reported that three young Lithuanians returning from work formed a column and sang:

**Get up, lad, get up,
Get up, good man,
It's time to go to the war;
Defend enslaved Lithuania!¹⁵**

That same summer, during a drinking party, Lithuanian youths sang an even more rebellious song:

**Down with damned communism,
Down with heartless liars
Burglars of others' property,
Those who ousted us, the young,
From our sweet homeland [...]
As soon as the sun sets
You can see through the small windows
Our yellow faces and tearful eyes.
You won't come back, old people;
You won't come back, little children;
You won't come back, brothers and sisters;
You won't walk Lithuanian paths;
You won't join the soldiers' ranks.¹⁶**

In the above song, the call to overthrow communism and the denunciation of the Soviet leadership are linked with sorrow about the fate of exiled Lithuanians, with fatalistic motifs making the song sound like a lament, made more poignant by multiple repetitions of the negation. This song, both a cry and

a lament, conveys the feelings Lithuanians had during the first years of their Siberian exile.

Religion played an important role in the life of the exiles. Given the extreme conditions of exile, prayer helped to mobilize their strength to survive. Thus, even in the rush to pack all that was most essential during the single hour granted for gathering up their belongings, Lithuanian women would take prayer books, crucifixes, rosaries, holy pictures, and other devotional articles. These and the appeals to God composed in exile not only served to restore their spiritual equilibrium, but also helped them to preserve their Catholic faith in the Soviet environment of bellicose atheism. The religious poem below was written by a Lithuanian girl, Aldona Artishauskaite, in 1951:

The earth was in blossom, the olives were praying;
You were accompanied by Christ's sad glance
And the free wind of your native fields.
Do not cry, even if your heart is torn by storms;
Love your Motherland; grace will descend to your feet.
Hard as it is to remember your Lithuanian name,
Do not ever exchange your cup of happiness.¹⁷

The poem contains a clear call to submission and spiritual strength, expressing confidence that all the hardships inflicted on the exiles will finally end. The lines urge the listener to maintain love for the Motherland and never to lose the traditional values and ideals.

Clearly, singing songs and composing poems seen as “anti-Soviet” and “harmful” were risky undertakings. The exiles were deeply concerned about their destiny. Thus, in July 1951, a Lithuanian girl who lived in Buryat-Mongolia told her countrywoman – who proved to be an informant – “How soon will the ones in the blue caps take me?” When asked “What for?” she replied: “I believe they must seize me for going to the cemetery with Kazya Rimkutya last summer. When we were there, we sang songs against the Soviet rule.”¹⁸

Indeed, just a few lines of poetry, song, or letters were enough to earn the exiles several years in a camp, charged with anti-Soviet protest. However, there were people who dared to mock even the top Soviet leaders. Such jokes were often recorded in the MVD's surveillance files at the time of the state bond issues, hated by the special settlers. For instance, during a bond offering, a Lithuanian woman named Zinaida Blagozhvichute said on June 26, 1953: “I hate this deputy director for political affairs because he makes me subscribe for amounts I don't want. Last year I did not subscribe for the full amount of my salary and Stalin died because of that; and if I don't subscribe this year Malenkov will die.”¹⁹

Such on-the-edge statements most tellingly reveal the level of antagonism towards Soviet practices and rituals. Despite the risk of being sent to a camp, the exiles expressed resentment towards the aggressive ideological campaigns, which aggravated their already strained financial situation.

CONCLUSION

The examples of the oral folk art of exiled Lithuanians cited in this paper allow us to address the fundamental problems of how the trauma of deportation relates to the archival findings and how it transformed the creators of the folk art. The bulk of research material is still preserved in the memory of those who suffered exile, or in restricted-access archives. Nevertheless, this analysis has made it possible to arrive at a number of generalizations.

It is folklore that most vividly reflects the situation of exile:

homesickness, expressed through immediately recognizable images, grudges against Soviet power, and rejection of an alien reality reflected in the contrast of expressive means and a conflict of images. At the same time, folklore may have served to neutralize the trauma, thus removing psychological stress and assuaging spiritual anguish.

Songs, poems, and prayers were reliable tools of passive resistance to Soviet propaganda. Unlike other types of expression of dissent, they were created for existential purposes, to last a long time and to be open to modification. Quite possibly, the same songs and poems, like court ballads, were passed from one contingent of Lithuanian special settlers to another, with new verses added.

The system of total surveillance established by the government to punish and reeducate the exiles has been preserved in its records and has brought to the present age examples of folk art that were created under extreme stress and documented for the purpose of surveillance. Given the ability of the human memory to quickly erase that which is most painful, the above examples might, under different circumstances, have been forgotten and have disappeared forever. The fact that most of them are presented in Russian translation and are accompanied by the interpretations of supervising officers gives us a vivid impression of the peculiarities of the perception and reasoning of the exiled Lithuanians: the MVD officers. This adds particular value to the examples of folklore as primary historical sources. ✕



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- 1 Viktor Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR, 1930–1960* [Special Settlers in the USSR, 1930–1960], Moscow 2003, p. 281. See also: Pavel Polyak. *Ne po svoei vole... Istoriia i geografiia prinuditel'nykh migratsii v SSSR* [Not by Their Own Will... History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR], Moscow 2001, p.239.
- 2 Vanda Kašauskiene, “Deportations from Lithuania under Stalin: 1940–1953”, in *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 3:80, 1998.
- 3 Vsevolod Bashkuev, *Litovskie spetsposelentsy v Buriat-Mongolii (1948–1960)* [Lithuanian Special Settlers in Buryat-Mongolia (1948–1960)], Ulan-Ude 2009, p. 100.
- 4 “Sovkhoz” is an abbreviation of the Russian *sovetskoe khoziaistvo* [soviet farm] and refers to the large mechanized farms owned by the state.
- 5 Viktor Berdinskikh, *Spetsposelentsy: Politicheskaiia sssylka narodov Sovetskoi Rossii* [The deported: the political exile of Russian ethnic minorities], Moscow 2005, p. 525.
- 6 From an interview with B. S. Razgus dated April 28, 2010 (the audio tape of the interview is kept in the author's records). According to B. S. Razgus, chairman of the regional organization National-Cultural Society of Lithuanians in Buryatia, the resolution concerning the expulsion of his family contained only four signatures of alleged “witnesses” to the fact that his father, S. V. Razgus, had given a sack of flour and a certain

quantity of home-brewed vodka to his neighbor. The Razgus family owned 20 hectares of land and a small farmstead.

- 7 Vsevolod Bashkuev, *Litovskie spetsposelentsy v Buriat-Mongolii (1948–1960)* [Lithuanian special settlers in Buryat-Mongolia (1948–1960)], Ulan-Ude 2009, p. 149.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 160–161.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 52–53.
- 10 Archival abbreviations are henceforth used as follows: F for “archival fund”; O for “inventory”; D for “archival file”; T for “volume”; L for “info on Lithuanians” or “sheet”. Gruppy spetsfondov Informatsionnogo tsentra MVD Respubliki Buriatii [Special Deposit of the Information Center of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Buriatia], F. 58L. O. 1. D. 91. T. 1. L. 66: “Sognulas' lipa pri doroge, / Zaplakala mat' moia starushka, / Akh syn moi, otchizna tebia zovet, / I opiat' budet svobodna moia Litva. / A esli suzhdeno mne pogibnut' / Ot russkikh palachei ruki, / Akh devushka, ukra's' moi mogilu / Beloi akatsii tsvetami”.
- 11 Ibid., L. 119: “Mat' starushka tvoia plachet, / Otchizna mat' tvoia zhdet tebia, / Zatsvetet vesna veselaia, / Budet schastlivyi den' svobody dlia Litvy.”
- 12 Ibid., D. 10. T. 1. L. 124: “Solntse zashlo, nastal vecher, / Zagrablenna nasha zemlia nishchei Rossiei, / Ona zavladela nashei zemlei / I ne daet nashim sestram seiati' travu-rutu. / [...] Prishli aziaty k oknu materi / I sprosil mat', gde ee syn, / A mat' molchala i ne vydala syna, / Za eto ona vyslana navek v Sibir'. / Pridet vesna, kukushka zakukuet, / Trupami sovetskikh partizan zastelem vse dorogi, / Pridet vremia krovavoe i nashi stradaniia konchatsia, / Nishchikh russkikh vygonim so svoei zemli litovskoi.”
- 13 Ibid., L. 125: “Ne sprashivai, pochemu skuchnoe litso, / Mezhdru vysokimi gorami Sibiri / Ia ne vizhu, kogda saditsia solntse / i ne slyshu pesni zhavoronka. / Mozhet ne uvizhu, kak na zelenom lugu / Brat'ia stanut seno kosit', / Mozhet byt' ne uslyshu, / Kak sestrenka pesniu svobody zapoet. / U vas tam na nashei rodine / Net ni postov, ni chasovykh, / Tol'ko shurshanie molodykh berez / I ekho skuchnoi pesni. / V Sibiri svirepstvuiut kholodnye v'ugi, / Tam stradiat brat'ia izdavna.”
- 14 Ibid., L. 125: “Ne sprashivai menia, dorogaia sestra, / Za chto popala ia v Sibir', / [za to], chto liubila rodnye kraia / i brat'iam kushat' podavala.”
- 15 Ibid., L. 124: “Vstavai, vstavai parenok, / Vstavai molodets, / Pora ekhat' na voinu, / Zashchishchat' poraboshchennuiu Litvu!”
- 16 “Doloi kommunizm proklatyi, / Doloi besserdechnykh obmanshchikov, / grabitelei chuzhogo imushchestva, / kotorye nas, molodezh', / vyselili iz nashei miloi strany [...] / [...] Kak tol'ko solntse zakatitsia, / Vy vidite skvoz' malen'kie okna / Nashi zhelyte litsa i slezlivye glaza, / Ne vernetes' vy, stariki, / Ne vernetes' vy, malye deti, / Ne vernetes', brat'ia i sestry, / Ne budete khodit' po litovskim tropam, / Ne vstanete v soldatskie riady.”
- 17 Ibid., D. 91. T. 1. L. 257: “Tsvela zemlia, molilis' olivy, / Tebia soprovozhdal pechal'nyi vzgliad Christa / i svobodnyi veter rodnykh polei. / Ne plach', khot' tvoe serdtse i budut razryvat' buri, / Liubi otechestvo, blagodat' spustitsia k tvoim nogam. / Khot' i tiazhele vspominat' imia litovki, / chashu schast'ia nikogda ne promeniiai.”
- 18 Ibid., T. 2. L. 140: “Mne kazhetsia, menia dolzhny zabrat' za to, chto ia proshlym letom s Rimkutei Kazei khodila na kladbishche, gde pela pesni, napravlennye protiv sovetskogo gosudarstva.”
- 19 Ibid., D. 130. T. 1. L. 251: “[...] ia nenavizhu etogo zamdirektora po politicheskoi chasti, tak kak on zastavliaet menia podpisyvat' na zaem stol'ko, skol'ko ia ne khochu. V proshlom godu ia ne podpivala na polnyi oklad, i iz-za etogo umer Stalin, a v etom godu, esli ne podpishu, umret Malenkov.”

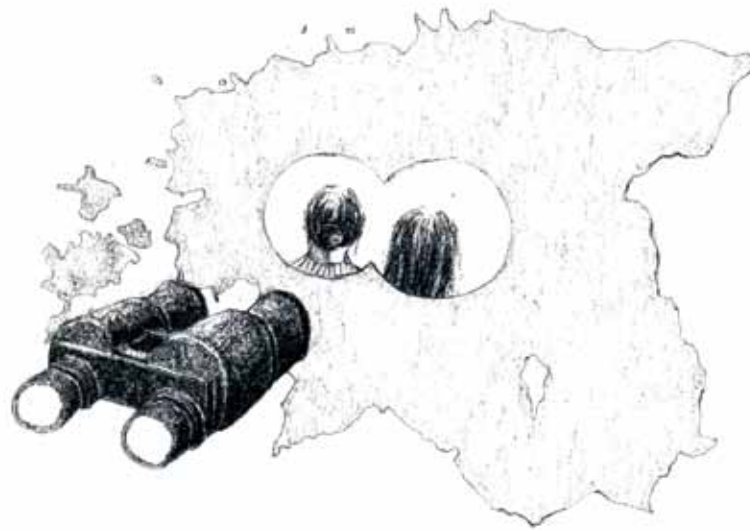


Illustration: Moa Thelander

Sofi Oksanen's “Purge” in Estonia

essay by **Eneken Laanes**

In an article revisiting Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities, and in particular the relationship between the modern novel and the nation, Jonathan Culler advances the idea that the novel functions in the contemporary world as a transnational form primarily directed at the international cosmopolitan reader.¹ It is therefore possible that the national community of readers closest to the novel's origin might not be its best audience.² He provides the example of the critical Peruvian reception accorded Mario Vargas Llosa's *Storyteller*, which reproached the author for quietism and evasiveness. Culler argues that Peruvian readers read the novel as a political statement against the backdrop of Vargas Llosa's political activity and writing. He suggests that a “geographic remove” from the novel's national

context is needed in order to read the novel as a novel.

An interesting test case for Culler's idea is presented by the reception of Sofi Oksanen's internationally successful Finnish novel *Purge* (*Puhdistus*, 2008) in Estonia, the national setting of the book. Although Culler's discussion of the cosmopolitan novel refers to postcolonial literature, another transnational phenomenon in contemporary literature that is similar to the postcolonial type discussed by Culler³ is literature on memory. Both address international readership in discussing widespread phenomena such as the postcolonial experience or working through historical traumas, but represent them in the historically specific (national) context. Because it addresses the traumatic legacies of World War II and Soviet rule in Estonia, *Purge* can be tentatively, albeit somewhat prob-

lematically, read as literature on memory and trauma. In my analysis of the Estonian reception of *Purge*, I examine how a transnational perspective affects the reading of the novel in the national context and vice versa. As one who participated in the debates on *Purge* in Estonia, I am presenting this article as an attempt at self-reflection.

The novel *Purge*, based on a play with the same title,⁴ was translated into Estonian in April 2009. It was received as a quasi-Estonian novel partly because of Oksanen's Estonian background, and partly because it recounts, through its two protagonists Aliide and Zara, the intertwining stories of Stalinist terror in Estonia and of trafficking in women in

post-Soviet Eastern Europe. Zara, a young woman from Vladivostok on the run from sex slavery, arrives in Estonia at the farm of her great-aunt Aliide to learn more about the suffering and acts of crime and complicity in her family during World War II.

The growing success of the novel in Finland and elsewhere was repeatedly reported and celebrated in the Estonian press even before the novel was available in Estonian. After translation, it was powerfully embraced by official publicity, but not reviewed as a literary work.⁵ The cultural critic Kaarel Tarand suggests that the reasons for the lack of literary reviews, and for *Purge's* prominence in the public space in promotional articles and interviews that represented Oksanen as a national hero, are to be found in the international recognition accorded the novel before its arrival in Estonia.⁶

In the autumn of 2010, more than a year after its publication in Estonia, *Purge* became the object of unprecedented public debate that centered on the question of presenting Estonian history in fictional form.⁷ The debate was remarkable in its intensity, and exceeded the public space usually allotted to a literary debate. The discussion was opened by a column in the daily newspaper *Eesti Päevaleht* by journalist Piret Tali, for whom *Purge* molded Estonian history “into a modern thriller in short sentences à la Dan Brown and covered with a disgusting trendy sauce of violence against women, anguish, and depression”.⁸ Her critical approach instantly provoked pain and fury in subsequent defenders of *Purge*. The critical dissent seems to be, more than a reaction to the novel itself, a response to its acclaim as a document about Estonian history that would enlighten the international reader about the historic suffering of Estonians. The specific points of criticism, all of which revolve around questions of history, can be divided between two broader arguments: one concerns the representational choices made in the novel, and the other deals with problems with the novel's depiction of history, caused in part by those choices.

The critical approaches to *Purge* view it as a novel that is part of the culture industry, which aims at accessibility, sensationalism, and entertainment. In telling a horrific story of crimes and suffering inflicted on people, it employs elements of the thriller and melodrama that make it a gripping read, but turn Estonian history into a theme park. The novel exoticizes elements of local color and borrows from Hollywood film in its sensational representation of the violence against women in sex slavery.⁹

Another aspect of the argument refers to ethnic stereotyping in characterization. On this point *Purge* is compared to the Stalinist novels of the 1940s–1950s, which “had a certain appeal; they fitted into some of our deep psychological needs, to our needs for fairy tales, for tales of heroes and villains”.¹⁰ Whereas in Stalinist literature heroic Soviet citizens were contrasted to sadistic Nazis, the patriotic Estonians in *Purge* are noble in body and mind, while Soviets are filthy and evil. In other words, *Purge's* element of mass culture, its eagerness to entertain the reader, and its popular success seem to make it suspect as a novel about historic suffering because the representational mode distorts history.

If we examine the allegations of distortion more closely, we find that some critics maintain that this schematic mode demonizes and presents an overly negative picture of the Soviet period.¹¹ Attempts to rehabilitate the Soviet period have led to accusations of Soviet nostalgia and insensitivity towards the suffering of co-nationals, as well as an inability to differentiate between the periods of Stalinist terror and the socialism

of the 1970s and 1980s.¹² Ethnologist Ene Kõresaar, who has analyzed the *Purge* debate with regard to how memory is discussed in the public arena, argues that the conflicting arguments reflect the typical scenario of post-Soviet memory culture, in which the discourse of totalitarianism and suffering referring to the Stalinist period clashes with milder memories of everyday life under late socialism.¹³

Another, more serious charge of distortion refers to the sensitive issue of sexual violence against women in the Stalinist period. Tali, who raises the point, argues that in the representational mode used in *Purge* the theme seems to be borrowed from international experience in Kosovo or Congo rather than Estonian history.¹⁴ There is almost no historical research on violence against women in the 1940s in Estonia, and it is not a topos of Estonian memory culture.¹⁵ That is not to say that such a phenomenon might not have occurred in the Stalinist period. Tali's argument indicates some resistance to accepting the possibility of such violence against women in the Estonian context.

Many works of fiction have drawn attention to past crimes that were not being addressed in the present. Nonetheless, it is problematic, I think, to claim something as sensitive as sexual violence against women in a specific historical context, especially if it is presented not as a personal experience of the protagonist, but as a widespread phenomenon. Rein Raud's summary of the argument about the culture industry – “by linking historical narrative with the clichés familiar enough [...] to the western reader, she [Oksanen] touches precisely those keys and chords that megasuccess presupposes” – is presumably applicable to the issue of sexual violence. Tali's observation draws attention to the fact that violence against women is a topos in the transnational memory culture to which the international reader can relate.

It is possible, however, that the critics' problem with the generalization of sexual violence against women is primarily the novel's perceived relationship to the post-Soviet politics of memory – the last set of questions debated with regard to *Purge*. Many critics have opined that the novel is celebrated in Estonia because its interpretation of Estonian history is in harmony with the post-Soviet politics of memory. Those whose uneasiness with the representation of history led them to search for errors of historical detail were vulnerable to the objection that they had read *Purge* as a realist text. It may be argued that, as *Purge* works with clear-cut dichotomies and stereotypes, it must be read differently. However, as Linda Kaljundi shows in her analysis of the interesting use of olfactory motifs and the theme of purity and filth in *Purge*, the image of Estonian history that results from such a reading is still susceptible to political and ethical criticism.¹⁶

The post-Soviet Estonian politics of memory have centered on the themes of national suffering and heroism, which function as a “dominant narrative and state-supported memory regime”.¹⁷ The fixation on victimhood has served as a screen memory¹⁸ for avoiding questions about the Holocaust in Estonian territory and the collaboration of Estonians in Soviet rule. At the same time, it has an ethnopolitical dimension in the multi-ethnic Estonian state in that it ignores and excludes the diverse memories of different ethnic groups.¹⁹ For Linda Kaljundi, *Purge* constitutes a powerful reiteration of the regime of memory established in the early 1990s because it represents the interwar Estonian Republic as a pastoral paradise, the farm as a symbol of the nation, and the Soviet

occupation as a rupture. Kaljundi demonstrates that the attribution of past and present sexual violence and political terror to Russians equates the two, transfers the victimization of women to the whole nation,²⁰ and assigns the blame to an ethnic group that is a part of post-Soviet Estonia.

My own contribution to the debate drew attention to the melodramatic elements of the text which, in aspiring towards an unequivocal moral interpretation of the world, construct a world of perpetrators and victims. This permits a nationalistic reading of the novel, because the roles are distributed along ethnic lines.²¹ The melodramatic element is most evident in the redemptive finale of the novel, in which the only morally ambivalent character, the protagonist Aliide, reveals her moral value by saving her niece Zara in the nick of time.²² Her act of (self)sacrificial violence is meant not only to save the girl, but also to purge the social order that is presented in the novel in ethnopolitical terms.²³

The reaction to *Purge* in Estonia brings to mind the reception of Steven Spielberg's Holocaust film *Schindler's List* (1993) in the US, as analyzed by Miriam Bratu Hansen.²⁴ Like Spielberg's film, *Purge* addresses collectively relevant historical traumas – the mass deportation of Estonians in 1949 and the annihilation of the Forest Brethren guerilla resistance movement by the Soviet regime in the 1940s and 1950s. In both cases, the reception is characterized by suspicions about the popular success of the works and perceptions of a clash between the representational modes employed and the subject matter. Whereas the polemic against *Schindler's List* was based on a comparison with Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* (1985) as an exemplary attempt to represent the genocide, *Purge* was negatively compared to the novels of the Estonian writer Ene Mihkelson, which portray Stalinist terror in a highly experimental form and, instead of reworking the historical trauma in the name of national identity, present the conflict between individual remembering and the post-Soviet politics of memory.²⁵

In her illuminating analysis of the reception of *Schindler's List*, Miriam Bratu Hansen argues that the film is important for its “diagnostic significance” in relation to the public remembrance of the Holocaust in American culture, but also *à vis* the functioning of public memory in general.²⁶ She shows how the straightforward rejection of the film overshadows its diagnostic value as well as diverts the discussion from the textual workings of the film.

In the light of Hansen's analysis, *Purge* can be seen to have a diagnostic value on multiple levels. First, the debate on *Purge* brought to the fore the differences in the interpretation of World War II and its aftermath in post-Soviet Estonia not only between the ethnic communities in the country, but within the Estonian community itself, in particular with regard to whether or not the memories of ethnic minorities deserve a place in the Estonian collective memory.

The second diagnostic point concerns the nature of collective remembrance and the role of literature as its medium. Michael Rothberg has argued that collective memory is not a “zero-sum struggle for preeminence”, but multidirectional, creating new forms of solidarity through intercultural cross-referencing of different memories.²⁷ Consequently, *Purge's* critics' concerns that the novel may achieve a political impact by establishing a hegemonic image of the past may prove to be exaggerated for two reasons. First, as Rothberg maintains, one memory does not necessarily preclude others. Second, and this brings us back to Culler's point discussed at the beginning of this article, novels are not read merely as political

statements. The critics of *Purge* fell into the same trap as the novel's publicists in that they read and discussed the novel as a representation of history. What gets eclipsed is the fact that *Purge* may not be, or at least does not function transnationally, as a novel about historic national suffering, but rather a masterfully executed, uncanny story about women's fear.²⁸ Instead of rejecting the novel on ideological grounds that are relevant only in the national context, we ought to analyze its textual workings and its attempt to represent sexual violence and other politically relevant issues in literature more closely.²⁹ As Culler shows, a geographic remove or a transnational perspective may allow readers to find more in a work of art rather than less.

Finally, *Purge* confirms that literature as a medium of collective remembrance is a phenomenon of reception³⁰ and that popular success is a prerequisite for attracting transnational attention to issues of historic injustice, especially in marginal historical contexts. The national perspective on *Purge* reinforces the realization that historical specificity may be compromised in the process. How we deal with specificity in remembering historical injustice and suffering in the public arena and in literature is a question still open for discussion. ✕



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- 1 Research for this article was supported by ESF research grant no. 8530.
- 2 Jonathan Culler, "Anderson and the Novel", in *Diacritics* 29, (1999), p. 33.
- 3 Culler discusses the kind of postcolonial literature in which, in Timothy Brennan's words, "the contradictory topoi of exile and nation are fused in a lament for the necessary and regrettable insistence of nation-forming, in which the writer proclaims his identity with a country whose artificiality and exclusiveness have driven him into a kind of exile – a simultaneous recognition of nationhood and an alienation from it". See Culler, p. 33; Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form", in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, London 1990, p. 63.
- 4 *Purge* premiered in the Finnish National Theatre in 2007.
- 5 Oksanen was named Person of the Year 2009 by the leading Estonian daily newspaper *Postimees*. The novel topped Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip's Christmas wish list. See "Ansip tahab jõuluvanalt Oksaneni raamatut" [Ansip wants Oksanen's book from Santa Claus], in *Postimees*, 2009-12-22, accessed 2011-11-15, <http://www.postimees.ee/204103/ansip-tahab-jouluvanalt-oksaneni-raamatut/>. In 2010 Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves awarded Oksanen the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana for special services to the Estonian Republic. The first review of *Purge*, by Kaarel Tarand, was published six months after its publication in Estonia. Kaarel Tarand, "Tuumapommiks kujutletud meelelahutus" [Entertainment imagined into a nuclear bomb], in *Sirp*, 2009-12-18, p. 8.
- 6 *Ibid.* *Purge* received the Finlandia Award in 2008, the Runeberg Award in 2009, the Nordic Council Literary Award, and in France, the Prix Femina Étranger and the FNAC prize in 2010.
- 7 The debate was provoked partly by the opening of the play *Purge* in Estonian theatre Vanemuine in September 2010.
- 8 The first critiques were actually expressed by the renowned Estonian writer Jaan Kaplinski in his blog entry "Sofi Oksanen and the Stalinist Award", but the negative responses to his post attracted wider attention. See Piret Tali, "Kogu tõde Sofi O-st" [All about Sofi O.], in *Eesti Päevaleht*, 2010-10-04, p. 3; Jaan Kaplinski, "Sofi Oksanen and the Stalinist Award", in *Ummamuudu*, 2010-08-24, accessed 2011-11-15.
- 9 On entertainment and crime, see Tarand, p. 8; on melodrama see Eneken Laanes, "Trauma ja popkultuur: Sofi Oksaneni *Puhastus*" [Trauma and mass culture: Sofi Oksanen's *Purge*], in *Vikerkaar*, no. 12 (2010), pp. 52–65; on exoticism, see Linda Kaljundi, "'Puhastus' ja rahvusliku ajalookirjutuse comeback" [*Purge* and the revival of national history writing], in *Vikerkaar*, no. 12 (2010), pp. 36–51; on the representation of sexual violence, see Tali, p. 3, and Laanes, pp. 62–64.
- 10 Kaplinski. For related arguments, see Rein Raud, "Teised meist: stampide keeles ajalugu" [Others about us: history in the language of clichés], in *Eesti Päevaleht*, 2010-11-05, p. 3; Rein Veidemann, "Oksaneni kuvand eestlastest on vastuoluline" [Oksanen's image of Estonians is contradictory], in *Eesti Päevaleht*, 2010-11-01, p. 3.
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- 14 Tali, p. 3.
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- 17 Eva-Clarita Onken, "The Baltic States and Moscow's 9 May Commemoration: Analysing Memory Politics in Europe", in *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, (2007), p. 31.
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- 19 Onken, p. 37.
- 20 Kaljundi, p. 46. For a reading of the way in which "the story of a era, of a state, of a family and of a woman [...] are braided into a rope", see Mari Klein, "'Puhastus' on väga mitmetasandiline lugu" [*Purge* is a multilayered story], in *Eesti Päevaleht*, 2009-01-16, p. 12.
- 21 Laanes, pp. 59–62. My understanding of melodrama is indebted to Linda Williams and Peter Brooks. See Linda Williams, "Melodrama Revised", in Nick Browne (ed.), *Refiguring Film Genres: History and Theory*, Berkeley 1998, pp. 42–88; Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess*, New Haven 1995.
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- 23 Zara comes to Aliide as a Russian girl, but Aliide decides to save her because she has her Estonian grandfather's Hans's chin. As she kills herself, Aliide thinks, "If the girl made it home, she would tell Ingel that the land she lost long ago was waiting for her. Ingel and Linda could get Estonian citizenship. [...] Since she was a descendent of Ingel and Linda, she could get an Estonian passport, too. She wouldn't ever have to go back to Russia" (Sofi Oksanen, *Purge*, New York, 2010, p. 335; 355–356). The initial social order is restored by expelling the scapegoats – the Russian pimps – and by bringing Zara, who was unjustly removed from her community, back within its periphery. I am indebted to René Girard for my understanding of sacrificial violence: see René Girard, "Violence and Representation in the Mythical Text", in *To Double Business Bound: Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology*, Baltimore 1978, p. 185.
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- 29 Hansen analyzes the role of sound in the visual production of *Schindler's List*. See Hansen, p. 85–94.
- 30 Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, Basingstoke 2011, p. 160. In reference to *Schindler's List*, Hansen also argues that the predominant media of public memory are media of mass consumption. See Hansen, p. 98.

The truncated road movie: Thomas Brasch and the Berlin Wall

essay by **Jakob Norberg**

In an interview from 1977, author Thomas Brasch, who had recently moved from the GDR to West Germany, said that people in East Germany experienced the same problems as in any other contemporary industrial society. There were struggles with bureaucracy everywhere, and a declining faith in economic and technological progress. East Germany was no different from Finland or Japan. The Berlin Wall, he added, was really the only “GDR-specific problem”.¹ But the Wall was hardly a minor issue. Later in the same interview, he laconically characterized his formative conditions as a writer in a way that suggested the dominating presence of the *Mauer*: “I started writing when the GDR was a functioning state, which was surrounded by a wall.”²

It is no surprise, then, that the Wall figures in Brasch’s first collection of stories, *Vor den Vätern sterben die Söhne*, from the same year, 1977. Brasch had written the stories in the GDR but taken the manuscript with him to West Berlin and published it with Rotbuch, a left-wing publisher there. The longest story of the collection tracks the travels of a group of young people, two men and one woman. In this story, the Wall appears several times: the text alludes to it tacitly, then refers to it explicitly, and finally the characters visit it. Towards the end of the story, the three friends are in Berlin for a blues concert and make their way to the Wall, an episode Brasch renders with absolute terseness: “After the concert we went to the Wall. I thought it was higher than that, Sophie said.”³ Unlike Brasch, the characters never cross over to the West.

Thomas Brasch was obviously neither the first nor the best-known author to write about the Wall.⁴ One of the most famous novels on the division of Germany is Christa Wolf’s 1963 bestseller *Der geteilte Himmel*. Between Wolf’s novel and Brasch’s story, however, the heavens have darkened and hardened. For Brasch, the sky is no longer partitioned, but has become a part of the enclosure; it is a lid, a cover. The title

of the story mentioned above reads, “Und über uns schließt sich ein Himmel aus Stahl”. About fifteen years after the division of the sky referred to in Wolf’s novel, the area to the East has turned into a vault; it is a border above people’s heads, a boundary that contains and confines them.

But is there a way in which the Wall is not simply mentioned in the title of Brasch’s story or gestured to in a brief scene, but somehow inscribed into the text, into its very literary form? I think there is. Let me summarize the story.

Three young East Germans meet, spend some time together, maybe a couple of weeks, and then disperse again. The male narrator meets Robert, a student, at a rare screening of a controversial, prohibited film. After getting into a fight with what are probably undercover secret police agents sent to intimidate the audience, the two escape and leave the city on a motorbike. They travel to the East German coast and stay on the beach for a while. While there, Robert persuades Sophie, a young female nursing student working in a pub, to join them. The three of them share intimate stories, bicker, go bathing, have sex, mockingly participate in a cheesy seaside resort singing competition, go on trips with the motor bike, and attend the American Folk Blues Festival in the capital. After a few days, the group breaks up. Sophie must return to her child and start her hospital work. The narrator works in a factory and cannot extend his sick leave. And Robert tries illegally to cross the German-German border and dies. In their final heated discussion about what to do next – get back to work routines or somehow continue their marginal existence – Robert accidentally smashes the motorbike: there will be no more traveling.

Summarized in this way, the story pattern may seem vaguely familiar. The plot has an unstructured feel to it. It jumps from encounter to encounter, moves through a seemingly random series of events in a journey without a clear destination. It is about a few young people who want to live more freely and wildly, to disregard duties and conventions, until their obligations close in on them again and the resulting

tensions strain their relationships. The group seeks a “mobile refuge from social circumstances felt to be lacking or oppressive”.⁵ They hop on a bike and embrace, however briefly, “the road as a way of life”.⁶ In other words, Brasch’s story belongs to the genre of the road movie, the emblematic countercultural narrative form in which the improvised nomadism of non-conformists with motorized vehicles represents a challenge to the normative-administrative order of the hegemonic majority. The story of their trip more or less begins with Robert sitting behind the narrator on the motorbike and shouting out: “Let’s get out of the city, just go wherever, someplace where we can get more air.”⁷ And then they travel to the shoreline, where they can feel the damp sea breeze on their faces.

It may seem odd to invoke a very American genre to discuss a text about the GDR, but Brasch’s story is already well-stocked with similar references to popular culture from the West. The narrator and his friend sing the songs of the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, and Simon and Garfunkel as they work themselves up into excitement about the folk concert in Berlin. “Every day I have the blues”, Robert exclaims on the beach, and the prison legends of American blues artists seem to resonate with their own helplessness.⁸ They see their own boxed-in lives reflected in the songs of men on death row in the Louisiana State Penitentiary. The story couldn’t possibly contain more interregional encounters, moments of cultural cross-pollination, and transmogrified German-English (or “*denglisch*”) phrases, given the boundaries that were imposed to filter or completely arrest the flow of people, ideas, and goods between East and West. The blues artists who perform have been invited to the GDR, and so are presumably considered non-threatening by the regime, but the three protagonists listening to them associate the music with their own entrapment. It is not an exaggeration to say that the characters in this East German story are animated by cultural energies coming from the Cold War enemy.

Yet the story embodies the pattern of the road movie genre only imperfectly. It is here that we must return to the Wall. Perhaps we can say that the Berlin Wall is not simply mentioned or indicated as a cruel physical barrier in the text, but also shows up in the text as a limit imposed on full participation in a genre, a closing that shows up too early in the unfolding of the generic pattern. “And Over Us a Sky of Steel Is Closing” is an abbreviated, even truncated road movie. The protagonists set out on an impromptu journey away from everything that burdens them: the tedium of factory work, the narrowness of dogmatic Marxist university teaching, the unspoken norms on how to conduct one’s social and sexual life, and, most immediately, the censorship and thuggish political oppression. And they have barely started out when they run up against the limit. It takes them little time to travel to the coast, a day’s ride interrupted only by a fuel stop, and geographically, that is as far as they ever get. There is no path across the water. Instead, they soon return from the seaside, and even claim that the sea gets irritating after a while, only to find themselves standing finally at the Wall. They travel, but not further and further away from a starting point. Instead, they get to the sea and back again, closer and closer to the impenetrable barrier that seals off their life trajectories. Any road movie might portray claustrophobia and people eager to escape enclosure, but in Brasch’s case, the period of relief is really very short. If the text activates the road movie pattern as a possible frame of interpretation, this association serves only to highlight how its heroes can do nothing but move in circles within an enclosed space.

Judging by Brasch’s text, there is not enough room for a road movie in the GDR. It is not the fact that the story ends in such a melancholy, desperate way that prevents full membership in the genre, but the fact that it must end so quickly. The road epic has shrunk to a road novella. Yet paradoxically, this curtailed variant may be the ultimate road movie, because it actualizes the idea that traveling is inherently subversive. The heroes are either outlaws escaping from the forces of control, or non-conformists breaking out of their designated place in society.⁹ In a party state that oversees and molds every aspect of citizens’ behavior, one could argue, the unplanned and aimless road trip can once again become genuinely subversive. While people who crisscross the country, crash local talent shows, steal alcohol, explore their sexuality, and listen to blues music may not be engaging in unequivocal political protest, they are clearly not helping to build the socialist state.

But here we must avoid a tired and facetious account of how intolerant societies keep the idea of rebellion interesting, or how demarcations and discipline help restore the liberating impulse of the road movie. If a repressive party state narrows down the space of permissible behavior, more and more seemingly trivial actions will be classified as implicit protest.¹⁰ And if that same state installs a system of nearly total surveillance and nearly perfect border control, these forms of protest will become completely neutralized, contained, and ineffectual.¹¹ The result, in Brasch’s story, is that the characters go mad out of total helplessness. They are not outlaws on the run from the law because everything they do, no matter how trivial, is potentially suspicious; nor are they wild and free individuals who defy the borders of their world because there really is no road, just a day-long trip to a dead end. The protagonists are stuck in the static condition of inescapable and ineffectual rebellion.

In Brasch’s story, East Germany is a functioning state sur-

rounded by a wall, a circumscribed, homogeneous space with no exit or threshold, a single cell.¹² The GDR citizen is confined to one area, but, according to Brasch, also trapped in a single phase of life, or kept in an extended childhood. The non-journey corresponds to personal non-development. In another interview from 1977, Brasch explained that there was no way for East German citizens to keep out of politics, since all actions were judged by their ideological potential, but that there was also no way of formulating political alternatives in cooperation with others. As a result, people were reduced to a state of “childish obstinacy.”¹³ These observations bring home the harrowing meaning of the collection’s title, “The Sons Die Before the Fathers”. The “sons”, the heirs of socialism, never leave adolescence, or never cross the threshold from one space or one age to another. The road trip and the life journey are both contained and sealed off by barriers.

To read Brasch’s texts is to witness people scurrying about and never growing up under a sky of steel. This can be a disconcerting experience. *Vor den Vätern sterben die Söhne* was published in West Germany but not in the East, for obvious reasons. The truncated road movie was bound to one of the two German states, the GDR, and never describes a place outside it, although the author and the first generation of readers were located outside. Today, the reader, critic, or scholar inherits this position outside East Germany, and slips into the role of someone watching as people suffocate inside the “*Riesenkast*”, or gigantic prison, next door.¹⁴

Brasch himself said that he paid no attention to the geopolitical map when writing, and he clearly wanted to avoid ranking the two Germanys or celebrating either of them. When interviewers in the West invited him to facilitate self-congratulatory West German attitudes by speaking of his first-hand experience of GDR horrors, he declined. But because the 1977 collection of stories could only be published in the West, there was never a time when it could avoid placing the reader in the position of an external witness to stunted development under conditions of confinement. In the text written in and about the East, but made available in the West, the border lies between the reader and the events represented. Brasch’s *Vor den Vätern sterben die Söhne* is a case of “dislocated lit-

erature”¹⁵: the collection crossed the demarcation line of the Cold War, and was immediately approached as a document of life behind the Wall.

Modern literature often guides its readers behind the scenes. In a complex world, authors can take us into spaces and minds that would otherwise be inaccessible and unknown to us. Brasch does so, but so do countless other authors; this is nothing remarkable. In the case of Brasch’s story about a leaden sky, however, the author and the initial and primary book market were just on the other side of the Berlin Wall, and the story does not make its readers invisible spectators of scenes in distant, inaccessible places. Rather, I would suggest, it pulls the reader quite close to the neighboring, country-wide prison, and even shows the reader models of privileged spectatorship. For instance, one West German in the truncated road movie is a tourist chatting to the desperate Robert at a train station. It is clear that this traveler represents the opportunity to move freely and even visit inside the prison, a role shared by West German readers. “I’m sorry”, the young visitor from the West says glibly, “every time I’m here I forget that you people can’t get out”.¹⁶

Brasch lets us peek over the Wall. And what we then see is how this wall destroys the people on the other side of it. Given the collection’s publication history, the topic of Brasch’s novella could not be simply life in East Germany, but rather life in East Germany as observed from somewhere else, or as seen by witnesses who are more mobile. Today, the text should perhaps not be read as a document of East German conditions, but rather as a document of East German conditions that was inevitably offered up for the voyeuristic consumption of a West German audience.

“The socialist experiment” is a common phrase that is obviously attractive to socialism’s critics: to call socialism an experiment is to imply that a particular hypothesis – the proposition that socialism constitutes a viable and desirable political and economic system – was conclusively refuted when put to an empirical test, namely the attempt to construct a socialist society in the Eastern part of Germany and



Illustration: Moa Thelander

other places. No laws of history brought socialism about; it was a man-made endeavor that failed. But Brasch's cut-off road movie highlights another meaning of the "socialist experiment". When reading his story, we approach the text as a window onto a clearly delimited space in which a dreary human action is being played out. The protagonists are cast in the role of lab rats to be studied. What happens to human relationships under conditions of internment? How does detention affect well-being? These are questions that force themselves upon us when we are reading across the border. Brasch's novella does two things: it presents lives smothered by incarceration, and it also places the reader on the other side of the barrier, as a witness to the road movie that crashes into the Wall. ✕



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- 16 "Entschuldigen Sie [...] jedesmal, wenn ich hier bin, vergesse ich, daß Sie ja nicht rauskommen." Thomas Brasch, *Vor den Vätern sterben die Söhne*, p. 61.

Baltic-Russian literature: writing from nowhere?

commentary by **Taisija Laukkonen**

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a new "Russian minority"¹ began to take shape on the territory of the independent Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia). It was new in a number of ways. Historically, whether large or small, a Russian community had always been present in these territories. However, the independent cultural status of this minority within a separate state was not a foregone conclusion, even though there were precedents, as, for example, in Lithuania between the First and Second World Wars.

The post-Soviet Russian diaspora in the Baltic countries was novel not only in and of itself, but in comparison with other communities in the post-colonial world. First, the transformation of a group from the status of linguistic and cultural dominance to one of a minority occurred without a change of residence. This is most unusual in traditional diasporas. Second, certain cultural pretensions remained with regard to differences in the prestige of literary traditions.² The enthusiasm for the "preservation of Russian culture" that was characteristic of the Russian diaspora beyond the borders of the Soviet Union throughout the 20th century was no longer appealing, given the disappearance of the obvious obstacles to repatriation and participation in the life of modern Russia.

This has caused the new Russian diaspora to look for a different basis for its identity, and one of the steps that seemed necessary was the identification of cultural boundaries. Historical precedents of this kind of cultural mission include both assimilation of the achievements of Western cultures, and eastern, northern, or southern exoticism. In classical Russian literature, the images of the representatives were often developed through exotic dismissal. During the Soviet

era, the Baltic socialist republics were considered the Westernized outskirts of the Soviet Union and, as such, the bearers of the prestige of Western culture. However, in the post-Soviet "world without borders", the newly emerged Baltic nations are neither one nor the other: too familiar to be considered exotic and, at the same time, not Western enough as far as the *real* West is concerned. Writers of Russian-German, Russian-French, and Russian-English cross-border cultural exchange appear to play the role of intermediaries in a culturally prestigious dialogue of equals, whereas Russian authors in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, having to develop their identity through their position in a cultural "beyond", find themselves struggling for legitimacy, uniqueness, and value their cultural dialogue.

Relations between the new Baltic national states and their Russian minorities are somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, the states were not interested in supporting or culturally advertising anything *Russian*, which, in the minds of some of the population, was synonymous with *Soviet*. On the other hand, attention to minorities is one of the most important characteristics of a contemporary democratic country, all the more so for members of the European Union. However, this does not imply that the dialogue with Russian culture is imposed from above. The cultural prestige of the Russian literary tradition is sufficiently high, compared to those of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, that those authors who are interested in accessing a wider international market cannot help but see a whole range of new opportunities in such a dialogue.

Despite the similarity of the general situation in the three

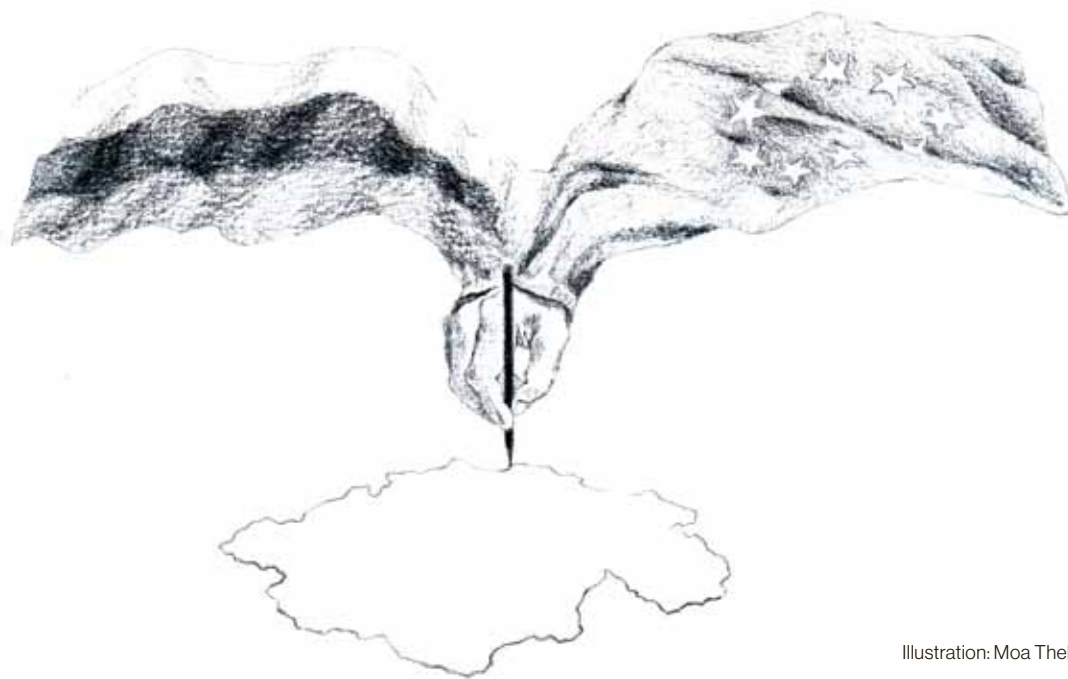


Illustration: Moa Thelander

Baltic States, the status of local Russian literature is different in each one. This is only partially due to the percentage of each state that is ethnically Russians.

In Lithuania, there is just one professional literary periodical in Russian, *Vilnius* magazine, which is published twice a year, sometimes even less frequently. It carries mainly Russian translations of Lithuanian authors and reviews by Lithuanian literary critics. A smaller portion of the magazine is devoted to work by local Russian-language writers. Although the Lithuanian Union of Writers can boast more than a dozen who are Russian-speaking, their activity goes almost unnoticed. In Latvia, in contrast, literary life is noticeably active, with numerous literary clubs and several periodicals. In Estonia, there is, in addition to periodicals, an electronic magazine called *Novye Oblaka* [New Clouds] that unites young Russian-language writers in Estonia. In addition, the *Eesti Kulturkapital* fund grants awards to local Russian-language writers annually.

Since Russian-language literary activity is more evident in Latvia and Estonia than it is in Lithuania, the latter is represented by only three authors on the New Literary Map of Russia³ – which claims to represent the entire Russian-language “literary world” – whereas Estonia is represented by eleven authors and Latvia by sixteen. For comparison, Finland is represented by as many as four authors, even though its Russian-speaking community is noticeably smaller than that of Lithuania. Moreover, Russian authors from Latvia (Sergei Moreyno and Sergei Timofeyev) and from Estonia (Yelena Skulskaya and Andrei Ivanov) have been among the nominees for the Russian Award⁴ twice during the six years of its existence,

whereas there has not been a single recipient from Lithuania.

In my opinion, the defining factor here is the absence (or presence, for that matter) of an established literary tradition. This, in turn, is connected to the unofficial, uncensored literature that came to light at the end of 1980s. It undermined the existing literary hierarchy and demanded a re-examination of the history of Russian literature of the second half of the 20th century. From this point of view, Latvia and Estonia find themselves at an advantage as compared to Lithuania. Authors from Riga (the capital of Latvia), united by the *Rodnik* [Brook] magazine, were involved with the samizdat⁵ in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) and, therefore, influenced the development of contemporary Russian literature.⁶ The importance of Estonia for unorthodox Soviet culture is undeniable, first because of the Tartu School of Semiotics led by Yuri Lotman, and second because of the literary works of the unofficial novelist Sergei Dovlatov. As a result, the new generations of Latvian and Estonian authors rightfully consider themselves heirs to a prestigious tradition of unofficial Russian art in its local form. It is commonly thought that, in Lithuania, it was mainly Soviet Russian literature that developed – the symbolic value of which is now called into question.

Whereas national literary institutions are mainly interested in the participation of local Russian literature in the dialogue between two cultures – and as a rule, it is local authors who translate contemporary Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian literature into Russian – Russian critics and prize juries prefer authors whose creative writing fits into a wider intercultural context.

Recently, two Baltic novelists, Lena Eltang of Lithuania and Andrei Ivanov of Estonia, have become unexpected discoveries for Russian critics. The literary trajectories of these authors are different, and they vividly demonstrate the difference in the status of Russian literature in the two countries. The first novel by Lena Eltang was published in 2006 in St. Petersburg and appeared on the shortlists of two prestigious Russian awards, the National Bestseller and an Andrei Biely⁷ Award. Her next novel, *Kamennye Klyony* [Stone maples], became the first recipient of the *Nos* [Nose] award,⁸ which is aimed at “identifying and supporting new trends” in contemporary Russian literature. Only then did Lithuanian society at large become interested in this Russian writer, who had resided in Lithuania since 1989.

The story of Andrei Ivanov is entirely different. His novel *Hanuman's Travel to Lolland* was first published in 2009 with the support of the Eesti Kulturkapital Fund and received the Fund's award. In 2011, the novel was republished in Moscow and was included on the shortlist of the “Russian Booker” prize. Thus, it was the Estonian cultural industry that facilitated the publication debut of the book.

Although Ivanov, as a writer, is often compared with Eltang, their literary trajectories are different, as are the texture and the subject matter of their novels. The main characters of Ivanov's mischievous novel are Hanuman, an Indian, and the narrator Eudge, a Russian-Estonian. The two reside illegally in a Danish refugee camp. Their dream is to visit Lolland, a Danish island. Russian critics see the refugee camp – with its mixed lot of representatives from “third world” countries, contrasted with well-off Danish citizens – as a parody of contemporary Europe. According to the author, the first version of the novel was written in phonetic English, but the final one was done in Russian. The very name of the novel mislead the reader, sounding as it does like a travelogue whereas the main characters never travel to Lolland.

Critics often compare Lena Eltang's works to the intellectual crypto-detective novels of Umberto Eco, and to the refined language of Fowles and Borges. Her novels are narrated in the first person, but are always refracted through the specifics of various “personal” genres. For example, her first novel, *Pobeg Kumaniki* [Blueberry shoot], appeared in LiveJournal (a web site and a web journal) as notes of a fictitious character, who many readers believed really existed. The book was also published in the same way, as the notes of either a student, or a madman named Moses-Morass, and e-mails and diaries of characters (members of an archaeological expedition to Malta or their correspondents) that probably exist only in the imagination of the main character.

Eltang's novels are far from unambiguous. To the best of my knowledge, the first attempt to translate *Pobeg Kumaniki* into English was a fiasco, due mainly to the tight texture of the language and its close resemblance to poetry. The main character of the second novel, Sasha Sonly, a woman with Russian roots, lives in Wales, owns a boarding house called “Kamennye Klyony”, keeps a diary and communicates with her surroundings by writing notes. This novel also consists mainly of letters, diaries and notes in guest books; here, too, the author creates a polyphonically complex, multi-layered “reality” rather than the pretense of an objective narrative.

In their attempts to determine the cultural-geographic coordinates and language characteristics of Eltang's and Ivanov's novels, Russian literary critics may well begin from different points, but they converge on one and the same key

word: “nowhere”. Here, for example, is what Tatyana Grigorieva writes about Ivanov’s novel:

The first paradox that holds up the narrative is reality itself, described vividly, in detail and even somewhat naturalistically, and transformed into a fantastic “nowhere” populated by wild characters speaking a wild language.⁹

In his review of *Kamennye Klyony*, Andrey Uritsky connects the language characteristics of the novel with the author’s place of residence, with the help of the “nowhere” category:

The parabola of Eltang’s biography is reflected in her novels: a Russian-speaking writer who lives in a city once located on the Western outskirts of the Soviet Empire, but now situated on the Eastern outskirts of the European Union, apparently has to use an airy, semi-transparent language almost devoid of any “meatiness”; an almost “distilled” language in which profane words or colloquialisms would be impossible. And, evidently, she has to place her characters in the historical and geographical space farthest from Russia, as well as from the location of her current residence. The simplest way to determine such a location would be to use the word “nowhere”. As a matter of fact, the author herself lives in the same “nowhere”. The “nowhere” of Eltang’s second novel is Wales.¹⁰

The fact that the word “nowhere” is the most apt to describe the intercultural situation of Russian-Baltic novelists and their characters is evidence of their attempts to culturally assimilate distant territories, despite the authors’ geographical proximity to the Russian border. The multicultural backgrounds and language properties on which their novels turn – and in a certain way depend – immediately confer on their creators the title of innovators in the Russian medium, and when translated into European languages, guarantee the recognizability of their themes.

As far as poetry is concerned, Orbit (www.orbita.lv), a publishing and multi-media project founded in 1999 by Russian poets in Latvia (Sergei Timofeyev, Arthur Punté, Semyon Khanin, George Wallick, and Vladimir Svetlov), enjoys the widest recognition. Orbit experiments with different ways of representing poetic texts and emphasizes the inter-cultural context. In this case, however, the context is more pointedly European, rather than an abstract “nowhere”. For example, in his review of Orbit’s fifth collection of works, Stanislav Lvovsky puts forward as a key metaphor a fragment of Alexei Levenko’s poem that cites the lyrics of a song called “Europe Is Our Playground” by the group Suede. Andrei Levkin, for his part, makes the notion of “TransEurope” a heading for his preface to Sergei Timofeyev’s book *Sdelano* [Done]. There is also a musical allusion to it: a famous album by the group Kraftwerk is named “Trans-Europe Express” (1977). However, Europe is understood as a field for cultural games rather than a specific cultural-linguistic space, as a transitional territory rather than a place of residence.

In summary, it is important to note that Russian literature is as multi-layered in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia as it is in the contemporary Russian literary space as a whole. One can

find virtually anything here: from naive poetry and popular literature to language and innovative intermediation. Therefore, strategies aimed at assimilating the Russian-European borderline are evident and successful. This allows us to talk about the primary task of Baltic Russian literature from the point of view of a literary metropolis, to comprehend the intercultural European “nowhere” from the perspective of its own cultural experience.

Many Baltic writers, in one way or another, do touch upon the issue of the Russian minority. The topic is of keen interest not only to the local Russian-speaking population, but also to those in government institutions. As a rule, local writers receive awards for strengthening literary and cultural ties. That being said, authors who confine themselves to simply developing the minority problem without focusing on their own intercultural situation run the risk of never attracting a wider market of Russian and foreign readers. For example, the novel by P. I. Filimonov entitled *The Zone of Non-Euclidian Geometry* – which received an Eesti Kulturkapital award in 2007 and was translated into Estonian in 2010 – has not yet aroused the interest of Russian readers. Some novelists and poets who are recognized as authors of the European borderline often find themselves in the spotlight of social attention and, as a result, successfully address more local topics; for example, the action of Ivanov’s second novel, *Gorst’ Prakha* [A handful of dust] – nominated for the Russian Award – is set in Tallinn and describes the recent situation developing around “The Bronze Soldier”.¹¹ The main character of Lena Eltang’s new novel, *Drugiye Barabany* [Other drums], is a Lithuanian. Orbit’s bilingual projects sustain the mutual interest of Russian and Latvian writers, and so on.

Thus, the Baltic Russian author is in double demand, from both the metropolis and the local public, but each one makes his or her individual choice. We must simply acknowledge that the authors who achieve the greatest success and recognition are those who combine their European identity with an interest in a specific cultural borderline situation in their literary work and their strategies of self-representation. Their novels are more frequently translated into other European languages. ✕



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- 2 As Pascale Casanova shows, ethnic literary territories are not equal; many of them relate to one another in terms of dominating or dominated. These relations are not necessarily political in nature; sometimes we must recognize that the domination of a specific literary tradition stems from the prestige of that literary tradition; in other words, its importance is derived from how ancient, developed, and recognized it is. See Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, Cambridge, MA 2007.
- 3 New Literary Map of Russia, accessed 2011-11-15 at: www.litkarta.ru.
- 4 The “Russian Award”, established in 2005, is given to foreign Russian-language authors.
- 5 “Samizdat” (self-publishing): The term refers to literary works that could not be officially published in the former communist-ruled Soviet Union, since they were deemed incompatible with official government propaganda. Such works were often printed illegally using personal typewriters and then distributed among trusted friends.
- 6 For more details see Ilya Kukulin, “A Photo of the Inside of a Coffee Cup”, in *Novoye Literaturnoye Obozrenie* [New Literary Review] 54 (2002), pp. 262–282. The name of the article cites the beginning of a poem by Sergei Timofeyev, a Russian-Latvian poet, who wrote: “All I know about Paris is a photo of the inside of a coffee cup.”
- 7 Andrey Biely is the pseudonym of Boris Bugayev, Russian poet and novelist of the first half of the 20th century, the Silver Age of Russian Literature.
- 8 The Nose award alludes to the well-known novel by Nikolai Gogol, a famous Russian-Ukrainian writer of the first half of the 19th century. The award and a bronze statuette in the shape of a human nose are displayed in St. Petersburg. The name of the award is also an acronym derived from the first three letters of the words “NOvaya Slovesnost’” [New Literature] or “NOvaya Sotsial’nost’” [New social order].
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- 11 The monument to Russian soldiers who fought in Estonia during the Second World War was erected in the central park of Tallinn. Not long ago, Estonian authorities decided to move it to another location. Ethnically Russian residents of Estonia opposed the decision. It created considerable unrest in Tallinn, including confrontations between Russians and Estonians.

Listening for other languages

Cia Rinne and the soundpoetic event

essay by **Hannah Lutz**

EXCERPTS FROM NOTES FOR SOLOISTS, CIA RINNE 2009

1
one
ohne
oh no
ono
on
o.
(oh no)¹
[...]

1 no
no.no
no)
no9
no.9
no.nine
no.nein
no.no.²
[...]

sur scène:
sur scen
sen, sur
censur.³

What is the relevance of these lines to the sounds of Cia Rinne, the Finnish multilingual poet I wish to introduce in the following pages? How can the soundpoetic event be approached in the form of an article in a journal? For many of its practitioners, creating sound poetry means vigorously demonstrating the here and now of the poem, which has no counterpart in text; encouraging the people in the audience to place trust in their own listening rather than look to a text for answers; and by extension challenging the idea of an object which lends itself to ownership, or can be saved to experience later. Do we listen differently when bereft of a text version? As performance art has taught us, we can question representationalism by creating works of art that demonstrate their inseparability from the hour and the space in which they take place, and therefore cannot be copied, sold for profit, or archived.

However, when Rinne performs, she carries a book in her

hand, in a sense bringing us back to the text. Moreover, her text poems – particularly in *notes for soloists* – suggest an immanent relationship to sound, as illustrated by the lines quoted above. In a sense, this reinforces the idea of representation, as the poem appears to be either imitating sound, or anticipating its own becoming sound. Why is engaging with Rinne’s sounds a difficult yet worthwhile challenge? Why choose Rinne over the many sound poets who do not rely on text versions of their poems? Why even call Rinne a sound poet?

I hope to demonstrate that it is precisely in the odd relationship between text and sound in Rinne’s performances that we may find openings into her poetry and its powerful potential. Rinne seems to suggest the possibility of a soundpoetic event in which spaces, bodies, texts, and times can assemble in surprising ways, and generate new and radical modes of negotiating language and meaning.

CIA RINNE ON STAGE

After my first live experience of Rinne’s poetry, I was left contemplating the presence of sound in her texts and the presence of text in her performance.⁴ Sensing that the tension between the two raises intriguing questions, and interested in further exploring this tension, I brought a copy of *notes for soloists* to her next performance.⁵ Attempting to follow the poems in the book during the course of the performance, I found that the words in the book remained firmly glued to the page. Rather than bringing the lines of the book to life, Rinne articulated long sequences of words like foreign sounds she was toying around with, uncertain of how to use them as tools of communication. She transformed into a machine, or perhaps a playful child, bridging gaps between languages by linking them through their similarities in sound, rather than through literal meaning. She is speaking Spanish, I decided as she repeated a sequence of sounds, only to find myself seconds later constructing a sentence in Swedish out of the same sequence of sounds, and wondering when she had changed linguistic codes.

Occasionally, she would plunge into repeated, rhythmic hissings and clickings, per-

haps intelligible as German, perhaps only as the sound of a tongue moving around in a mouth. A copy of the book was in her hand as well as in mine, but I could not go back and verify what she actually said. Gradually the separate languages I was listening for seemed to dissolve, and all I could hear was air traveling between lips, tongue hitting teeth, vocal cords vibrating.

Thus, the sound and the text worked against each other when I attempted to organize them in a relation of representation. This relation can be reconfigured as a delezoguaritarian “becoming”. Deleuze and Guattari draw on Nietzsche in asserting that there is no being, no intrinsic ontological unity, only becoming through blocks that connect different phenomena: humans, animals, texts, sounds, machines, bacteria, etc. The movement of becoming is non-teleological and “produces nothing other than itself”.⁶ Moreover, becoming moves rhizomatically: unlike trees with their hierarchical branching, it spreads in all directions; any point can connect to any other. According to Deleuze and Guattari, “The tree and root inspire a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or segmented higher unity”.⁷ The rhizome, however, is a non-centralized system, and therefore undermines the idea of representation.



Illustration: Moa Thelander



CIA RINNE, POET AND ARTIST

I meet Cia Rinne at Collegium Hungaricum Berlin, where she just attended a panel discussion on the current problems of Roma filmmakers in Europe. Rinne knows well the situation of the Roma in Europe, having spent extended periods of time with Roma communities in seven different countries. Together with photographer Joakim Eskildsen, she translated parts of this experience into a book of essays and photographs, *The Roma Journeys*.¹

Cia Rinne thinks of her poetry as less directly political than her work on the Roma. Nevertheless, she is intrigued to hear that her poems have sparked a reading that connects them with new forms of community beyond the nation. Born in Sweden and raised in Germany and Finland, Rinne never experienced national identities as central. Her extensive linguistic facility with at least ten languages makes it possible for her to study and play with language beyond specific linguistic contexts. She illustrates her approach to language with the words of an Argentinean friend, who says that language is like a revolving door. There is not one, but several possible directions to go in.

Some weeks before our meeting, Rinne performed her multilingual poetry at *Ausland*, a project space in Berlin focusing on experimental performance art. On stage, Rinne's poems from her second poetry collection, *notes for soloists*, become a sound event, as Hannah Lutz observes in her article. Rinne's first book of conceptual poetry, *zaroum*, beautifully designed by the poet herself, focuses on the visual rather than aural aspects of language. However, this book also ended up producing a medial transformation of sorts, as it became an interactive Internet piece with moving images, *archives zaroum*. The contexts for Rinne's transmedial art are thus manifold, to say the least, and include art museums and exhibitions as well. ✕

kaisa kaakinen

Cia Rinne's installations *indices* and *h/ombres* and sound installations *sounds for soloists* and *7/ [seven solidus]* are being shown at Grim-museum in Berlin from June 23 to July 19, 2012. Rinne will also read in three performances at the exhibition (June 23: Cia Rinne, July 5: Anders Lauge Meldgaard and Cia Rinne, July 19: Tomomi Adachi and Cia Rinne).

Cia Rinne's works on the internet:

Interactive piece *archives zaroum*:

<http://www.afsnitp.dk/galleri/archiveszaroum/>

Sound installation *sounds for soloists*:

http://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Rinne/Rinne-Cia_Complete-Reading_Sounds-For-Soloists_2011.mp3

reference

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Rather than resonating back to the tree, the root, the Father, or the Nation, meaning is created by flattening out the relationship between text and sound, placing them on a single horizontal plane where they can infect each other, dislocate each other, and co-construct each other, but never represent each other.

By this token, despite the book in Rinne's hand, a sound poem was never on the page. The book may function as part of the event of the sound poem and a physical component of the performance, but it does not constitute the past of the poem. Similarly, despite Rinne's text poems' pronounced relationship to sound, they will never become sound. Here I find an interesting deterritorialization of both text and sound: the text moves forward through its desiring sound, and sound is reconfigured as the driving force of the text, as the desire that brings the poem into existence.

How can "becoming", in this context, be understood as a possible political engagement with the world? Equipped with Karen Barad's idea of "entangled agencies"⁸ and Rasmus Fleischer's concept of "the postdigital", I hope to demonstrate that Rinne's poetry undermines arborescent systems of generating meaning, and creates openings for a politics built on other premises.

BARAD: ENTANGLED AGENCIES

"Climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the things, animals, or people that populate them, follow them, sleep and awaken within them", Deleuze and Guattari suggest.⁹ While Deleuze and Guattari illustrate the entanglement of all the components of an event, the feminist and quantum physicist Karen Barad shows agency – and thus responsibility – to be intrinsic to processes of becoming: "[R]elations are not secondarily derived from independently existing 'relata', but rather the mutual ontological dependence of 'relata' – the relation – is the ontological primitive."¹⁰ This opens up a place for agency, which "does not take place in space and time but in the making of space-time itself".¹¹

In light of this, it seems to me that the poem comes into being as a part of the body and the space; when bodies inhabit space and affect each other they create time, and none of the parts of the event are exchangeable, all are constituted by their relations of becoming. Agencies, then, emerge from this mutual entanglement and from intra-acting and do not exist as "separate individual agencies that precede their interaction".¹² According to Barad, it is here, in understanding our entangled agencies, that we can develop new forms of political engagement. For Barad, epistemology, ontology, and ethics are inseparable; you are responsible for the becomings in which you engage and through which you exist. Possibilities for acting and intervening are immanent in every situation, but practicing politics based on attentiveness to the specificities of the circumstances is no simple task.

FLEISCHER: THE POSTDIGITAL AND THE COLLECTIVE

In his 2009 book *Det postdigitala manifestet* [The postdigital manifesto], Fleischer focuses mainly on how digitalization affects our relationship to music.¹³ Nevertheless, many of his thoughts may be advantageously applied to sound poetry, particularly as collective experience. Struggling to challenge the idea of saving and owning with the idea of listening as becoming, we enter Fleischerian territory. In discussing music

experiences increasingly shaped by abundance and access, in which we stare at our screens paralyzed by the task of choosing between all the songs we "have", Fleischer finds the concept of the postdigital useful. This does not signify "a new stage in cultural history, but rather a maturing of the digital experience which causes us to attach renewed importance to presence".¹⁴ Hence he suggests a postdigital understanding of music influenced by new materialism. By this definition, the files on your computer are merely *potential* music: music is that which takes place, that which is materialized in time and space, that which affects bodies.¹⁵

Fleischer imagines a future in which collective experiences become increasingly important as our access to digital files becomes increasingly unrestricted. In contrast to the private, practically unlimited accumulation of music files, a collective event imposes limits through its physical and temporal manifestation, through bodies restricting and affecting other bodies. This heightens sensation and makes certain kinds of becomings possible: "Since [collective experiences] cannot be copied, deleted or calculated, they set strong desires in motion. Desires can spread contagiously in the postdigital, from one temporary community to the next, provided that some of the participants return."¹⁶

This contagion in the postdigital, which sets bodies in motion, challenges the idea of saving, owning, and reproducing with rhizomatic movements of becoming. It suggests an ontology built on sharing and desire, and communities built horizontally, in all directions, and not resonating with a central system of control.

A POLITICS OF LISTENING

This brings me back to the sound-text relation in Rinne's poetry and the ontological implications of reconceptualizing this relation. In her performances, Rinne appears to be actively engaging with the text poem and freeing herself from it simultaneously. This movement, I suggest, illustrates the poet's affirmative approach to borders as passages, reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's imperative: "Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight. [...] It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight."¹⁷

Moving "unfaithfully" among languages, Rinne deterritorializes these loci of Western thought and philosophy by creating meaning not within them, but straight across them. By undermining the ways in which they control discourse and thought, Rinne is not negating meaning. Rather, she initiates other meaning-making processes which work "against the Father", as Deleuze would put it, "without passing through the [Platonic] Idea".¹⁸ Rinne's claims to language are, in the manner of the seductive simulacrum condemned by Plato, "made from below, by means of an aggression, an insinuation, a subversion".¹⁹ Sounds from one language can physically transform into the sounds of another language without passing through an arborescent structure. Thus her poems do not resonate with anyone's national project. If I allow meaning to emerge at those points where I lose track of the codes, I discover how the body itself, the grain of the voice, the language in its materialization, has the capacity to undermine systems of control, making matter mean.

This makes possible a politics of listening: if the poem is inseparable from the time of my listening, and the event is inseparable from the bodies in the room, meaning is always a collective, physical, and temporal process. Consequently,

politics means taking time to listen for ways of responsibly intervening in the world's becoming. A postdigital desire for embodied yet open-ended collectivities, rather than political programs or national flags, can trigger a contagious feeling of responsibility, and this excess of energy and desire could perhaps be directed towards creating and sustaining communities by horizontal movements. Famously, Derrida once made a "plea for slow reading, even at a time of political urgency"²⁰ – perhaps the soundpoetic event may serve as a space for slow listening, a space in which the Nation and the language of the Nation may be challenged by other, as yet unformed languages and meanings. ✕



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The land, the sea and the water in between

On the liquefaction of culture

lecture by **Sven Rücker**

On September 2 in the year 1967, Paddy Roy Bates, a former major in the British Army, landed in the middle of the water. He occupied a marine fortress called Fort Roughs, which has roughly the size and the appearance of an oil platform, 10 kilometers away from the British coast on the open water. After landing, Bates immediately founded the state of Sealand and proclaimed it to be sovereign – a constitutional monarchy with, of course, himself as the king. Since then, the Royal Navy has tried several times to reconquer the platform; one of the citizens of the "Principality of Sealand", the German Alexander Achenbach, even started a revolution. Bates, however, has successfully defended his state by both judiciary and military means until today. Currently, ten people live on the platform, and so Sealand lives on too, with its own currency, its own passports and its own flag.

Even though the sea is characterized by its transgression of all borders, the founding of Sealand has shown that one can transform the sea into some sort of land, into Sea-Land. Because the sea is dislocated, one can set up a location. Because it is not the realm of defined territories, one can declare part of it as a territory and thereby align it with the land and the terrestrial idea of a state. But if one does, it is no longer "sea" in the strong sense of the word,¹ but rather a symbolic aggradation of the sea – just sealand.

While these sea commonly stands for homogeneity, the classic symbol of culture is the house. The house sets up the basic opposition of inside and outside, just as classic culture defines itself by the separation from other cultures or from non-culture: in other words, by its frontier. It is the frontier that permits localization and creates a closed territory.

Culture begins with the installation of a border. But not only culture, the world itself begins with a border. The Book of Genesis starts with the spirit of God, hovering above the indifferent water: "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. [...] And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together in one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas."

On the first day, God created Sealand. But what God does is actually not creating, but dividing. He divides (as Moses will do later) the water from the water, then he divides the water from the sky, and in the end of the beginning, he divides the water from the land. Creation means division: it means setting boundaries and, by doing so, defining territories. As long as there is only water, there is no world in the sense of the Greek kosmos, an organized and well-regulated totality – only the chaos of transgression.

The work of God is also the work of his legitimate successors on earth, or on dry land: the philosophers. Thinking also means creating order by dividing one from the other, by setting boundaries. In spite of a heretical tradition beginning with Heraclitus's sentence, "Everything flows", the exponents of mainstream – or rather, mainland – philosophy use architectural terms to describe their work. Thinking is building in a concrete sense. It uses repetitive elements and connects them with the help of the laws of logic to build a system in which one element supports another. That is what Spinoza and Descartes called "geometrical method" and what, from another point of view, Heidegger analyzed in his text

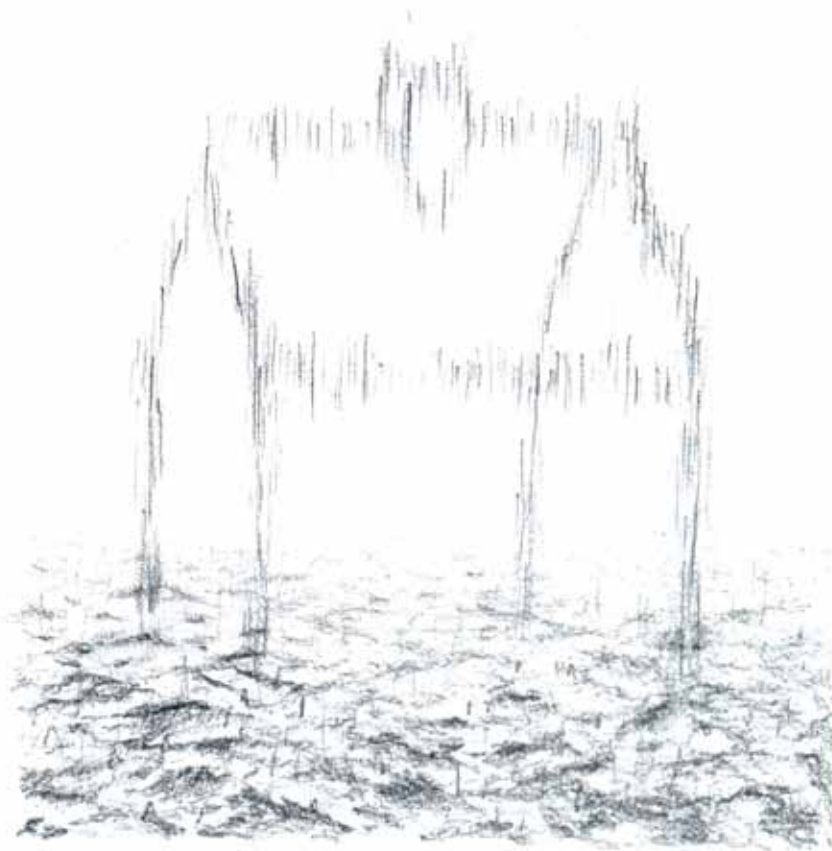


Illustration: Moa Thelander

“Building, Dwelling, Thinking”. And even before them, the great *Summae* of Thomas Aquinas showed such an obvious architectural structure that they were often compared to the great cathedrals of his time. Kant calls his system the “architecture of pure reason”. But he also criticizes the architecture of classical metaphysics by saying, “We have found, indeed, that although we had contemplated building a tower which should reach to the heavens, the supply of materials suffices only for a dwelling-house... [A]nd inasmuch as we have been warned not to venture at random upon a blind project which may be altogether beyond our capacities, and yet cannot well abstain from building a secure home for ourselves, we must plan our building in conformity with the material which is given to us, and which is also at the same time appropriate to our needs.”²

One might say that Kant replaces the old cathedral of thinking – the towers that reach to the sky – with a middle-class family house. He wants to build on solid ground, on a foundation that can support the house instead of collapsing under its own weight or ending up a monstrous ruin because it can never be finished. But, of course, this is just a change of the building plan, and does not touch the central identity of thinking and building. Perhaps words pour out of the soul, but when they are printed, they are fixed. In a late text, “The Conflict of the Faculties”, Kant mentions a crisis of the petrified words caused by their liquefaction. First he admires the type, the printed words, because they look like an army of stone soldiers or a Greek temple – like something that can carry the weight of his thoughts. Kant insists on the original meaning of the German word for “type”, *Buchstaben*: staffs of beechwood to hold onto for support: “mit Breitkopfschen Lettern, die ihrem Namen Buchstaben (gleichsam bücherner Stäbe zum Feststehen) ... entsprechen”.³ Philosophy needs such a solid ground because Kant defines thinking itself as the

“fixation of a term” (*Festhalten eines Begriffs*).⁴ But when he read at university, something strange happened: suddenly, the words began to shift and disintegrate before his eyes.⁵ They became fluid, and so did Kant. The architecture of pure reason tumbled down and Kant panicked. But he found a solution: Kant ended the crisis by closing his eyes for a few seconds.⁶ By petrifying himself – with eyes closed, like a dead man – he managed to petrify the words on the paper again. The liquefaction was stopped, the text was rebuilt, and the equation of thinking and building was reestablished.

This changed in the 19th century. The main protagonist promoting this change was Friedrich Nietzsche. With him, philosophy, indeed culture in general, leaves the house and sets sail. Thinking is no longer creating a static system, a system in which everything remains in its assigned place. It has to be mobile and encompass multiple perspectives. The world is not a totality of territories that can be closed off, but a fluid mass. It is not ruled by identity, but by alternation; not by borders, but by transgression. If everything is floating, the thinker must float too. He is no longer an architect, but a drifter.

“On to the ships, philosophers”, Nietzsche pathetically exhorts. But he also says: “There is another world to discover” – and another world means a new land. Thinking leaves the land, not to go to sea, but to cross the sea. Thinking moves, but it moves like an occupation army that relocates when dislocated, that deterritorializes itself only to establish new territories by setting new boundaries. The movement on the sea is liable to become aggradation.

Is it possible to reverse this process, to initiate a liquefaction? Another text by Nietzsche “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” continually alternates between the fluid and the fixed, between liquefaction and petrification. “What

is truth?” asks Nietzsche, and he answers, “A mobile army of metaphors [...] illusions that we have forgotten are illusions.”⁷ Again, here is an army, or to be more exact, here are two forces fighting each other: a mobile army – or navy – and an army of stone soldiers. One is the result of liquefaction, the other of petrification. As long as the metaphors are known for what they are, they stay fluid and flexible. But as soon as we forget about their nature and take them for some sort of “truth”, they become immobile and petrified: “Only by fossilization of an original mass of pictures that once – as a hot liquid – gushed forth from the primeval imagination”⁸, man builds truth as a “system of classes, laws and boundaries [...] and the great building of terms shows the fixed regularity of a Roman temple”⁹. In other words, the great philosophical tradition of an architectural self-description is just a monstrous aggradation of metaphors that were once fluid, and their transformation into terms that are now fixed. Finally, the thinker himself becomes petrified, like Kant when he closes his eyes to prevent the words from liquefying: “He does not show a twitching, moving face, but rather a mask of symmetry. He does not scream, he does not even change his voice. If it starts raining, he hides under his cloak and slowly slips away.”¹⁰ The architect of truth obviously does not like water.

To fight those stone soldiers of the mind, one must mobilize the other army, the army of metaphors, which is buried under the building of terms. To uncover it, one must destroy the temple of truth and build a ship or raft out of its ruins. One must put the house to sea; in other words, one must dislocate it. Nietzsche describes this new fluid model of thinking: “Now we can admire man as an architectural genius who succeeds in building a complex cathedral of metaphors on mobile foundations and on fluid water. But to stand on

such foundations, it must be a building of cobwebs, so airy that it is carried away by each wave, and so strong that it is not destroyed by the wind.”¹¹ The fluid is not just the opposite of the house. It is rather a new way of building – a building of cobwebs, airy and strong at the same time, conjunctive and flexible: a world-wide web.

In Nietzsche's text, land and sea, the fluid and the fixed are not separated and therefore not identified as they are in the biblical myth. Instead, his text describes the permanent transformation of the fluid into the solid and vice versa. The difference between land and sea itself is not solid, but fluid.

Nietzsche was not the first to liquefy the idea of culture. In 1845, Ernst Kapp wrote his book *Vergleichende allgemeine Erdkunde*. Kapp analyses the history of world culture, not in terms of the shifting of political frontiers and territories, as most other cultural theorists did, but in terms of the rising of water in relation to land. Kapp distinguishes between three phases of world culture. The first phase, called the “potamic phase”, starts with Mesopotamia and the Egyptian Nile culture. It is characterized by rivers and streams. The potamic phase is followed by the “thalassic phase”, the cultures of the inland seas, represented by Greco-Roman antiquity and the Middle Ages, and including, in my view, the Baltic Sea. The third and last phase starts with the modern era and the conquering of the oceans. According to Kapp, the progression of world culture expresses itself in the liquefaction of mankind. The history of Man does not start with the resettlement after the Flood; rather, Man is the Flood. In Kapp's model, high water and high culture become similar. The rise of culture is directly connected to the rise of water.

Kapp's fluid Hegelianism floats into the 20th century and is collected again by Carl Schmitt. His book *Land and Sea* constructs the progression of culture as a struggle between land cultures and sea cultures. For Schmitt, the progression of culture is the sum of spatial revolutions. The beginning of each spatial revolution is marked by a new “nomos of the earth”, the conquering of new land, and with it a new definition of space itself. Therefore, the triumph of the sea cultures does not mean the triumph of water over land – because even victorious sea cultures like England are characterized not by a transgression of the land, but by a transgression or crossing of water and a definition of new territories. Ruling the waves means finding a safe way to reach new land. The deterritorialized sea is surrounded and delimited by territories. And to the same extent that the theory of culture is liquefied, it transforms the sea into a different kind of land, into an area of transportation rather than transgression.

This becomes clear when we look at the most famous conqueror of the modern era, whom we know as Columbus, but who gave himself the Spanish name “Cristóbal Colón”. “Colón” means “colonist”, “conqueror”; and “Cristóbal” is St. Christopher, who carried Christ over the river. And this is exactly what Columbus did, carrying Jesus, the Christian ideology, from coast to coast over the ocean, not transgressing but transporting it. In sum, the difference between land and sea is an aggradation because it localizes the dislocated, it creates a territory for the deterritorialized.

But this creation is only a human construction. As mentioned earlier, the difference between the fluid and the solid is itself not solid, but fluid. One can only regard the sea as another kind of land – as something to be crossed, as a medium of transportation – as long as one stays on its surface. But the real water begins underwater. “The idea of depth is a general idea”, Roland Barthes writes. And of course, this gen-

eral idea is derived from the idea of the sea, and specifically from its third dimension. One of the most erroneous interpretations of the so-called postmodern theories claims that there are no depths, but only surfaces. To experience what water really is, you cannot hover over it like the spirit of God and his armed missionaries, the European Conquistadores. You have to dive into it. This would add a fourth phase to Kapp's three-phase model of world culture. After the potamic, the thalassic and the oceanic phases, all defined by the surface of water, something new would begin, something that one might call the abyssal phase or, from the old name of the Deep Sea, the hadal phase. In this fourth phase, to think means to sink. Thinking would no longer be defined by the distance to its object, but – as Deleuze and Guattari say about the rhizomatic rooting in the underground – by interlinking; not – as Kant said – by the fixation of terms, but by drifting.

But if we choose this close connection between thinking and sinking, we must be aware of the fact that mankind may have had good reasons to form an aggradation instead of a liquefaction. Depth is always near to death. The classical European concept of identity itself is based on the idea of a territory or a terra firma; beginning with Plato, we are accustomed to describing our inner life in architectural terms. Under the fragile building of the soul, under the surface of identity, there is only the chaos of drives and unadjusted powers. This is why the same man who claimed the idea of depth was a general idea wrote an article about the death of the author. To undermine the building of the self can be a dangerous undertaking – as Nietzsche's fate illustrates. It is no coincidence that Nietzsche's deconstruction of the self used maritime metaphors. The ocean always was connected with the loss of identity, as in the Romantic paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, such as the famous “Monk by the Sea”. But the liquefaction of the self is not necessarily a loss of identity – just as getting near to the fluid underground of the self does not necessarily mean the aggradation of the “inner ocean” by making it conscious, as in Freud's famous phrase. The hadal phase stands neither for the loss of identity nor for the aggradation of its fluid parts: it is a transformation of our concepts of self-identity. In relation to this change, we are still standing on the shore, looking into the great wide open. ✖

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references

- 1 This is why I will not discuss the Baltic Sea in particular: it is something like an inland sea, and therefore not a good example of water as a transgression of all borders. A sea that can even freeze and so transform itself into a kind of land cannot be “sea” in the strong sense mentioned above.
- 2 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 735.
- 3 Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, (GA, vol. 11), A 203.
- 4 *Ibid.*, A 199.
- 5 “Unter den krankhaften Zufällen der Augen . . . habe ich die Erfahrung gemacht, wo das Phänomen darin besteht: daß auf einem Blatt, welches ich lese, auf einmal alle Buchstaben verwirrt und durch eine gewisse, darüber verbreitete Helligkeit vermischt und ganz unleserlich werden.” *Ibid.*, A 205.
- 6 “Zufälligerweise kam ich darauf, wenn sich jenes Phänomen ereignete, meine Augen zu schließen [...] meine Hand darüber zu legen, und dann sah ich eine hellweiße wie mit Phosphor im Finstern auf einem Blatt verzeichnete Figur [...] mit einem auf der konvexen Seite ausgezackten Rande, welche allmählich an Helligkeit verlor.” *Ibid.*, A 205. What Kant sees with eyes closed, this strange figure “as if painted with phosphor in the dark on paper”, is the ghost of the text, the type in its liquefied form.
- 7 Nietzsche, “Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne”, in *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, Stuttgart 1964, p. 611. Translation by the author.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 614.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 612.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 622.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 613.

August Strindberg

Symbol for Russian symbolists

In 1912, Russian symbolist Vladimir Pyast decided to go to Stockholm to carry a message from Aleksandr Blok to the dying August Strindberg (1849–1912). He didn't quite succeed – but the journey had an intriguing outcome.

Pyast (born Pestovsky, 1886–1940) was a true Petersburg intellectual. He was a poet and critic with a touch of the outsider, although he was at the center of symbolism in all its phases. He was first influenced by Blok's early cult poetry – which strove to conjure up the feminine World Soul. Around the time of the 1905 revolution, Pyast began an enduring and complicated friendship with Blok. Eventually, he cultivated close relationships with the young acmeists – including Osip Mandelstam – who, after the abstract and ethereal efforts of the symbolists, sought to emphasize compactness of form and clarity of expression.

After 1905, Pyast's turn of mind became increasingly democratic and he clearly had a hand in radicalizing Blok, yet, paradoxically, he was still open to occult worlds. This complexity in his personality made him particularly important to Blok around 1910–1912. The deeper, more intense friendship between the two was now played out entirely in the spirit of Strindberg.

Russian symbolism was in crisis in 1910. A state of repression and resignation had followed the young century's exalted expectations of spiritual and political revolution. Blok frequented brothels, drank, and distanced himself from his former circles. It was at this point that Pyast handed him Strindberg's novella *Ensam* [Alone]. Pyast absorbed the many sides of Strindberg all at once: the autobiographical confessor, the social rebel, the occultist, the psychically experimental pre-expressionist. And Blok soon did the same. The identification with the inveterate recluse became nearly total: Blok took long walks through his city by the water and stressed his liberation from previous ties, the fact of his "aloneness".

At this moment, Blok felt the Russian intelligentsia had failed. It had given in to weakness and sluggish inertia. He saw in Strindberg a way out, the Strindberg who seemed to stand for something masculine and austere, a tempering after dashed hopes of rebellion, psychological crises, and occult investigations. Making personal contact with this Master seemed imperative – but Blok was in no condition to make his way to Stockholm. In April 1912, cast down and depressed, he wrote an essay, "From Ibsen to Strindberg", in which Strindberg is declared as going one step beyond Ibsen. Ibsen is a bird, flying over the fjords, while Strindberg is a human, a man. Ibsen's hand is presumed white and bloodless; Strindberg's the hand of a worker or athlete,



August Strindberg, *The complete works. Volume III. Novels and drama*, published in Moscow in 1909.

powerful and battered. "Sick" Russia is in desperate need of Strindberg.

Pyast shared Blok's views in every respect. His feelings were, if possible, even stronger. Strindberg stood out as "the most important person and writer on earth", and tellingly enough, it was Strindberg the man that he put first. They were well aware in St. Petersburg that the great Swede was seriously ill, that he might not have much longer to live. If one wanted to meet him, wanted to feel his firm handshake, time was of the essence. The moment Pyast heard the Master's condition had deteriorated, on an early morning in mid-April, he decided to leave for Stockholm before it was too late, whatever the cost. He had scarcely a penny to his name, but in the end, a "correspondent contract" with a newspaper made the project possible.

In his memoirs, Pyast describes his journey in detail from a distance of seventeen years. He seems to have made his way to Strindberg the very day he arrived. In hindsight, he is palpably concerned with shrinking the local environment. He found Strindberg housed in a "grayish, humble" apartment, alone with his housekeeper: "This is how the great martyrs live." Pyast had learned from Strindberg's Russian son-in-law Vladimir Smirnoff that the invalid had declined all visits outside immediate family. His self-imposed isolation seemed now to be complete.

Pyast sat among playing children in Tegnérslunden, a park

near Strindberg's "Blue Tower", and asked himself whether he might never get a glimpse of "the person who means more to me than any alive [...], not meet his eye, not hear his voice". He gathered his courage and rang the doorbell. The housekeeper answered. A door to the sickroom stood ajar. He could easily have forced his way past the opposition and gone in, but decided after a moment's hesitation that he would not defy the great man, however hard it was to refrain. He left a copy of his recently published autobiographical "Poema v nonakh" [A Poem in Nones] in the Russian original with a calling card attached, on which a greeting was written in faltering Swedish.

Even more than before, solitude now became the leitmotif of his perception of Strindberg. He grandly cries in his memoirs: "You, the abode that the writer of *Alone*, my first Strindberg book --, chose: I have been in you!" On the calling card, he wrote: "To August Strindberg, the One, but now already not Alone – by young Russian poets." It was thus a play on words: Strindberg was certainly alone, but at this moment only in the sense of unique, outstanding – because he had otherwise become part of a young, Russian fellowship. He now belonged to Blok, to Pyast, and to Andrei Bely who had just confessed that after reading *Inferno*, he understood that he was "no longer alone".

Eventually, Pyast returned. The first thing he did after arriving home was share all of his impressions with Blok. Strindberg died the next day. Blok sat down to write a powerful obituary, "In memory of August Strindberg", in which he paid homage to "our comrade August" as the harbinger of a new kind of human – a unique union of male and female, scientific mind and artistry, craftsmanship and refinement. In July 1912, a memorial production of the play *There are Crimes and Crimes* was produced in Terijoki on the Karelian Isthmus, directed by Vsevolod Meyerhold, introduced by Pyast and with Blok and Mr. and Mrs. Smirnoff in the audience. It was, Pyast remembers, on the verge of ecstasy, "our summer of Strindberg".

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Note: This is an excerpt from a contribution to *Strindbergiana* (2012), the yearbook of the Strindberg Society of Sweden.



Orphanage No. 7 in Taganrog.



"Only together!", is the message.

RELIC OF THE GULAG OR SOCIALIST WELFARE?

THOUGHTS ABOUT AN ORPHANAGE IN SOUTHERN RUSSIA

by **Håkan Blomqvist**

The lonely whistle of the diesel locomotive at the factory wends its way into the dormitory where the clatter and bang of freight being loaded and unloaded is mixed with the sighs and murmurs of sleeping children. The floodlights at the entrance to the Iron & Steel Factory cast a pale light through the windows, over teddy bears and lace bedspreads arranged in neat piles. From a sagging armchair in the hall, the night monitor squints slightly at a half-asleep child on the way to the toilet. It is nighttime at Orphanage No. 7 in Taganrog. And the fog from the Sea of Azov settles quietly over the city in southern Russia.

What kind of place is this, where about sixty children of various ages romped and jostled just a little while ago as they brushed their teeth and got ready for bed? Is it a relic of a massive system of children's gulags from the days of the Soviet system, as implied by Human Rights Watch in a December 1998 report? The organization acknowledged that the gulag prisons of the Soviet Union were closed, but stated:

Yet today, in another archipelago of grim state institutions, the authorities of the Russian Federation are violating the fundamental rights of tens of thousands of innocent citizens: children abandoned to state orphanages.¹

The report gave the impression that systematic abuse, violence, and discrimination are part of everyday life for the hundreds of thousands of children estimated to be living in Russian orphanages around the turn of the millennium – a number that had actually gone up in the 1990s.²

The separate world of giant orphanages was historically, according to Human Rights Watch, a reflection of the Soviet philosophy of collective action and discipline that guided the institutions erected to house millions of war orphans during the first half of the 20th century. But instead of dismantling the system and living up to the 1990 U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Russian government had allowed the institutions to continue operating. Based on the alarming

report, Human Rights Watch formulated a large number of recommendations to the Russian government to bring to a halt the abuses and guarantee children's rights. These were urgent demands in the difficult reality of the Russian transformation.

But can the Russian and formerly Soviet orphanage system be understood mainly as a relic of the gulag system? Based on many years of working with family support for an orphanage in southern Russia, my intent in this article is to put the experience as it was lived in a historical perspective and to discuss questions surrounding the Soviet and Russian orphanage system.

TRETIKAK'S ORPHANAGE EXCHANGE

"This is Group Room Four, with Nadia, Zyenya, Dima . . . Come, children, we have a visitor from Sweden!"

How many Swedish parents and siblings have at this point



Celebration in the dining hall with Swedish guests from the Tretiak Orphan Exchange.



The dormitories are decorated in the most imaginative way.

been shepherded round Orphanage No. 7 in the industrial city of Taganrog in southern Russia by Rita Logvinenko, director of the orphanage for the past 30 years? It was Rita who accompanied the first group of children from Taganrog to Arlanda International Airport outside Stockholm in June 1991. The summer before, Vladislav Tretiak, Soviet ice hockey legend and goaltender for the Moscow Central Sports Club of the Army (CSKA), and Stig Nilsson, chairman of the Swedish Ice Hockey Association, had broadcast an appeal to Swedish radio listeners: “More than a million orphans are living in orphanages in Russia. Is there anyone out there who can take in a child for a few weeks next summer?”

That same year, Swedish Television had just shown a much talked-about documentary about children in Romanian orphanages.³ The documentary had shaken a great many people – and several felt called upon to do something. Whether the place was Romania or Russia seemed not to make much difference. My wife and I were among those who responded.

THE FIRST GROUPS of Russian children arrived at Arlanda in June the following summer. They came from orphanages in Moscow, Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg), Tula, and Taganrog. All told, there were 97 girls and boys aged 7 to 17, wearing washed-out tracksuits of Soviet cut, with colorful bows and barrettes, floral cardigans, and shy smiles. The summer vacation program, with its mutual visits and support initiatives, the forging of bonds of friendship and family, good experiences and bad, has now been going on for twenty years under the auspices of the Tretiak Orphan Exchange organization. Several orphanages have joined the program over the years, some have dropped out, and the children who have participated can be counted in the thousands. The first groups have long since grown up and left the orphanages, and are living adult lives, often with families of their own in Russia or, in some cases, Sweden. For Swedish parents, the experience gave them insight into the world of Russian orphanages, which has changed with the transformation of Soviet society into today’s Russia.

ORPHANAGE NO. 7

Tolko vmestie my družny
tolko vmestie my silny

Only together are we friends Only together are we strong

An appliquéd textile wallhanging in the vestibule illustrates the Russian folk tale about the turnip. A Russian peasant family standing outside a little cottage as the sun is rising. An itty-bitty mouse happily cavorting over a gigantic turnip. Everyone on the farm has been working together in an attempt to pull up the turnip, but to no avail – until the little house mouse pitched in. And pop! With the combined strengths of everyone and help from the tiniest creature on the farm, the turnip is out of the ground.

“Only together” is the message.

This is not only something that welcomes the visitor. At Orphanage No. 7 in Taganrog, the philosophy imbues everything: weekdays and holidays, education and recreation, mealtimes and bedtimes.

The orphanage was founded in 1948 to house war orphans. The Taganrog Iron & Steel Factory (Tagmet), the biggest industry in the city, donated one of its buildings. The 1930s building served originally as accommodation for traveling engineers and others with temporary assignments at the factory. The two-story building is surrounded by a high barred fence and shaded by poplars and weeping willows. The enormous industrial plant is on the other side of Zavodskaja, Factory Street, where streams of factory workers pass on the way to and from work. The street is lined with small kiosks selling tobacco, alcohol, candy, and bread. There are fruit stands and fish is hawked from the back of trucks, and newspapers for sale are spread out on the ground. No trams or buses rattle by. Zavodskaja is a peaceful side street compared to Dzerzhinskaja around the corner, which is always busy with traffic on the way downtown.

The orphanage has a small ball field and a concrete playground. A flower garden and pergola have been laid in the courtyard formed between the older buildings and a newer wing. Apart from the muted racket from the factory, the orphanage is in a very peaceful spot. The sounds of kids laughing and playing in the playground or on the way to school echo between the factory and the residential houses. In autumn 2006, when I made these notes, there were 62 children residing in the orphanage. Today, in 2011, there are somewhat fewer. During the twenty years we have been in contact with the orphanage, the census peaked at more than

90 children, at which times the dormitories and group rooms were crowded.

The children range in age from four to eighteen – in theory, that is. A few young adults who have been accepted to institutions of higher education have been permitted to stay a couple of years longer. For smaller children, including infants, there is an infants’ home on the other side of the Iron & Steel Factory, near the sea. There are another four orphanages in Taganrog, and a total of 44 in the Rostov region (2006).

For now, the children are divided into six groups of mixed ages, with first-graders and teenagers in the same group. The idea is that the older kids will teach and take charge of the younger ones, helping them with their homework and other chores. Every group has its own group room, most of which are on the second floor of the older building. A couple of groups are housed on the ground floor behind the big entrance hall, where a large stuffed tiger once welcomed people to the visitors’ sofa. The tiger’s duties have now been taken over by a pitch-black Bagheera.

The group rooms function as both study and living rooms. They are comfortably decorated with bookshelves, sofas, pictures, potted plants, and soft rugs. The whole is furnished with a central work and dining table big enough for the entire group, and a relaxation corner with a TV and some kind of sound system. There are aquariums in several group rooms, and one is home to a guinea pig and hamsters. The children do the cleaning and upkeep themselves, taking care of the plants, the aquarium fish, and other things. In November 2006, the kids are busily putting up new curtains after several windows in the orphanage were replaced. While some are gathering the curtains onto rods, others are washing the windows and cleaning up after the workmen. Clearly, the groups think of the rooms as their own and take care of them, often at the big-sisterly urgings of teenage girls directed to the younger boys.

EVERY GROUP HAS two *vospitateli*, teachers or educators, with emphasis on the educational mandate. The educators, all women except one specialist art educator, have worked at the orphanage for a long time and have followed the children from an early age. Although Tatiana or Sveta or one of the others can certainly yell when necessary, the atmosphere is far from harsh and authoritarian. There are admonitions here along with silliness, high spirits along with a little more strictness, depending on personal inclination and the function of



Each room has its own theme and competes with the others.

Countless hours are spent on designing, sewing, and decorating. The children do the cleaning and upkeep themselves.

the group. The climate might be characterized by words like “tightness” and “closeness”.

The group is something of a family collective, one of harmony and security, and there is thus a strong element of social control. It might feel scary to a newcomer at first, but might also seem like a potential source of safety. The task of the educator and the older children is to help the new child meld quickly with the group, as he or she is given a place at the table and a share of the attention the older ones give to the younger.

EDUCATION, UPKEEP, AND THE ARTS

Schoolchildren do their homework in the group rooms. The children of Orphanage No. 7 attend School No. 25, a fifteen-minute walk away. The school takes pupils from the first through eleventh grades. Teaching is provided in morning and afternoon sessions, so the group rooms can provide a fairly calm study environment when half the kids are at school. The children keep their books, pencils, and other supplies in cupboards, where each child has a designated space. It is not really as neat and tidy as it sounds, and when visitors come unannounced, the scene is one of relaxed disorder. The group rooms are thus used both as workplaces and as recreation rooms where the kids drink tea in the afternoon and chill out in front of the TV.

Rita Logvinenko’s director’s office and the educators’ offices are also located here in the older building. The doors are always open to the kids. There is a library and adjacent computer room, a sewing room, and a linen storeroom for bedding, towels, etc. A small gym with a rowing machine and wall bars has been set up in the upstairs hall, where there is also a small doctor’s office. There is a large assembly room for concerts, dances, and games in the basement.

The newer, attached wing houses a laundry room, a commercial-size kitchen, and a dining hall on the ground floor, and the children’s dormitories on the upper floor.

In the dining hall, which is big enough for all the kids at once but where meals are served in shifts to accommodate school hours, the smallest children sit at special mini-tables and mini-chairs. A mural with fairy tale motifs decorates one wall. The food is served at the tables by the older girls who have been assigned the task for the day. The meal often con-

sists of soup – *borscht* or *solyanka* –, bread, and tea.

The dormitories on the upper level are ten in number and decorated in the most imaginative way. The groups do not sleep together – the kids are separated by sex and age. Each room has its own theme, expressed in wall decorations, curtains, bedspreads, and toys. One of the little girls’ dormitories might look like a pink princess’s room, with ruffles and bows and canopies over the beds. A boys’ room might feature race cars or nautical gear. The dormitories compete with each other for imaginative elegance, and countless hours are spent designing the special touches, which may change over time. Bedspreads, pillowcases, and curtains are sewn at the orphanage, and the children make the decorations themselves, under the guidance of the art educator.

The hall leading to the dormitories is kept closed during the day. As at the entrance to the orphanage and by the public phone, children sit, like security guards, next to the stairs up to the dormitories. Children cannot go upstairs during the day without asking for permission.

The toilets and washrooms are adjacent to the dormitory area. The toilets used to be of the “hole in the floor” variety, four in a row, with no cubicles or doors. There was virtually no privacy while going to the toilet or brushing teeth before bed, but boys and girls were ushered in by dormitory so they would not collide, and a rag doll denoted whether boys or girls were using the toilets. Installation of new WCs in separate toilet cubicles started in the last year or so. Buckets, brushes, and scouring cloths on hooks marked with group numbers are telltale indicators of shared responsibility for keeping the washrooms and toilets clean.

BY THIS TIME, the educators have long since gone home, and the “night monitors” have taken over. They are often older women clad in white lab coats, who make sure bathroom visits and getting to bed – mainly for the smaller children – proceed in an orderly fashion. The head night monitor used to have a minimal office next to the stairs, but it has been converted to a bedroom for two teenagers. One of the women on the night crew keeps watch on a sagging sofa illuminated by a night-light until wake-up time in the morning.

There are forty people on staff at the orphanage: one director (Rita Logvinenko), three vice-directors, and fifteen educators, including a special-needs educator, an arts and music educator, and a vocational instructor. There is also a

doctor, who has a small examination room and infirmary, and a dentist (certain weeks), a nurse, the night crew, and “technical staff”, meaning cooks, launderers, a driver, and technicians. Pay (as of 2006) ranges from about 2,000 rubles a month for technical staff, night crew, and kitchen staff up to about 4–6,000 rubles for educators. This can be compared to 15,000 rubles a month for a school principal and 8,000 for qualified primary school teachers and for shift workers at the Iron & Steel Factory.

Alongside schooling, activities include tasks related to running the orphanage, covering everything from cleaning and serving meals to tending the garden. There are also lots of organized recreational activities such as sports, sewing, painting and crafts, singing, music, dance, and drama.

Musicians and other culture workers often visit the orphanage. And the children are taken on outings, preferably to museums, concerts, and theatrical performances. Orphanage No. 7 in Taganrog is far from being a dumping ground or storage facility for abandoned children. It is one of a couple of thousand orphanages of varying quality in today’s Russian Federation.⁴

ADVENT OF THE SOVIET ORPHANAGE SYSTEM

The rationale behind the advent of the Soviet orphanage system was the catastrophic number of “wild” children – *besprizhornie* – wandering around without homes or supervision after the war and revolutionary years of 1914–1921. The problem involved about seven million homeless children and it was the task of the new Soviet authorities to deal with the catastrophe.⁵

Responsibility for the welfare of orphaned and homeless children age three and up was assigned to the People’s Commissariat for Education, *Narkompros* – equivalent to the later Ministry of Education – under the leadership of Anatoly Lunacharsky. Responsibility for children in Soviet orphanages was thus tied to the Russian education system early on. This was, according to historians of the Soviet orphanage system, an ideologically significant choice: child welfare was not to be limited to protection and care, but should also educate and foster the citizens of the new society. The model ended up remained essentially unchanged for the entire Soviet epoch, with continuity into our times.⁶



Aesthetics is highly valued. Orphanage No. 7 as painted by one of the children.



Relaxed disorder in a group room with a feeling of "togetherness".

Radical laws against child labor, child abuse, and exploitation were passed during the initial years of the Soviet regime, but also against adoption (1918), which had been criticized as tantamount to trafficking in children as cheap domestic and farm labor.⁷ Children were given the right to shelter, food, schooling, and a secure childhood. If a child had no parents, either foster parents, preferably relatives, would step in, or society would provide pedagogically based care and welfare in orphanages.

These proud goals, however, stood in stark contrast to the growing millions of orphans, while the economic capacity to realize the goals was decimated during the civil war and the disintegration of the Russian Empire. At the same time, the revolution and Bolshevik government for ideological reasons had dissolved or incorporated the charitable institutions that had operated under the monarchy.⁸ Charity was perceived as a way for the upper classes to buy a clear conscience or for the church to exert its power. Organizations like Save the Children with connections to states that had intervened in the Russian civil war were dissolved.⁹ Consequently, responsibility for addressing the disastrous situation fell entirely upon local Soviets that lacked the resources to attain the goals. Instead, they were forced to build on the former empire's dilapidated shelters and forcibly requisitioned churches, stately homes, and other emergency facilities, which were often overcrowded and suffered from dreadful sanitary conditions and shortages of food, heat, and qualified staff, such as care workers and teachers. In 1921, about half a million of the masses of homeless children were sheltered in more than seven thousand facilities designated as orphanages. Another hundred thousand or so had been placed in foster homes.¹⁰

The number of homeless children declined drastically with the Soviet recovery during the market-oriented NEP period in the mid 1920s, to about one million.¹¹ The rebuilding of Russian society and the Soviet Republics began in these years in a kind of creative chaos in the midst of the severe privations of postwar destitution. Despite the dictatorship, pluralism existed in many areas, even in regard to family policy and child welfare, which were characterized by various currents of ideas and experimentation. Soviet family law was then regarded as the most radical in the world when it came to equality between men and women.¹²

The fundamental Marxist idea that the emancipation of women was dependent upon their economic independence

from men was in turn dependent upon paid employment on equal terms – which meant that childcare and housework had to be made a collective responsibility.¹³ The strong emphasis on collectivized household chores, meal provision, and childcare was also rooted in harsh reality during the civil war and military communism. Alexandra Kollontai, the Soviet government's first minister of social welfare, declared after the civil war that it was the Soviet government's duty to "assume responsibility for the care and welfare of small children, the economic protection of children, and true social education".¹⁴ The argument based on social education theory was combined with criticism of the paternal tyranny, alcoholism, and lawlessness against women and children of the outmoded, patriarchal family relationship. There were economic benefits to the collectivization of housework and childrearing as well. To have every individual family – or housewife, really – devote a large portion of their lives to household chores and childrearing was considered a waste of female labor that could be used to build the socialist society. Collective dining halls, laundries, and daycare centers were considered far more efficient than splitting up household tasks among millions of individual households.¹⁵

ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI rejected the notion that the communist society should take children from their parents and abolish families. A new, socialist family model would instead emerge through changes in the material conditions and the power of example.

"Society's" responsibility for the welfare of homeless and orphaned children was manifested in many different ways in the 1920s, from desperate emergency facilities to experimentation with a wide variety of educational and practical methods to readjust children who had fallen into alcoholism and prostitution, teach them a trade, and educate them. Radical theories of childrearing and education inspired by Leo Tolstoy's ideas at Yasnaya Polyana and those of international educators were tested in schools, boarding schools, and orphanages, which were often criticized for being too lax and individualistic.¹⁶ One of the earliest additions to the motley flora was Ukrainian educator Anton Makarenko's Gorky corrective labor colony outside Poltava, which was soon followed by several similar experiments. Accused of applying "regimental pedagogy", Makarenko underlined the importance of educational leadership, clear structures, and order in provid-

ing for the welfare of former street children. The individual would be subsumed into the collective and improved through vocational training and work. Corporal punishment was not to be used, but the child collective would be developed through peer fostering, with the older children held accountable to a common children's council for the younger children. Orphanages were to be run as self-governing colonies where the children would work in gardens and do other productive labor. Great emphasis was put on technical skills, character building, and arts education.¹⁷ Makarenko's ideas achieved an important breakthrough in 1927, when he was tasked with building up the "Dzerzhinsky labor commune", named after Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Soviet security service. In 1921, the new Children's Commissariat had assigned Dzerzhinsky to quickly get roofs over the heads of the masses of homeless children. The child collective named after him was linked to the security service and became a great success, in part by contributing labor for camera manufacturing.¹⁸ At that point, Makarenko's ideas were not yet serving as guidance, but the recurrent supply crises of the NEP era and political conflicts within the Communist Party heralded a change.

Lunacharsky was deposed in 1929 and replaced by Andrei Bubnov, who was closer to the new leadership surrounding Stalin.¹⁹ A radical centralization of all Soviet social institutions was carried out with the first Five Year Plan and the collectivization of farming. From the economy and policy to culture and science, Soviet society was homogenized. The same thing happened to family policy and child welfare.

MAKARENKO AND THE STALIN ERA

The number of divorces, broken families, and abandoned children rose while birth rates declined during the revolutionary process of industrialization in the early years of the 1930s.²⁰ By then, the hardships of the NEP era towards the end of the 1920s had also affected the child welfare sector. Many orphanages had decayed, sanitary conditions had deteriorated, mortality and morbidity had risen. While the justification of the Five Year Plans was specifically that they would serve to overcome the difficulties of the 1920s, they also gave rise to a new wave of abandoned children.

They were the children of deported and imprisoned kulaks, farmers who had opposed the forced collectivization. They



A vision of a "childhood's world", as imagined by one of the children.



Music, singing, and dancing are important in education.



The children do well in regional sports and dance competitions.

were the children of victims of the political terror against "Trotskyites" and "enemies of the people", who were purged, imprisoned, or shot. And they were, of course, the children of starvation from the disastrous famine along the Volga in the early 1930s. Another factor was rapid urbanization and the dissolution of family ties, with children placed without supervision in hastily erected industrial cities with no social services and far away from the *babushka*.

THE LIBERAL FAMILY reforms of the 1920s were reevaluated in response to the dissolution observed. Under the laws enacted in the 1930s, parents could be held liable for their children's criminality and more easily lose custody for anti-social behavior and neglect of parental responsibility. At the same time, penal sanctions for serious crimes were lowered, new youth institutions for children convicted of crimes and "hooliganism" were established, and the orphanage system was expanded. Children and adolescents lacking supervision could be taken into custody in the expanding systems of labor camps, youth prisons, orphanages, and vocational boarding schools.

With the organization of the 1930s, the Soviet orphanage system solidified into a structure in which the welfare of very young children and children with serious disabilities was managed by the healthcare sector, while other school-age children were placed in institutions for correction, vocational education, and labor.²¹ The link between the orphanage system and preparation for work and production was underlined when the Makarenko model of fostering and pedagogical development was elevated to the norm. Orphanages would not only provide care and protection, but also be designed as training facilities for responsible workers in the emerging Soviet industrial society.

NEW WAVE OF WAR ORPHANS

Stalin's 1930s brought contradictory lines of development in family policy and child welfare. On the one hand, the experimental ideas of the 1920s about new forms of family life were relegated to the history books. One ideal that was realized to some extent among the 1930s middle class of administrators, technicians, and elite workers was the modern socialist family, but in the context of a strong marriage with a traditional division of labor.²² Unlike the Western housewife, however,

the Soviet woman was supposed to work outside the home and society was supposed to provide the childcare.

On the other hand, millions upon millions of Soviet citizens were living under dire social privation, with absolutely no chance of forming families or keeping them together. And for the large orphanage population, the gap between institutional life and the ideal of the Soviet middle class was insurmountable. The strong collective upbringing and "regimental pedagogy" were hardly designed to prepare anyone for life in a socialist engineer's family. But for a disciplined labor force in heavy production and housing in a crowded *komunalka* or a factory shelter – yes. It was not unusual for former orphanage children to pine for and try to reestablish the well-organized "togetherness" of the orphanage, away from need and danger.²³ Others felt thoroughly prepared for their future lives as production workers and for the living conditions of most people in the Soviet working class. But they were also, in a way, prepared for the privations of the war years. It was entirely accepted that as young adults, the children of the orphanages would be part of the Soviet defense efforts of 1941. From life in the pseudo-military organization of the orphanages to an army unit or work brigade was not an insurmountable step.²⁴

THE RAVAGES OF the war and the devastating loss of life gave rise to yet another orphaned generation. With more than 25 million dead, mass expulsions, and shattered communities, millions of children were once again left without home or family.²⁵ Citizens were primarily encouraged to take in foster children and even, this time, to adopt.²⁶ At the same time, a law was passed requiring companies and collective farms to set up orphanages at their own expense to provide for the displaced children of war. The number of orphaned children took on the epic proportions of the civil war era, as did the shelters in overcrowded facilities with shortages of almost everything. Although many children were able to return to at least one surviving and relocated parent after the war and others were taken in as foster children, the overcrowded children's institutions were in a miserable state with regard to both material resources and personal supervision. After the war, millions of children were consigned to growing up with foster parents or in institutions of various types.²⁷ More than thirty years of war, civil war, repression, and social upheaval had shaped the childhoods of generations of Soviet children

– and made orphanages a feature of society as accepted and expected as schools and workplaces.

THE POSTWAR ERA

The death of Stalin in 1953 and the beginning of the Khrushchev era brought not only the dismantling of mass repression and the gulag system. Comprehensive programs for developing Soviet welfare during the reconstruction of the postwar years were also part of the "thaw", which included educational and recreational initiatives for children and teenagers.

A program to develop the boarding school system to extend to non-deprived children was developed in 1956. All Soviet children would be given the opportunity to attend a boarding school with high standards of education and housing. This would lighten the burden on parents and single mothers living in overcrowded conditions and the pupils would be educated to become knowledgeable and responsible Soviet citizens. At the same time, the existing boarding schools for institutionalized children would be given better conditions and higher status. But only about half of the planned one million children were enrolled at boarding schools by 1960, and the plans for millions more had to be scaled back. The official explanation was lack of interest among parents, but the project was also very costly and primarily attracted children from deprived environments and single parents who were not required to pay fees. Consequently, the boarding schools evolved, in practice, into institutions for the less well-off and not at all into the modern welfare communism the Soviet leadership had hoped for.²⁸

The plans were shelved and many of the boarding schools that had been founded instead became part of the institutional world of orphans and children taken into care by compulsory order. The number of children in Soviet orphanages declined sharply during the Khrushchev years as fewer and fewer children were taken into care while more of them left the institutions.²⁹

During the Brezhnev era that followed, the number of institutional orphanages and the number of registered children continued to decline sharply to fewer than 100,000 in about 800 institutions by 1985.³⁰ Life in the orphanages still followed many of Makarenko's ideas, but in demilitarized form and no longer with any direct ties to industrial production. Farm labor had become tending kitchen garden; quasi-military divi-

sions had become “family groups”. The latter were something of a reflection of the Brezhnev era’s stronger emphasis on the importance of the family, along with policies intended to slow the steadily rising divorce rate.

The intense debates on family policy in this era included demands to expand the childcare system and improve quality (smaller groups of children, a higher staff-to-children ratio) in order to facilitate women’s participation in the workforce and also objections that children were spending far too many hours in daycare and not being prepared for their future roles as responsible mothers and fathers in well-adjusted families. Stagnating birth rates, rising abortion rates, and declining school performance among the children of single parents were other themes of Soviet debates on family policy in the 1970s. These were years in which the number of children in Soviet orphanages continued to fall sharply and the large waves of orphans seen in the first half of the century abated.

Developments in educational theory and living conditions at orphanages for “normal” children under the Ministry of Education seemed to follow general developments in social welfare. (This was in contrast to the considerably harsher conditions in orphanages organized under the Ministry of Health, whose task was to care for children with various degrees of physical and mental disabilities. Conditions at Ministry of Health orphanages are not addressed further in this text.)

CHILDREN AT MINISTRY of Education orphanages were sometimes given priority admission to technical education programs, even as a demilitarized Makarenko model for collective fostering lightened up routines and increased contacts with the local community. Visitors to Soviet orphanages in the 1980s could describe them as environments characterized by dedicated staff and warm relationships to the children.³¹ The Brezhnev era of the 1970s also featured a significant expansion of palaces of culture, sports and recreation programs, summer camps, and other opportunities for leisure and summer vacation activities for children and youth.³²

But there was a grimmer side too. Under the more stringent political and social control of the Brezhnev era, placement in orphanages had evolved into an instrument of social repression and punishment that had not been experienced since the Stalin era. As the equivalent of child welfare boards, the resuscitated system of lay courts (“comrade courts”) was strengthened, and school personnel monitored their pupils’ family situations more strictly, a growing number of parents lost custody of their children. Actually, the trend was that an increasing percentage of children in orphanages were not orphans at all, but had been made “social orphans” through a legal process and placed in institutions.³³ This was not limited to situations of child abuse, alcoholism, or criminality. There were also cases in which dissidents and practitioners of religion had been punished by depriving them of custody of their children.

When glasnost made it possible to criticize the dark sides of Soviet society in 1986, the orphanage system was among the targets that elicited the greatest rage and despair. The extent of compulsory care orders and the grounds upon which they were made, the culling of children with disabilities and their relegation to a periphery of institutions with extremely scanty resources and low quality of care and welfare, former residents of orphanages who as adults bore witness to the lack of close family relationships that made their lives difficult forever after – all of this calls to mind a current Swedish discussion of the children in orphanages and foster care during the postwar era as “society’s stepchildren”.³⁴

An intense effort was begun that included investigations and committees in which social educators, children’s rights



How the orphanage system could be dismantled in favor of foster homes and support for at-risk families is a question debated in Russia.



The first groups of children who came in contact with the

activists, and others agitated for reform of the system. Under a new law enacted in 1987, the institutions were to be refurbished and children in orphanages given greater support in the form of clothing and housing when they left the institutions as young adults. Programs were begun to improve support and advice to at-risk families instead of placing children in orphanages, while the first initiatives were taken toward mobilizing popular charitable efforts through the formation of the “Lenin Children’s Fund”. This was named after the communist aid organization of the 1920s, which had at that time incorporated many “bourgeois” and church-based charity projects.³⁵ In the Soviet Union of the late 1980s, however, as Gorbachev’s brief years were coming to an end, the Lenin Fund would be utterly divorced from any socialist welfare dream in which the state provided for the “only privileged class” of society, as children were called. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the switch from the former planned system to a market economy in the 1990s, the Lenin Fund instead constituted the prelude to the new decades of charity, with a growing network of Russian and foreign charitable organizations, based on humanitarian and often Christian principles, replacing the crumbling Soviet welfare systems. This occurred as a fourth wave of hundreds of thousands of at-risk children swamped the former Soviet institutions in conjunction with the Russian “shock therapy” of the Yeltsin years in the 1990s.

ORPHANAGE NO. 7 in Taganrog was one of the former Soviet orphanages that came into contact with the new charity early on, in the form of summer vacation exchanges with Swedish host families. The reality Swedish visitors encountered in Taganrog and elsewhere, however, was not always of the dreaded kind – a destitute shelter for desperate children abandoned by the world – although such a description was at times apt, especially in reference to homes for the mentally disabled. What they found instead were tangible traces and elements of entirely different plans and ambitions.

The demilitarized Makarenko model for collective fostering was clearly present, and not only at the well-equipped and organized Orphanage No. 7, which often placed highly in regional sports and dance competitions. Order and structure prevailed, and still do: morning routines and bedtimes, meals and schooling, recreational activities and summers at camp

(former Young Pioneer camps) follow a schedule, and this is true not only for the younger children. Teenagers also have set times for studies and chores at the orphanage, as well as curfew and lights-out. Activities are characterized by collectivity and shared responsibility: the groups are responsible for their cleaning areas, kitchen or laundry duties, picking up purchases, and the like. They also compete with each other for the best cleaning and the most beautifully decorated dormitories. The “togetherness” that was the aim of the Soviet orphanage model of the interwar era is still conspicuous, both in their shared lives and organization of their accommodation, meals, sleep, and washing-up, as well as the older children’s day-to-day responsibility for the younger ones. There are no children’s councils or more formalized “chains of command” among the children at Taganrog, as there were in the former Soviet orphanage model, but the strong focus on sports and arts programs for painting, handicrafts, song, and music has a long pedagogical tradition.

As they did under glasnost, current waves of debate are running high in Russia about the future of the orphanage system, with a stated ambition to dismantle the orphanages in favor of foster homes – and support for at-risk families. The arguments against the system are not limited to reactions to neglect or concern for children’s rights and opportunities to grow up in normal family life. There are also notions about orphanage residents as a favored group of spoiled, demanding brats who “just take all the time and never give” and become a burden on society even after leaving the orphanage.³⁶ This type of prejudice is, of course, the polar opposite of the image of the Russian orphanage system as a relic of a Soviet gulag archipelago for children.

For the teenagers at Orphanage No. 7 in Taganrog who are playing Counterstrike on the computer beneath a portrait of Makarenko, on the other hand, reality is about preparing for the step from a protective – but also demanding – community to surviving as young adults in a Russian society that offers few bumper cushions. ❌



charity in the '90s have long since left the orphanage for another world.

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- 2 According to HRW, of a total of 600,000 children classified as being "without parental care", about 200,000 resided in state institutions, while the others were placed in various types of temporary shelters, institutions under police jurisdiction, or simply waiting for space in an orphanage. HRW reports that in the period of 1996-1998, 113,000 children per year had been "abandoned to the state", double the number in 1992, just after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Figures reported on the number of children in Russian orphanages vary in the literature. According to K. Eduards's *Barn i Ryssland* [Children in Russia], published by the Swedish Embassy in Moscow in 2002, about a half million of the 35 million children in Russia were residing in orphanages at the beginning of the 2000s, a number that had risen steeply during the 1990s. According to a UNICEF situation analysis, *Children in the Russian Federation* by Carel de Rooy, November 2004, at the end of 2002 more than two percent of all Russian children, or almost 700,000, were either orphaned or without parental custody. Of this total, about 500,000 were living in institutions. In addition to these figures, UNICEF reported that there was a very large but difficult to assess number of street children not covered by the statistics. Moscow alone had an estimated 33,000 homeless children in 2002.
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- 8 Anne White, "Charity, self-help and politics in Russia, 1985-91", in *Europe-Asia Studies* 1993, vol. 45:5, pp. 787-810. Database: Academic Search Elite.
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- 15 See for example Trotsky's paper from 1925, "To Build Socialism Means to Emancipate Women and Protect Mothers", in Caroline Lund, *Leon Trotsky: Women and the Family*, New York 1970, p. 48.
- 16 On the radical ideas in education, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934*, Cambridge 1979. William W. Brickman and John T. Zepper, *Russian and Soviet Education: A Multilingual Annotated Bibliography*, New York 1992, provide examples of early Soviet educational role models. Concerning problems of order and conduct, see Brickman and Zepper, op. cit., p. 31.
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- 18 See Jan Bergman, *Den ryska och sovjetiska fotoindustrin* [The Russian and Soviet photographic industry], Sundsvall 2006, on the Cheka's camera factory that produced the popular FED camera, or the "Fedka", after Felix Dzerzhinsky.
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- 21 Children with learning difficulties and minor disabilities were also separated and sent to special institutions, but under the control of the Ministry of Education.
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- 25 Harwin, op. cit., pp. 20-23. The Soviet secrecy surrounding information about the number of victims and war orphans does not, according to her, permit more exact figures as to the scope of the new wave of orphans.
- 26 In the Russian Soviet Republic alone, according to Madison, op. cit., p. 45, 200,000 children were adopted during the period of 1941-1945. Massive numbers were taken in by foster parents, often by single mothers with children of their own.
- 27 Madison, op. cit., p. 175, states for 1963, so almost twenty years after the end of the war, the figures of 246,000 children in orphanages for "normal" children, 217,000 at boarding schools for children with mental and physical disabilities, plus about 5,000 with more severe disabilities.
- 28 Kelly, op. cit., pp. 260-263.
- 29 Harwin, op. cit., p. 30, states that the number of children in institutions declined only in the period of 1950 to 1958 from 635,900 to 375,000.
- 30 Here, as well, the figures seem uncertain, but according to Harwin, op. cit., p. 56 f, who relies on various sources, the fastest decline occurred in a ten-year period, from 172,900 children at 1,761 orphanages in 1965 to 108,000 children at 900 orphanages in 1975. Ten years later, this figure had fallen to 88,000 children at 760 orphanages. During the period of 1980-1985, the number of children without parental supervision residing at boarding schools increased from 54,000 to 65,000.
- 31 Harwin, op. cit., p. 58.
- 32 The number of children given access to recreational and vacation establishments in the Soviet Union increased according to Harwin, op. cit., p. 39, by more than 50 percent between 1970 and 1980, from about 12 million to more than 19 million.
- 33 The number of court orders by which parents lost custody of their children increased, according to a study cited by Harwin, op. cit., p. 51, from 6,100 cases in 1969 to 13,400 in 1976. Children removed from their homes under compulsory care orders made up one third of a total of 60,000 children in Russian Soviet Republic orphanages (under the Ministry of Education) in 1970.
- 34 Harwin, op. cit., p. 64. For a contemporary study and retrospective, see Clementine K. Fujimura, Sally W. Stoeker and Tatyana Sudakova, *Russia's Abandoned Children: An Intimate Understanding*, Westport CT. 2005.
- 35 Harwin, op. cit., p. 71; White, op. cit., 1993.
- 36 Child psychologist Yekaterina Tarasova, Moscow, at a seminar arranged by Tretiak's Orphanage Exchange, Stockholm 2010-03-20.

FEAR AND LOATHING IN LITHUANIA

by **Kjetil Duvold & Inga Aalia** illustration **Karin Sunvisson**

On March 11, 2010, one of Lithuania's three national holidays, an annual march of radical nationalists took place in the heart of Vilnius with an official permit from the municipality.

Although rather low-key compared with the infamous march of 2008, when participants chanted openly racist and anti-Semitic slogans, the march nonetheless retained its unmistakable ultra-nationalist feel, and slogans such as "Lithuania for Lithuanians" were hardly more palatable. That did not seem to faze the protagonists, including a parliamentarian from the Homeland Union party who had applied for the municipal permit for the event. Although the march provoked some public discussion questioning the appropriateness of a far-right rally on a national holiday and criticism from some public officials, there was nothing like the uproar over a public event that was to follow two months later.

The Baltic Gay Pride parade was scheduled to take place in the capital on May 8. Shortly before the date, a Vilnius court decided to ban it "for security reasons". Moreover, over 50 parliamentarians – more than a third of all MPs – signed a petition to have the event stopped. The parade eventually took place, but the 400 or so participants were relegated to a fairly peripheral location and physically separated by a heavy police presence from a much larger crowd of angry protesters and curious onlookers.

These two events raise the following vital question: Why does a festival celebrating sexual diversity attract so much more attention and arouse so much more anger than a nationalist demonstration in contemporary Lithuania? Moreover, what does it tell us about democratic values in Lithuania 20 years after the country gained independence and eight years after it joined the European Union?

BACK TO BASICS

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Lithuanian society has undergone profound and sometimes traumatic changes. The economic and political transition from dictatorship and Soviet rule was able to rely on rather specific guidelines that regulated the community of Western European states, which Lithuania sought to emulate, but genuine social change has predictably proved slower and more controversial. Lithuania has been struggling to redefine its national identity and social cohesion, changing from an atheist republic among the Soviet "family of nations", with a rather folkloric concept of nationality, to an independent, democratic and predominantly Catholic nation-state in which the social fabric ideally should reflect a distinct confluence of national and European elements. Throughout the 1990s and up until the mid-2000s,

the Lithuanian political and cultural establishment sought to demonstrate that this mixture was compatible, complementary and even necessary; "Europeanness" was invoked as a core argument for Lithuania's prompt inclusion in the European Union. After accession to the EU in 2004, however, a more cynical attitude to European integration arose. The labels "Lithuanian" and "European" are no longer assumed to be complementary. Many of the country's leading politicians and social personalities are to an increasing extent portraying the "liberal European agenda" as antithetical and even threatening to "traditional Lithuanian values".

Nowhere has this conflict become more visible than in attitudes towards sexual minorities. The notion of equal rights for sexual minorities is politically charged and highly controversial among elites and in society at large. Like several other formerly communist countries, Lithuanian society remains steeped in homophobic sentiment, and the enduring prejudices against homosexuality have recently been exploited by elements of the political class for electoral gain, as they position themselves as "defenders of the nation" against the "morally corrupt West", which is "forcing" the issue of LGBT rights upon traditional, Catholic Lithuania. Or as a group of MPs wrote in a letter to church leaders,

The ideology of homosexuality contradicts the concept of family, the union of man and woman, the natural law established by the Creator, the Constitution which considers family the foundation of the Lithuanian state, and the catechism of the Catholic Church, which emphasizes that homosexual relations contradict the natural law and close the sexual act to the gift of life. The position of the Church also arises from the biblical concept of homosexuality as a grave perversion.¹

A handful of politicians have discovered that hard-line opposition to gay rights is a profitable way to seek publicity and build political capital. Moreover, they have essentially transformed the issue into a rallying point against the European Union.

What has happened since Lithuania joined the EU in 2004? A change is certainly noticeable since the current, socially conservative government, led by the Homeland Union-Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), came to power in 2008. Expressions of naked hostility by leading Lithuanian politicians towards homosexuality and gay rights became a recurrent feature of the domestic political discourse and a source of embarrassment internationally. However, there were several incidents before 2008, highlighting the deep-seated prejudices

against homosexuality among the population. In 2007 and 2008, Vilnius gained notoriety as the only European capital which did not grant permission to park the European Commission's campaign truck "For Diversity – Against Discrimination" in the city center. Kaunas, Lithuania's second city, made a similar decision in 2008. Citing safety arguments, the mayors of Vilnius and Kaunas nonetheless made such statements as, "There will be no advertising for sexual minorities", and "Tolerance has its limits".² In a separate incident, trolleybuses in Vilnius and Kaunas carrying awareness campaign messages by the Lithuanian Gay League with slogans like, "A gay person can serve in the police", and "A lesbian can work in schools", never left the bus park because the drivers refused to take them. Company representatives claimed the buses were parked due to technical malfunctions, but at the same time raised concerns that the buses could be damaged because of the advertisements.³

The full extent of the nearly institutional homophobia in Lithuania became evident when the Baltic Pride festival was about to take place in the capital in May 2010. The event drew an enormous amount of attention, condemnation, and protests, and faced significant obstacles. Initially, the city had granted permission for a parade to take place in an area removed from the city center. However, just days before the scheduled event, the interim prosecutor general of Lithuania chose to address the court in order to stop it. The previously low-profile official cited public safety concerns, despite claims from the police that they were able to ensure the safety of those involved. The court decided to suspend the permit until the claims of the prosecutor had been investigated, which effectively would have put a stop to the parade. President Dalia Grybauskaitė expressed her "surprise" about the lack of communication between the various Lithuanian security agencies, but many in the political establishment simply stated their opposition to the parade. As it turned out, a higher court ruled in favor of the organizers, which allowed it to go ahead.⁴ The "March for Equality" drew around 400 participants, protected by twice as many police officers. Participants and protesters against the march were clearly separated and did not interact with each other. As the event drew to a close, two MPs – Petras Gražulis, author of the legislative amendments to penalize the promotion of homosexual relations, and Kazimieras Uoka, who had applied for the permit for the far-right demonstration of March 11 – tried to breach the security cordon and ended up in a scuffle with the police. After the incident, the prosecutor's office started proceedings to charge the two MPs, a process that would require the Seimas to lift their parliamentary immunity. The parliament refused. However, Uoka was excluded from the



Homeland Union-Christian Democratic party as a result of the incident, and ultimately left their parliamentary group.⁵

Perhaps the most contentious piece of legislation passed by the Seimas in 2009 was an amended Law on the Protection of Minors, which sought to protect children from negative influences by limiting various types of information that might otherwise be available to them, including information that “promotes homosexual, bisexual and polygamous relations”.⁶ After an international outcry and a presidential veto (on grounds of lack of clarity in the criteria applied), the law was returned to the Seimas, where it was eventually amended to declare that information promoting any kind of sexual relations is damaging to minors. The law took effect in March 2010. Even in its amended form, the law protects children from information that “denigrates family values” or “promotes a different concept of marriage and family” than that specified in the Lithuanian Constitution and the Civil Code, which both stipulate “union between a man and a woman”.⁷ The amended law expands an already lengthy list of information it deems detrimental to minors, but remains ambiguous in several respects.⁸ Ironically, while the law puts a ban on discussing homosexuality and other “alternative lifestyles”, it also categorizes manifestations of intolerance, discrimination and mockery, including such acts on grounds of sexual orientation, as detrimental to minors.⁹

Attitudes towards homosexuality and the rise of homophobia must be seen in the context of general attitudes towards the family, gender roles, and the role of the state in regulating family life. Although the inviolability of the private sphere is enshrined in the Lithuanian Constitution¹⁰, the recent public debate and legislative frenzy seem to reflect an urge to determine the boundaries of the private sphere and to define norms of the family deemed acceptable to society at large.¹¹ The Lithuanian Constitution itself provides no clear answer, except that “the family shall be the basis of society and the State”.¹² An attempt to introduce a law on civil partnerships was thrown out in 2004, not least because such partnerships came to be seen as a “threatening” alternative to the traditional family. There was also some fear that the bill could lead to the legalization of same-sex partnerships.¹³ Similar arguments were used when the infamous State Concept of the Family policy was discussed three years later: the family is under threat, it was argued, and single parents are unable to instill moral values and a sense of responsibility in the young.¹⁴ The Concept introduced legal definitions of a “harmonious family”, “incomplete family”, “family in crisis”, and others¹⁵, thus setting out a number of conditions for state support and the active promotion of the “harmonious family” as a basis of society. In 2010, a National Agreement on Creating a Family-Friendly Environment initiated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labor was signed. Again, the goals were family values, securing the material basis of families, and promoting “positive attitudes towards the family”.¹⁶ Although some human rights organizations were concerned it would create new divisions in society, the document was signed by the bulk of the political parties, including the liberals, but with the notable exceptions of the Social Democrats and the Labor Party.¹⁷ Conservative political forces, in an alliance with the Catholic Church and other religious denominations, have been heavily campaigning against a “liberal” bill on artificial insemination.¹⁸

The introduction of the State Concept of Family Policy appears to have backfired. After it had passed Parliament, a group of MPs challenged its constitutionality on grounds of content and legislative procedure.¹⁹ The authors of the Concept intended to equate the terms “family” and “marriage”. Although article 38 of the Constitution states that a marriage

is that between a man and a woman²⁰, the Constitutional Court deemed the Concept unconstitutional because the “constitutional understanding of family cannot be derived solely from the institution of marriage”.²¹ Amidst calls for a referendum over the issue of “traditional marriage”, some even went as far as to call the Constitutional Court a “judicial junta” pursuing “criminal activities”.²² Judging by the reaction of Rimantas Jonas Dagys, the chair of the Social Affairs committee of the Seimas and one of the staunchest conservatives in Lithuanian politics, the conservatives’ main concern is that the Constitutional Court has opened a floodgate leading to gay marriages – or at least the recognition of same-sex partnerships.²³ Although both the Ministry of Justice and independent Constitutional law experts have stated that the decision does not sanction same-sex relationships²⁴, it galvanized the Ministry of Justice to finally put forward a draft amendment to the Civil Code that would allow only heterosexual partnerships.²⁵

Arguably, the fears that the ruling of the Constitutional Court spells the end of traditional marriage in Lithuania are not groundless: the Constitutional Court decision and the ensuing discussions on civil partnership have indeed brought about the conditions for some very tentative steps towards recognition of same-sex unions. In the midst of fierce opposition from her own party²⁶, Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė, the most vocal (and often the only) supporter of gay rights in the Lithuanian parliament, has put forward a proposal for a bill on partnership which includes same-sex partnerships.²⁷ The gay advocacy group Lithuanian Gay League has also stated that the Court’s decision, even if not applicable to same-sex couples, is a positive, albeit small, step towards full recognition of same-sex partnerships.²⁸ Though this may not seem like an exuberant reaction, it should be kept in mind that, in the past, gay activists in Lithuania consciously avoided talking about issues like legal recognition to avoid risking further alienation and animosity towards the gay community. As we shall see, the predominant attitudes among Lithuanians lend solid support to such tactics. Clearly, the road ahead is long and the recent steps are largely symbolic. However, in the political landscape of Lithuania, where the typical approach to the issue of homosexuality is knee-jerk, sensationalist, and borderline hysterical, the Constitutional Court decision marks a significant shift.

ARCH CONSERVATIVE AGENDAS

With a heavy emphasis on “Christian family values”, the political agenda of the ruling party, the Homeland Union-Christian Democrats, appears to be strongly influenced by its junior faction the Christian Democrats. Indeed, their influence can be seen in certain ministries and parliamentary committees. For instance, the Ministry of Social Security and Labor has been promoting a remarkably conservative agenda in regard to family issues under the leadership of Rimantas Jonas Dagys, whose spirit lives on despite his departure from the Ministry. Equally troublesome is the fact that support for the traditional family agenda comes at the expense of support for other important democratic values, including equality of opportunity and gender equality. According to the Human Rights Monitoring Institute, family policy is “being enforced together with the elimination of state institutions responsible for implementation of gender equality”.²⁹ Mr. Dagys, currently the Chairman of the Social Affairs and Labor Committee of the Seimas, has been pushing for stronger regulation of the private sphere, making public statements regarding the number of children women should have³⁰, and calling for

a referendum on the definition of family after the Constitutional Court ruling against the Family Concept³¹.

To be sure, the picture is not entirely uniform: public institutions do differ in their promotion of this agenda – particularly concerning the rights of sexual minorities, but also on family issues and gender roles generally. However, not a single public institution has been promoting the rights of sexual minorities, or of any group whose notion of family might not be that of conservative Catholicism. That task has been left to a handful of NGOs, which usually receive media attention but represent a minority opinion on gender roles, equality of opportunity, and indeed social tolerance.³² Conversely, the Church is more active than ever in pushing an archconservative social agenda, supporting several radical politicians.³³ The Seimas has also been more active since 2008, regularly returning to hearings on legislation to introduce additional restrictions to the rights of sexual minorities. Petras Gražulis, the driving force behind the bulk of the homophobic legislation, has put forward amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences introducing fines for the representation of homosexual relations³⁴, arguing that these amendments are implementations of the Law on the Protection of Minors.

The amendments stated, according to a report by Amnesty International, that “any public expression, portrayal of, or information about homosexuality would be banned”.³⁵ That would include (but not be limited to) campaigning on human rights issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, providing sexual health information to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and organizing events such as gay film festivals and Pride marches.³⁶ The amendments received wide attention and condemnation from international organizations, including the Council of Europe.³⁷ In early 2011, the European Parliament also passed the resolution on “Violation of freedom of expression and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in Lithuania”.³⁸ After these reactions and the unfavorable conclusions reached by the Legal Committee of the Seimas and the Supreme Court, the amendments were returned for further debate.³⁹ A similar solution – expanding the object of legal regulation to avoid accusations of specifically targeting homosexuals – was reached in regard to the Law on the Protection of Minors, which subsequently banned the representation of all kinds of sexual activity rather than only homosexual, bisexual or polygamous relations.

“There is a sense that Lithuania’s motivation to protect human rights has relaxed since the country gained EU membership”, a recent Freedom House report said.⁴⁰ The Vilnius-based Human Rights Monitoring Institute, addressing the rights of sexual minorities, is even more critical, stating that “Lithuania has taken a step backwards in safeguarding the rights of sexual minorities”, and citing increased public intolerance to homosexuals, which they attribute to “discriminative initiatives restricting homosexuals’ rights to freedom of expression and assembly, and hatred-inciting political rhetoric”.⁴¹ Lithuania has acquired a reputation for being a homophobic state, according to the HRMI report.⁴² This conclusion might not be too far-fetched, considering that the failure to ensure the protection of the rights of sexual minorities has not gone unnoticed in the international community.

External pressure remains one of the few tools available for restraining the influence of the most ardent anti-gay advocates and “shaming” from Europe might not have lost its force. The European Parliament has been particularly active in exposing recent developments in Lithuania, and a few of its members have taken part in the Baltic Pride events. A clear majority of the MEP voted in favor of censuring Lithuania for the Law on the Protection of Minors. But apart from the EU Parliament, which is less bound by national sensitivities than

other EU institutions, member states would be reluctant to meddle with issues that are considered to be of a domestic nature.⁴³ Hence if Lithuanian lawmakers define a family exclusively as a “union between man and woman”, Brussels is unlikely to object.

It should be pointed out that the strong legislative push for Christian conservative values has produced a minor backlash of its own. As we have seen, the “Family Concept” was criticized for creating new conditions for discrimination against children born to unmarried parents⁴⁴ and was eventually thrown out by the Constitutional Court. Moreover, a leadership conflict in 2011 exposed an ideological rift within the ruling Homeland Union. In the end, the incumbent leader (and Prime Minister) Andrius Kubilius staved off the challenge from Irena Degutienė, the Speaker of the Seimas and also a spokesperson for the more conservative faction of the party.

Nevertheless, there has been scant domestic opposition to homophobic rhetoric and legislation. Lithuania’s cultural, artistic, social and intellectual elite has been conspicuously silent on the issue.⁴⁵ Strong resistance to alternative lifestyles, including homosexuality, can be found within the educational system.⁴⁶ With no domestic political or social forces willing or able to counteract the efforts to establish homophobic notions in Lithuanian legislation and society, it should perhaps come as no surprise that ordinary citizens remain less than tolerant.

EU ANTI-DISCRIMINATION MEASURES: IMPORTING TOLERANCE?

In 2003, Lithuania passed a Law on Equal Treatment, which was specifically designed to transpose and implement EU anti-discrimination legislation.⁴⁷ It went into effect in 2005 and was the only Lithuanian law to explicitly mention discrimination based on sexual orientation.⁴⁸ But unlike prohibitions of gender discrimination, the law does not provide for compensation of victims.⁴⁹ The law has been criticized on other counts, including its narrow definition of the term “discrimination” and the fact that the very notion of “shifting the burden of proof” does not apply to cases of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

When the law was due to be amended in 2008, members of the Homeland Union, Order and Justice, and Labor parties made an attempt to throw it out simply by refusing to register for vote (a 50 percent turnout in the parliament was required). It was saved by a whisper when the Homeland Union joined the voting, thus ensuring a quorum. Commenting on the bill after the vote, Petras Gražulis of the Order and Justice Party exclaimed, “Lithuania is a perverted state, since it takes care of minorities and not people [. . .] If it was similarly concerned with rural people, a third of them [might] not have left the country [. . .] All values have been turned upside down.”⁵⁰ The bill that was passed included a notable provision allowing non-compliance with the equality principle in the educational and training institutions of religious and ethos-based organizations (the Employment Equality Directive, which the Equal Opportunity Law transposes, permits such an exception). This provision is vaguely formulated and open to interpretation, but the purpose of the exemptions, which were discussed with and approved by church lead-

ers, are clearly tied up with the Law on the Protection of Minors: they are a “self-defense tool for the elimination of ‘non-traditional’ sexual orientation from schools and the education system in general”, according to Gražulis.⁵¹ In fact, the very notion of combating discrimination due to sexual orientation has come under strong pressure, as no constitutional basis for it exists. Article 29 of the Lithuanian Constitution does not explicitly mention sexual orientation, stipulating that “the rights of the human being may not be restricted, nor may he be granted any privileges on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, belief, convictions, or views”. This omission provides a loophole to those who drop sexual orientation from prohibitions of discrimination, since all legislation must conform to the Constitution.

As early as 1999, Lithuania introduced an Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (OEOO), which is in charge of supervising the implementation of the law, advising victims of discrimination, investigating complaints, reporting on discrimination, and providing recommendations. Comparatively few cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation have been brought to the Ombudsperson. According to the Office’s own statistics, they make up around two percent of all cases between 2005 and 2010.⁵² In 2005 and 2006, only two cases per year were brought forward, but the number increased sharply to 18 in 2007 – no doubt due to the high media profile and politicization of the issue.⁵³ A campaign led by Amnesty International added considerably to the statistics, although the cases it raised were deemed outside the competence of the Ombudsperson.⁵⁴ By 2010, however, the number of cases per year was down to three. According to the OEOO, most victims of discrimination do not want a court case, but merely mediation and legal advice.⁵⁵

An underlying problem with the anti-discrimination efforts in Lithuania is of a cultural nature. Many ordinary citizens are either unaware of their rights or unwilling to press a case.⁵⁶ Tellingly, 75 percent of all cases come from residents of the two largest cities.⁵⁷ The concept of discrimination has a long way to go before it reaches the entire population, and the divide between laws and culture remains vast.⁵⁸

Since the economic downturn of 2008, the OEOO has seen its budget slashed by as much as 50 percent.⁵⁹ This has put a heavy strain on the Office’s ability to fulfill its tasks and capacity to manage even the bulk of its caseload. The Office has been accused of neglecting certain types of discrimination, including that against sexual minorities, and for failing to

investigate high-profile cases, such as hate speech by prominent politicians.⁶⁰ Other authorities, on the other hand, have become much more active in pursuing cases of hate speech. Hate speech against homosexuals and other minorities has risen sharply, a fact that can be attributed at least in part to the growing importance of electronic media.⁶¹ In 2010 the Prosecutor’s Office opened 168 investigations of incitement to hatred, and as many as 148 of them involved homophobia.⁶² The courts seem to have taken a more principled position on the matter, and recently several convictions have been publicized, resulting in fines or confiscations of computers.⁶³ But newspapers have also whipped up homophobic sentiment in society: among the media outlets that champion an extreme homophobic position, the *Respublika* media group – also notorious for its anti-Semitic stance – is particularly noteworthy.⁶⁴ *Respublika* has been a leader in fomenting and capitalizing on anti-European and anti-liberal sentiments in the country.⁶⁵ The media group has printed a significant number of articles with strong anti-gay bias, and has even established the Žalgiris National Resistance Movement to “reflect a patriotic, anti-global stance” and promote national culture, national values, and patriotism.⁶⁶

Although the concept of discrimination has shallow roots in a post-communist country like Lithuania, it is clearly beginning to receive wider acceptance, particularly among the younger generations, and will continue to do so if information campaigns and agencies for the active support of minorities are given more clout. But such support does not necessarily affect every form of discrimination. Combating gender discrimination for example is likely to receive greater acceptance than many other forms of anti-discrimination measures. On the whole, the notion of anti-discrimination might not yet correspond with the norms and values in society at large, and may even meet with resistance: a complaint of racial discrimination could face an uphill struggle in a local court due to administrative ignorance or even outright racial prejudice. However, few mainstream political leaders in Lithuania or any other post-communist country would challenge the fight against racism. Discrimination based on sexual orientation, is another kettle of fish and remains strongly contested even at the elite level.⁶⁷ As we have documented, it is considered perfectly acceptable for high-ranking officials to dispute the value of measures against this particular form of discrimination, and even to actively oppose them.⁶⁸ To claim that anti-discrimination legislation exists in order to please the European Union may be inaccurate, but in any case it is difficult to see how it can function properly if society is deeply hostile to certain groups, such as homosexuals.

OLD VALUES DIE HARD

While few issues have managed to stir up quite as much controversy as gay rights activism since Lithuania joined the European Union almost eight years ago, the frenzy evidently did not materialize out of the blue. Even a casual observer of post-Soviet societies will conclude that homosexuality is generally regarded with deep hostility. Under communism, it was an outright taboo, and none of the communist regimes had anything like a liberal approach towards homosexuality. The obsession with egalitarian values offered little space for pluralism and nonconformist ways of life. In the Stalinist and post-Stalinist world, homosexuality represented something akin to “bourgeois decadence” and “capitalist degeneration”.⁶⁹ While several communist regimes did in fact allow homosexual practices, the Soviet Union turned male homosexuality into a criminal offence.⁷⁰ Shortly after the collapse of the Union, former Soviet republics and Soviet satellite states



that had criminalized homosexuality moved towards legalization.⁷¹ But even after twenty years of democracy, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia are the only formerly communist countries to recognize same-sex partnership, and none of them has yet accepted same-sex marriage or adoption by same-sex couples.

Attitudes towards homosexuality diverge dramatically across time and space. Until a few decades ago, homosexuality was illegal in most of Europe and was a major social taboo. While a majority of countries in Europe currently recognize same-sex partnerships, only a handful of them recognize same-sex marriage and allow same-sex adoption. These international legal differences are by and large reflected in the popular attitudes as well. There are geographical variations, differences between predominantly Catholic and predominantly Protestant countries, and between relatively secular countries and more traditional, religious countries. But some of the most glaring differences are found between the long-standing democracies in Western Europe and the younger democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. Of course, the division is not entirely clear-cut: Southern Europe is for instance not uniformly more tolerant than East-Central Europe, and many EU member states in the East resemble some of the older democracies in the West rather than former communist states outside the European Union, such as Russia or Ukraine. Nevertheless, it should not come as a surprise that citizens of long-standing democracies show greater levels of tolerance than those of newer democracies in East-Central Europe. If tolerance is part and parcel of a democratic learning process, it is also true that attitudes towards people of different sexual orientation change only gradually over time.

A cursory inspection of Eurobarometer data reveals that Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, and Romania are outliers among EU members in that they harbor the most negative attitudes towards homosexuals. Large proportions of their populations would not want to have a homosexual person as a neighbor, and only small minorities would be comfortable electing a political leader who is homosexual.⁷² Citizens of northwestern Europe, by contrast, seem to be thoroughly relaxed about the idea of gay neighbors and gay politicians (Table 1).⁷³

Another item from the Eurobarometer survey may provide some clues to this East-West divide. Very few respondents from Central and Eastern Europe admit that they *know* people of homosexual orientation. While well over half of the respondents from northwestern Europe say they have homosexual friends or acquaintances, not more than three percent of the Romanians – and six percent in Lithuania – say the same. It is clear that many of the citizens in these countries are deeply unfamiliar with homosexuality and public expressions of it. But they are not merely unfamiliar with: most of them are of the opinion that homosexuality is “wrong”. According to a 2009 poll in Lithuania, homosexuality is considered to be a “perversion” by 38 percent of the respondents, while a mere 12 percent considered it a “normal state of sexuality”.⁷⁴ In a similar fashion, a 2010 poll reveals that almost 44 percent of the respondents consider homosexuality an “illness”, whereas less than 7 percent would “try to support and understand it” if a relative, friend or colleague were gay (Table 2). In the same poll, 70 percent claim they would not support a gay parade.

There may be good reasons to think that the generation gap is larger in ex-communist Europe than in the rest of the con-



continent. After all, those who finished school in 2011 were not even born when the old regimes vanished. Post-communist societies have gone through social changes that are far more profound and dramatic than virtually anything witnessed in Western democracies. However, recent survey data only gives a slight hint of a generational divide. In a survey from 2008, 26 percent of the Lithuanian respondents admitted that they would not want to work together with a person who is gay. The figure rises to 29 percent among the older respondents and shrinks to 24 percent among the youngest. Among students the figure drops to 18 percent (Table 3).⁷⁵ But on the whole, income, profession, and geography account for larger differences than age. Similar patterns can be found in people’s willingness to “communicate with, work with and live in the same neighborhood as” someone who is gay. In a survey from 2003, the age patterns are somewhat clearer. When asked about discrimination against certain groups, only 6 percent report that they have witnessed discrimination against homosexuals over the last two years. However, the figure rises to 13 percent among the youngest cohort and 16 percent among students. In the same survey, 40 percent thought it was never acceptable for an employer to dismiss an employee based on sexual orientation, while 33 percent thought it sometimes acceptable and 10 percent always acceptable. Among the youngest respondents, 46 percent find it unacceptable; while as few as 27 percent among the oldest respondents hold the same opinion. However, here we can see social status playing an interesting role: respondents with a blue-collar profile and those who are unemployed are not more inclined than specialists to agree that it is wrong to dismiss employees due to characteristics like sexual orientation – even if they tend to be more homophobic in other respects (Table 3).

The current Lithuanian government coalition was to some extent voted into power on a family-oriented platform. Several pro-family and pro-Church associations have been brought into governmental boards and committees (often in preference to gender-oriented NGOs), and the Lithuanian Bishop’s Conference has been consulted and has also given its approval to several policies.⁷⁶ All in all, it seems clear that the Church has strengthened its grip on power and is exercising considerable influence on Lithuanian politics. Interestingly, this is not necessarily a welcome change among ordinary citizens. The vast majority of Lithuanians consider themselves Catholic and tend to have a rather traditional outlook on family-related matters. For instance, less than half of the respondents to the 2010 poll said that a single father or mother with children can be called a “family” (Table 2). Moreover, less than four

percent think that same-sex couples living together can be called a “family”. On the other hand, in the same poll, only one in five respondents claims to be a “practicing Catholic”. Moreover, two-thirds of the respondents reject the notion that the Church should be involved in forming family or sex education policy, while an overwhelming 90 percent think the Church should refrain from campaigning for a political party or movement. On the evidence of these figures, it seems reasonable to conclude that there is little leeway for the current political leadership to widen the scope for a conservative family policy. The question is how strong the opposition to the current policy trend is. So far it has been muted – particularly when it comes to LGBT rights.

DEMOCRACY: THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Values are transmitted from parents to children in every society, and we have witnessed significant value changes across generations in several Western democracies. General tolerance of homosexuality is a recent phenomenon, and has had a real impact only in a small number of Western democracies. But in countries like the Netherlands, Sweden, Great Britain, France, and Spain, the degree of tolerance was much higher in the 1990s than in the 1970s. The Netherlands, which has consistently been one of the most liberal countries in Europe regarding homosexuality, is a good case in point. According to the World Values Survey of 1981, 22 percent of Dutch respondents disapproved strongly of homosexuality, while 40 percent somewhat disapproved. Among the upper age brackets, more than half of the respondents completely disapproved of it. By 1999, only 7 percent of the Dutch were strongly against it, while some 22 were somewhat negative.⁷⁷ The changing attitudes towards homosexuality signified wider societal changes in favor of post-materialist values. In other words, tolerance of homosexuality was accompanied by greater acceptance of diversity in general, environmental awareness, different perceptions on democracy and participation, and more individualism. Again, the difference between the youngest and oldest cohorts was palpable.

Not all societies change along similar lines and it is not certain that post-communist democracies will follow a similar course. Lithuania and other countries might resist the path towards greater tolerance of sexual minorities.⁷⁸ As an EU-member, Lithuania has to a large extent set up institutional mechanisms to combat homophobia. It has implemented anti-discrimination laws that are roughly in line with EU norms. At the same time, the country does not allow same-sex marriage, fails to recognize same-sex partnership (or indeed any form of civil partnership), and does not allow homosexual couples to adopt children. A still greater problem is that the political and cultural climate remains deeply hostile towards homosexuality and towards recognizing the rights of individuals of a minority sexual orientation.

The crucial change in Western democracies came when institutions and laws had been changed in favor of greater LGBT rights, such as same-sex partnership or even marriage. Before the 1990s, same-sex partnership seemed virtually unthinkable. But profound changes in the legal status of homosexuals had an effect on norms and values. They ultimately helped to eradicate institutionalized discrimination and, arguably, moved homophobia to the fringes of society. Legal and institutional changes could only be implemented when society had at least *started* to accept homosexuality. EU members in Central and Eastern Europe, however, were confronted with massive pressure to adopt liberal gay legislation long before society appeared to be ready for it. In countries like Lithu-

ania, this seems to have generated a backlash: while it might not seem wholly surprising that equality for homosexuality would meet resistance from leaders and ordinary citizens in a country that until recently banned it, it is worth noting that the protests escalated after the country's entry into the EU.

Unfortunately, EU membership alone cannot foster a democratic political culture, neither among elites nor among citizens. One of the main reasons why EU membership did not become a major issue before accession was because it was seen as a very broad question of national orientation – part of the whole transition from Soviet communism, as it were. EU membership was presented as a bulwark against creeping Russian influence: Lithuania must “go west” or return to Russia's fold. To some extent, this might explain why even the most nationally minded politicians in Lithuania embraced the European Union instead of considering it a threat to national self-determination. When the fundamental issue of “West versus East” had diminished and the country had secured both EU and NATO membership, perceptions on Europe became more open and, to some extent, more hostile. Many Lithuanians are likely to have a rather utilitarian attitude to the European Union: they support it because they think their country – or themselves – will benefit from it.⁷⁹ If membership fails to deliver tangible goods, many ordinary citizens will in all likelihood withdraw their support. When – or if – that turns out to be the case, key oppositional leaders might conclude that anti-EU sentiments among the voters can be readily exploited for party political purposes. Given the potential for a political spillover of the current economic crisis within the European Union, such a scenario is becoming increasingly likely.

For those who had hoped membership would have a profound impact in molding a more tolerant society, the current development might seem disappointing. However, it is quite conceivable that the backlash eventually will lead to a more nuanced debate about the place of tolerance and openness in Lithuanian society. Similar developments have taken place elsewhere.

Democracy is a learning process and the length of democratic experience is an essential factor in the degree of political tolerance in society. The late Ralf Dahrendorf eloquently suggested that it might take a mere six months to introduce democratic political institutions and six years to fundamentally transform a command economy into a market economy; but it will take more like 60 years to forge a pluralistic society.⁸⁰ Pluralism and acceptance of difference are prerequisites for a democratic political culture.⁸¹ Most citizens of even the most rudimentary democracy will accept the very basic notion behind bargaining and compromise (although not in certain contexts, such as societies shattered by ethnic or religious conflict). But small, humdrum conflicts over policymaking do not say much about the extent of pluralism. It is on more challenging and morally ambiguous questions, such as gender and race equality, ethnic minorities, beliefs, and sexual orientation, that people have to decide where they stand and to what extent they are willing to tolerate different perceptions. This can only be learned through experience. This is exactly what Lithuania, torn between nation-building, democratization, and EU integration, is going through. ❌

Table 1. Attitudes towards homosexuals in the European Union (%).

1. Would be comfortable having a homosexual neighbor
2. Would be comfortable having a homosexual political leader
3. Have homosexual friends or acquaintances

	1.	2.	3.
Sweden	9.5	9.1	56
Denmark	9.3	9.0	55
Netherlands	9.3	8.8	69
Luxembourg	9.2	8.2	45
France	8.9	8.2	55
Belgium	8.8	8.3	52
United Kingdom	8.7	7.7	55
Ireland	8.6	7.8	32
Spain	8.6	8.2	42
Malta	8.4	7.0	34
Germany	8.3	7.2	30
EU average	7.9	7.0	34
Slovenia	7.5	6.1	17
Finland	7.4	6.5	32
Poland	7.4	6.4	9
Greece	7.2	5.5	17
Cyprus	7.2	3.7	17
Estonia	7.2	5.7	13
Austria	7.1	6.0	22
Italy	6.7	5.7	29
Portugal	6.6	6.0	20
Czech Republic	6.6	5.6	15
Slovakia	6.5	5.3	11
Hungary	6.2	5.2	6
Lithuania	6.1	4.4	6
Latvia	5.5	4.1	10
Bulgaria	5.3	3.7	7
Romania	4.8	3.9	3

Note: The figures in column 1 and 2 indicate the mean values of responses on a 10-point scale, where 1 means the respondent would be “very uncomfortable” and 10 means “totally comfortable” having a homosexual person as a neighbor or having a homosexual in the highest elected political position. The figures in column 3 indicate the percentage of respondents who said they have friends or acquaintances who are homosexual. Source: Eurobarometer Special Survey 296, “Discrimination in the European Union: Perceptions, Experiences and Attitudes”, 2008.

Table 2. Attitudes towards homosexuality and religion in Lithuania (%).

Would you support a homosexual pride march?

Yes	16.4
No	70.3
Don't know/no answer	13.3

What would you do if you found out that your close relative, friend, or colleague is homosexual?

Try to give support and understand	6.5
Would not pay attention to it	42.6
Would stop the relationship	12.5
Difficult to imagine	28.1
I already communicate with homosexuals	7.6
Don't know/No answer	2.7

Do you think homosexuality is an illness?

Certainly	13.0
More yes than no	30.5
More no than yes	26.3
No	20.6
Don't know/No answer	9.6

What is a family?

Married man and woman with children	99.2
Married man and woman without children	65.4
Single mother with children	48.1
Single father with children	43.0
Man and woman living together	34
Single person	8.1
Same sex couple living together	3.9

Are you religious?

Yes, practicing Catholic	18.9
Non-practicing Catholic	60.2
Orthodox	4.2
Protestant	3.6
Yes, another faith	2.1
No	8.1
Don't know/No answer	2.9

Should priests campaign for political movements?

Yes	3.5
No	89.8
Don't know/No answer	6.7

Should the Church participate in forming family policy on the state level?

Yes	22.8
No	64.6
Don't know/No answer	12.6

Should the Church participate in forming sexual education policy on the state level?

Yes	19.7
No	66.5
Don't know/No answer	13.8

Note: Items 1–3 are taken from a Sprinter poll from 2010 (<http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menutop/9/home/publish/MTYzOzk7OzA=>); item 4 from a Sprinter poll from 2010 (<http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menutop/9/home/publish/MjA5Ozk7OzA=>); and items 5–8 from a Sprinter poll from 2011 (<http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menutop/9/home/publish/MTYzOzk7OzA=>).

Table 3. Attitudes towards homosexuals in Lithuania by social categories (%).

1. Could not work with a homosexual person
2. Could interact with a homosexual person in the neighborhood
3. Refusing to hire a person due to different sexual orientations never justified
4. Homosexual persons cause problems in Lithuanian society

	1.	2.	3.	4.
Sex				
Male	30	26	38	34
Female	23	33	42	30
Age				
Under 30	24	37	46	28
30—39	24	30	42	25
40—49	24	40	47	23
50—59	29	30	43	35
60—69	28	20	37	35
70 or over	29	18	27	46
Education				
Low	30	19	28	42
Medium	29	28	44	29
High	15	47	47	22
Status/profession				
Unemployed	41	23	43	32
Parenting	40	29	42	26
Pensioner	28	19	33	39
Student	18	43	52	27
Specialist	13	47	48	25
Service	22	31	53	25
Worker	28	32	37	31
Income				
Lowest	40	20	41	26
Second	33	23	36	34
Third	28	25	42	36
Fourth	25	30	44	23
Highest	18	44	*	*
Geography				
Vilnius	13	43	46	27
Other cities	26	29	39	37
Towns	21	32	42	27
Villages	38	23	38	32
Total	26	30	41	31

Note: Columns 1 and 2 are taken from the survey Tolerancija 2008; columns 3 and 4 from the survey Lietuvos Tolerancijos Profiliai, 2003. Both surveys were conducted by the Vilnius Public Opinion and Market Research Institute.

* Income in the 2003 survey is broken into three categories.

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- 71 The Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are exceptions to this pattern. Moreover, some countries, such as Romania, did not decriminalize homosexuality until several years after the end of communist rule.
- 72 In regard to gay office-holders, we find Cyprus at the bottom of the table. It should be kept in mind, however, that Cyprus is divided into distinct Greek and Turkish components. In the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, same-sex practice is illegal and punished by jail terms of up to five years. Hence, it would hardly be surprising if many Turkish-speaking respondents express hostility towards homosexuality.
- 73 There is of course a slight possibility that northwestern Europeans are more careful about speaking their minds when they answer such questions. In 2011, Western Europeans were certainly more accustomed to the notion of politically correct attitudes towards race, gender, and gender orientation than post-communist citizens. In other words, while it has become inappropriate to express hostility towards certain minorities in long-established, Western European democracies, open hostility towards homosexuals for example appears to be perfectly acceptable in countries that happened to belong to the communist world before 1989.
- 74 The poll was carried out by Spinter Polls. Reprinted in www.delfi.lt, 2009-06-26.
- 75 Curiously, 41 percent of the unemployed respondents said they could not work with a homosexual person.
- 76 Virginija Aleksejūnė and Margarita Jankauskaitė (Center for Equality Advancement), interview with the author, Vilnius, 2011-04-14; and Leonidas Donskis (MEP), interview with the author, Vilnius, 2011-14-15.
- 77 Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy*, New York 2005.
- 78 One variable that makes attitude change in Lithuania harder to predict is emigration. http://www.iom.lt/documents/Migration_profile_EN.pdf, accessed 2011-11-14.
- 79 Kjetil Duvold, *Making Sense of Baltic Democracy: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania between the Soviet Union and the European Union*, Colne 2010.
- 80 Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: In a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Warsaw*, New York 1990.
- 81 Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton 1963.



Reinterpreting a Bulgarian past. The dialectics of dictates and dictatorships

Roumen Daskalov
Debating the Past
Modern Bulgarian History –
from Stambolov to Zhivkov

Budapest: Central European
University Press 2011
367 pages
Original Bulgarian edition 2009

At the peak of his country's recent crisis, a Greek minister admonished his people to accept some drastic austerity measures. Or else, he explained, the Greeks would be reduced to living like the Bulgarians. I have no idea whether this really hit home with the Greeks, but the Bulgarians were outraged. In a way it all boils down to how much anyone knew about Bulgaria other than what comes across through international comparisons, where that country often appears at the bad end of the ratings: the lowest per capita incomes, the lowest level of life satisfaction, the largest percentage dreaming of emigration, and so on, in a never-ending mood of despair. Even the EU is skeptical and is keeping new member Bulgaria's entry to the Schengen zone on ice because of well-grounded suspicions of high-level corruption combined with a politically manipulated legal system.

It is sometimes said that happy countries have no history. If that saying is true, then Bulgaria should be heavy with the weight of history books. Only the period from 1878 to 1912 can be considered a success. About the only bright point in modern Bulgarian history is the government's refusal to cooperate with its German allies in murdering the Jewish population during World War II. The king, the bishops, the parliamentarians, and local people combined in 1943 to stop on-going plans to deport the nearly 50,000 Bulgarian Jews to Auschwitz. Repeatedly, King Boris refused Hitler's demands that Bulgarian soldiers be sent to the Eastern Front. There has been controversy about these events. Until 1989, Bulgaria was part of the Soviet sphere, and historians were bound to the unique prejudices of the Stalinist school of class and party history. According to this school, members of the middle and upper classes and their political parties could do nothing morally good as they were assumed to be bearers of fascism. Thus the socialist historians attributed the saving of the Jews either to the efforts of the Communist Party and its leading functionaries (which is obviously false), or saw it as a moral rising of the entire Bulgarian people that forced the elite to act (which is not true either). An entire nation populated with Raoul Wallenbergs? Not very likely. Only after the fall of communism in 1989 did the story of the role of the "monarcho-fascist" elite, and in particular the heroic part in hindering the destruction of the Jews played by the deputy speaker of parliament, Peshev, get told. But even this single glorious moment is badly tarnished by the Bulgarian government's deportation of Jews from the areas of Greece and Macedonia that the Germans allowed them to occupy.

Many of these sorts of historiographical conflicts are revealed in Roumen Daskalov's studies. Daskalov is professor of history at the New Bulgarian University in Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, and is also attached to the Central European University in Budapest. The book is based on a series of seminars he held at the Center of Advanced Studies in Sofia. It is divided into four thematic studies of history writing. The first deals with Bulgaria's leading nineteenth century statesman, Stefan Stambolov, who ruled with an iron fist in the 1880s and '90s. The second takes up the reign of Agrarian National Union leader Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski (1919–1923), with his worldview that seems like a radical, but less bloody-minded, precursor to the Khmer Rouge. The third study covers the debate on whether or not all of the Bulgarian governments from the 1920s up to the communist takeover in 1944 can be categorized as fascist. The final study looks at interpretations of the origins and character of the "people's democracy" and socialism. Each of the studies is meticulously researched and covers not only professional historians, but also the works of amateur historians, journalists, and novelists. Throughout, Bulgarian historians emerge as an ethnocentric and relatively isolated guild satisfied by the honor and status given them by the regimes whose policies they served.

Daskalov's main point concerns the degree of intellectual friction that arose when the Stalinist class-against-class view of history came to confront the homegrown blood-and-territory nationalism of Bulgarian historians. This conflict became increasingly visible in the late 1960s and '70s as nationalist rhetoric was allowed to permeate most levels of Bulgarian politics. The idea behind the official sanctioning of nationalism was a perceived need to graft communist ideology into a nationalist narrative. It was hoped that this would reinforce patriotic consciousness. During the time that dictator Zhivkov's daughter was minister of culture, the leading historians gained privileged public status.

FROM ITS BIRTH as a modern state Bulgaria has lived under the shadow of either Tsarist Russia or the Soviet Union, both of which posed as the "liberator", first from the Ottoman Turks, and then from fascism. Thus nationalistic history writing – which seems endemic among Bulgarians – bumped up against the political need to keep in lockstep with Russia. In Daskalov's view, the communist era politicized historians in order to serve the rulers. But at the same time, the nationalists succeeded in "liberalizing" history and making it capable of subverting "official tenets and meanings, not least due to the power of language to displace meanings and shift perspectives". Most of these shifts turn out to be subtle semantic adjustments hidden within complex historical arguments. Daskalov, on the one hand, does us a great service in teasing out these subtle changes from the density of publications, conferences and debates, some of which are obscure to say the least. On the other hand, because nationalism was officially encouraged, he risks exaggerating the degree to which any but a few writers of history were subversive in any normal meaning of the word.

Bulgaria today cultivates a special form of amnesia. Recent history is not taught at school and there is no museum treating communist misrule. Unlike many other post-communist states, there has been no historical commission to deal with the crimes committed during World War II and during the Soviet era. One reason for this neglect is that much of the brutal-

ity of Bulgarian history is homegrown. There was no Nazi military occupation, and the communists built their own horrible Gulag on islands in the Danube River. Nor is there any research institution studying this period. In most Eastern European countries, domestic anti-communism, dissidence and revolt against Soviet oppression fits organically into a new historical narrative. Not so in Bulgaria, and there is considerable continuity after what is known simply as the "Event of November 10, 1989". The following year, the government removed Bulgarian communist icon Georgi Dimitrov's preserved body from its mausoleum in downtown Sofia. Then it tried three times to dynamite the structure – but, symbolically, with little success. One can try to ignore it, but some of the rubble of the communist past is still to be seen.

BULGARIA BECAME a modern state after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. Although there was a native Bulgarian independence movement, it was very weak, and without the Russian and Romanian armies, the country would not have come into being, at least not just then. From the start Russian interference was clumsy, and Russia manipulated the nomination (and dethronement) of the princes; sometimes it placed its own generals in cabinet minister positions, instigated and financed coups, supported assassinations, sent warships at moments of political crisis, and so on. As the leading Bulgarian statesman, Stambolov needed to shield the integrity of his country from the pressure of Russia, resulting in a strong-arm nationalistic policy that was basically Russophobic, and his opponents became known as the Russophiles. The nationalists had several aims that were against Russia's interests. The most important was the will to expand territorially from the small state area that was created at the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 to cover all areas where Bulgarians lived, or were believed to live, or had a historic presence. The "Nationalist Question" meant an ambition to annex regions still held by the Ottomans – the so-called Eastern Rumelia that lay south of the Balkan Mountains, Thrace, and Macedonia (the "Macedonian Question" is still alive). The aims included the acquisition of parts of southeastern Serbia, and, if possible, getting hold of harbors on the Aegean and Adriatic coasts. All this collided with Russia, which, playing its traditional cat-and-mouse foreign policy, decided that for the time being it had to be on good terms with the Turkish Sultan and even better terms with the Serbs.

Russia reacted very negatively when Bulgaria single-handedly marched in and annexed Eastern Rumelia in 1885, forming a



Illustration: Katrin Stenmark

territory with borders that are almost exactly those of today. This did not please the Tsar. A Russian-backed revolt by Bulgarian military officers brought on the forced abdication of Prince Alexander and his replacement with Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. In return, Bulgaria broke off diplomatic relations with Russia, but the Russians continued to instigate plots, conspiracies, political assassinations, and riots. Stambolov responded with violent repression against his Russophile opponents. He was assassinated in 1895, and only after his death could diplomatic relations with Russia resume.

For traditional historians, Stambolov has been a true hero and his defense of Bulgarian independence against Russian “enslavement” was glorified for a long time. It could have been reasonable for Marxist historians to play down the conflict between Russophiles and Russophobes. These events did take place under reactionary Tsarist regimes with which the Bolshevik revolution claimed to make a clean sweep. However, with Stalin in power there was a desperate need to ignore the suffocating impact of Russia’s interference in the past, as the parallels to the Soviet Union’s own bullying would be all too obvious, and questioning Russia was unthinkable. Thus, the communist-era historians censored themselves and made a point of being anti-Stambolov and pro-Russian. Stambolov’s regime was criticized as a violent dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, using national independence to hide its real character as a puppet for foreign capitalists. An exception was Nikolai Genchev’s 1976 book on Bulgarian-Russian cultural exchanges, which exposed their negative impact, though the book was immediately withdrawn from circulation and destroyed. It had spoken

about the debilitating effects of population exchanges with Russia, and the use of universities to spread propaganda among Bulgarian students. It also pointed out the fact that even Russia, not just Britain and Germany, had almost from the start agreed to put an end to all hope for a Greater Bulgaria. A few other books that showed Russia in a negative light disappeared from the bookshops and were placed in “special collections” in libraries.

BY THE 1970S, the solidly negative view of Stambolov’s stance had begun to change. Historians switched towards diplomatic history and focused on why the dream of uniting all of the territory inhabited by Bulgarians failed. This line of inquiry meant not just the need to explain or rationalize away why Russia opposed the union with Eastern Rumelia in 1885, but also opened a whole Pandora’s box by clarifying how Bulgaria’s and Russia’s interests clashed. A shift to vindicating Stambolov as a statesman occurred with a little-known historians’ conference in 1984 entitled “Stambolov – Revolutionary and Man of Letters” (the presentations were published after a long delay in 1987) and the re-release of Simeon Radev’s hyper-patriotic *Builders of Contemporary Bulgaria* (originally published in 1911), which sold more than one hundred thousand copies in 1990. Stambolov was particularly venerated for his courage in standing up for Bulgarian independence against Russian Tsar Alexander III, a point that even the Bulgarian communist leader Todor Zhivkov was said to have appreciated.

During the communist era, agrarian leader Stamboliiski was never as completely demonized as Stambolov. There was considerable overlap between his style of rule and that of the communists. The Bulgarian National Agrarian Union was a mass political party backed up by an ideology that attacked urban capitalism, as well as city life in general. It even spoke of creating a “dictatorship of the peasantry”. A personality cult grew up around Stamboliiski and the party had its own paramilitary thugs, the Orange Guard, for harassing political opponents. Because the Bulgarian population was made up overwhelmingly of farmers, it was possible for historians to see the Agrarian Union era as both a unique Bulgarian adaptation to its peasant society and as a necessary step in the

universal transition to the “dictatorship of the proletariat”.

The problem was that the polity created by the Agrarian Union was an utter catastrophe. After 1989 historians could point to many flaws. The administration by party hacks, recruited from the party cells, was often incompetent and ruled with brutality. Agrarian activists armed with clubs could invade towns, breaking up shops and bullying the inhabitants. The party ideology created a sharp conflict between town and countryside. Extreme nationalists take Stamboliiski to task for his pacifistic foreign policy. He abandoned Bulgaria’s irredentist claims and relied on the League of Nations to protect the rights of Bulgarian minorities elsewhere. Crucially, he ignored the “Macedonian Question” in order to be on friendly terms with Yugoslavia, and this led to attacks by Europe’s first large-scale terrorist band, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, and ultimately to his assassination.

STAMBOLIISKI SUMMED up the situation:

“Our rule is not a rule, but a war, a true internal and external war: a war against railway workers, a war against brigands in the forests, a war against brigands in the towns, a war against teachers, a war against parties, a war against the Military League, a war against hatred and mistrust outside us, a war against bureaucracy, a war against the Holy Synod. Tell me with whom in Bulgaria we have not quarreled yet, tell me against whom we have not started a war, that we may start it all the sooner.” In the end, the Agrarian Union regime had antagonized too many powerful political forces and was overturned by a military coup in 1923. Stamboliiski was shot and his supporters were brutally suppressed.

Continued. Reinterpreting a Bulgarian past

The most astonishing feats of semantic athletics occur when Bulgarian historians write about “September Ninth”, the day of the communist takeover in 1944, mythologized as a founding day. In this matter, historians had to follow the lead of the politicians, and the politicians changed their position several times. Some of the background: Bulgaria was a somewhat unreliable ally of Nazi Germany and had occupied parts of Greece and Macedonia. On September 5, 1944, the Red Army marched in, and on the Ninth, after a pro-communist officers’ coup, authority passed into the hands of the “Fatherland Front”, controlled by the Bulgarian Communist Party, but with representatives of some of the other political parties. The historiographical question concerns how to categorize this event.

From the start the leader of the new regime was Georgi Dimitrov, a famed communist veteran who was the star of the Reichstag Fire trial in 1933 and had been the secretary-general of the Comintern until its dissolution in 1943. He rejected the first official description of events as an “anti-fascist revolution”. Instead he proposed the formulas that it had been an “armed popular uprising” or an “all-people’s uprising”. It was vital to avoid the term “revolution” as that would signify a violent class revolution; instead, it was important to show that Bulgarian partisans and Soviet troops uneventfully paraded in to the “jubilation” of the “liberated” citizens. Dimitrov also proposed the term “people’s democracy” – a term he coined when he headed the Comintern – to designate a popular front coalition of several anti-fascist political parties including part of the bourgeoisie. This he used to designate the new Bulgarian “Fatherland Front” government, which even tolerated some political opposition. Scarred by memories of the Stalinist terror, Dimitrov was adamant that he wanted to avoid the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and preserve a façade of parliamentary pluralism. This was seen as a transitional stage towards a Soviet model.

By the 1950s, however, the term “revolution” had been rehabilitated to designate a two-stage process: first a people’s-democratic revolution (1944–1948), then the “socialist” revolution into which it morphed. At the fifth congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Stalin forced Dimitrov to give in and accept the point of proletarian dictatorship, which of course meant undivided control by the Communists. Because of its revelation of such awkward facts, the regime deemed Dimitrov’s diary too dangerous to publish during the communist era. It was published in an edited form in 1997.¹ Even before 1989,

the reputation of Dimitrov among historians had been treated with considerable sympathy, representing what Daskalov sees as a “vague dream of a different and more humane face of socialism, of a better course of development aborted under pressure from Stalin”. Whether or not the revisionist Bulgarian historians can succeed in rescuing Dimitrov’s reputation from remaining that of a Stalin henchman remains to be seen.

AFTER THE DEATH of Dimitrov, the communist leadership continued to create new interpretations of history. The new secretary-general Todor Zhivkov declared at the seventh congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1958 that it had been a “socialist revolution” from very start and was a replica of the Bolshevik revolution in its basic features. Zhivkov repeated his stance in 1974: “Achieved with the decisive assistance of the Soviet army, the September Ninth Revolution was from its very beginning a socialist revolution, a repetition of the Great October in its basic and main features. Of course, the September Ninth Revolution also solved general democratic and anti-fascist challenges. This was its peculiarity as a socialist revolution.”

That settled the categorization once and for all, but what were historians to do with the facts? Some had to be ignored or minimized, such as the pro-communist coup of a handful of army officers on the eve of September Ninth. A conspiracy would cast doubt on the claim that it was a popular uprising and a heroic revolution. A very sensitive issue was the role of the Red Army. Should it be seen as the “liberator” of the Bulgarians and thus get the star role and be the decisive factor? This was the position of Stalin and his historians, who claimed that power had passed immediately to the working class, “not by an internal uprising but by help from outside, from the Soviet troops, thus easily, without much effort”. But from what were they liberated, since there was no German occupation? The Bulgarian leaders needed to reduce the Russian impact (well, only slightly) to a helping-hand role in order to build up the case for victorious internal revolutionary forces fighting against domestic fascism. Dimitrov proposed a compromise, that it was a “combination of the popular rising of September 9, 1944, with the victorious march of the Soviet army in the Balkans”.

THE BULGARIAN HISTORIANS were struggling with many difficult issues. Some supported the Stalinist version while others took Dimitrov’s line. The official *History of the Anti-Fascist Struggle in Bulgaria* (1982) balances the impact of the Red Army with an emphasis on internal aspects. By advancing “slowly”, the Soviet troops gave time for the internal forces to become “prominent” and allowed the ripening of a “revolutionary situation” (Lenin’s term) and the fall of the regime. The help from the Soviet Union could not be considered “export of revolution” and should not be seen as Soviet interference with the development of Bulgarian society. Further, the need to show that a revolutionary situation had ripened meant that historians needed to examine what was going on during World War II and lift up some sort of anti-fascist and anti-capitalist resistance. But in the absence of Nazi troops it was hard to argue for a massive partisan movement, so that the historians’ search for heroes was pushed back into the interwar period to take the failed 1923 uprising as evidence of longstanding anti-fascism. In the 1960s, historians returned to the people’s democracy period to re-interpret the role of

the non-communist politicians in a polarized form. Those who were allied with the communists were dubbed “healthy” forces on the side of the good, while those opposed to communism were judged “rightist” reactionary archenemies on the side of all that was bad for the country. The first years of the people’s democracy were narrated as “the defeat of the bourgeois opposition”. The harsh repression of these politicians and activists (estimated to be 11,000) by the so-called People’s Courts was described as a just retribution meted out to morally evil elements.

The head of the Bulgarian Institute of History in 1991 declared that the former regime had considered “history as politics turned to the past”. Daskalov is a historiographer and writes about those who write history. Such books are very hard to review as, particularly in Bulgaria, there is hardly a turning point or a prominent personality that has not been interpreted, reinterpreted, revised, and/or condemned to temporary silence. And that several times over. It is a never-ending story very much dependent on political structures. The readers of Daskalov’s book cannot help being struck by the similarities between the aims and methods of communist and traditional nationalist historians. Both types share the same attitude towards history – that there is a single Truth to be discovered by sifting through documents. Both types are willing to subordinate their use of sources to a one-sided interpretation that serves a political purpose. It proved possible for both groups to co-exist in the late communist period. Perhaps this is an explanation of the remarkable continuity of Bulgarian historical writing after the “Change” of 1989. Many historians who attained positions during the previous regime could continue business as usual. ✘

david gaunt

reference

- 1 *Georgi Dimitrov, Dnevnik, 9 mart 1933 – 6 fevruari 1949*, edited by D. Sirkov, P. Boev, N. Avreiski & E. Kabakchieva, Sofia 1997.

Estonia deserves attention. The missing civil society

Estonia is the sole focus of this thematic issue of the *Journal of Baltic Studies* (2009). “From Post-Communism to the EU: Estonia’s Transition 20 Years On” discusses the country’s development after the new independence in 1991 from a perspective that reflects the contributors’ varied interests and fields of research. A younger generation of Estonian sociologists and media researchers emerge under the editorship of the grande dame of journalism studies at Tartu University, Marju Lauristin (herself a prominent force in the People’s Party Moderates, in the Laar government of 1992–1995, and as a member of parliament), and Peeter Vihalemm.

Several of the articles are devoted to the problem of ethnic minorities and social relations between Russians and Estonians in the wake of the noted crisis surrounding the relocation of the “Bronze Soldier” in April 2007, when riots broke out in Tallinn for the first time since independence. The event shook things up and tarnished Estonia’s image as a place of peaceful coexistence among the different ethnic groups. In three articles, Külli Korts, Martin Ehala, and Triin Vihalemm and Veronika Kalmus approach the minority problem and relations between Estonians and Russians after the Bronze Soldier riots. While the late 1990s and early 2000s signaled something of a honeymoon of integration, as Ehala writes, and the time around the accession to the EU saw both Estonians and Russophones integrating into Europe, the government’s removal of the Soviet war memorial from central Tallinn brought a change in the wrong direction (this issue of the journal came out in early 2009, so whether the findings have proved valid is uncertain). Disappointment ensued, especially among the younger generation, and the relocation had strong symbolic power as one aspect of an ongoing conflict over historiography.

THE ARTICLE BY Korts, one of the highlights of the issue, examines the “contact hypothesis” common in integration contexts, which is that tolerance and understanding increase with the frequency of contacts with people of other ethnic groups. Some support for this is found in Estonia, but the study – based on survey data – shows that relations are asymmetrical. Ethnic Russians have more positive attitudes toward Estonians than the reverse, while Estonia – as it was in the early 1990s – remains a conspicuously segregated society; Russians and Estonians rarely socialize and thus interact most often in the public arena. More Russians are learning Estonian, which the Estonians consider one of the key symbolic elements of willingness to integrate, but

for the Russians the language is mostly of instrumental importance. The language is a necessary tool for succeeding in Estonian society and decisions to send children to Estonian-speaking schools are thus an expression of rational behavior rather than an emotionally charged expression of a sense of belonging. Nor does the language act as a unifying link leading to greater personal interaction, as Laitin argued (1998).

THE SPECIAL ISSUE opens with a broad overview of the political agenda over the last 25 years, co-written by the editors, with a focus on the interaction between internal and external influences. One central conclusion is that domestic factors are tending to play an increasing role in pace with achievements of the highly prioritized integration in NATO and the EU. Estonia has made a remarkable journey, even in comparison with the countries in Central Europe and the success story of Slovenia. In the space of a little more than 20 years since independence and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country has established a stable, multi-party democracy with free and fair elections. The parliamentary election in 2011 reaffirmed trust in the coalition government that guided Estonia during the economic crisis, an indication of political maturity among the electorate. Owing to both its Soviet status as an economically experimental republic and broad consensus among nationalists and former communists on economic matters, Estonia was remarkably swift to abandon the planned economy in favor of a still extremely liberal economy. The Ansip government independently steered the country through the severe economic crisis that brought down Latvia and left it indebted to the IMF. Estonian society today shows little trace of the mentality and feel we associate with the Soviet concrete monolith. It is characterized by the quiet rationality we have become familiar with in the Nordic countries. But these observations are at societal levels far above that of the individual. A darker picture accompanies the social changes, with high suicide rates, the spread of HIV, and the existence of economically disadvantaged groups.

The title of the issue, “From Post-Communism to the EU”, is aptly symbolic. Estonia is no longer a post-communist country; it has moved onward and upward into a new phase of postmodern stabilization. In particular, Estonia is now in the information age, and the IT “Tiger Leap Program” launched by the government in 1997 is extremely far-sighted. Pille Runnel, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, and Kristina Reinsalu discuss this policy in their article. Post-communism is a fluid concept of course, but it nonetheless justifies its existence by highlighting the partially shared legacy of the Soviet era and the fast-paced dual (sometimes triple) transformations that all of these countries have undergone and which have entailed an unusual movement from more equality to less. This post-communist state of affairs also entails a conspicuously weak civil society. Between political institutions and individuals there are quite simply too few collective structures in the form of active voluntary associations, organizations, and meeting places, which has consequences for the degree of opinion-shaping, as well as for the pressure placed on government agencies and elites. At least when it comes to the latter, Estonia nonetheless remains post-communist. ✕

li bennich–björkman

Mass murder or genocide? Debates on atrocities continue

**Edward S. Herman (ed.)
The Srebrenica
Massacre
Evidence, Context,
Politics**

Foreword by Phillip Corwin
2011
300 pages

The unparalleled crimes of the Nazis have constituted the ultimate measure of genocide since World War II. The genocide perpetrated on the Jews was the first attempt to reshape history biologically. In Hannah Arendt’s words, the Nazis wanted to “decide which people had or had not the right to live on earth”.

According to the UN Genocide Convention adopted in 1948, for a massacre to be defined as genocide, it must be possible to prove “intent” on the part of the perpetrators to “destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such”, through one or more of five specified acts, such as killing members of the group or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction. It is not always easy to determine when such intent exists. Many indigenous peoples have gone under in the wake of colonialism, and we have no way of clearly determining whether this was the intent of the perpetrators.

Where should the line between ethnic cleansing and genocide be drawn? If the Nazis had been able to realize their plans to drive the Jews into the Belarusian swamps, where they would freeze or starve to death, would this have been ethnic cleansing or genocide? Was the Bengal famine of 1943, which claimed millions of lives, intentional genocide engineered by the British colonial power? And how should we judge the massacres and mass murders that have taken place closer to hand in our own time? With the civil war in the former Yugoslavia of 1992–1995 in particular, where ethnic groups that had once lived peacefully side by side suddenly became mortal enemies after having been sicced on each other by fanatical politicians, the problem of defining genocide has obvious relevance.

THE QUESTION of what happened to the estimated 8,000 men who went missing from the Bosnian city of Srebrenica between the 11th and 19th of July 1995 is particularly controversial. Were they murdered? Did they fall in battle, or did the majority manage to escape? This is the subject of an anthology published last year under the editorship of Edward S. Herman, Professor Emeritus of Finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, with a foreword by Phillip Corwin, the highest-ranking United Nations civilian official in Sarajevo when Srebrenica fell. The book builds on the earlier report presented in 2005 by The Srebrenica Research Group under Herman’s direction. The anthology authors (journalists, filmmakers, media scholars, and a law professor) question the accepted picture of the Yugoslav War. The main issue is whether the killing in Srebrenica was of

Continued. Mass murder or genocide?

sufficient magnitude to be classified as genocide or should instead be called a massacre. The authors are aware that they are walking through a minefield. Herman coolly expects to be accused of historical revisionism.

Despite the controversial subject, however, the authors arrive at surprisingly little that is new. Most of the information is familiar from Diana Johnstone's *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO, and Western Delusions* (2003). Johnstone puts the Yugoslav War in its historical and international context with focus on the co-responsibility of Western powers for the tragic evolution of events in the Balkans. In her eagerness to de-demonize the Serbs, she trivializes the Srebrenica massacre as one incident of war among many others.

According to the anthology's various authors, those who are mainly culpable in the Yugoslav tragedy are not found among the political leaders of Belgrade; blame is instead assigned to the interests of great powers outside the country.

THE AMBITIONS of Western powers to fill, at any cost, the political void that ensued after the fall of Soviet communism were decisive in the failure to resolve the conflict by diplomatic means. The presence of NATO in the Balkans, led by the newly reunited Germany, fanned the flames of smoldering nationalism in the constituent republics of Yugoslavia. German foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher persuaded the EU and the US to recognize Slovenia's and Croatia's declarations of independence, after which Bosnia declared independence following a referendum. Serbia and Montenegro then formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in a last-ditch attempt to hold together the Yugoslavia in which six republics, five nationalities, four languages, and three religions had been united by Tito after World War II. A compromise was reached in March 1992, negotiated by the Portuguese and known as the Lisbon Agreement, in conjunction with the referendum in Bosnia, which was boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs. If the agreement had been implemented, it would have brought about an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina divided into three independent cantons in a Swiss-like model. The agreement was accepted by the warring parties, but a couple of days later Bosnian Muslim president Alija Izetbegović withdrew his support at the urging of the United States. Two weeks later, the civil war was a fact.

NATO bombings of Bosnian Serb positions commenced after the Srebrenica massacre and a mortar attack on one of Sarajevo's biggest commercial streets. The war ended with the peace talks in Dayton, Ohio, resulting in

the Dayton Agreement signed in Paris in December 1995. The outcome was a Bosnian state divided into a Muslim entity and a Serbian entity: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska.

The book sheds light on the geopolitical machinations that contributed to the outbreak of war, but the reader does not learn much about the internal causes of the civil war. Only a summary outline is given of the Yugoslav War in its entirety with its various areas of conflict, especially the ethnic and economic. The actual objective of the Serbian policy, other than holding the nation together, is not explained. The only thing said about Serbian nationalism is that the notion of a Great Serbia was a myth fabricated by Western powers.

The purpose of the book, of course, is not to explicate all the ins and outs of the war. The authors' aim is instead to understand the war based on the event that contributed most to the stigmatization of the Serbs, the Srebrenica massacre. This narrow focus, however, results in stultifying monotony and many overlaps in the text. The same factual and theoretical arguments are repeated in the various articles.

Everyone speaks in the same voice and everyone is touchingly in agreement on the main points. Thus, there is no real discussion from different perspectives, which would have lent the text much greater credibility. It becomes difficult to shake the impression of a partisan brief, an argument for the defense that is at least as one-sided as the indictment against which the authors polemicize. Instead of being demonized, the Serbs must be depicted as victims.

THE BOOK ILLUSTRATES the difficulty of comparing different kinds of evil without being sucked into the swamp of guilt mitigation, where the crimes of one side are presumed to weigh less heavily due to the crimes of the other side. Comparing different kinds of bloody deeds can easily end up becoming a macabre counting of dead bodies in an attempt to make one's chosen side look a little better.

Corwin makes this moral dilemma obvious from the start in the foreword to the book, where he maintains that the Red Cross estimate of the death toll in Srebrenica is highly exaggerated. According to him, the figure should be revised downwards from 8,000 to 800, a drastic reduction. At the same time, he emphasizes that thousands of Serbs were murdered during the war in Bosnia. From Herman's relativized perspective, what happened in Srebrenica was a fully understandable, albeit illegitimate, act of retribution for earlier injustices, a crime among crimes.

The worst war crimes were committed, according to Herman, by the Croats in Krajina and Slavonia, two Serb enclaves in Croatia. In the months after the Srebrenica massacre, at least 2,500 Serbs are alleged to have been killed during Operation Storm. Unlike the Bosnian Serbs, the Croats did not spare women and children. In addition, 250,000 Serbs were driven from their homes in Krajina in what Herman calls the largest single act of ethnic cleansing in the Balkan wars. He bases this information on sources that include a Serbian professor, Milivoje Ivanišević, whose book *Srebrenica July 1995: In Search of Truth* (2010) was launched as the true story of Srebrenica from the Serbian nationalist perspective.

Herman and George Bogdanich also deny that the Bosnian Serbs were guilty of the repeated shelling of civilian targets in Sarajevo, including the shelling of the city's marketplace in February 1994 that killed 68 and wounded hundreds more.

Actually, they claim, the shellings were executed by the Bosnians themselves to arouse the sympathies of the world for their cause. The evidence for this astonishing new interpretation is made up of various literature references and one newspaper article, none of which is, any more than Ivanišević's statements, subjected to any rigorous source-critical examination.

The foremost conspiracy theory in the book concerns the retreat of the Bosnian Muslim army from Srebrenica the day before the Serbs' advance. Why did they fall back and leave the population to their fate?

The Muslim force is said to have been numerically superior, with about 5,000 men compared to about 200 Serbs. The generally accepted explanation is that the Bosnian Serbs fell back because in April 1993 the UN had declared Srebrenica one of three Safe Areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina and thus they assumed it would be free from any armed attack. Following an agreement between the warring armies, a UN peacekeeping force of 400 Dutch troops had been installed in Srebrenica. There was thus good reason to presume that the population of the city enjoyed adequate protection. And after General Ratko Mladić gave his word as an officer and a gentleman that no one would be hurt, the Bosnian Serb Army could march in to the city without encountering resistance from the UN troops.

In imitation of Johnstone, the authors of the book claim that Izetbegović allowed the Bosnian Muslim Commander Naser Orić to pull back his troops in full knowledge of the massacre that would follow. The alleged reason was that the Muslims had tried for several years to induce the United States to intervene. President Clinton is then alleged to have declared that it would take at least 5,000 dead Bosnians to legitimize armed US intervention. In other words, the Srebrenica massacre is alleged to have been a pawn sacrifice. The people of the city were sacrificed to give the US a pretext for military intervention.

This might be the book's weakest point. How does this explanation fit with the other arguments? On the one hand, the authors question whether any major mass executions ever happened in Srebrenica. On the other hand, they present a hypothesis that passes the burden of guilt to the Bosnian Muslims and suddenly we are talking about a huge massacre. The authors seem not to have realized that the one hypothesis falsifies the other.

There is generally a discrepancy in how the book treats witness testimony. Those who have testified about Serbian abuses are put under a critical microscope, while those who testify in defense of the Serbs are treated uncritically, to say the least. During the summer

of 1993, Serb, Croat, and Muslim internment camps were established in Bosnia, but Herman questions the existence of Serb prison camps where an unusually large number of people are alleged to have died, having either starved to death or been executed. He refers to a film by the German journalist Thomas Deichmann. The film about the Serb prison camp Trnopolje in northern Bosnia – *The Picture that Fooled the World* – has been thoroughly examined in connection with the trials of the prison guards. The picture said to have fooled the world was presented as that of an emaciated prisoner, Fikret Alić, standing behind barbed wire, which was meant to conjure images of a Nazi concentration camp. According to Deichmann, the picture was a fraud. For this reason, Herman gives no credence to Alić's testimony before the Hague Tribunal about the treatment of prisoners in the camp. Nor does he remark upon former Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavšić's acknowledgement before the same tribunal of responsibility for the establishment of these camps and the conditions there. The tribunal convicted her in 2003 of crimes against humanity, to which she pled guilty.

THE ADMISSION by the Bosnian Serb government in Republika Srpska in June 2004 that at least 7,000 people had been murdered in Srebrenica is airily dismissed. Jonathan Rooper, former BBC reporter, claims on the basis of a single newspaper article in *The Guardian*, without the slightest of source-critical deliberations, that this admission was coerced under threat of political and economic sanctions by the international community's High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Paddy Ashdown.

It would, however, be unfair to highlight only the book's weaknesses – the inadequate source criticism, the conspiracy theories – without mentioning the critical discussion that is also presented, such as Bogdanich's section on Srebrenica's status during the civil war. This strategically located city near the Bosnian-Serbian border had long been Naser Orić's base, from which bloody attacks were visited upon Serb villages starting in the spring of 1992 until the Serbs took the city. Today there can be no doubt that Bosnian, Croat, and Serb forces committed horrific abuses against the civilian population in eastern Bosnia. It is, however, remarkable that the UN-led International Criminal Tribunal of the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) established in The Hague in May 1993 did not indict Orić until 2003, and then for crimes carrying lesser punishments than the charges against his Serb mirror image Mladić, for crimes in direct connection with the Srebrenica massacre.

The most interesting chapters in the book, those written by George Szamuely and the Canadian law professor Michael Mandel, discuss the aftermath during The Hague Tribunal. The ICTY, which should not be confused with the International Court in The Hague, which rules on matters related to international law, claimed to follow the tradition established in the Nuremberg trials after World War II. This time it was not the Nazi leadership being held accountable for crimes against humanity, but Serb political leaders and generals. Milošević is alleged to have planned ethnic cleansing in order to create a Greater Serbia. According to the tribunal, the Srebrenica massacre could not be compared to other incidental by-products of war objectives and was a genocide of Hitlerian proportions.

Neither Izetbegović nor Croat President Franjo Tuđman was indicted. But Croat General Ante Gotovina was indicted for expelling 250,000 Serbs from the Krajina area during Operation Storm in 1995, but not until 2001, two years after *The New York Times* wrote about this ethnic cleansing. NATO's role in the context was essentially ignored.

Szamuely is skeptical of witness testimonies of Serbian mass executions, since they always recount the same story. The Serbs surround a village, pound it with heavy artillery for days, then march in and round up the villagers. They then take away the women, children, and the elderly and execute the adult men in the nearby forests. Invariably, one person survives by pretending to be dead or having bodies fall on top of him and later comes forward as a witness. But Szamuely's criticism also becomes a constantly repeated litany whose foundation is that credence cannot be given to the testimony of witnesses for the prosecution because the protection of witness anonymity cannot be verified. Cross-examinations have also been limited so as not to torment people who had been subject to traumatic experiences.

Szamuely is particularly scathing about the prosecution's key witness, Dražen Erdemović, a Bosnian Croat mercenary soldier who had served on various occasions for all the warring parties. He was part of the Serbian force that took Srebrenica and claimed to have participated in a Serbian death squad of seven men, who allegedly killed 1,200 adult men in four hours. For this he was sentenced to ten years imprisonment, which was later reduced to five years. The reason for the remarkably lenient sentence, according to Szamuely, is that he was the key witness for the prosecution against Karadžić and Milošević. Acting as his own attorney, Milošević cross-examined Erdemović, but was not allowed to pursue his questioning.

In April 2004, General Radislav Krstić, commander of the Bosnian Serb Drina corps, was sentenced to 35 years in prison for aiding and abetting the genocide in Srebrenica, thus becoming the first person since World War II to be convicted of genocide in Europe. Mandel argues that the executions in Srebrenica, which he estimates at 4,000 at the most (thus considerably higher than the number surmised by Corwin and Herman) should instead be defined as mass murder. In that connection, his argument is in alignment with that of the Israeli Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Elie Wiesel.

In an article in *Newsweek* in April 1999, Wiesel protested the comparison between the Serb mass murder and the Nazi genocide: "Does anyone believe that Milošević and his accomplices seriously planned to exterminate all the Bosnians, all the Albanians, all the Muslims in the world?" he asked. The women, children, and elderly of Srebrenica were removed

to safety, the opposite of what happened in Auschwitz–Birkenau. Despite objections of this kind, the ICTY chose to stand by the relatively loose definition of genocide provided in the 1948 Genocide Convention, which includes killing or causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of a group of people in one area. The ICTY also relied on a 1982 UN General Assembly Resolution that the murder of at least 800 Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila was an act of genocide.

ONE CAN CERTAINLY concede Mandel's point that the burden of guilt was not equitably distributed in the ICTY's rulings. Srebrenica was probably not the only massacre of a genocidal nature committed during the Yugoslav War. But that does not make Srebrenica a lesser evil. Instead, it begs the question of where the line should be drawn between war crimes and genocide and why we close our eyes to certain crimes and not others.

Mandel is also right that Serb crimes under international law do not follow the horrific patterns of the Nazi Holocaust. One may, however, very well doubt the adequacy of a definition of genocide tailored to the proportions of the Jewish extermination in World War II. When that standard is applied, there is considerable risk that the term will become virtually useless in light of the exceptional nature of the Holocaust, and most crimes, with the possible exception of Rwanda in 1994, would not measure up. The alternative is a broader definition of genocide when it comes to the motives and magnitude of crimes, so that it would include not only all the outrages of colonialism but also massacres like those in Sabra and Shatila, Srebrenica, Krajina, and elsewhere.

The book poses many questions that cast doubt upon the accepted picture of the Yugoslav War in general and the Srebrenica massacre in particular. It is, however, difficult to form an opinion about all the information and judge which sources are credible and which merely pass on rumors or out-and-out lies. The extensive documentation – 626 full-size notes – are not much help, as the truth value of the sources, whatever that might be, was not examined. The most problematic issue is that the answers given all point in the same direction.

The book is intended to trigger debate, of course, but it does not reflect the full spectrum of debate and allows only one side, the Serbian, to speak. Opposing voices are absent, which is a major drawback in a book that purports to show what really happened in Srebrenica. ❌

jan christensen

BALTIC SEA LIBRARY ABOUT “BALTICNESS”

by **Unn Gustafsson**

The Baltic Sea Library is a web-based literary project run by a group of editors from all the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea, plus Iceland. The website resembles an anthology and contains poetry, novel excerpts, and other genres in all the literatures of the region. The texts reach across time from antiquity – Tacitus’s *Germania* and Pomponius Mela’s *De Chorographia* – to today’s contemporary Estonian prose.

The unifying aspect is something the editors call “Balticness”, and each text is accompanied by an explanation of its connection to the Baltic Sea. Balticness brings the material together and allows the works and the places to be reflected in a context broader than the national literary canon. Conversely, Balticness also acts as a filter; the selection is deliberately narrow. Translation is central to the project. The visitor will find Tomas Tranströmer’s poem cycle “Baltics” translated into the Nordic and Baltic languages and into English. The ambition is for all the original texts to be presented alongside professional translations to the other languages of the region, and to English in order to make the texts more widely available.

The project has engendered remarkable interest among prominent figures in the regional library community. Last year, the editors arranged a conference on cultural diversity, language, and digital content in Berlin, sponsored by the German Foreign Office. Scholars, writers, translators, and librarians from the countries surrounding the Baltic took part, along with representatives of organizations including the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Bibliotheca Baltica, and the Goethe-Institut.

DIGITIZATION IS THE greatest modern challenge for the library as an institution. New forms of international cooperation have become necessary, beyond the interlibrary loans that have always endowed libraries with a measure of internationalism. References were made during the conference to several ongoing digitization projects at the national, regional, and European levels. In particular, university libraries in the Baltic



“Fischkutter in der Nachmittagssonne” by Max Pechstein (1881 in Zwickau–1955 in Berlin West). Expressionist artist, belonged to the group “Die Brücke”. Spent all his summers on the Baltic Sea. Condemned by the Nazis as “degenerate”.

region have established and continue to be involved in international partnerships.

The biggest development projects right now are two web portals, the European Library and Europeana. Not only are they public sources of information, but they also function as engines of cultural policy for national libraries when it comes to digitizing collections and developing joint technical solutions. So far, the main content is a large body of metadata, so a search for a specific title often ends with a library catalogue entry. Europeana is funded by eContentplus, the EU Information and Communications Technologies Policy Support Program. Several million euros are funneled into the project every year.

THE BALTIC SEA LIBRARY is tiny by comparison. The project will spend a total of 93,000 euros over the first three years, funds provided by the German Foreign Office, the Goethe-Institut, and the Nordic Council of

Ministers. Ultimately, the virtual library will hold about 200 original texts and a varying number of translations.

What explains the tremendous resonance of such a small-scale project? Perhaps the Baltic Sea Library embodies both the ambition to make literary material accessible on the net, as well as a cross-border, regional partnership. The twelve editors form a network that corresponds to the UNESCO definition of cultural diversity. The effect of their work in selecting material is a kaleidoscopic view across the Baltic, a landscape penetrated by borders for so long that it has been difficult to distinguish as a shared cultural space.

IMET THE FOSTER father of the Baltic Sea Library, writer and translator Klaus-Jürgen Liedtke, in Berlin. He said the idea for a virtual Baltic Sea library was a long time in germinating. In 1992, three years after the fall of the Berlin

Wall, Liedtke took part in the Baltic Writers’ Cruise around the Baltic, organized by and for writers and translators from all over the region. The cruise was the precursor to what would become the Baltic Writers Council. Liedtke has been the German delegate to the council since the 1990s and was elected chairman in the 2000s, when he conceived the idea for a virtual library. The organization issued a call for funding and partners for the project in 2008. Following the initial editors’ meeting in Ventspils, Latvia, the website was launched in mid-2010.

“To my mind, the Baltic Sea is actually a lost province. And what had been lost was a sense of affinity with the countries in the east. But this space was reopened via all the initiatives of the 1990s, especially the formation of a regional writers’ and translators’ council. A partnership was established, but the question was, partnership around *what*? What was important to me during my time as chairman was

to look at the content of this newfound thing”, says Liedtke.

That the twelve editors make a selection is an important part of the project. Their preparatory work is building a framework and differentiating the Baltic Sea Library from other, considerably larger digitization projects. What is the selection process?

“The library is interested only in topographically oriented literature, and the texts are our point of departure, not their authorship, although the writers are also brought to the fore. The places are important. You can imagine a visit to the library as a virtual journey from city to city around the Baltic: Thomas Mann’s Lübeck, Anna Achmatova’s Saint Petersburg, Tomas Tranströmer’s take on the Stockholm Archipelago. We devote special attention to travel literature. Everyone sees the sea from their own shore and the literatures in the region are actually very different. But a poem by Eichendorff about Saint Mary’s Church in Old Danzig and a text by Stefan Chwin from the Polish Gdansk of the postwar era echo each other.”

To the extent that there is a shared narrative in the Baltic Sea region, it is indeed one of echoes, Liedtke notes. Writers and poets have engaged in direct and indirect call and response, even when the Iron Curtain made physical travel impossible. The previously unpublished poems of Estonian writer Paul-Eerik Rummo are one example. He wrote them in the 1980s in answer to Bertolt Brecht, who spent the early years of his exile in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. Rummo used poetry as a means to explain why, despite everything, he did not want to leave Estonia.

Liedtke relates that he read the work when it was written, but that publishing it would have been too risky for Rummo (who later became the independent Estonia’s minister of culture). These poems will soon be published for the first time in the Baltic Sea Library, along with new translations into Latvian, Lithuanian, and Russian. Thus will the original echo be reproduced.

You are exploring the Baltic Sea as a literary landscape. The idea of a mythical tie connecting literature to the people and the space, has served ideological purposes, not least in this region. How do the editors approach this in selecting texts?

“I don’t see this as a risk, although we have agreed not to include texts that are interesting only in relation to the problem of national identity. The editors represent their respective languages, rather than nations. This is a crucial distinction. On a more general level, I would say that the landscape itself does not possess its own mythology; this is created when the place or the region is ‘discovered’. The Baltic was discovered in this way most immediately in plein air painting, by artists like Pechstein and Beckmann. But the mythology woken to life in art can also be recast. The Baltic Sea Library deals with the Baltic as a border that has been done away with, making it possible for people to re-discover their neighbors. The texts are also neighbors; they are engaged in dialogue with each other. And the

German perspective on literature and the people has also changed, in large part due to Karl Schlögel. Today, it is once again permissible to read history through the space, which was frowned upon for a long time.”

You have managed to publish the original works and several translations for some writers, while other shelves in the library remain empty. How are you dealing with copyright restrictions?

“We have to approach the copyright owners in each individual case. They may be heirs, the writers themselves, or publishers. Existing networks and personal contacts are important and have in some cases given us free access to material. Also, the translators still have their digital rights, which has helped to a certain extent. But the situation varies widely and we have to pay considerable royalties for some works.”

New translations make up one tenth of the holdings of the Baltic Sea Library. Liedtke is clear that he regards the project as a sort of job creation plan for translators, especially those who work between the smaller languages in the region. The website is also a vehicle for putting the spotlight on translators, who are presented in the same way as the writers, with photographs, biographies, and so on.

What happens next?

“The active project will end in 2012. Until then, we will be publishing even more texts and translations. Two of the editors and I will be holding a workshop for Russian-German literary translators this autumn, with material we want to have translated for the library. It will probably be held in the intersection of Russia and Germany in the Kaliningrad area. Beyond that, Bibliotheca Baltica may have a significant interest in perpetuating the Baltic Sea Library.”

Why do we need a Baltic Sea Library?

“I meet a great many people who really want something between the level of the nation and the level of greater Europe – the local region. There seems to be a need for a new, somewhat larger identity. After the Wall fell, in the 1990s, there was an upturn in the need for people to rediscover each other. Interest waned somewhat thereafter, but it has now returned, at the political level too. At the same time, we still know far too little about each other. But there is a lost heritage to return to, legacies, and through translations we can find each other again.” ✕

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among our contributors



Li Bennich-Björkman

Johan Skytte Professor in political science at Uppsala University. Her monograph, *Political Culture under Institutional Pressure: How Institutions Transform Early Socialization* (2007), deals mainly with the Estonian diaspora.



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PhD in political science. Positions at Södertörn, Humboldt, Vytautas Magnus, and Vilnius universities. Among his books is *Making Sense of Baltic Democracy: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania between the Soviet Union and the European Union* (2010).



Inga Aalia

Holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Vilnius and a master’s degree from the University of Oslo. Born in Vilnius, and has lived, studied and worked in the United States, Norway, France, and Romania.



David Gaunt

Professor of history at Södertörn University. For many years has conducted research into what actually happened to the Christian population from 1915 to 1916 in southeastern Turkey, during what is called the Armenian, Assyrian/Syrian, and

Pontic-Greek genocides. Inducted in 2011 into the Assembly Academia Europaea, Section of History and Archaeology.

And now the eel has almost ceased to exist in the Baltic Sea! We must thus reinvent it, no?

NEVER TRUST A NEWSPEAKER!

S ometime in the late eighties, the language used in Hungarian public life began to change. Two people made arrangements to meet at some café or restaurant. When discussing the time, they didn't say, as before, "at four o'clock", or "shortly before four", but used the formula "at the height of four o'clock". The phrase could equally be pure pomposity or a delicate hint that, because of the stressful times, it was not impossible that they would arrive late or even that the meeting would fall through. And if you asked the head of one of the many new publishing companies whether and when payment might be received for the manuscript you had just delivered, the answer was no longer the trite "but of course!" or "not until after the book has been published", but the New-Hungarian set phrase "according to our expectations" which could well mean that the publisher was expecting or counting on a financial subsidy, but one should not bank on it.

Naturally, there were expressions in socialist regulation of language, too, that made one aware in a tactful way that they actually meant the opposite of what they appeared to mean. For example, if the Central Committee announced that the five-year plan had been carried out successfully "in essence" or "basically", then we could assume that none of the desired outcomes had actually been achieved. In the sixties and seventies there were absolutely no price increases; instead, according to official terminology, there were just "price corrections", "price changes", or the slightly more ponderous "adjustment of prices to production costs". In the telephone book of 1971, one could find the somewhat cryptic sentence: "The Hungarian Post Office guarantees the secrecy of telephone conversations as far as it is possible to do so." That is: everyone must watch his tongue.

The more than two decades since the *Wende* have enriched our language by almost as many expressions as came into the language at the beginning of the Romantic nineteenth century. At that time, language reformers created some 20,000 new words, half of which served as replacements for prevailing German and Latin terms. People went

by what sounded right to their own ears. The word *égeny* (oxygen) did not catch on: people still said *oxigén*, while the similarly formed expression *higany* (mercury) was accepted. The problem with the word for piano was solved in two stages. Music lovers first called the popular instrument *zenélő tambura* (music-making drum), later adopting the more musical term *zongora*.

THAT REFORMATION OF the Hungarian language was directed explicitly at closing the gaping holes in the national vocabulary and was in its pragmatic nature innovative and value-free. Its single ideological element was its preference for Hungarian variants of foreign words. Today's neologisms are intended to record phenomena that were unknown before 1989. Even the times in which we live are described as post-communist or post-socialist, that is, perceived only as the continuation of a past and not as the present *sui generis*. Many neologisms are characterized by this bipartition. The relatively new concept "media" has numerous branches. For example, the rulers of the day are described as media czar, media magnate, media mogul – as we can see, the second, explanatory, half of the word with its pejorative coloration almost always dates from pre-capitalist times. Similarly, the word "drug" can be followed by several different words to complete the meaning, such as "drug czar", "drug cave", "drug disco", "drug lord", "drug liberalization", and "drug tourism". The combinations with the epithet "Euro" would fill several pages: the inflationary use of the word is called "Eurobabble", nationally minded politicians protest against making Hungary a "Euro-colony", the opinion research institutes sound out our "Euro-mood", and "Euro fathers of the people" sit in Brussels. The epithet "black" used to refer to shady deals; today it has expanded to include several concepts: thus black market must soon become "black wine", in stores you can ask for "black meat", and there is a type of "black entrepreneur" who, with a newly coined verb, "operates blackly".

In other cases language turns nouns inside out. What does a Hungarian do when he has a cellphone in his hand?

He "mobiles", and he does this even while driving, knowing full well that such "mobiling" can be dangerous. Perhaps he is proud that in our country there are already millions of "mobilers", that is, cellphone owners. They are not "sending a text message" (or SMS); according to the new way of using language, they are "sms-ing" (which again corresponds to the German "sim-sen"). No wonder people are looking for genuine Hungarian words for the achievements of the new media: thus the first Nokias were called *bunkofon* (roughly "dummies") or, on the inverse, "smart phones". Internet mail was originally called *drótposta*, in the style of the nineteenth century, after the German "Drahtpost" (wire mail).

IN POLITICS THE WENDE brought with it a strange, emotional terminology. The old tried-and-true word *Ungartum* (Hungariandom), a beautiful-sounding word in beautiful sentences, was "enriched" by the protagonists of the swing to the conservative right and radical right. At the beginning of the nineties many of those in public life attempted, in the context of "national politics", to cast doubt upon the "Hungariandom performance" of their opponents, and to condemn liberal and socialist ideas as part of a supposed ideology of "enmity toward Hungary". All terms connected to a leftist tradition, including "liberal left" or "social-liberal", turned into swearwords, and the new anti-Semitism created its own constructs, such as "sozionism", created from "socialism" and "Zionism" – which was supposed to be an embodiment of Jewish conspiracy.

Once a culture of hatred, rather than a political culture, developed in the republic, the style of political discourse also changed. Instead of a dialogue that is normal for every community based on the principle of liberty, monologues dominate, whose contents are totally mutually exclusive. This development took place parallel to the expansion of the new media and their saturation with aggressive, anonymous articles that were hardly moderated at all. The yet uncensored portal Kurucinfó, with regular columns such as "Gypsy Criminality" and "Jewish Criminality",

constitutes not only the political but also the mental and linguistic nadir of Hungarian life since the *Wende*. The same can be said of the online editions of many newspapers.

Magyar Hírlap, which has close ties to the government, published the following reader opinions response to the contributions of the philosophers Ágnes Heller and Miklós Tamás Gáspár at the Berlin Media Congress of the *taz*: "These dirty bastards should be arrested at the border on their way back from Berlin because of their disparagement of Hungary [...], a treason both openly expressed and covert." "These traitorous scoundrels were educated at our expense and are now taking advantage of their international contacts. They are trying to compromise us and the government we have elected in every way they can. All right-minded people are outraged by their disgusting attitude. They should be stripped of their Hungarian citizenship and deported. Filthy traitors." These are not biting political attacks, but acts of violence shrouded in words.

AS AN AUTHOR of an older generation I am trying to understand the linguistic novelties of a time that I can no longer consider my own. I even let myself profit from the fund of new words, but when I do so, I notice that the New Hungarian issuing from my mouth usually acquires an unintentionally ironic tone. What from my heart I reject most strongly is the spiteful tone of political and ideological newspeak, and I would like to keep my pen and computer undefiled by such nastiness. ✘

györgy dalos

This lecture by Hungarian writer György Dalos, famous for his Orwellpastiche 1985, was delivered at an open symposium in Schwäbisch Hall, Germany, sponsored by Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, April 2012.