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John Keane

Die Geburt der
Watchdog-Parlamente

Alberto Alemanno

The EU Must Become
A People's Project

Taras Fedirko

Trafficking
For The Nation



*Gyan Prakash, Andrea Orzoff, Clemena Antonova,
Tijana Koprivica, Ludger Hagedorn, Alicja Rybkowska, Marika Grasso*

Art and Society

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Editorial

Getreu dem Profil des IWM und der IWMpost, behandelt auch das vorliegende Heft eine breite Palette von Themen. Zum ersten Mal aber besteht der größte Schwerpunkt eines Heftes der IWMpost aus Beiträgen, in denen Kunst und Literatur im Zentrum stehen und als Einstieg dienen, um über gesellschaftliche Fragen zu reflektieren. Die Essays des Schwerpunkts gehen auf die politischen Implikationen künstlerischer Pionierleistungen ein (**Prakash, Orzoff, Antonova**), thematisieren die Wechselwirkungen von Politik und Kunst (**Antonova, Koprivica**), fokussieren auf Wege der literarischen Erfassung der Wirklichkeit (**Hagedorn, Rybkowska**), und problematisieren die Begegnung von Kunst und Wissenschaft (**Grasso**).

Essays zur Demokratie können in keiner IWMpost-Ausgabe fehlen. Diesmal fokussieren die Beiträge auf Experimente und Werkzeuge demokratischer Erneuerung: Watchdog-Parlamente (**Keane**), Bürgerversammlungen (**Cesnulaityte**), EU-Reform (**Alemanno**), WhatsApp-Gruppen (**Barbosa**). Im engen Zusammenhang mit diesem Schwerpunkt stehen jeweils zwei Beiträge zum Populismus (**Samaddar, Wyss**) und zur feministischen Politik (**Haastrup, Shparaga**). **Gjuričová**, wiederum, bespricht in ihrem Essay, warum die viel kritisierte politische Geschichte es verdient, gerettet zu werden.

In einem kleinen Schwerpunkt zum Krieg in der Ukraine kritisiert **Dovzhyk** die epistemische Ungerechtigkeit westlicher Berichterstattung, während **Fedirko** den Aufstieg und die Transformation der informellen Kriegswirtschaft thematisiert. Zwei weitere Beiträge behandeln Fragen von Migration und Menschenhandel. Während **Ramsauer** und **Çağlar** auf die rechtliche Behandlung afghanischer Konvertiten zum Christentum eingehen, bemüht sich **Banerjee** um ein ausgeglichenes Bild von Frauen, die vom Menschenhandel betroffen sind.

Schließlich würdigt **Hagedorn** in einem Nachruf auf **Karel Schwarzenberg** das Wirken und die Erinnerung eines großen Freundes und Förderers des IWM, der letzten November verstarb.

Im Namen des IWM wünsche ich Ihnen viel Freude beim Lesen. ◀

In line with the profile of the IWM and the IWMpost, this issue covers a wide range of topics. For the first time, however, the largest section of an IWMpost issue consists of essays that center on art and literature, and that use them as entry points to reflect on social issues. The essays that form this section address the political implications of pioneering work by artists (**Prakash, Orzoff, Antonova**), discuss the interplay between art and politics (**Antonova, Koprivica**), focus on literary ways of mirroring and documenting reality (**Hagedorn, Rybkowska**), and problematize the encounter between art and science (**Grasso**).

No IWMpost issue is complete without essays that address issues of democracy. The respective essays in this issue focus on experiments and tools of democratic renewal: watchdog parliaments (**Keane**), citizens' assemblies (**Cesnulaityte**), EU reform (**Alemanno**), and WhatsApp groups (**Barbosa**). The contributions on populism (**Samaddar, Wyss**) and feminist politics (**Haastrup, Shparaga**) are also closely related to this focus on democracy. **Gjuričová** in turn discusses in her essay why political history is worth rescuing.

In a section on the war in Ukraine, **Dovzhyk** criticizes the epistemic injustice of Western reporting while **Fedirko** addresses the rise and transformation of the informal war economy. Two further essays deal with issues of migration and human trafficking. While **Ramsauer** and **Çağlar** discuss the heuristic challenge that the religious conversion of asylum seekers poses to the authorities, **Banerjee** strives for a balanced picture of trafficked women.

Finally, **Ludger Hagedorn** honors the memory of **Karel Schwarzenberg**, a long-time friend and supporter of the IWM, who sadly passed away last November.

I hope you enjoy the read! ◀

Evangelos Karagiannis



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Die Geburt der Watchdog-Parlamente

VON JOHN KEANE

In einer Zeit, in der die demokratische Bedeutung von Parlamenten zunehmend in Frage gestellt wird, weist John Keane auf parlamentarische Entwicklungen hin, die eine Erneuerung der repräsentativen Demokratie ankündigen.

Haben Parlamente eine Zukunft? Die Frage stellt sich, weil es wachsende Anzeichen dafür gibt, dass sich die Renaissance der Parlamente, die nach 1945 eingesetzt hat, ihrem Ende neigt. Zynismus, Nörgelei, Ressentiments und Proteste wütender Bürger gegen Politiker fügen den Parlamenten von außen her Schaden zu. Gleichermaßen beunruhigend sind die Triebkräfte der Dekadenz innerhalb der Parlamentsgebäude. Zu erwähnen sind nicht nur der lauthals kundgetane Groll, die Frauenfeindlichkeit und Ignoranz einer nicht unbeträchtlichen Anzahl von Politikern oder die „tote Hand der Parteidisziplin“. Ebenso besorgniserregend ist die Korruption der Parlamente durch die vereinten Kräfte von Lobbyisten, Schwarzgeldhändlern und jenen, die vom Drehtür-Effekt profitieren.

Tatsächlich legt sich ein dunkler Schatten auf viele Parlamente der Welt. Es wäre daher naheliegend anzunehmen, dass wir in das Zeitalter der Phantomparlamente und der Herrschaft der Exekutive eintreten, in dem die Gesetzgeber, die den Anspruch erheben, dem Volk zu dienen, in Wirklichkeit von begrenzter oder überhaupt keiner demokratischen Bedeutung sind. Einige Kreise mögen einen solchen Übergang willkommen heißen, aber wir wollen hier die entgegengesetzten Trends betrachten und ergründen, warum die parlamentarische Regierungsform weiterhin unentbehrlich bleibt.

Blicken wir auf das dänische Folketinget: Sein mächtiger Ausschuss für europäische Angelegenheiten verfolgt in Sitzungen, die als Konsultationen (samråd) bezeichnet werden, die Tagungen des Rates der Europäischen Union in Brüssel und Luxemburg in Echtzeit und nimmt die teilnehmenden Minister unter die Lupe. Die Nationalversammlung der Republik Korea hat die weltweit ersten umfassenden Gesetze gegen verbale Missbrauch und Bullying („gajjil“) durch Familienkonzerne und andere mächtige Organisationen verabschiedet. Das rumänische Parlament wird jetzt mit Hilfe von ION, einem intelligenten Roboter, der angeblich in der Lage sein soll, die „Intelligenz“ von Politikern zu verbessern, digital mit Vorschlägen und Beschwerden der Bürger versorgt. Und der Deutsche Bundestag soll künftig unverbindliche Berichte von Bürgerräten erhalten, deren Mitglieder per Losverfahren ermittelt wurden.



Photo: Aktid/Canham/CC BY 4.0

Das Sámi Parlament in Norwegen.

Darüber hinaus befassen sich Parlamente intensiv mit der Vergangenheit und der Zukunft. Die walisische Legislative berät sich regelmäßig mit dem weltweit ersten Future Generations Commissioner. Mit Blick auf eine ungewisse Zukunft hat das Europäische Parlament das erste KI-Gesetz der Welt ausgearbeitet. Das neuseeländische Parlament (Aotearoa) hat Ökosystemen „die Rechte, Befugnisse, Pflichten und Verbindlichkeiten einer juristischen Person“ eingeräumt. Das grenzüberschreitende nordische Netzwerk der samischen Parlamente, das Sámediggi, ist ein Beispiel für interparlamentarische Zusammenarbeit und verfügt über Beratungsorgane, die den Auftrag haben, die Selbstbestimmung der Ureinwohner zu fördern und zu bewahren.

Wie ist diese neue Welle von Experimenten zu verstehen? Offensichtlich hauchen sie alten Institutionen neues Leben ein; Institutionen, deren Zweck ursprünglich darin lag, dass Gesetzgeber als die Vertreter der verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Interessen im Sinne des Gemeinwohls verbindliche Vereinbarungen treffen. Wir könnten sagen, dass diese parlamentarischen Experimente heute das tun, was Parlamente mehr als acht Jahrhunderten lang getan haben: Sie repräsentieren

die Forderungen und Interessen der von ihnen Vertretenen, und sie erinnern uns daran, dass parlamentarische Repräsentation eine verzwickte Angelegenheit ist.

Populisten und Demagogen seien gewarnt: Repräsentation ist kein einfacher, von Angesicht zu Angesicht geschlossener Vertrag zwischen einem Vertreter und einem imaginären Volk oder einer Nation. Repräsentation ist keine Mimesis. Sie hat eine treuhänderische Qualität, was mit sich bringt, dass, wenn Wähler einen Vertreter wählen, die Vertretung gleichermaßen ein Ende wie einen Anfang darstellt. Wie uns die neue Welle parlamentarischer Experimente vor Augen führt, ist Repräsentation ein offener Prozess, der von der Zustimmung, der Enttäuschung und dem Unmut der Vertretenen abhängig ist. Wenn Repräsentanten hinter den Erwartungen zurückbleiben oder gar versagen, werden sie im Handumdrehen aus dem Verkehr gezogen.

Diese Grundsätze der Repräsentation sind in den neuen parlamentarischen Experimenten quicklebendig. Aus diesem Grund steht in den Lehrbüchern nach wie vor, die wichtigste Aufgabe der Parlamente bestehe darin, die Interessen der Bürger abzubilden, basierend auf freien und fairen Wahlen. Aber diese Lehrbü-

cher sind fehlerhaft: Wenn wir uns genauer anschauen, was die raffinierten, aktivistischen Parlamente von heute tun, sehen wir eine Abweichung von großer historischer Bedeutung, die von den Lehrbüchern ignoriert wird.

Parlamente sind nicht nur Kammern oder „kleine Räume“ (Winston Churchill), in denen gewählte Politiker ihre Wähler vertreten. In unserem Zeitalter der Monitor-demokratie werden Legislativen zu Watchdog-Parlamenten. Im Namen des Gemeinwohls fungieren sie als Whistleblower, schlagen Alarm, warnen vor schlimmen Problemen und verabschieden Gesetze mit dem Ziel, willkürliche Machtausübung einzudämmen oder zu verbieten.

Der Gegensatz zu den Parlamenten von gestern könnte nicht deutlicher sein. Das allererste Parlament, das 1188 n. Chr. in León einberufen wurde (*Cortes of León*), war das Ergebnis einer militärischen Eroberung. In jüngerer Vergangenheit waren Parlamente allzu oft Schlösser der Aristokratie, Herrenhäuser der Bourgeoisie, Salons der männlichen Privilegien und Motoren des Imperiums. Im Gegensatz dazu stellen sich die heutigen Watchdog-Parlamente, sofern sie gut funktionieren, gegen jegliche Art von Eroberung. Watchdog-Parlamente spezialisieren sich auf die Ausübung öffentlicher Kontrolle und Zügelung räuberischer Macht, insbesondere wenn sie über umfassende Ressourcen verfügen.

Sie leisten nicht nur Widerstand gegen törichte Regierungen, die ihre Macht missbrauchen. Watchdog-Parlamente sprengen die Ketten der Majoritätsherrschaft, stellen sich gegen die blinde Anbetung der Zahl, indem sie Minderheiten, die von der hohen Politik ausgeschlossen sind, Stimme und Rechte gewähren. Diese Parlamente verändern unser kollektives Zeitempfinden. Sie erweitern das Wahlrecht auf bedrohte Spezies, benachteiligte Vorfahren und künftige Generationen. Indem sie sich beispielsweise gegen räuberische Konzerne, profitgierige Banken und skrupellose Bergbauunternehmen stellen, schützen und fördern sie die Einhaltung demokratischer Spielregeln. Nicht zu unterschätzen ist die Tatsache, dass sie sich um die Lösung langfristiger Probleme bemühen, die durch das kurzfristige Denken in Wahlzyklen in den Hintergrund gedrängt werden.

Watchdog-Parlamente sind mehr als nur die Hüter der Wahlintegrität. Als Meister öffentlicher Machtüberwachung nehmen sie vertrackte

Probleme ins Visier. Ihre Aufgabe ist es, im Hinblick auf künstliche Intelligenz, Steuerparadiese, Umweltverschmutzung, Seuchen, die Notlage staatenloser Menschen, den unregulierten Waffenhandel und endlose Zermürbungskriege gerechte Lösungen zu finden. Paradoxerweise gehen Watchdog-Parlamente dabei nicht nur den „parlamentarischen Weg“ und frönen nicht alleine dem Fetisch regelmäßiger Wahlen. Vielmehr tragen sie dazu bei, die Demokratie neu zu definieren und ihr Biss zu verleihen. Die Wahldemokratie (*electoral democracy*) wird zur Monitordemokratie (*monitory democracy*). Demokratie ist damit nicht mehr nur gleichbedeutend mit freien und fairen Wahlen, sondern beinhaltet weit mehr: eine Garantie der Freiheit der Bürger vor räuberischer Macht in all ihren abstoßenden Ausprägungen, einschließlich unseres rücksichtslosen Umgangs mit der Erde, auf der wir leben.

Es stimmt, dass die neuen Überwachungsparlamente fragil sind. Sie arbeiten ohne große intellektuelle Unterstützung. Es gibt keine großen politischen Theorien, die ihnen Schutz gewähren, wie es einst François Guizots Vorlesungen über die Ursprünge der repräsentativen Regierung in den frühen 1820er Jahren, oder John Stuart Mills Betrachtungen über die Repräsentativregierung 1861 taten. Diesen Watchdog-Parlamenten fehlt es an Handbüchern und Bedienungsanleitungen. Das hat zur Folge, dass sie in der Wissenschaft kein Aufsehen erregen und keine historischen Erfolgsgarantien genießen. Nur künftigen Historikern, nicht aber uns, sind ihre Überlebenschancen bekannt. Das Einzige, was sicher ist, ist, dass der Geist dieser Watchdog-Parlamente jene Kraft ist, die wir Menschen benötigen werden im Bemühen um einen klugen, gerechten und demokratischen Umgang mit den reichhaltigen Möglichkeiten und den sich häufenden Gefahren unseres unruhigen Jahrhunderts. ◀

Dies ist ein Ausschnitt einer Grundsatzrede in Anwesenheit von König Felipe VI. auf der Konferenz zur Feier des Internationalen Tages des Parlamentarismus, die von Inter Pares: EU Global Project to Strengthening the Capacity of Parliaments veranstaltet wurde (Cortes Generales, León, Spanien, 30. Juni 2023). Vollständige Fassung (auf Englisch und Spanisch): www.eurozine.com/why-parliaments/ und www.eurozine.com/por-que-importan-los-parlamentos/

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Democratic Innovation: A Matter of National Security

BY IEVA CESNULAITYTE

Citizens' assemblies give people agency, strengthen quality information ecosystems, and overcome polarization by bridging divides. In doing so, they help strengthen people's resilience to authoritarianism and populism.

Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe is in a particularly vulnerable moment as it faces a wave of populism, polarization, and growing public disengagement against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine.

In Hungary and Serbia, authoritarian tendencies are grown stronger, while Austria shows alarming levels of support for the populist Freedom Party. Rising polarization and discontent in Slovakia has led to a new governing coalition threatening to end support to Ukraine, which would open yet another crack for Russian influence in the region. In Poland, a much-needed change in government after the recent parliamentary elections promises renewal, but years of erosion of human rights and rule of law have left a mark.

We must address the weakening of democratic infrastructure with genuine democratic innovation. People are looking for greater agency in their lives and for real solutions to their problems. By tapping into the constructive aspects of our shared humanity and creating the conditions for our collective intelligence to emerge, we can take steps to reinvigorate democracy.

A Matter of National Security

Rising populism is the unintended outcome of the current democratic political system. Large parts of society are legitimately withdrawing their consent from a representative system that has failed to represent them and left them feeling behind in the globalized world, not in control of their lives, living under the pressures of changing climate and insecurity, and experiencing war fatigue. The inability of governments to articulate a roadmap for change and a more hopeful future does not help.

Even though similar tendencies are present in much of the Western world, in Central and Eastern Europe citizen resilience against populism and polarization is much more a matter of national security than elsewhere. Russia, with its imperial ambitions and foreign interference, exploits the flaws of the current democratic system and people's feelings of disillusionment.

Citizens' Assemblies

There is a vision for change and a more hopeful democratic future. Something remarkable has been happening right under our noses: a new kind of democracy is taking root.



The 150 members of the French Citizen's Convention on Climate.

Over the last few decades, governments across the world have been reaping the benefits of citizens' assemblies: a democratic model, grounded in ancient Athenian practices that has been widely implemented and embedded into public decision-making as new institutions connected to power and underpinned by a legal basis.¹ In citizens' assemblies, governments convene groups of everyday people selected by lottery and broadly representative of society. They are empowered to learn, deliberate, build consensus, and develop recommendations that consider the values behind multifaceted public issues.

Citizens' assemblies have been strikingly successful in tackling policy problems. In France, 185 people selected by lottery from across the country were convened to deliberate on whether to amend the legislation on end-of-life issues, and if so, how. After deliberating for 27 days over four months, they reached a 92 percent consensus on around 67 recommendations. In Ireland, citizens' assemblies have been common practice at the national level for over ten years.

Citizens' assemblies are democratic spaces for everyday people to grapple with the complexity of policy issues, listen to one another, and find common ground. In doing so, they create the conditions for over-

coming polarization as well as for strengthening societal cohesion and democratic resilience.

Citizen Deliberation in Central Eastern Europe

Citizens' assemblies, initially largely implemented in the West, over the past few years have been used in Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and Slovakia. Introduced by governments, civil society organizations, and academia, they demonstrate the potential of democratic innovation in the region.

Where populist and extremist trends are not worrying yet, such as in the Baltic states, citizens' assemblies are the next step toward a less vulnerable democratic paradigm. By creating spaces for people to deliberate and shape decisions affecting their lives, they provide genuine opportunities for citizens to exercise their agency. Building up people's democratic resilience can strengthen this essential line of defense against externally induced social discontent.

In countries where polarization is emerging, such as Austria and Slovakia, but civil society and rule of law has not been significantly weakened yet, citizens' assemblies could be just what is needed to defuse rising tensions. By establishing them on pressing and divisive issues, gov-

ernments can create an opportunity for citizens to tackle them in a constructive way, to promote considered judgment, and to enable them to work toward a shared consensus. This would reduce the possibility of a thorny issue being weaponized by populist elites to entrench social divides for their political benefit, a classic move in the populist playbook. Research also suggests that when citizens with populist views take part in assemblies they turn out to be equally motivated by the common good as other citizens. Echo chambers that intensify polarization do not operate in deliberative conditions. Assembly members become less extreme as deliberation reduces biases in information processing and reasoning.²

Corruption, a legacy of the informal networks inherited from communist times in most of the region, remains a weak spot that enables power capture. Citizen deliberation can enhance transparency and strengthen the integrity of public decision-making, reducing opportunities for individuals with money or power to exercise undue influence. Ramping up this line of defense contributes to more robust democratic governance.

Where democracy is already in serious decline, such as in Hungary and Serbia, citizen deliberation at the local level could present an opening. Strengthening local governance

is often the last line of defense against democratic backsliding, with cities in particular being a stronghold against authoritarianism. However, citizens' assemblies should be implemented with caution in such contexts. Like other parts of the democratic system, they are not immune to influence or misuse by the government to legitimize its decisions. Usually a clear and transparent governance and protocol for citizens' assemblies, as well as independent evaluation, helps ensure their legitimacy and democratic quality. But where civil society and the rule of law are compromised, these checks and balances might not always be possible, especially at the national level. The presence of international observers or deliberation in frameworks organized by international organizations could address such concerns.

Informed citizen deliberation could to some extent mitigate mis/disinformation, which is routinely employed to cause polarization or as a tool of foreign interference. In citizens' assemblies, people are presented with diverse stakeholder views and a comprehensive package of information about a specific policy issue. They are invited to think critically and to deliberate extensively over different arguments to develop their own point of view. As the information they receive is made public and communicated widely, this broad base of evidence can also enable informed public debate on the policy issue and reduce the impact of mis/disinformation about the particular issue in society.

Ultimately, if implemented well, citizens' assemblies are about hope. They are about people coming together across party lines and divisions, and experiencing a new kind of democracy that bridges and empowers. In the process, it is possible to build democratic resilience at the individual, country, and regional levels. ◀

1) OECD (2020), *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

2) Grönlund, K., Herne, K. and Setälä, M. (2015), "Does enclave deliberation polarize opinions?", *Political Behavior*, 37(4), pp. 995–1020.

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To Survive, the EU Must Become a People's Project

BY ALBERTO ALEMANNO

The EU's future expansion to the east offers an unmissable opportunity to profoundly reform itself by putting its people in the driving seat.

After seventy years of unprecedented socioeconomic integration, the EU continues to evolve through processes that largely neglect people's input. It remains virtually impossible for an EU citizen or resident—not to mention those living in candidate countries or other regions impacted by the EU—to express their desire for change in the union's direction and to hold its institutions accountable. Yet as the big crises of the last decade have shown, from the sovereign-debt crisis to the Covid-19 pandemic to Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the violence in Israel and Gaza, EU action and inaction directly affect people's lives across Europe and beyond. If the EU reacted in unprecedented ways to these crises—from the establishment of union-wide taxes for pandemic relief to the creation of joint-procurement agreements for vaccines and now for weapons to the activation of a common temporary protection mechanism for those fleeing Ukraine—its emergency responses took place with little or no democratic control.

This is far from new. The EU has always struggled with standard representative democracy, due to a combination of institutional design and history. As a technocratic project driven by member states, it drew its political legitimacy from the democratic credentials of the delegating countries. The EU found its way through a tacit and permissive consensus. Owing to its genetic code, it has been historically suspicious of any expression of popular sovereignty. If EU citizens have voted for their representatives in the European Parliament since 1979, even today they do so on different dates, according to different electoral laws, for candidates selected by national—rather than European—political parties and on the basis of domestic agendas. As a result, the EU lacks not only genuine EU-wide political parties competing into a transnational electoral contest, but also a pan-EU political space in which citizens can participate in decision-making that affects their common interests as Europeans. When it comes to political representation, unless a clear link between the vote cast by citizens and the formation of the next European Commission is established, it remains difficult to explain to voters what the purpose of them going to the European Parliament ballot is. This appears even more so as no motion of censure exists, so no one can realistically push the “European government” out of power and hold a



Photo: Bits and Spits / Shutterstock.com

political party, leader, or institution properly to account.

To many, it might appear unrealistic to transform a union of demographically and economically heterogeneous states into a fully fledged parliamentary democracy in which a transnational parliament matters as much as the states. Yet, one of the major lessons of the last decade of EU integration is that those who make decisions having a transnational impact must emerge from a transnational electoral process too. In other words, in a union made up of states and citizens, decision-makers must represent both.

Despite the EU's multiple internal and external challenges, its leaders have thus far resisted calls for any significant institutional reform. Yet an opportunity to tackle its democratic conundrum may now be on offer. As Jan Zielonka presciently predicted a few years ago, “unless there are some powerful external shocks forcing dramatic changes, a spectacle of false pretensions can continue for a long time.”¹ Those shocks are now in full swing.

As it contemplates a new expansion to the east, which is made inescapable by the new geopolitical imperatives, the EU is once again set to reform internally to be able to expand externally. This offers a unique chance to acknowledge the limitations of a system and structures created regardless of the people, and eventually to put addressing the legitimacy deficiency in EU integration front and centre.

Absence of popular input has been the case not only for citizens of member states but also for those from

candidate countries. The last big accession waves of 2004 and 2007 fully revealed the original, unresolved “democratic sin” of EU integration.

By not foreseeing that citizens from candidate countries may have a say on the prospect of joining the union, the EU has deprived itself from earning a crucial legitimating opportunity. A look at “illiberal” Hungary suffices to gauge the costs of that omission. As shown by Ivan Krastev and Steven Holmes, behind today's Central and East European illiberal revolution, there is a cultural, political, and democratic rejection of a top-down model imposed under a logic of imitation on countries emerging from communism.²

In sum, due to its historical neglect of any expression of popular sovereignty, at accession and in membership, the EU has given up on the most powerful legitimating source at its disposal. Seen from this perspective, the Brexit referendum may be read as a revenge story (“take back control”) against the EU's atavistic scepticism toward every expression of popular input.

The next enlargement will offer a unique opportunity not only to remedy that original sin but also to replace it with a “European democratic dividend.” By that I refer to the benefits, advantages, and positive outcomes that may result from a people-led choice for—and control of—European integration in each individual country.

Hence the need to radically rethink not only the EU accession process by giving voice to the candidate countries' citizens, but also the very membership status.

To be part of the EU can no longer be all-or-nothing affair. To restore its credibility at home and abroad, the EU must move away from the dominant yet illusory paradigm of a monolithic membership imposed from above to a more diversified approach in which each country decides to commit, from the bottom up, to a menu of possible manifestations and spaces of EU integration. Under this new heterogeneous, multispeed, and citizen-led construct, some countries would be free to integrate more deeply in certain areas without being prevented by others from doing so, or without feeling pressured to do so.

By eventually surrendering some political autonomy to citizens, this new collective understanding of accession and membership would entail a reset of the EU project. Candidate countries would be able to choose the degree of integration best suited to their needs and political realities while existing member states would be asked to reconsider their degree of engagement with the EU—and to do that based on their respective citizens' wishes. One may consider, along the lines of the recent proposal by the Group of Twelve,³ a Franco-German expert initiative, four tiers of “membership,” the last two falling outside the EU altogether, could coexist. These “concentric circles” would include an inner circle whose members could have even closer ties than those that bind the EU already, the EU as we know it, associate membership (that is, of the internal market only), and the looser, less demanding new European Political Community.

This multispeed construct would however not create different levels of worth or standing among countries. Instead, it would unleash an alternative geopolitical imagination capable of accommodating different levels of commitment toward EU integration that for the first time would be driven by popular choice.

While new and existing members would be free to choose which circle to join, respect for the rule of law and commitment to human rights should remain non-negotiable. As a result, the exclusion of noncompliant members from any given circle could, unlike now, be foreseen and be accepted as legitimate, since under the proposed model all members would have their relationships with the EU determined by the participation of citizens.

This fresh and pragmatic approach to EU democratic expansion appears more attuned to today's political realities than the original EU formula that still applies.

Under this regenerative dynamic, it would be a self-aware citizenry, not the individual states nor the EU institutions, to choose whether and the extent to which their country should engage in supranational decision-making and under what rules. <

1) Jan Zielonka, *Is the EU doomed?*, Polity Press, 2014, chapter 1.

2) Ivan Krastev and Steven Holmes, *The Light that Failed*, Pegasus, 2020.

3) Report of the Franco-German Working Group on EU Institutional Reform, *Sailing on High Seas: Reforming and Enlarging the EU for the 21st Century*, September 18, 2023, www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/19/Paper-EU-reform.pdf

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WhatsAppers and Local Participation in Brazil

BY SÉRGIO BARBOSA

Digital sociologist Sérgio Barbosa explores the role of chat app activism in democratic mobilization and local participation against the background of turbulent political episodes in Brazil.

With a population of more than 215 million, Brazil is one of the largest democracies in the Global South. The extreme inequality in the country has multiple dimensions. One is that a significant part of the semi-illiterate population gathers its information almost solely through audio and video messages on WhatsApp groups. This is thanks to the zero-rating fees provided by telecom companies to Meta, which means that Brazilians still have unlimited use of WhatsApp even if their internet access is no longer covered by their telecom plan.¹ As a consequence, there is a huge dependence on WhatsApp as a daily problem-solving platform. The app, which Brazilians nicknamed ZapZap, is used to find and share news. It is also frequently used as a primary form of communication.

The profile picture of the WhatsApp group #UnitedAgainstTheCoup



The Rise of WhatsAppers

The WhatsAppers are everyday activists using the app to organize, communicate, and foster emerging forms of political participation at the local level. They have appropriated a commercial chat platform as a means to participate in political life. Engagement with chat app-based activism is an intimate affair, mediated by affordances, that enables local participation. Any average citizen could in theory be a WhatsApp, including those not previously politically active. They interact digitally with others through closed messaging communities, where online and offline arenas are most of the time very blurred.²

WhatsApp stands out as an emerging space of political participation for three main reasons. First, it affords structurally collective engagement and boosts interpersonal trust. Second, it forges communities of mutual interest. Third, it promotes internal decision-making processes on the scale of small groups. My research on chat app-based technologies that bypass the traditional structure of how grassroots engage in Brazil has focused on the interactions of two progressive chat groups in Florianópolis, the capital city of the state of Santa Catarina in the south of the country.

#UnitedAgainstTheCoup was created in March 2016 by a political activist in Florianópolis in the run-up to the parliamentary vote on the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. The group opposed this “soft coup” and later demanded her return to the presidency. At the

onset, virtually all participants were listed as group administrators on a private chat, which enabled each one of them to add or to exclude members. The still active group is heterogeneous, including professionals, journalists, and students, with a minority from other parts of the country. It brings together experienced activists (for example, trade unionists) and newcomers to active politics. It hosts political content (for example, news, images, links, memes, and videos), calls to protests, and reflections and heated debates about Brazil’s turbulent situation. The group organized the “vomitação” (super puke) action, in which members at the same time posted comments with vomit stickers on the Facebook profile of the party of Vice-President Michel Temer, who assumed the presidency after Rousseff.

#CampecheAndSouthOfTheIslandPopularStruggleCommittee was created in October 2022 by a grassroots activist from the Campeche neighborhood in Florianópolis in the run-up to the 2022 elections, uniting existing local groups of the south of the island. It opposed the political movement of President Jair Bolsonaro and aimed to drive votes for Lula da Silva. It is still active with 168 participants: local residents including retired people, grassroots activists, and local councilors, mostly based in Campeche. They position themselves as defenders of democracy promoting equality and social change, mainly in the neighborhood and nearby areas of the south of the island. The group organized

before the elections the “bandeiraço” (super flags) street action in which members called for on-the-ground actions and brought flags in support of Lula.

#UnitedAgainstTheCoup and #CampecheAndSouthOfTheIslandPopularStruggleCommittee are local initiatives that did not derive from a programmatic structure but evolved organically from WhatsAppers’ lived experiences. They embraced a varied repertoire of actions that blur the lines between online and offline: information-sharing (diffusion of news ignored by mainstream media); creative platform-bound protest (calls to action and deployment of creativity and art through online and ground activities); interpersonal communication as collective engagement (“direct replies” as dialogue between group members); bottom-up organization (absence of formal leadership, and decision-making based on heated discussions through chat messages, with many agendas coexisting through flexible management); networks of solidarity (based on common interests and, values and collective ideas); and connections to other WhatsApp groups, including offsprings of the “mother group,” to engage in specific activities.

The Dark Side

In January 2019, Brazil first far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, took office, with the 2016 “soft coup” against Rousseff jump-starting the campaign that led to his election. Bolsonaro’s victory was based on the massive spread of mis/disinfor-

mation through WhatsApp public and private groups, which was facilitated by the deep penetration of the app in Brazil. The platform was used as a flywheel of mis/disinformation with Bolsonaro supporters sharing malicious content with regional and local activists, who then spread it further widely in social media platforms. I call this the dark side of WhatsAppers,³ as this process is widely facilitated by the capillarity of WhatsApp private and public groups. This fosters a “pipeline” for inaccurate content that originates from WhatsApp groups to spread as widely as possible.

In the first year of Bolsonaro’s presidency, Brazil experienced record Amazon deforestation. He also attacked the press and severely mismanaged the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020, Brazilians were bombarded with pandemic-related disinformation while far-right activists took to the streets against the lockdown. In the 2022 elections, Telegram and TikTok were also weaponized alongside WhatsApp groups by far-right groups to spread mis/disinformation. However, the Electoral Supreme Court was more prepared to react to this wave of disinformation.

Reinventing the Chat App Ecosystem

WhatsAppers had a clear pro-democracy agenda and strategy to promote bottom-up arenas to fight political turbulence. During the hardest period of Covid-19, they also used high-speed participatory decision-making to deliver grocer-

ies, collect money, produce masks, share scientific information, mobilize against disinformation, reach vulnerable population, and fight for emergent political imaginaries. Both groups studied remain active on WhatsApp, using it as a channel for internal communication, and a progressive agenda.

The current challenge is to understand WhatsApp-based activism through its paramount importance at the local level to organize day-to-day activities, to unite for a common political cause with low participation costs, and to promote local social change. It is also to situate WhatsAppers and contextualize their appropriation in the Global South. In other words, the challenge is to see everyday activism beyond large-scale social mobilization in Europe and United States, and to reinvent how accurate information can be also disseminated on chat app ecosystems in a massive and creative way. ◀

1) For more on this, see Laila Lorenzon, “The High Cost of ‘Free’ Data: Zero-Rating and its Impacts on Disinformation in Brazil”, Data-Pop Alliance, December 9, 2021.

2) See Sérgio Barbosa, “COMUNIX WhatsAppers: The Community School in Portugal and Spain”, *Political Studies Review*, 1–8, 2020.

3) See Sérgio Barbosa and Charlott Back, “The Dark Side of Brazilian WhatsAppers”, in Jesús Sabriego, Augusto Jobim do Amaral, and Eduardo Baldissera Carvalho Salles (eds.), *Algoritmos*. São Paulo, BR, Valencia, ES: Tirant lo Blanch, pp. 454–467.

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Political History Is Worth Saving

BY ADÉLA GJURIČOVÁ

Historical studies of politics care about how power is organized and used. In recent decades, political history has been rightly criticized as traditionalist and dropped out of the historiographical mainstream. Adéla Gjuričová argues it is worth rescuing.

Political history once stood at the birth of modern historiography. As a narrative of political events, ideas, and movements, as well as of governing bodies, political groupings, and leaders, it grew close to diplomatic history, legal history, and the history of political systems and administration. For long, it used to represent the discipline as a whole and occupied most of its institutional resources. Yet over several decades, political history became marginal and difficult to defend or to get funding for. Even at the IWM, it seemed to be the only topic that did not lead to lively discussions during the renowned lunch sessions, where even very unconventional ideas find a friendly and engaged audience.

Political history itself was to blame for this hostility. It had embodied a specific, narrow perspective of politics, characterized by reducing it to the description of central institutions, to lists of members of formal bodies, and to personified stories of a succession of their leaders or rulers. Such a focus led to exclusive engagement with national elites and white men. That was *the* political history that dominated historiography from the nineteenth century to the 1960s.

Then new approaches challenged the authority of the discipline. Social history and cultural studies shifted the emphasis away from the study of leaders, elite institutions, and national decisions, and moved attention to the role of ordinary people, including outsiders and minorities. Quantitative methods joined in and managed to relate mass political preferences to social categories such as religion, gender, or ethnicity. Political options began to be seen as a part of cultural practice passed on within cultures and across them.

A few years later, the postmodern and linguistic turns suggested that politics could also be understood as a matter of language, discourse, and visual or other representation. This revealed the language of politics as a cultural and power-laden instrument rather than a neutral product of intellectual activity. Understanding the past as not existing outside its textual and other representations produced completely new interpretations of established problems of political history; for example, as in Lynn Hunt's work on the literary genres of political rhetoric in the different phases of the French Revolution.

All this seems obvious today, but the fact that the basic premise of an immutable past that had happened and could be reconstructed from certain types of sources has been shattered is of grave importance. Political history, apparently depending



Hall of the former Federal Assembly of Czechoslovakia

Photo: Lukáš Havlen / Courtesy by the Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences

on that idea, has been weakened, and adapting to its new position has been far from easy. A previously dominant discipline now experiences a status that “has sunk to somewhere between that of a faith healer and a chiropractor. Political historians were all right in a way, but you might not want to bring one home to meet the family.”

These were the words of William Leuchtenburg, a leading political historian, in a heated 1986 debate on the setback of political history, which not only documented the dramatic decrease in the number of these and grants but also initiated the idea of New Political History. Many journals and associations have been discussing the crisis of political history since, yet as Giovanni Orsina, a leading researcher of the political class and journalism, remarked recently, lamenting over the position of political history sometimes prevails over searching for new topics and approaches to them.

The East-Central European historiographies of communist dictator-

ships and their post-socialist transformations, to which the author of this essay has proudly contributed, were not exactly brimming with innovative trends in the first decades following 1989. They mostly remained within personified stories of traditional political institutions and showed them as domain of elites—old, new or old-new—and of white male actors. These works most often focused on developments at the central level and were satisfied with seeing the main events from the perspective of national capitals.

The abundance of sources and living witnesses that make the most recent contemporary history an exception within the discipline soon brought researchers' attention to the stimuli of oral history. Yet its proponents often missed the original point, namely to give voice to the previously unheard narratives from communities that were excluded from conventional historical sources. In contradiction to what the original Anglophone founders of oral history intended, the first col-

lections of interviews in East-Central Europe again favored leading actors and elites, and offered themselves as a historical source equal to written sources, without suggesting any specific analytical guidelines or concepts.

Nonetheless, the historical study of politics is worth saving. The original primary angle of power and its institutionalization is unique, and the criticism of political history should be taken as a starting point for the creative incorporation of useful inspiration from cultural and social history, of anthropology and sociology.

Such experimenting can make even traditional institutions fascinating again, as current European parliamentary studies show. For example, the monograph on Czechoslovakia's parliament that I co-authored,¹ offered an ethnographic study of the “wild tribe” of parliamentarians to explore the status of newcomers, their different roles in the community, and the institution's rituals and good manners. An established political body then comes

out as much more than the names of those elected, the rules of procedure, and the adopted laws.

An interpretation of institutionalized practices and their institutional ecologies shows parliaments as entities that can be vulnerable and undergo change within the same constitutional schemes, and yet in another sense tend to be resilient and durable. The notion of parliamentary culture—as a complex set of rhetorical, cultural, social, gender, visual, and other characteristics that makes up the idea and practice of parliamentarism in the specific national, regional, or wider European context—helps explain why some features of institutional culture can be preserved through decades of dictatorship and be found again in internal procedures or public expectations.

Leaving the central level, while incorporating some of the perspectives above, can be equally productive. For example, observing socialist and post-socialist towns, municipalities, and regions—as is done within the current fusion of urban history and transformation studies—can expose unexpected actors and factors, new chronologies, and unseen inequalities. My institution's current comparative research of municipal administrations at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s shows very independent local elites and economies and their crucial influence on the specific paths of privatization and commercialization of urban environments.² What seemed absent in the central institutions—the Roma and other minorities, in particular—is central here.

With grand narratives falling apart in current historical research, I do not suggest to particularize the debate further. Political history asks the right questions on power, the state, the institutional framework, and the organization of power relations in social and cultural contexts. Thanks to productive fusions with other parts of historiography as well the social sciences, it gains new tools to interpret sources, while always historicizing the findings. If we allow it back in play, we might gain a helpful ally against the pressure of political activism and the presentism of current historical research, one bringing counterintuitive interpretations to the familiar terms of contemporary debates. <

1) A. Gjuričová and T. Zahradníček: *Návrat parlamentu: Češi a Slováci ve Federálním shromáždění, 1989-1992*. Praha 2018.

2) *City as a Laboratory of Change*. Strategy AV21 project of the Academy of Sciences. strategieav21-mesto-stavby.cz/

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Unpacking the Power of Memory in Populism

BY JOHANA WYSS

The countries of Central Eastern Europe, like others worldwide, are grappling with a rising challenge to the stability of democratic systems. This often takes the form of increasing political polarization, coupled with a surge in populism, nationalism, and right-wing extremism. One notable, yet understudied, aspect of this polarization is the use and abuse of historical memory.

As I am writing this essay, political observers and colleagues at the IWM and elsewhere celebrate the victory of the opposition in Poland's recent parliamentary elections. The joy and relief for the country are even more heartfelt after the grim results of Slovakia's elections that took place only a couple of weeks earlier. And especially as the state of liberal democracy in Hungary remains grim, to say the least, and in the Czech Republic the populist ANO party's renewed popularity suggests it could return to power in 2025. However, despite this brief occasion for celebration, the return to pre-populist liberal democracy is unlikely in all four countries.

The decline in the quality of democracy and the rise of populism in Central Eastern Europe over the past decade have been noteworthy. Nationalism, racism, and the "symbolic thickening of public culture," as Jan Kubik calls it, aiming to promote and preserve "traditional" social institutions and cultural heritage, have also seen a resurgence. Rather than creating a vision for the future, populist leaders have adeptly reshaped historical narratives to serve their contemporary political agendas. This "crisis of the future," in which the future no longer serves as a unifying force, has made the past an essential soft-power resource. In this context, selective historical memory is often explicitly crafted by populist movements to mobilize voters and gain their support. Its relevance and potency lie in the fact that the "present past" rather than the "present future" functions as the apparent quintessential foundation of a political community, clearly distinguishing between "us" and "them." Indeed, this fundamental juxtaposition between the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite" is the most common, yet vague, definitional cornerstone of populism.

Memory and Populism

In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has harnessed the contentious memory of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, stoking nationalistic sentiment and a sense of historical injustice to justify his consolidation of power and the assertion of Hungarian sovereignty. In Poland, Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of the Law and Justice party, has implemented stringent memory laws that suppress



"I am hurt by Trianon." Supporters of the World Federation of Hungarians take part in a memorial event in front of the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest on June 2, 2020, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the WWI peace agreement.

Photo: FERENC SZÁ / AFP / picturedesk.com

references to Polish involvement in the Holocaust, quashing dissent and reinforcing national pride to solidify his political influence. In Slovakia, Prime Minister Robert Fico has faced criticism for his revisionist approach to Jozef Tiso, the leader of the Slovak Republic state during the Second World War. By downplaying Tiso's collaboration with Nazi Germany, Fico has sought to appease far-right elements within his coalition and maintain his political control. In the same vein, in the Czech Republic, former prime minister Andrej Babiš has utilized historical narratives surrounding the Munich Agreement to bolster his political standing. He has frequently referenced the agreement, which led to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, to rally nationalist sentiment among his supporters and to justify his ambivalent positions on European integration.

Antagonistic Memories

These leaders illustrate the use and abuse of historical memory to advance political agendas, often at the expense of unifying politics and historical accuracy. In particular, they capitalize on contentious and conflicting collective memories of events, known as "antagonistic memories." These usually revolve around events that have deep emotional significance and the power to trigger impassioned out-

bursts in a population, such as the "humiliation" of Trianon, Holocaust "guilt," Nazi "shame," or the "betrayal" of Munich. Antagonistic collective memories are fuelled by an unprocessed, difficult past that can be used to ignite people's old fears and resentments to promote polarizing political agendas.

To understand this intrinsic relationship between antagonistic memories and populist agendas, the historical background is vital. The region's transformation from pronounced heterogeneity to relative ethnic homogeneity during the course of the twentieth century can be linked to both World Wars and the population transfers, forced displacements, and genocides that followed. The extremely difficult process of working through the past, exemplified by West Germany's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* regarding the Holocaust, barely took root in Central Eastern European countries. Troubling memories of forced displacements and ethnic cleansings were heavily suppressed during the socialist era, and remembering the vanished others remains contentious to this day, as the examples presented above shows.

The complexity of such historical experience for a region existing simultaneously at the edges but also at the center of the main socio-political forces is reflected in a multitude of challenging and often contra-

dictory historical narratives. These are variably addressed in academic writing as "disputed memories," "difficult heritage," "contested memories," "twilight memories," and even "memory wars." What these contestations show is that maintaining the ideology of a primordial ethno-national homogeneity while simultaneously silencing any memories of expulsions, forced assimilations, or ethnic cleansings is a precarious and laborious affair, involving denial and "prescriptive forgetting" of the vanished others and of lost heterogeneity, as well as other forms of memory work.

Anthropology of Populist Voters

However, it is the conceptualization, understanding, and discussion of how memory and populism interact in the everyday lives and realities of ordinary citizens that is missing. While the literature dealing with the illiberal turn and democratic backsliding—coming primarily from political science—is extremely useful in terms of its contextualization and theoretical grounding, there has been comparatively less work on understanding and explaining people's emic, bottom-up perspective. It is as if ordinary people, as opposed to political or public figures, have nothing to say about their own understandings of the past, present, and future, or about their reasons for

sympathizing with populist movements and political parties.

To understand the relationship between mnemonic politics and the current illiberal turn, one needs to take the understandings and motivations of ordinary voters seriously, instead of brushing them off and trivializing them. Overlooking the intricate motivations and narrative accounts behind individuals' support for populist leaders and parties only further hinders our comprehensive grasp of populism and its accompanying societal shifts. If we truly aspire to study and understand the illiberal turn, it is imperative that we refrain from passing condescending judgment on those who align with illiberal agendas and instead endeavour to fathom the worldviews and everyday mnemonic practices of ordinary citizens, irrespective of our personal political stances and convictions. This approach promotes empathy and a willingness to engage with diverse perspectives, contributing to a more inclusive and rounded study of populism and its societal implications. <

This essay straddles between and draws on my pilot study of the subject, published as *Exploring Populism Through the Politics of Commemoration* (Europe-Asia Studies, 2021) and the upcoming ERC StG research project MEMPOP: Memory and Populism from Below (2024–2028).

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Populism and Rewriting the Grammar of Democracy

BY RANABIR SAMADDAR

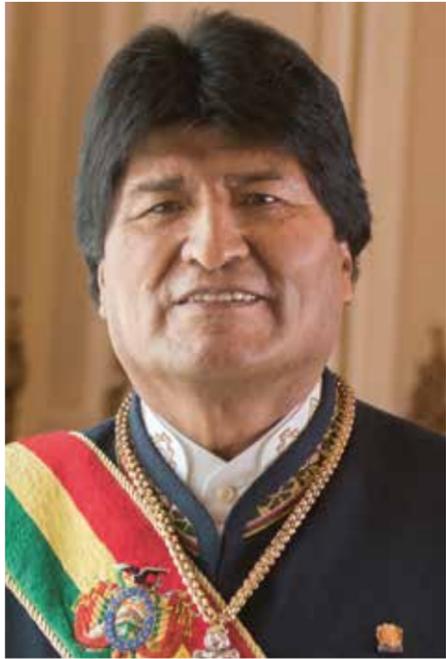
Populism responds to the crisis of political representation in contemporary democracies. Populists argue for the primacy of politics over economics. Common sense is central to populist politics.

The dominance of populist politics today in various parts of the world has surprised liberal political observers and analysts. Part of the reason is the astonishingly rapid decline of the institutional core of representative democracy. Another part is the equal rapidity with which populists filled the vacuum. The situation is also marked by a failure of the traditional left globally to step in with its own agenda.

Populism is not a specific phenomenon of the right wing in politics that builds on liberal democracy and then becomes authoritarian by focusing on conservative themes such as family, religion, and tradition, and by using racist or xenophobic slogans.¹ Left-wing populists would not even label such a politics as populist, but rather as reactionary and nationalistic. Moreover, the understanding of populism in the Global South and the policies associated with it deviate remarkably from the prevalent perception of populism in the North. Populism as a broad general phenomenon is rooted in specific local experiences of contentious politics as well.

The problem populism wants to address centers around the much discussed crisis of political representation. The question of representation was present from the democracy's inception. In the past, there were other ways than populism to make sense of this crisis. These were ways of making self-rule possible, even to make a different society that one may label as "counter-democracy," in the style of Pierre Rosanvallon.² As a living phenomenon, populism has an active relation with the past as it continuously challenges our understanding of the past and suggests a different story of its genesis, an alternative tale of the legitimacy of democracy in politics.

The features of the crisis of representation are well-known. People no longer think of their rulers as their representatives and show their annoyance by voting for far-right or populist parties. At times, they demand more direct forms of representation. Representational theory, whatever form it takes, believes in a social body of the people awaiting representation. For populists, there is no such thing—instead, they are the people who will make the government. Outside of the populist platform in which people and leadership merge, there cannot be any natural unity of people and their representatives, and thus there



Evo Morales, 65th President of Bolivia.



Nicolás Maduro, President of Venezuela.



Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil.

cannot be any "evidently coherent totality" of representative democracy. Only after the populists have given an identity to the people can it be said to have been constituted. This is where populists mark themselves out as distinct from parties, unions, and various pressure groups, through which individuals are supposed to feel connected to larger bodies and the state, and thereby feel represented. Populist platforms do not simply mirror existing preferences of people. They damage, and when possible, destroy the old representational dynamics, or at least mould these so that these acquire new meaning and coherence.

Individuals no longer feel represented by their rulers due to the incapacity of political parties, unions, knowledge institutions, and academic and policy discourses to structure society for the good of the people and offer individuals an identity, as distinct from the identity of the institutions and agencies of representation. The lack of participation of citizens in politics has to do with control of various associations and institutions, social surveillance, and the consequent distrust of citizens for these institutions and associations. The problem thus is not how to represent people in power but how to make the people an organic and coherent collective.

This puts the populists in permanent attrition with the received past of democracy, because the history of democracy is at loggerheads with what is now termed as the history of the political. The latter is built on a more dynamic notion of political life. It enables us to view pol-

itics beyond the received history of institutions and to focus on the present political moment in a way in which the political acquires immanent character.

Populism urges society to read and understand itself in an immanent way. This is a political urge as it adds to the power of the society. Populists through this mode try to escape the representational bind. Their mission is to enable society to acquire a new coherence.

While the core of the populist endeavor is the particular way in which it responds to the crisis of representation, the populist agenda varies around the world. The following remarks on populist governance draw primarily on experiences in the Global South, especially the long populist tradition in Latin America.

The populist venture of creating the people has as its engine a specific mode of governing, which, rather than drawing on elaborate analysis and intellectual sophistication, is based on common sense³ and realizations from historical experience.

First, there is the realization that democracy is meaningless unless it has what Ibn Khaldun called *asabiyya*: a feeling of solidarity for which the members of the group needed proper education, historical awareness, shared protocols of life, and awareness of the value of thrift. There is also the historical realization that this sense of solidarity has the power to act as an obstacle against the domination of the ideas of the rich and the democratic elite, for whom democracy is a game of managing the demos.

Second, their experience of governance has taught the populists that if one does not want to overwhelm the people, erode their autonomy, and put politics in the hands of the financially strong classes, the economy must not dominate the government. There has been very little study of the way populist economics works and how its logic stands up to neoliberal financial logic. Economists have been most guilty in underestimating the stakes populists have in what can be called economic common sense: an understanding of economics that is not based on scholarly laws but on historically grown normative beliefs about what constitutes a meaningful economic activity. To mainstream economists, even when they understand the social background of populism, the population's insistence on common sense is just a transitional phenomenon toward modernity and scientific wisdom. They are also overwhelmed with anxiety about inflation and hence are against giving money to the poor. With their almost single tool—the interest rate—which they apply almost uniformly to all sectors and to all regions, mainstream economists are obsessed with the allocation of capital by financial institutions and corporations, which seek the highest risk-adjusted rate of return, not the public good. Thus, social spending takes a back seat, wages remain stagnant, and labor is deregulated. And, as the transition that economists expect never happens, populists move away from mainstream economic wisdom.

Finally, historical experiences have also taught the populists to

value welfare. However, the populist welfare agenda should not be confused with the post-Second World War emergence of the welfare state. In the latter welfare was a mode of redistribution of wealth from the bourgeoisie to the working class. In the case of populist governance, welfare is a form of protection of the poorer classes in face of debt, austerity, and wage crunch. Welfare/protection is an ethical duty of, and justifies, government. The ever-expanding agenda of protection in the face of the marauding forces of globalization and neoliberalism quickly became the mark of populist rule.

Clearly populist government is not liberal government. It is not also socialist government, because it is far removed from planning for the structural transformation of economy. Planning presupposes sovereign power and definite and precise economic goals. Populism does not have the necessary sovereign power nor does it aspire to it. Instead, it concerns itself with the protection of the people and aims to build an economy where the government will be in the driving seat. ◀

1) One of the early expressions of such formulation was by Stuart Hall, "The Great Moving Right Show," *Marxism Today*, January 1979, pp. 14–20.

2) Pierre Rosanvallon, *Counter Democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

3) Stuart Hall spoke of "populist common sense," *ibid.*, p. 17.

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Feminist Foreign Policy: A Dangerous Proposition for the European Union?

BY TONI HAASTRUP

The EU has long struggled with its identity as a foreign policy actor. It is thus unsurprising that, as it has emerged as new concept, some have been advocating for the EU to adopt a feminist foreign policy (FFP). Yet, can the EU really adopt FFP in light of its competing priorities? And can FFP signal a change for the EU?

For as long as the European Union has existed, its identity as a foreign policy actor has been questioned. This comes not from the denial that the EU does things abroad but from whether what it does or can do is comparable to the actions of a state. Challenging those who question its role as a security actor, the last few years have seen an increased militarization of the EU in the security domain. Militarization is supported by an ideology—militarism—that has war as its constant point of reference for security governance. Often, this is measured by the increase in resources assigned to the military and to military solutions to global challenges.

For feminists, this approach to the security dimension of foreign policy reinforces stereotypically masculinized traits for the security actor over its feminized security subjects. The EU's security governance has therefore becomes worrying, with its shift towards increased military spending and ease with acquiring more military assets, given that many of the subjects of its new security governance are in the Global South. As increased power comes with military accumulation, in this context a hierarchy is established where the EU has power over subjects in the majority world.

The impact of this militarization cannot be underestimated. While the deployment of EU military assets in countries like Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Niger has helped to establish its security credibility, this has also caused significant suffering in these places, especially for women and girls. This militarization's main result there has been to reinforce the status quo, or to increase harm if recent coups in Mali and Niger are to factor into how we understand the EU's global security reach.

Enter Feminist Foreign Policy

Sweden was the first country to adopt a feminist foreign policy (FFP) in 2014. Organized around the "3Rs" (rights, representation, and resources), this sought to place gender equality at the heart of the country's foreign policy, leveraging the mythology of its internal identity. Since then, many other coun-



Photo: Claudio Schwarz, March 22, 2019

tries have made a shift towards FFP. With the majority of these being in Europe, it is unsurprising that some have called for the EU to also adopt its own FFP.

This call stems from the fact that, over the last decade or so, the EU has sought to internalize feminist principles in its foreign policy structures and practices. For many, it has done this reasonably well. For example, the EU has demonstrated its commitment to global initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the gender equality one, and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda initiated with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. In this regard, the EU commits itself to gender perspectives in its development and se-

curity policy. As a way to integrate this commitment within its work, the EU adopted its third Gender Action Plan in 2020. This followed on from its 2018 Strategic Approach to Women, Peace, and Security, which supports the implementation of this agenda in domestic and foreign policy. The European Parliament also passed a resolution on gender equality in the EU's foreign and security policy in 2020.

As a result of the above, the EU emphasizes the promotion of women's and girls' participation in formal institutions. More recently, it has also considered intersectionality by acknowledging various identities that can be subject to discrimination and unequal treatments that it wishes to challenge. The majori-

ty of this work is covered by the European External Action Service and the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships.

In addition to creating new frameworks to implement global commitments, the EU has initiated gender programs to demonstrate its global leadership on gender. One example is the Spotlight Initiative, in partnership with the UN, which, with initial funding of €500 million, is currently the largest investment to fight gender-based violence in the world. The initiative aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including femicide, domestic and family violence, female genital mutilation, and sexual and economic exploitation. It is a one-of-a-kind gender program targeting countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific.

The EU's tentative engagements with feminist principles means that to, an extent, it is attending to the marginalization and rights of women and girls within global politics. But, as many feminists have argued, feminism goes beyond gender equality. The notion of feminism as an entry point to in-

clusive policies that benefit women and girls only captures a narrow element of its potential. Activists and scholars advocating feminist inclusion often seek systemic transformation against patriarchy and sexism in every aspect of society. At the same time, gender, understood in its fullness, is not just about these issues. A transformative feminist approach is holistic in that it seeks to challenge a broader range of social inequalities so that men and women can live their lives fully.

Given that feminism aims for the transformation of the status quo, FFP should seek to transform the status quo of foreign policy, which would fundamentally interrogate how the world is ordered, so as to undermine hegemonic power hierarchies. The

deployment of intersectionality in the EU's approaches to gender and within many FFP articulations further reinforces this aim, in theory. Intersectionality, which comes from Black feminist thought calls attention to the ways in which different structures of power such gender, race, and sexual orientation intersect to magnify the marginalization of minoritized identities.

The Dangers of Competing Priorities

What the adoption of the language of feminism in the EU context has revealed is the inherent contestation within its foreign policy architecture. Which one wins when militarism and feminism are in competition? Invariably, the quest for mainstream credibility outweighs the liberatory demands of feminism for the EU. FFP that mainly focuses on separate programs for promoting women's representation or women's rights is able to give foreign policy actors a pass on other areas that continue to cause harm, including to women, from defense spending to extractive trade policies, since these undermine justice for those who are most marginalized in global politics.

Feminism deployed in the EU context, in this manner, provides an alibi for the status quo, wherein militarization can sit easily with the promotion of gender equality. The uncritical adoption of FFP as the foreign policy identity of the EU is therefore potentially dangerous as it can be used to reify prevailing hierarchies of power. While, in many respects, the EU's gender programming as part of its foreign policy practice has been positive, militarization has elided any significant scrutiny. Yet, to be true to feminism, FFP must working towards liberation as its ultimate aim. And what that entails is likely to be messy and uncomfortable for FFP advocacy in Europe. ◀

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Feministische Politik und Fürsorge

VON OLGA SHPARAGA

Feministische Politik gewinnt in Demokratien wie auch autoritären Ländern, insbesondere aber in den gegenwärtigen Kriegssituationen zunehmend an Bedeutung. Fragen der Fürsorge kommt dabei eine zentrale Rolle zu.

Am 7. Juli 2022 erschien inmitten des Krieges das ukrainische Feministische Manifest „Recht auf Widerstand“. Es beginnt mit einem Aufruf zur internationalen feministischen Solidarität mit dem Widerstand des ukrainischen Volkes gegen den imperialistischen Angriff Russlands und enthält eine Reihe von Forderungen nach grundlegenden Menschenrechten. Das wichtigste Anliegen des Manifests ist jedoch, gerade auf die geschlechtsspezifischen Aspekte der Gewalt hinzuweisen. Deshalb fordern die Verfasserinnen neben dem Recht auf Selbstbestimmung, dem Schutz von Leben und Grundfreiheiten sowie dem Recht auf Selbstverteidigung des ukrainischen Volkes ausdrücklich, die Interessen und Rechte von Arbeiter:innen, Frauen und Mädchen, LGBTQ+ Menschen, ethnischen Minderheiten und anderen unterdrückten und diskriminierten Gruppen zu berücksichtigen.

Die ukrainischen Feministinnen verbinden dies auch mit zwei weiteren Forderungen, die – über die unmittelbare Situation des Krieges hinaus – von besonderer Relevanz sind: erstens wird die Notwendigkeit angemahnt, nach dem Krieg beim Wiederaufbau der Ukraine dem Bereich der sozialen Reproduktion (einschließlich Kindergärten, Schulen, medizinischer Einrichtungen usw.) eine Priorität einzuräumen, zweitens soll insgesamt die Sichtbarkeit und Anerkennung der aktiven Rolle von Frauen hervorgehoben und die gleichberechtigte Einbeziehung von Frauen in alle gesellschaftlichen Prozesse in Kriegs- wie in Friedenszeiten sichergestellt sein.

Baerbocks „Feministische Außenpolitik“

Diese Forderungen der ukrainischen Feministinnen und ihre gesellschaftlichen Visionen weisen Ähnlichkeiten mit der „Feministischen Außenpolitik“ auf, die im Februar 2023 von der deutschen Außenministerin Annalena Baerbock vorgestellt wurde. Das Dokument des Ministeriums stuft die Vergewaltigung in bewaffneten Konflikten unmissverständlich als Kriegsverbrechen ein. Ferner weist es auf den Umstand hin, dass die aktive Beteiligung von Frauen an Konfliktlösungen die Chancen auf einen nachhaltigen Frieden erhöht. Feministische Außenpolitik setzt sich für die Kontrolle der Produktion, der Verbreitung und des Exports von Waffen aller Art

ein und fordert ein gendersensibles und genderspezifisches Krisenmanagement sowie entsprechende humanitäre Hilfsprogramme.

Interessant ist aber auch, dass das Dokument gerade mit dem Zitat einer Ukrainerin noch aus der Zeit vor der Eskalation des Krieges beginnt: „Solange Frauen nicht sicher sind, ist niemand sicher.“ Dieser Satz enthält in nuce die Grundüber-

ten aber dabei anderthalbmal so viel unbezahlte Care-Arbeit.

Care-Arbeit im feministischen Kontext

Dass die ukrainischen Feministinnen in ihrem Manifest gerade die Care-Arbeit hervorheben, ist alles andere als zufällig. Care-Arbeit ist eine grundlegende Säule der sozia-

formen der modernen Kommunikation spielten dabei eine wichtige Rolle, es entstanden Gemeinschaften, die manchmal rein situativ waren, manchmal auch nachhaltig verbunden blieben. Dies zeigt, wie wichtig Empathie und Achtsamkeit sind, um in Situationen staatsterroristischer Gewalt eine fürsorgliche Verbindung zwischen Menschen zu schaffen.

tischen Transformationen des Landes. Die praktizierte Fürsorge, die eine tragende Kraft der Proteste von 2020 war, soll in institutionalisierter Form auch die zukünftige Gesellschaft bestimmen. Und sie ermöglicht es den Menschen ganz konkret, sich den unerträglichen Bedingungen der gegenwärtigen Repression zu widersetzen.

Die Infrastruktur der Fürsorge – sei es, dass sie von staatlichen Institutionen bereitgestellt wird, oder sei es, dass sie von Männern und Frauen in schwierigen Situationen auch ohne staatliche Unterstützung hergestellt wird – ist ein zentrales Anliegen der feministischen Politik von heute. Sie verbindet Gesellschaften in Kriegs- und Krisensituationen mit solchen in gefestigten Ordnungen, und es ist keineswegs so, dass sie in demokratischen Gesellschaften als selbstverständlich vorausgesetzt werden darf. In Schweden etwa gab die neue Regierung 2022 ihre feministische Außenpolitik mit der Begründung auf, sie stehe im Widerspruch zu „schwedischen Werten und Interessen“. Dabei war Schweden das erste Land, das 2014 offen eine feministische Außenpolitik verfolgte und damit beispielgebend für Kanada, Frankreich, Mexiko oder Deutschland war.

Asymmetrische Herrschafts-, Macht- und Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse lassen sich am besten aus der Perspektive feministischer Politik und einer damit verbundenen Anerkennung gesellschaftlicher Fürsorgepraktiken sichtbar machen. Denn noch immer gilt, dass die unsichtbare und unbezahlte Hausarbeit vielfach von Frauen und gesellschaftlich marginalisierten Gruppen geleistet wird. Zugleich ist es aber gerade diese systematisch unterbewertete und unterbezahlte Care-Arbeit von Erzieher:innen, Sozialarbeiter:innen, Altenpfleger:innen und vielen anderen, die das Funktionieren und den Zusammenhalt einer Gesellschaft sichert. Dies unterstreicht einmal mehr die entscheidende Bedeutung der Fürsorge für die Politik und die Notwendigkeit, sie gegen Diskurse und Praktiken des Wettbewerbs, des Konsums und des unbegrenzten wirtschaftlichen Wachstums zu schützen. ◀



Kharkiv, 8. März 2021.

zeugung feministischer Politik, dass die geforderte Rechts- und Chancengleichheit für Frauen letztlich einen gesellschaftlichen Zugewinn für alle bedeutet. Die Verwirklichung dieser Rechte von Frauen kann auch als ein Gradmesser verstanden werden, an dem sich der Zustand moderner Gesellschaften beurteilen lässt.

Das Konzept einer feministischen Außenpolitik hat in der deutschen Gesellschaft eine breite Diskussion ausgelöst. Der Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband Hamburg betonte, dass Deutschland neben einer feministischen Außenpolitik auch eine erneuerte feministische Innenpolitik brauche. Denn trotz der in Deutschland formal existierenden Gleichstellung der Geschlechter fehlten in vielen gesellschaftlichen und politischen Bereichen noch immer Mechanismen, die diese fördern. Ungleichheiten hätten sich seit der Covid-Pandemie teilweise sogar noch verstärkt. Deutsche Frauen stellten nur 16 Prozent der Eigentümer der 200 größten Unternehmen und besetzten nur 28 Prozent der Aufsichts- und Führungspositionen, verdienten im Durchschnitt 18 Prozent weniger als Männer, leiste-

len Reproduktion und heute einer der wichtigsten Kontexte im Kampf um weibliche Gleichberechtigung. Jüngste Massenproteste mit Frauen als sichtbaren Anführerinnen – in Polen, Belarus, Iran – und viele weithin sichtbare Praktiken des Widerstands von Frauen in autoritären Gesellschaften haben der Fürsorge eine neue mediale Aufmerksamkeit verliehen. In den Worten der belarussischen Kuratorin Antonina Stebur und des Künstlers Alexej Tolstow im Zusammenhang mit den Protesten in Belarus 2020: „In einer Situation, wo jede Bürgerin und jeder Bürger die Instabilität und Fragilität der eigenen Existenz erfährt, wird Fürsorge zur zentralen politischen Botschaft und zu einem Programm.“

Gerade die Protestbewegungen in Belarus können als gutes Beispiel für die Bedeutung der Care-Arbeit dienen. Die Fürsorge für die Anderen bekundete sich in einer Vielzahl von Praktiken der Solidarität und gegenseitigen Unterstützung. Menschen zu vernetzen, kleine oder größere Gemeinschaften der Fürsorge zu schaffen, war eine wichtige Stütze der Proteste. Verschiedene Platt-

Elementarer Teil dieser Struktur der Fürsorge ist auch die Sorge für sich selbst. Besonders zeigt sich dies heute in den Gefängnissen und Strafkolonien von Belarus, wo derzeit mindestens 1700 politische Gefangene systematisch gefoltert werden. Praktiken der Fürsorge für sich selbst, wie sie sich in der Pflege des eigenen Körpers, in einem Lächeln oder in der bewussten Haltung des Körpers ausdrücken können, sind für Frauen eine Möglichkeit, ihr Selbstwertgefühl zu bewahren. Zugleich sind sie auch eine Form der Sorge um die anderen, weil sie Widerstandsfähigkeit vermitteln. Diese enge Verflechtung zwischen Achtsamkeit für sich selbst und für andere, zwischen (Selbst-)Fürsorge und Solidarität wurde nach der Befreiung aus dem Gefängnis von inhaftierten Frauen in Interviews immer wieder betont.

So wie die ukrainischen Feministinnen in ihrem Manifest schon an die Zeit nach dem Krieg denken und der Sphäre der sozialen Reproduktion besondere Priorität einräumen möchten, so geht es auch in den Überlegungen in Belarus heute schon um die zukünftigen demokra-

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Mediating Ukraine

BY SASHA DOVZHYK

Since Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukrainians have found themselves at the junction of inward and outward media perspectives. When foreign reporters descended upon the country, many assisted them while also becoming the object of news coverage. This exposes how locals are made to earn their credibility and doubt the value of their emotional engagement in the war.



May 30, 2022 in Borodianka, Kyiv region, Ukraine.

Photo: Sasha Dovzhyk

While navigating the turbulent first weeks of the full-scale war in Lviv, I was called upon to speak on air to dozens of media, from Al Jazeera English to the BBC, CNN, and NTD. In these interviews, I was usually paired with an international expert who would provide an objective analytical framework to my emotional first-hand experience. My accounts of Ukrainian defiance would be “balanced” with my counterpart’s suggestion of Ukraine’s inevitable fall. I was a patriotic local woman, naively demanding to sanction the hell out of Russia and provide Ukrainians with the means of defending ourselves and shielding the rest of the world from what Russia was capable of unleashing upon it. My usually male Western counterpart provided a “realistic” antidote to my impassioned speeches; he was prepared to list Russian military capabilities and Ukrainian deficiencies.

“Credibility Deficit”

Johana Kotisova describes this dynamic as the “credibility deficit” of Ukrainians on the ground, which is mirrored by the “excess credibility” of Western experts and journalists. Ukrainians are mistrusted as a group with an “agenda” or too much of an emotional investment to be a credible source of knowledge. Western experts, on the contrary, enjoy inflated credibility owing to their position of privilege and professed emotional detachment.¹

In practice, having been on the receiving end of the Kremlin’s propaganda for decades, Western pundits frequently bought into the imperialist narrative of Russia’s dominance in the region and of Ukraine’s expected surrender. Often parachuted in Ukraine from the Moscow offices of the big media houses or speaking from the comfort of remote television studios, they lacked the local knowledge and contextual understanding to correctly assess Ukraine’s capabilities and will to resist.

Ukrainians proved them wrong but the price of disbelieving them is a country half-ruined and global security compromised. Epistemic mistrust leads to real-life errors of judgment that cost hundreds of thousands of lives. As Olesya Khromeychuk explains, “We must perceive those for whom this war presents an existential threat as a credible source of knowledge not only for the sake of their survival but also for the survival of the democratic order as we know it.”²

Emotional Detachment

The emotional detachment of Western media practitioners often negatively affects the ethics of journalism. A Ukrainian interviewee’s interactions with them may range from almost comical to traumatizing. Following one of the first bombings of Lviv, a British news producer sought my comment. When it turned out that our schedules were out of sync, he retorted politely: “I hope another opportunity will present itself soon.”

I was less hopeful that my location would get bombed again shortly.

Sometimes the lack of empathy was more disturbing. A radio journalist contacted me on the first day of the full-scale invasion as I was coordinating the evacuation of my parents from Zaporizhzhia and preparing to house other fleeing families in Lviv. I agreed to recycle my experience into a documentary, diligently recorded my audio diary, and spent an hour talking to him the evening before my parents were to evacuate to Germany.

The producer, however, was disappointed that I did not record the most dramatic moments as they happened. He wanted to hear my parents cry and beg me to come with them. He wanted me to press “record” when I was saying goodbye to my childhood friend as she was leaving the country with her kids. Once he realized I was incapable of delivering the material, he stopped our communication, leaving me to regret not spending more time with my parents before sending them off across the border, not knowing whether I would see them again.

Outsourcing of Emotional Labor

My work as a fixer in Ukraine has clarified the role of affective proximity in ethical reporting for me. While foreign journalists were observing my people at war, I was observing the foreign journalists. Sometimes, they would become so comfortable with their fixers that, driving through

the recently liberated towns of the Kyiv region that still smelled of burnt metal and rot, they would turn the music on and dance a little in their seats, celebrating a good day’s work. They would then turn to their fixer plastered against the back seat and ask why she did not join the party. Being a Ukrainian often means being a killjoy, but there are some little joys that deserve to be killed.

Being a Ukrainian fixer also means rephrasing intrusive questions, keeping in touch with interviewees, and taking on other responsibilities that few international journalists have the resources to take on. After all, these resources are emotional resources and this labor is emotional labor, categories that are feminized and devalued across societies. In international reporting, this labor is tellingly outsourced to the locals.

While lack of emotional engagement is often regarded as part and parcel of journalistic professionalism, the contributions of local media practitioners are often discredited as emotional and biased. Kotisova argues that “in practice, it can be the foreign reporters who have their ‘agenda,’ ‘preconceived notions,’ or ‘narrow views.’ They can ask their local collaborators to find controversies or relatively marginal phenomena fitting into the stereotypical image of the country in question.”³ Stories produced in this manner are artificial and simplistic at best, harmful at worst—as in the case of the notorious foreign media hunt for “Ukrainian neo-nazis.”

Preconceived Western Notions

Reporters who discovered Ukraine in the early days of the big war frequently possessed a preconditioned image of victimhood. They were looking for wartime clichés: despairing young mothers, tearful old grannies, confused teenagers. Instead, they met teenagers who were fortifying checkpoints, grannies who were weaving camouflage nets and young mothers who were enlisting in the army.

In the following months, Ukrainian defiance kept undermining Western expectations. After the liberation of the north of the country, I accompanied foreign crews to the Kyiv region, where we met Nadiya. She was hard not to notice: her t-shirt was turquoise, same as her eyes, same as the bench she was sitting on. Same as the wall of the ruined house behind her.

The house with turquoise walls was Nadiya’s pride. It contained memories of births and funerals, weddings and family reunions, of a life full of hard work and striving. Nadiya’s love for it was palpable. When the Russians invaded her village, they drove her out of her family home and turned it into an ammunition warehouse, with tanks parked in her garden. Nadiya’s house was set on fire by a Ukrainian missile.

When we met her, Nadiya was living in a cabin put up in her backyard by volunteers. She feared one thing only: that the occupiers would return. “If only someone gave me a rifle. My legs are bad now but I would shoot at least one bastard from the sitting position,” she said quietly. The archetypal image of a tearful granny faded away.

Rather than being an obstacle, affective proximity is what makes many Ukrainians effective storytellers. Their right to tell the world their own stories on their own terms is underpinned by their embodied, intimate connection to the subject matter. To fight against epistemic injustice, Ukrainians should arm themselves with emotion. ◀

1) Johana Kotisova, “The epistemic injustice in conflict reporting: Reporters and ‘fixers’ covering Ukraine, Israel, and Palestine,” *Journalism* 2023: 0(0), 1–20 (pp. 5–6), doi.org/10.1177/14648849231171019.
2) Olesya Khromeychuk, “Why the West underestimated Ukraine,” *New Statesman*, December 20, 2022, www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/ukraine/2022/12/the-west-underestimated-ukraine-war
3) Kotisova, p. 6.

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Trafficking for the Nation

BY TARAS FEDIRKO

What is the problem if informality is the answer? Anthropologist Taras Fedirko explores the rise and transformation of Ukraine's informal economy of war since 2014.

Since the beginning of the war in Donbas in 2014, military crowdfunding networks have been central to the Ukrainian war effort. As regular forces and militias departed for what was then called the “anti-terror operation” in eastern Ukraine, activists mobilized their connections and social media followers to procure everything—from food and technical gear to drones, vehicles, ammunition, and light weapons—to make up for deficient military logistics. Crowdfunding networks spread through all social strata but were often coordinated by middle-class people. Since then, military activists have emerged as key mediators between frontline units and donors and supporters in the rear.

These war brokers often operated informally: on a cash basis and relying on the diaspora, smugglers, and colluding customs officials to import vehicles and restricted items while avoiding official duties, registration, and scrutiny. The 4x4 vehicles, often with political slogans on makeshift number plates, became the symbol of the contradictions of Ukraine's expanding informal war economy. As the war in Donbas entered a stalemate following the Minsk Peace Accords in late 2014 to early 2015, Ukraine's courts started to receive a steady trickle of cases seeking to determine ownership of and responsibility for volunteer-supplied SUVs that ended up in road accidents, were stolen, or seized far from the front lines by police unwilling to put patriotism above missing registration papers.

In October 2021, against the backdrop of Russia massing its forces on Ukraine's borders, I arrived in Kyiv to study the networks that were the backbone of this informal economy. The “volunteers,” as the crowdfunding activists are commonly known, with whom I spoke joked that I was five years too late: with a protracted economic crisis and the incorporation of militias into the regular armed forces, the crowdfunding movement had subsided after 2015. Its most active members joined executive state bodies or were elected to office. Most of those assuming public office managed to hold it for a short time only. Meanwhile, the state's spending on the military increased by 72 percent between early 2014 and 2021, reducing the latter's reliance on crowdfunded aid for basic supplies. The once dynamic and diverse field of crowdfunding activism became carved up between several “oligopolist”—networks that had managed to professionalize and specialize their activities and to diversify their income—and individual activists who persisted in send-



An air reconnaissance group in east Ukraine pose for a photo with an SUV supplied by Solidarity Collectives.

Photo: Solidarity Collectives

ing small supplies to the military, as acts of care as much as out of meeting needs.

The cooperation on which the people's economy of war thrived created densely interconnected civic networks linking veterans groups with political parties, Western-funded NGOs, and state institutions. It cemented a heterogeneous coalition of veterans, activists, and political parties, united by shared opposition to the Minsk Peace Accords. After Russia fully invaded Ukraine in February 2022, this alliance became the foundation for a new mass mobilization.

The crowdfunded economy exploded in the “big war” as the size of the defense forces trebled to over a million and the fighting intensified. The National Bank of Ukraine and the three largest military charities—UNITED24, Come Back Alive, and the Serhiy Prytula Foundation—raised some €870 million in 2022. Come Back Alive, in whose offices I had done fieldwork, saw an almost 233-fold increase in receipts: from €0.6 million in 2021 to €143.5 million in 2022. Sums that once would have taken a year to collect were now gathered in days. Smaller organizations sprang up alongside these large ones: almost eight times as many of them were established in 2022 compared to 2021. Many charities and NGOs shifted their activities toward the expanding war economy.

Last year, half of Ukrainians provided financial support to the military, veterans, or the displaced. Donations to formal organizations, however, are just the tip of the iceberg. Much of the giving is not to

registered charities, but to activists accepting cash or using private bank accounts. The donations they collect are rarely visible or reported to the state. Having spent decades battling a “shadow economy” that deprived the state from due revenues, Ukraine is now relying on volunteer crowdfunding that is heavily from the shadow economy as an additional source of revenues for the war. In fact, it is difficult to imagine that military crowdfunding would have developed on the same scale without peoples' experience of doing business in the shadows.

The shock of the “big war” in 2022 undermined distinctions between licit and illicit, official and irregular, just as the violence of revolution, annexation, and separatist war had done eight years earlier. But with the war “descending into the ordinary,” to borrow from the anthropologist Veena Das, the Ukrainian state has started to look for ways of asserting control over informal flows. Their volume has been high enough to make the Ministry of Finance suggest that it would tax (at 19.5 percent) donations received by those not registered with the tax authorities as military activists. By early summer 2023, some 5,000 people had registered—a tenfold increase on the previous year, but still only a small proportion of those involved in voluntarily supplying the defense forces. The volunteers' concern about their impending confrontation with the state and its “paper army” is palpable in the cliché I increasingly heard: “After the war, we will all go to prison for money laundering and smuggling.”

Individual volunteers operating informally to speed up aid deliveries, often risk falling afoul of customs and banking regulations. Following the 2022 invasion, the National Bank of Ukraine imposed severe limits on outbound transfers and foreign withdrawals for individuals to protect hard-currency reserves. Forced to procure most of their supplies abroad, volunteers who operate without the backing of charities and other organizations, have had to find ways of making cross-border transfers that significantly exceed the bank's limits. For this, volunteers have relied on brokers with access to bank accounts in multiple countries, with money paid into a Ukrainian account and paid out of a foreign one. This has given rise to the Ukrainian equivalent of the *hawala*: the informal, honor-based value transfer system of the Islamic world. In this context, volunteers mix forms of interactions—donations, commercial purchases, gifts, and promises—normally kept separate for reasons of law and morality. Justified from the point of view of the “people's logistics,” their workarounds can easily appear questionable to officials.

In September 2022, two volunteers in Lviv—the sculptor Oles Dzyndra and the activist Yuri Muzychuk—were charged with selling crowdfunded vehicles imported as humanitarian aid. Commenting on the case, one activist, Sviatoslav Litynskyi, explained that it is not unusual for cars brought in as humanitarian aid upon an official request from one military unit to be instead given to another unit in greater need. In

such cases, the recipients are charged for the vehicle (the charge is usually crowdfunded too) so as to pay for a replacement for the originally intended recipients. “According to the letter of the law, this is a sale of humanitarian aid,” said Litynskyi.¹ The offense carries a maximum penalty of seven years in prison with forfeiture of property.

The charges against Dzyndra and Muzychuk were dropped in September 2023. But their and other similar cases have spurred defensive mobilizations in a volunteer community prepared to fight the state bureaucracy in order to help the nation. This anti-bureaucratic sentiment, with nationalist and growing libertarian undertones, is becoming the distinctive feature of wartime political life. Driven by the requirements of national defense and the dynamics of the informal war economy, many volunteers seem ready to turn against the state where they see it standing in the way of winning the war. If and when the imperative of urgent national defense recedes, these middle-class “traffickers” and logisticians of people's aid will play a greater role in politics too. But how exactly this happens will depend on leaders articulating the volunteers' grievances and demands into large collective projects. ◀

1) www.radiosvoboda.org/a/volontery-dopomoha-humanitarkaviyna/32011853.html

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Den Glauben glaubhaft machen

VON MARKUS ELIAS RAMSAUER UND AYŞE ÇAĞLAR

Die Konversion von Asylsuchenden stellt die zuständigen Behörden vor eine heuristische Herausforderung. Säkular-juristische Regime von Beweisführung sind oftmals nicht mit religiösen Wahrheitsvorstellungen vereinbar. Die Auswirkungen dieses bürokratischen Misstrauens zeigen sich auch innerhalb der Religionsgemeinschaften.

Der vergleichsweise hohe Anstieg an Asylanträgen in Österreich während der sogenannten „Europäischen Flüchtlingskrise“ der Jahre 2015 und 2016 hatte zur Folge, dass sich deren bürokratische Bearbeitung oftmals über mehrere Jahre prolongierte. Eine Sonderstellung kam dabei jenen Geflüchteten zu, die a) die afghanische Staatsbürgerschaft innehatten und b) sich auf Religion/Konversion/Apostasie als Grund für asylrelevante Verfolgung beriefen. Dies erklärt sich einerseits dadurch, dass für diese Gruppe der Anteil an erstinstanzlichen, negativen Asylbescheiden – etwa im Vergleich zu Syrer:innen – sehr hoch ausfiel und andererseits viele Afghan:innen – oft im Unterschied zu iranischen Christ:innen – erst während ihres Aufenthalts in Österreich konvertierten. Letzteres galt bereits vor der Wiedererlangung der Macht durch die Taliban 2021 als eine potentiell große Gefahr für zurückgekehrte Personen.¹

Aus bürokratischer Sicht stellen die Asylverhandlungen von sogenannten „Apostat:innen“ insofern eine Besonderheit dar, als hier ein Feld konstituiert wird, in welchem säkulare Vorstellungen von faktenbasiertem Wissen und Beweisführung mit glaubensbezogenen Fragen von „Verinnerlichung“ des Glaubens etc. aufeinanderprallen. Der zuständigen Behörde also dem Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl (BFA), bzw. in zweiter Instanz dem Bundesverwaltungsgericht (BVwG) kommt dabei die Aufgabe zu, zu entscheiden, ob einer konvertierten Person im Falle einer Rückkehr Gefahr drohen würde. Dabei ist umstritten, inwieweit und mit welcher Methodik z.B. die „Echtheit“ einer Konversion beurteilt werden kann und soll. Ähnlich wie in Fällen von Asylsuchenden, denen aufgrund ihrer Sexualität oder ihrer (so betitelten) „westlichen Orientierung“ Gefahr im Herkunftsland droht, besteht auch für den Umgang mit ehemals muslimischen Konvertit:innen und Atheist:innen kein institutionell festgelegtes Verfahren zur Feststellung der „Authentizität“ einer Konversion; die Indikatoren etablieren sich erst in der juristischen Praxis.

Indikatoren für eine „echte“ Konversion

Die Aussage eines Richters am BVwG „Ich kann nicht in einen anderen Menschen hineinschauen“ bringt die



Einstellung vieler bürokratisch verantwortlichen Personen in dem Feld auf den Punkt. Obwohl die zuständigen Akteur:innen in Gesprächen oftmals darauf verweisen, dass „die Konversion selbst“ nicht von der Behörde evaluiert würde, so kristallisieren sich mittels einer Analyse der Protokolle und durch teilnehmende Beobachtung während der Verhandlungen doch (zumindest) fünf Indikatoren für die „Echtheit“ einer Konversion heraus: Wissen über den neuen Glauben; Ablehnung des alten Glaubens; der Zeitpunkt der Konversion; die Öffentlichkeit der Konversion; und die emotionale *Performance* der Asylsuchenden. Gemein ist diesen Anforderungen, dass das richtige Maß oftmals schwer einzuschätzen ist und vermeintliche Beweise für eine „echte“ Konversion auch ins Gegenteil umgedeutet werden können. So ist es etwa bezüglich des Wissens um die neue Religion wichtig, nicht nur formale Fakten aufzuzählen und Gebete vorzutragen, sondern auch die Bedeutung dieses Wissens für die eigene Lebensgestaltung klar in Worte zu fassen. Ähnliches gilt für die Ablehnung des muslimischen Glaubens: diese sollte eindeutig zum Ausdruck gebracht werden, ohne dabei auf vermeintlich „auswendig gelernte“ Gemeinplätze zurückzugreifen. Hinsichtlich der Öffentlichkeit der Konversion wird von den Asylsu-

chenden erwartet, dass sie ihre neuen Überzeugungen mit anderen Menschen (auch via Social Media) teilen, was die Verfolgungsgefahr im Falle einer Abschiebung noch zusätzlich erhöht. Asylsuchende geraten so in eine schier unmögliche Position bei dem Versuch, ihre neue Weltanschauung auf akzeptable Weise darzustellen.

Expert:innen, Dokumente und die Stimme des/r Konvertiten/in

Für die Performanz einer „echten“ Konversion reicht es allerdings für die Asylsuchenden nicht, ein entsprechendes Narrativ zu präsentieren. Vielmehr bedarf es für die Etablierung einer juristisch akzeptablen und hörbaren „Stimme“ der konvertierten Person eines Ensembles an Akteur:innen und Dokumenten, welches die „Authentizität“ derselben bezeugt und somit auch erst produziert. Eine besondere Rolle bei der Entscheidungsfindung kommt hierbei Angehörigen von religiösen oder atheistischen Gemeinschaften als Expert:innen zu. Dieser Status beinhaltet einerseits die Auskunft über religiöse Inhalte, andererseits wird z.B. erwartet, dass Pfarrer:innen durch ihr „Gespür“ und ihre Bekanntschaft mit den Asylsuchenden Zeug:innenschaft über die Konversion ablegen können. Diese Angehörigen von (a-)religiösen Ge-

meinschaften sind es oftmals auch, die bei der Vorbereitung für juristische Verfahren behilflich sind, u.a. durch die Produktion von Dokumenten wie Taufzertifikaten oder Gutachten bzw. „Empfehlungsschreiben“. Der Einsatz von Dokumenten ist ein Mittel, um den Anforderungen der Gerichte an eine glaubwürdige Konversionserzählung gerecht zu werden. Um Wirksamkeit zu erlangen, wird also das religiöse, verinnerlichte „Rauschen“ der Konversion in eine für die juristisch-säkulare Logik annehmbare Form gebracht.

Misstrauen, Gerüchte und „Scheinkonversionen“

Während in anderen Kontexten wenig Anlass dafür besteht, die Authentizität einer Konversion in Frage zu stellen, herrscht bei Asylverfahren ein Klima des Misstrauens vor. Programmatisch hierfür steht der Begriff der „Scheinkonversion“. Damit wird der Vorwurf zum Ausdruck gebracht, die asylwerbende Person habe bei ihrem Abfall vom Glauben nicht (rein) aus Überzeugung, sondern aus „asyltaktischen Gründen“ gehandelt. Diese misstrauische Grundeinstellung gegenüber den Asylsuchenden beschränkt sich hierbei nicht auf die zuständigen Behörden, sondern manifestiert sich auch innerhalb der jeweiligen Religionsgemeinschaften. Bereits 2014/2015

veröffentlichten sowohl die österreichische Bischofskonferenz als auch die Generalsynode der Evangelischen Kirche „Richtlinien“ und „Handreichungen“ für den Umgang mit konvertierten Asylsuchenden.² Begründet wurden diese Schritte einerseits mit der Sorge um die Glaubwürdigkeit der Kirchen im juristischen Kontext. Andererseits praktizierten die Staatskirchen damit auch eine Abgrenzung zu jenen Freikirchen, die sich Gerüchten um „Fließbandtaufen“³ ausgesetzt sehen. Auf diese Weise erstreckt sich der Verdacht der „taktischen“ Konversion, auch auf inter- und intra-kongregationale Beziehungen.

Angesichts dieser Entwicklungen scheint es umso wichtiger, als kritische Beobachter:innen des gewalttätigen und rassistischen Asyl- und Einwanderungskontrollapparats, nicht dessen misstrauische Rhetorik hinsichtlich der Frage, ob eine Person „wirklich“ Christ:in oder Atheist:in geworden ist, aufzugreifen. Stattdessen gilt es, die Narrative, Strategien, Dokumente, kurz: die jeweiligen Wahrheitsregime in ihrer Gesamtheit zu analysieren und so die Konstitution von rechtswirksamen Subjektpositionen zu beleuchten. <

1) Seit August 2021 hat die österreichische Regierung die Abschiebungen nach Afghanistan ausgesetzt. Allerdings mehren sich bereits Stimmen, die Afghanistan als sicheres Rückführland darstellen wollen und die Wiederaufnahme der Abschiebungen fordern.

2) Österreichische Bischofskonferenz, „Richtlinien der österreichischen Bischöfe zum Katechumenat von Asylwerbern“, *Amtsblatt Der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz* 64, no. 1 (February 2015): S. 9–14; Theologischer Ausschuss der Generalsynode der Evangelischen Kirche, „Handreichung des Theologischen Ausschusses der Generalsynode der Evangelischen Kirche A. und H.B. in Österreich für Taufanfragen, Taufunterricht und Taufe von Asylsuchenden“, 2014.

3) Nicole Hoellerer and Nick Gill, „Assembly-Line Baptism“, *Journal of Legal Anthropology* 5, no. 2 (December 2021): S. 1–29.

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Human Trafficking, Gender, and Agency

BY PAULA BANERJEE

Human trafficking is always the result of crisis but this does not render the trafficked completely without agency or totally disempowered.

The word trafficking is one of the most tantalizing ones of our times. And, among the different forms of trafficking, nothing conjures up images of horror more than human trafficking. Human trafficking is defined in the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol as: *the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, or deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.*¹

The 2020 *Global Report on Trafficking in Person* of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime showed that female victims continue to be the primary targets of traffickers. Of those known to be trafficked in 2018, half were women and 19 percent were girls, while 20 percent were men and 15 percent boys.² Apart from showing the gendered nature of the problem, this shows why efforts to define human trafficking have become so loaded with the politics of disempowerment and emasculation. Human trafficking therefore is currently termed by some sources in the Global North as modern-day slavery. This notion has been popularized by the likes of the American social scientist Kevin Bales.³ The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, an agency of the U.S. Department of State, is one of the chief advocates of this terminology. Such a narrative became increasingly attractive to international audiences, particularly in the Global North.

International bodies such as International Labor Organization have reported that the Asia Pacific region has the highest number of people in forced labor at 15.1 million.⁴ This is one of the reasons why the notion that women in South and Southeast Asia are trafficked to become modern-day slaves has become increasingly popular. Considering the widespread poverty in these two regions, women are seen as prime targets of exploitation. But such a narrative completely denies any agency to all women there who have been trafficked or have tried to continue to not merely survive but live their lives.



A sex worker holding her baby in a brothel in Daulatdia, Bangladesh, August 7, 2021.

Photo: Sazzad Hossain / PA / picturedesk.com

In contrast to trafficking, smuggling became understood as an agentive concept. Even though smuggling was considered a crime as it led to the commodification of humans just as in trafficking, it is seen as different. While trafficking is considered a completely exploitative process, smuggling is not since people approaching smugglers are considered as having more agency and so smugglers are seen as service providers. Human smuggling involves the transportation, often with fraudulent documents, of individuals who seek to gain illegal entry into a foreign land. Therefore the onus is less on the smuggler and more on the smuggled. Also, while trafficking may or may not be a cross-border enterprise, smuggling is always one. Although there are several overlaps between smuggling and trafficking, the notion of power and empowerment in them is different.

None of the above is to argue that trafficking is not a debilitating phenomenon, especially for those who are trafficked. And there is no denying the fact that most women and men who are trafficked come from vulnerable sections of society. Also, often women submit to the ignominy of being trafficked because of penury. But to think that these women are completely without agency shows a lack of understanding of the situation. For trafficking and smuggling alike, the underlying principle is that of transaction.

Let us take the case of Piya, a girl of 18 who had been living in

a women's hostel in South Bengal. Her mother is a sex worker in one of the red-light districts of Kolkata and lives in northern suburban part of the city. Piya had never lived with her mother until the last phase of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown forced her to leave the hostel. During the festival of *Durga Puja*, she wanted to buy new clothes and her mother sent her to Kolkata with her *baboo* (a male client who pays maintenance and lives with the sex worker). In Kolkata, the *baboo* repeatedly raped her and then tried to sell her, but the police rescued her. Now Piya lives in a government facility for rescued victims of trafficking. She has no idea where she will go when she cannot stay there any longer, but she knows she will not go back to her mother or to any known address.⁵ If need be, she will consent to being trafficked.⁶

Another case is that of Namiya, who lives in the plantation area of Alipurduar in North Bengal. Her mother is preparing to send her away for work even though she is aged 17. Namiya is ready to leave her native place. When asked if she is aware of the risks, she replies leaving is better than dying of hunger. She is also excited that she will have her own money, which she has never had before.⁷

In January 2022, it was reported that state police officers had held a meeting with the garden workers in the tea garden areas of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts to reduce trafficking of minor girls and boys. The workers are helpless and practi-

cally living without food. In this situation they send their children away to work as cheap labour.⁸ The latter are not unaware of the risks but they want to brave them for a better life.

Trafficking is always a result of crisis but it does not always render those trafficked completely without agency or totally disempowered; for example, in the case of adult women as opposed to that of children. The dominant narrative about these women, however, constructs them as completely disempowered. The correctives suggested to this misunderstanding are also not useful. For example, it has been suggested that, because they were placed in brothels as a result of being trafficked, they should get out when able. People fail to realize that the time of getting out never comes. Even if they manage to get out, their economic and social situation forces them to go back. Out of the brothels they might be a rag picker or a medical waste collector, so it is no wonder that they prefer to remain in them and agree to be sex workers. There they have a community and people to stand behind them; after all, sex workers do not die of hunger and their choosing life over death cannot be an incorrect choice.

Understanding the nature of trafficking requires more nuanced thinking that challenges the idea that reduces women to slaves when they are trafficked but not when they are smuggled. Debilitating circumstances cannot reduce a person, male or female, to slavery. Defining women

who are trafficked as modern-day slaves contributes to their voicelessness. Would it be the same if those trafficked were perceived as overwhelmingly men? Our understanding of agency is gendered. It needs to be reconfigured so that women are viewed as not mere victims but as persons making a choice, albeit a hard one, that can make the difference between life and death for them. What is more agentive than the effort to live? If such agency seems to make us uncomfortable, then we need to create a new terminology instead of relegating women to being slaves. <

- 1) UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Human Trafficking, FAQs, www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html (accessed on August 10, 2023).
- 2) UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.IV.3) p. 9.
- 3) Kevin Bales et al., "Modern Slavery: A Beginner's Guide," (London, One World Publication, revised edition 2011).
- 4) International Labor Organization, Forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang-en/index.htm (accessed on October 25, 2023).
- 5) Sangbida Lahiri's interview with Piya (name changed), October 13, 2022, South Bengal.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) Author's interview with Namiya, March 3, 2023, North Bengal.
- 8) "Human Trafficking at Tea Garden," www.zenews.india.com (accessed on November 2, 2023).

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Culture After Empire

BY GYAN PRAKASH

How an ambitious and a politically driven imagination of a post-imperial culture was overtaken by the project of building a culture for the nation-state in postcolonial India.

When seen from Europe or the United States, the onset of the Cold War appears to define global history after 1945. But viewed from the ex-colonies, decolonization and the struggle for a world after empire emerge as the central theme of postwar history, one that led to the rise of the idea of the Third World.

Historiography has made the Third World a geopolitical term or a geographical descriptor. However, for Frantz Fanon, the idea of the Third World was not merely about political sovereignty but something much more ambitious: the creation of a different world, a world after empire. It was not about development or “catching up” with Europe. The challenge was to create a new universality, a new humanism, a new life.

Underlying this vision of a new world was an attention to culture. Anticolonial intellectuals understood that colonialism was not only about military conquest and economic exploitation but also about cultural domination. Fanon argued that a new national culture could be the basis of a postcolonial future. His vision of national culture was not about recovery and revival of the past, but one created by the anticolonial struggle. Politics was to produce national culture. He insisted that it had to be something composed and cultivated by political struggle.

This dynamic and a political struggle-based national culture, Fanon believed, could be the basis for international solidarity. According to him, “National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is alone capable of giving us an international dimension.” There are two points to note in this statement that are of contemporary relevance. First, it was a vision of globalism based on political struggle and solidarity, not one of market-based globalization. Second, the vision of an anticolonial national culture is different from the ascent of nationalist culture we are witnessing today.

Indian anticolonial leaders also thought that the nation could be the basis for a new social and political order, and for an internationalism different from the inequality of imperial globalism. They valued newness and youth. Mahatma Gandhi, with all his reverence for what he called India’s civilization, named his journal *Young India*. His press was called *Navjivan Press*—New Life Press. B. R. Ambedkar called his form of Buddhism *Navayana*—the new vehicle. Jawaharlal Nehru’s famous book was titled *The Discovery of India*. For most Indian anticolonial activists, the nation was not something narrow but part of a cosmopolitan, modern, and internation-



Photo: IPTA Ahmedabad Conference, 1948

al system. Opening the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947, Nehru declared: “We stand at the end of an era and the threshold of a new period of history.” He planned no revolutionary overthrow of the colonial order, but the soaring rhetoric of the “new period of history” expressed yearnings for radical new beginnings.

On the ground, there were attempts to build a new, radical national culture based on anti-imperialism and social equality. An expression of this was the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA), which was formed in Mumbai in 1943. A communist-led organization, its performances were often propagandist and contained pro-Soviet themes. But it was not just a communist front. IPTA brought together leading cultural practitioners in art, music, dance, poetry, and theater, many of whom went on to win national and inter-

national recognition. Its work anticipated the Fanonian spirit of building a national culture as part of a political struggle against imperialism and capitalism. It offered the first serious critique by Indian artists of colonial capitalism and envisioned a radical theater of the “people.”

IPTA had two basic goals. First, to develop forms outside the naturalistic and commercial alternatives to advance the struggle against imperialism, capitalism, and fascism. Second, to draw on India’s rich folk forms to create a popular alternative to the bourgeois, urban colonial theater. Over the decade or so after 1943, IPTA produced and performed hundreds of social-realist plays. These toured extensively, depicting struggles against feudal, capitalist, and imperialist domination.

The 1940s and 1950s were IPTA’s heyday. Its Central Cultural Troupe, with prominent artists from

Bengal and Mumbai, toured the country to stage radical plays, and music and dance performances. While these were high-profile, the real work was carried out by local troupes in regional languages. Mumbai, for example, was an important location for IPTA’s activities. Not only was the city a hub of writers and artists, its cotton mill districts also became the scene for very lively and important cultural work. The performers were often drawn from among workers, who brought and reinterpreted the Marathi *tamasha* traditions on the stage. Two artists, Anna Bhau Sathe (1920–1960), a Dalit, and Amar Shaikh (1916–1969), a mill worker, formed the *Lal Bawta Kalapathak* (Red Flag Cultural Squad) that served as IPTA’s wing in Mumbai. Grounded in the culture and politics of the working classes, they became iconic figures for their plays and poetry that repurposed Marathi folk forms to advance radical ideas of justice and freedom.

By the late 1950s, however, IPTA had lost ground, for many reasons. First, the communists’ combative stance toward Nehru’s government was met with strong repression. Second, even IPTA artists had trouble accepting the communist line that India’s independence in 1947 was a false one. Third, many artists considered the performances as political propaganda masquerading as art.

In any case, the central goal of producing “people’s art” remained unfulfilled. With exceptions, what IPTA produced was not “people’s art.” Instead, urban intellectuals brought radical art to the people, interpreting folk art for the folk. The worlds of radical middle-class intellectuals and Dalit and subalterns did not often intersect. As working-class and peasant struggles under communist leadership floundered by the late 1950s, the vision of forging a political struggle-based culture was not realized.

Another important reason for its failure was that the Nehruvian state entered the cultural arena to build and promote national culture. Nehru was committed to the idea and considered it vital for national unity. Given the background of violence accompanying the partition of British India, the country’s cultural diversity, and the Kashmir crisis, Nehru

and other leaders thought of India in terms reminiscent of the “state of nature” in Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. The turmoil of imperial retreat created a situation in which only the state could manage the anarchy and create national unity. Thus, building a national culture was vital if India was to achieve national unity and develop as a modern nation. With this in view, Nehru established institutions that became powerful cultural bodies offering patronage to artists and writers in different languages, and drawing them into the state project of building a national culture.

But the state project was a profoundly culturalist one. When Fanon spoke of national culture, he intended a politically engaged and dynamic process. National culture was to be forged in engagement with the daily life and struggle of the people—it was precisely this aspect of struggle that could make the national the basis of international solidarity. This was also IPTA’s vision. Its theatrical activity was aimed at mobilizing the people against capitalism and imperialism. Didactic and propagandist though it may have been, it advanced a dynamic view of culture, forged in struggles against capitalism and imperialism. It envisioned the battle for Indian independence as part of a global movement against capitalism and imperialism. But its efforts were overshadowed by the Nehruvian state’s project to forge a national culture to advance national identity and unity. With independence from colonialism achieved through a “passive revolution”—that is, a political revolution without a social one—the state attempted top-down modernization. This was true as much for culture as it was for the economy.

Once the state captured the idea of national culture as a culturalist project, unrelated to political struggle, culture after empire became susceptible to nationalism. The state provided an important ground for the debate and discussion on what constituted national culture, what was an Indian aesthetic, or how modern idioms could be developed for traditional cultural practices. A debate disconnected from active democratic struggles of caste, class, and gender justice left itself open to interventions from other kinds of proponents of national culture. It was only a matter of time before Hindu nationalists would enter the arena to rail against the Nehruvian pluralist cultural project and press the claims of a majoritarian Hindu nationalism. ◀

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The Jewish Express and the Bolivian Cantata

BY ANDREA ORZOFF

The European Jewish refugee experience in Bolivia is often told in sunny generalizations: The refugees thrived in exotic Bolivia; they opened Viennese cafes and founded the national symphony orchestra. After the Second World War, most of these grateful Europeans remigrated with warm memories. A simple tale, and a relatively happy ending. But the reality was more complicated.

Through the story of Erich Eisner, a German composer and conductor from Prague, this essay looks at anti-Semitism in Bolivian politics and elite culture, and its complicated parallel with the country's elites attitudes toward the local indigenous population. The refugees were themselves the objects of racism; Jewish "whiteness," in wartime Latin America as in Europe, was at best insecure or provisional. Bolivia's elites were dubious about the role of indigenous peoples and cultures in its modern state. This left room for some refugees and elites to make common cause. Eisner's Bolivian career, including the music he played, wrote, and conducted, reflected these tensions.

Erich Eisner entered Bolivia in 1939. His family followed him a year later. By 1940, the train from the Chilean port of Arica up to Bolivia's capital, La Paz, was known as "el exprés judío," or the Jewish Express. Bolivia is rightfully famed for its unusual willingness to allow in Jewish Central European refugees, with estimates of the total ranging from 8,000 to 20,000. The Eisner family first landed in an immigrant hostel in La Paz. Erich found only occasional work giving piano concerts, and the family struggled. In 1940, he was offered a job in Sucre, as a professor at the Escuela Nacional de Maestros, where he taught music teachers. He slowly created a Central European-style choir of 265 singers. At local performances, and later on government-supported tours across Bolivia, Eisner's choir sang classics like Händel's *Messiah* or Haydn's *Creation* alongside work by Bolivian composers. Additionally, he directed a philharmonic society that brought Sucre's professors and students together to perform at the Teatro Mariscal. Eisner's work in Sucre, and especially his choir's national tours, helped him establish a national reputation.

During the same years, anti-Semitism, almost nonexistent prior to the mass migration, gained currency across Bolivia. As European Jews arrived, elite antisemitism grew, driven in part by dynamics in global Catholicism and by Nazi influence. The Bolivian officer corps, especially younger officers, was generally friendly to Nazism. Latin American anti-imperialist sentiment could easily veer into antisemitism, as when the far-right Revolutionary Nationalist Movement claimed that the Jewish refugees, and the liberal elites who



Entry permit from the Bolivian Consulate General in Hamburg for Erich Eisner, Hamburg, April 4, 1939.

had helped them immigrate, had sold out Bolivian interests to the United States. The Catholic hierarchy, especially priests of Italian and Spanish origin, were sometimes forthrightly antisemitic. Nazi Germany's embassy supported these ideas through propaganda and its backing for the radical-right political press.

In 1944, the government asked Eisner to return to La Paz to create a national symphony orchestra and to work as professor of counterpoint and composition in the National Conservatory. That same year, he composed his only large-scale piece, the *Cantata Bolivia*, based on Quechua-language poetry by Yolanda Bedregal de Konitzer, which praised the landscape and people of Bolivia.

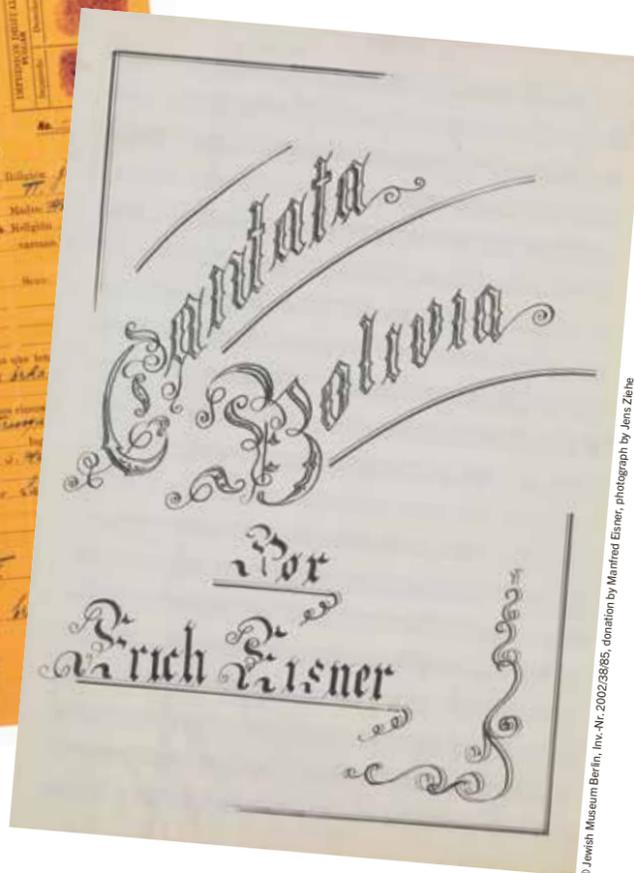
Eisner's cantata offers a glimpse into the involvement of European refugees in the Latin American aesthetic movement known as *indigenismo*, in which nationalists "envisioned the creation of a national culture based upon cosmopolitan renditions of Indian culture deemed superior to the Andean indigenous original."¹ *Indigenistas* throughout the Andean region held up a romanticized version of supposedly elite Inca culture as a preferred set of references and prac-

tices. *Indigenismo* and anti-indigenous prejudice coexisted easily and often, however. Rural Andean indigenous and *mestizo* populations were systematically excluded from full civil rights. Throughout the region, *indigenismo* often amounted to a neo-Inca façade over a tacit policy of Hispanization.

Bolivian *indigenismo* dated back to the 1920s, when the state sponsored "Incaic" folkloric ensembles and musical work, hoping to draw on the Inca past to create a unified national artistic culture. During the 1932–1935 Chaco War with Paraguay, radio networks expanded beyond the standard repertoire of European classical music to include far more Bolivian folkloric and *indigenista* music. Those behind the first efforts to create a Bolivian national orchestra called on the *indigenista* José María Velasco Maidana, composer of the "Inca ballet" *Amerindia*, to lead the ensemble, but the negotiations failed.

Against this backdrop, it is less odd to encounter Eisner and Bedregal's *Cantata Bolivia*, which combined a somewhat unimaginative Austro-German melody with Quechua lyrics written by a white, Span-

Conductor's score of the "Cantata Bolivia" by Erich Eisner, La Paz, ca. 1950–1955.



cluding free performances for workers and peasants on Sunday mornings at the Teatro Municipal. This work involved telling compromises and critiques. For example, the resolution creating the ensemble specified the use of only "autochthonous" or indigenous instruments—guitars and mandolins—were easier to obtain in La Paz, and were preferred by audiences as well as local music critics.

The Orquesta Tipica Nacional and Eisner's cantata represent a basic aspect of *indigenismo*, even as practiced by a European Jewish refugee: the intention to rescue or civilize. Actual indigenous agency was not at all the point. In this context, the European refugees fit quite comfortably into their new homelands, Bolivia included.

But Bolivian *indigenismo* also served as a foil for growing antisemitism and anti-European frustrations, especially after 1938. Antisemitic sentiment had been supported for years by the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, a neo-fascist party that combined *indigenista* propaganda and what its leaders called "tactical antisemitism" to strengthen its claim to speak for a unified Bolivia. The party's paper, *La Calle*, printed antisemitic propaganda.

Many refugees were reminded too closely of Nazism. Some Jewish businesspeople were even jailed. Jews in Bolivia recalled feeling that they lived in a waiting room or on a trampoline, ready to bounce to another country. Within ten years of the end of the Second World War, thousands of them did. So it was for Elsa Eisner, who went home to Munich in 1957 after her husband died in La Paz. As it turned out, the Jewish Express into Bolivia was generally not a one-way ticket. And Eisner's cantata, scheduled for its initial premiere in 1943, did not play in Bolivia until 2004, by which time its composer and the circumstances of its creation were merely curiosities. <

1) Fernando Emilio Ríos, "Music in Urban La Paz, Bolivian Nationalism, and the Early History of Cosmopolitan Andean Music," Ph.D. thesis, Musicology, University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana), 2005, p. 95.

This article presents in Bolivian miniature the larger arguments of my book, *Music in Flight: Migration From Hitler's Europe and Musical Politics in Latin America*, which focuses on European classical musicians within the larger Holocaust refugee population in Latin America.

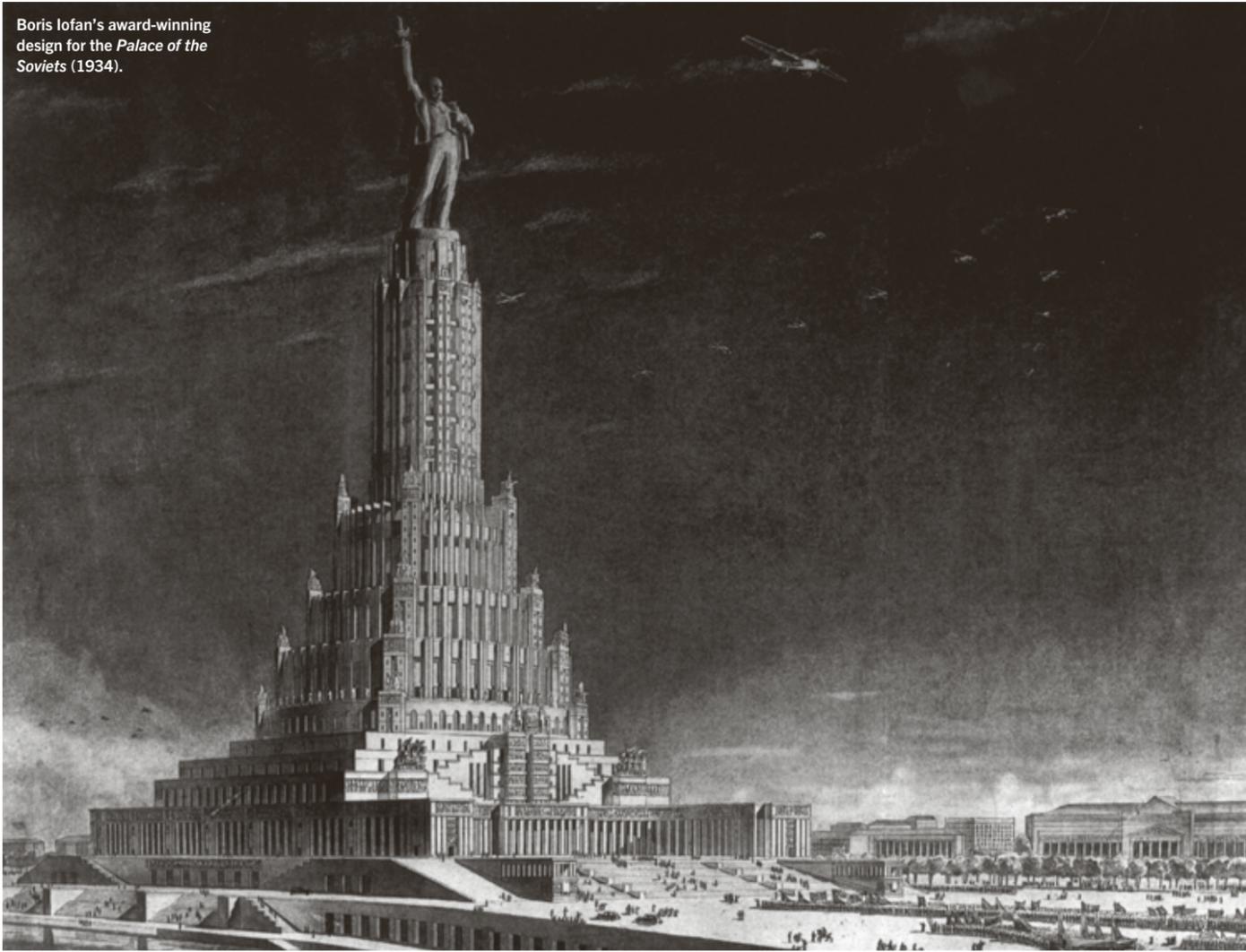
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The Victory of the Literal

BY CLEMENA ANTONOVA

The idea that poets speak in metaphors is so natural and deeply embedded that we may miss the rare occasions when they mean exactly what they say. The experience of the revolutionary storm from October 1917 in Russia was marked by a—short-lived and paradoxical—“victory of the literal.”

Boris Iofan's award-winning design for the Palace of the Soviets (1934).



In a 1919 article, Kazimir Malevich, an artist born in Kyiv to Polish parents, who became one of the most important representatives of the Soviet avant-garde, proposed that the cities of the future were to be completely destroyed and then rebuilt from scratch every ten years. The idea sounds so utterly absurd and wasteful that it can only be understood as a metaphor. One does not want to imagine that Malevich was serious, any more than one would take Vladimir Mayakovsky, perhaps the greatest poet at the time, at his word when he said that “we should pepper the museum with bullets” (“It’s Too Early to Rejoice,” 1918). Surely, this was a poetic exaggeration, just as the provocative gesture of another poet, Vladimir Kirillov, who declared that “in the name of our Tomorrow, we will burn Raphael/destroy the museums and trample the flowers of art” (“We,” 1918).

Contemporary scholars have gone to great lengths to insist that what the Soviet avant-garde meant was not “destruction, but [...] redefinition, renewal, and transformation.”¹ Not surprisingly, the Soviet avant-garde features regularly in studies on utopian thought, while the iconoclastic rhetoric of the Futurists in particular is frequently perceived as an expression of “playful hooliganism.”² What all these interpretations share is that they shy away from lit-

eral meanings—they refuse to take the avant-garde at its word.

Here is the first paradox: a literal understanding of the avant-garde project is much richer and more profound than the possible metaphorical readings. Truth lies on the surface in this case and Malevich meant exactly what he said. Destroying all the art and culture of the past was, in fact, quite consistent with the Soviet avant-garde’s vision of creating a completely new, free art for the future. Tradition, by its very existence, was an obstacle so long as it entailed, however tentatively, the evolution of an artistic canon with the appearance of a masterpiece to serve as a model. Incidentally, the focus on Raphael—Mayakovsky called for “putting Raphael against the wall”—was not accidental: more than any others, the works by the Italian artist had acquired the status of masterpieces. This rhetoric can also be seen in Italian Futurism, as well as the anarchism of Mikhail Bakunin, who had an important following in the late Russian empire, and the anti-intellectualism of the Nihilists. It makes some connections to contemporary cancel culture as well.

What made the case of the Soviet avant-garde different was the October Revolution. Before 1917, this talk had an element of posturing and an obvious desire to shock. The 1912 Futurist Manifesto of Mayakovsky

and the group around him—under the revealing title *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*—that declared its authors’ intention of “throwing Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc. off the steamboat of modernity,” could be understood along these lines. After October 1917, these statements were made and understood in a completely different spirit, because the revolution had made them appear actually possible. So, the role of speech itself, of the word (in Russian, *slovo*), was utterly different. The short period of a few years after the revolution, especially until 1921 with certain features persisting into the early 1930s, marked what we could call a “victory of the literal.” When the Futurists said in their manifesto of 1912 that “from the skyscrapers we gaze” at the “nothingness” of the great Russian classics, the skyscrapers did not exist and were a figment of the imagination. The Palace of the Soviets (*Dvorets Sovetov*), the gigantic architectural project of the new regime, similarly did not exist and, in fact, never came into being—but one would not know that by reading the many references to it at the time. In a way that is quite amazing to readers outside this milieu, article after article described the palace as an actually existing structure. Images of the building were pervasive since it featured in films and was exhibited at World Fairs.

Contemporary scholars have paid attention to the project for the Palace of the Soviets largely because of the competition in which some of the most internationally renowned architects—such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Mosei I. Ginzburg—submitted designs. What is most fascinating, however, is that speech created reality, as the revolution had made anything possible. This was the message conveyed by the journal *Sovremennaya arkhitektura* (Contemporary Architecture, fl. 1926), in which authors expressed the conviction that even if not a single new building were put up, the “new Soviet architecture” would be an organic part of the Soviet environment.

That progress is much more akin to a storm than a stage in a linear unfolding of history is one of the great insights of Walter Benjamin in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940). This is how the avant-garde must have experienced the revolution: as a storm that descended upon them, promising to sweep all of history in its way. Therein lies the second paradox, which was insoluble and, therefore, an instance of tragic irony. If radical originality depended on total extinction, on eradicating all tradition and all cultural heritage, so that the artistic genius could start creating from level zero, quite soon the artistic genius too would be swept away in the storm of obliteration.

Once Malevich’s works ended up in the museum and acquired the status of masterpiece, they were themselves caught up to the same logic. The problem was not that one artistic fashion had followed another and that Malevich had replaced Raphael. The issue was that Malevich and his collaborators had overturned the very institution of the museum and had destabilized the notion of art. Staring at his paintings hanging on the walls of museums, the artist must have felt at least something of the “sense of doom, so sustained and vivid, that it became insupportable” that Roman Jakobson speaks of as characterizing the avant-garde in the Soviet period.³

The third paradox is also a bad joke: Raphael was saved by Stalin. Cultural policy under Stalinism put categorically an end to the avant-garde experiment and placed anew the classical heritage and the Russian cultural tradition center stage. Pushkin and Tolstoy were back in a big way. Malevich’s Suprematist works no longer had any place. In fact, they would not even fall into the category of a picture (*kartina*), since the latter became a term of Socialist Realism, which described almost exclusively realist, narrative painting.⁴

For a short time, particularly during the period of War Communism, which ended with the New Economic Policy in 1922, the avant-garde was in the ascent in a way that was unparalleled in any country in the West. Practically all the major figures were on board with the revolution and held government positions. The end of the short-lived romance between the regime and the avant-garde artists spelled the end of “the victory of the literal.” In many cases, under Stalinism, deciphering an obscure language meant the difference between life and death. And this deciphering, fretful and anxious, took place in whispers—as among the people in the queue before the Leningrad prison, where the poet Anna Akhmatova found herself in the mid-1930s, waiting to see her imprisoned son (Preface to “Requiem”). The world of the gulag had rendered literal speech not just dangerous but also, in some sense, impossible and obscene. ◀

1) Sarabyanov, A. and Strizhkova, N., *Art and Power: The Avant-garde and the Soviet State, 1917–1928*, (London, 2021), p. 26.

2) Stites, R., *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*, (New York and Oxford, 1989).

3) Jakobson, R., “The Generation That Squandered Its Poets” (1930) in Jakobson, R., *Language in Literature*, eds. K. Pomorska and S. Rudy, (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1987), p. 275.

4) Buchlon, B. et al., (eds.), *Art since 1900*, (London, 2004), p. 286.

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Lost in Canonization: Intermediality of Yugoslav Avant- Garde Illustrated Poetry Books

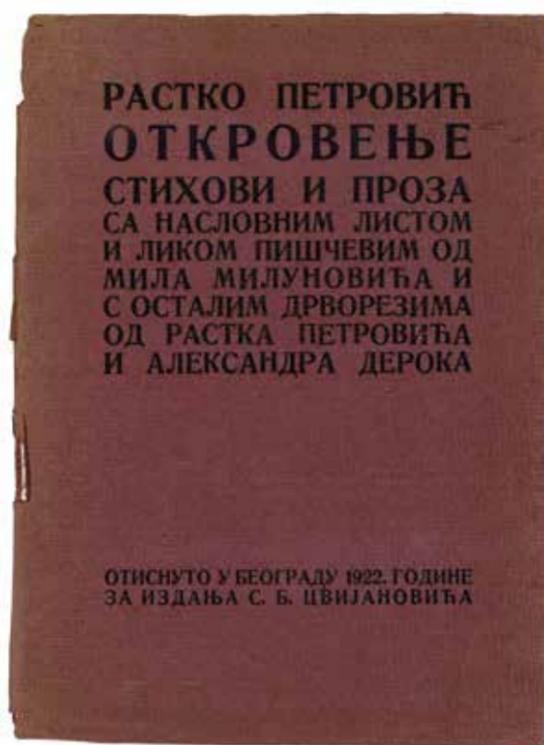
BY TIJANA KOPRIVICA

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the illustrated poetry book emerged as one of the Yugoslav avant-garde's favorite ways of expression. Its subversiveness was supported by the text and by its illustrations. But when the unruly avant-garde got absorbed into the literary canon after the Second World War, the illustrations—curiously—went missing from the reprints.

The interplay of text and pictures is as old as the script itself. It is most evident in the long-standing tradition of illuminating scriptures and illustrating books. However, the seemingly simple question of whether an originally illustrated book remains the same once its illustrations are removed is a very intriguing one. This is especially true when it comes to works that use the interplay of the textual and the visual, as is the case with the Yugoslav avant-garde illustrated poetry books.

The historical avant-garde consists of a group of experimental and innovative artistic and cultural movements—such as Expressionism, Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism—that emerged primarily in the early twentieth century and between the two World Wars. Their desire to challenge established norms and traditions in art and society was usually conveyed by radical and unconventional techniques. As in the rest of Europe, the Yugoslav historical avant-garde established itself in the interwar period, in the time of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which adopted the name Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. One of the fascinating outcomes of its confrontation with traditional media practices and ways of representation can be observed in the illustrated poetry books. These predominantly originated as a result of a collaboration between a poet and a visual artist. In this way, their distinctive intermediality was established and expressed in the dynamic coexistence of the verbal and visual elements.

Typically for the avant-garde, the two elements in Yugoslav illustrated poetry books, each on their own, defy prevailing literary and artistic norms. The texts within them are not exclusively lyrical poems written in verse. Much more often than not, the textuality of these books challenges and transcends the genre conventions: it usually shifts from verse to prose and back, as in Milan Dedinač's *Javna ptica* (1926). When it comes to the visual elements, their variety in terms of production technique is immense. It entails drawings and technical-like graphs and charts, like in Marko Ristić's *Turpituda* (1938) or Moni de Buli's *Ik-*



Rastko Petrović, *Otkrovenje* (Revelation), 1922.



© Courtesy by SANU—Serbian Academy of Science and Arts and the Legacy of Marko Ristić

sion (1926). It stretches even further to diverse types of graphics, such as woodcuts in Rastko Petrović's *Otkrovenje* (1922), and to photographs and photo-montages, as in Dedinač's *Jedan čovek na prozoru* (1937) and Aleksandar Vučo's and Dušan Matić's *Podvizi družine "Pet petlića"* (1933).

However, what really generates the subversive potential is the inclusion of these visual materials within poetry books. As a consequence of this, varied and complex relations between texts and pictures arise. These relations can be regarded from the perspective of the functions the textual and the visual elements perform in respect of each other. In Dedinač's *Jedan čovek na prozoru*, poetic text and inserted photographs each function as substitutes for the other to compensate for their "lacks" in terms of their representational possibilities. Or, as is the case in Petrović's *Otkrovenje*, the woodcuts function as a unifying device that structurally reinforces the layout of the book. Hence, the function of the illustrations in the Yugoslav avant-garde illustrated poetry books is not only what one might assume based on the traditional understanding of the term "illustration": a simple graphic paraphrase of the text.

The aftermath of the Second World War brought significant changes

to the Yugoslav avant-garde illustrated poetry books. In the times of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and later in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, they were reissued and republished on various occasions and in different ways. In most cases, however, the pictorial elements were drastically altered, as in *Podvizi družine "Pet petlića,"* or entirely eliminated, as in *Otkrovenje*.

This was mostly done by the editors of the reissued publications and, after the war, many avant-gardists had gained prominent positions in editing houses. Thus, in some cases it was the poets themselves who edited their own books or those of others. The interwar oppression and dictatorship of the monarchy had ceased, and consequently the need for avant-garde rebellious activities and expression disappeared. What is more, the ideas and values represented and promoted in the avant-garde works were supported by the emerging Yugoslav state. The illustrated poetry books, once highly revolutionary, were adjusted to the new cultural and political paradigm. Moreover, the suspension of their intermediality got them ready to fit into the literary canon as some of the works were reissued and republished as mandatory school read-

ing. Thus, for example, provocative photo-montages were replaced with simplistic drawings more appropriate for children and fitting the uniform look of school books.

Does an illustrated poetry book remain the same without its illustrations? The answer depends on the understanding of the term "book." If we understand the book as the metonymy of written words, then the removal of illustrations does not affect its authenticity and meaning. But when a book is considered a unique object for its content and materiality alike, as well as for the way of its production, then even minor modifications, let alone removing illustration, profoundly impact its meaning and the possibilities for its interpretation. This is particularly significant where the interplay of the textual and the visual is the ground for the book's subversive agency. Stripped of this kind of potential and sometimes even reduced to mere text, the Yugoslav avant-garde illustrated poetry books became "only" poetry books.

For these reasons, studying the intermediality in Yugoslav illustrated poetry books requires diachronic and synchronic approaches. The former permits an exploration of historical shifts in intermedial practices within these books, while the latter allows for the concrete analy-

sis of the intermedial products and the interplay of their verbal and visual content. The relations between the text and pictures, however, need to be problematized. Otherwise, one could easily fall into a simplified comparison between the visual and the verbal content.

Therefore, starting from the premise that written text as a form of verbal representation inherently contains something of the visual through the materiality of the script, same as visual representation is always already contaminated with some sort of discourse, the constant interplay between the two modes of representation in the illustrated poetry books comes to the fore. This suggests that illustrated poetry books exhibit a multipli-

cation of the relationships between the verbal and visual aspects. On the one hand, the interaction between the two is viewed as an integral element in the makeup of illustrated poetry books. On the other hand, each participating media inherently incorporates their interplay.

Yugoslav illustrated poetry books exemplify a fascinating intersection of interwar and post-Second World War artistic expression. They convey diverse aesthetic and political ideas, while their intermediality was eventually subjected to negotiation by alteration and elimination of the pictorial elements. Today, these books need to be re-examined. But this time, the constant interplay between the verbal and the visual needs to take center stage. Only this will lead to a nuanced understanding of their complexity and the interconnectedness of their constitutive elements. Finally, it will tell us more not only about the processes taking place in the background of the taming of the Yugoslav avant-garde, but it could also provide insights into contemporary intermedia phenomena. ◀

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Die Intellektuellen und ihre Verführbarkeit

VON LUDGER HAGEDORN

Vor 70 Jahren erschien ein Buch, das die Auseinandersetzung mit dem sowjetischen Kommunismus tiefgreifend verändern sollte. Es war ein Zufall, dass es gerade im Jahr von Stalins Tod herauskam, doch im Rückblick wirkt es wie ein Fanal. Czesław Miłosz, späterer Nobelpreisträger für Literatur, wurde mit *Verführtes Denken* weltberühmt.

Zur politischen Zäsur des Jahres 1953 trat mit der Publikation dieses Buches eine intellektuelle. Es bot eine bis dahin unerhörte Bilanz des Sowjetkommunismus, der zu dieser Zeit auch im Westen noch viele Bewunderer und prominente Fürsprecher hatte. Miłosz selbst hatte dies eindringlich erfahren, als er nach seinem Entschluss zur Emigration im Jahre 1951 in seinem Pariser Exil mit einflussreichen Stimmen konfrontiert war, die ihn deshalb für „wahrscheinlich geistesgestört“ hielten. Unerhört war, mit welcher analytischen Schärfe der Autor argumentiert und dabei zugleich die Kraft und Schönheit eines literarischen Textes zu entfalten weiß. Er schreibt nicht als jemand, der vom Hass und dem Wunsch nach „Abrechnung“ getrieben ist, sondern als Autor, der den „neuen Glauben“ – für den er phasenweise selbst Sympathie hatte – erklären und die Mechanismen seiner Anziehung verstehen will.

Unerhört war für viele auch, dass diese Stimme aus jenem unterjochten Teil Europas kam (Kundera nannte ihn später „Mitteleuropa“), der lange nicht als eigenständig, sondern nur als „dazwischen“ wahrgenommen wurde. Unerhört blieb aber schließlich trotz des phänomenalen Erfolgs auch eine zentrale politische Botschaft: Wie können es, fragt der Autor gegen Ende sarkastisch, diese „kleinen“ und „nationalistischen“ Völker nur wagen, sich der Größe der russischen Kultur entgegenzustellen? Wenn wir heute, im Abstand von 70 Jahren, die Passagen lesen, in denen es um Folter, Zwangsumsiedlung, Deportation der Bevölkerung in diesem Teil Europas geht, dann stockt angesichts der Aktualität der Beschreibungen der Atem.

Kernstück des Buches sind die Porträts von vier Intellektuellen und ihrem Verhältnis zum „neuen Glauben“. Es sind psychologisch raffinierte Studien von Dichtern und Schriftstellern, die verschiedenste Stadien der Verführung und Verführbarkeit durchlaufen: Widerstand erlahmt beim Schielen auf die eigenen Vorteile, Skrupel und Angst gehen auf im Gefallen an der neuen gesellschaftlichen Rolle, und was anfangs noch wohlüberlegte Entscheidung war, wird zur besinnungslosen Umarmung und Verinnerlichung der neuen Ideologie bis hin zum Sadismus der Macht. Vor diesem Hintergrund hat auch

der abweichende deutsche Titel *Verführtes Denken* seine gute Berechtigung, während das polnische Original *Zniewolony umysł* eher als „Versklavter Geist“ zu übersetzen wäre, entsprechend auch im Englischen *The Captive Mind*.

sind und kaum je „echte“ Menschen zeigen. Alpha geht es um die moralischen Prinzipien.

Eine seiner Erzählungen ist besonders charakteristisch: Ein junger Bursche, der gefoltert wird, verrät der Polizei den Namen seines Freun-

gesellschaftliche Stellung zu halten, muss er sich öffentlich zum „neuen Glauben“ bekennen. Alpha tut auch dies vorbildlich – und zum Verdruss der anderen Schriftsteller. Er tritt in die Partei ein und veröffentlicht eine Selbstbezeichnung (früher hätte er

westlichen Hauptstadt, sogar Mitglied des Zentralkomitees der Partei und schließlich so etwas wie der politische Aufseher aller Schriftsteller, der „Direktor der Gewissen“. Scheinbar ungerührt verfolgt er die Deportation Zehntausender (auch seiner eigenen Familie) und genießt die Macht, die ihm in seiner neuen Rolle als Richter über das Wohl und Wehe anderer Menschen zufällt. Ein, wie Miłosz es charakterisiert, Pakt mit dem Teufel.

Gamma stellt sich ganz in den Dienst des geschichtlichen Fortschritts, sieht sich als Instrument eingebunden in die berühmten „ehernen Gesetze der Geschichte“, wo das Handeln des Einzelnen irrelevant wird. Paradox muss ihm jedoch scheinen, dass seine ganze Karriere gerade auf einer besonderen Vorsicht der persönlichen Entscheidungen, dem Taktieren und Intrigieren gebaut ist. Das ist, was er in all diesen Jahren als maßgebliche Lektion verinnerlicht hat. Gamma ist nicht Sklave der Geschichte, sondern jemand, der sich nur allzu gerne von der Totalität des Denkens verführen lässt. In dieser Verführung spiegelt sich der Widerspruch seiner Haltung: „Manchmal kommt ihm der Gedanke, ob der Teufel, dem er seine Seele verschrieben, nicht gerade durch solche Leute wie ihn die Lebenskraft bekommen habe, und ob nicht der Determinismus der Geschichte nur ein Produkt menschlicher Gehirne sei.“

Zentral ist das Kapitel über Gamma aber auch vor dem Hintergrund von Miłosz' eigener Biographie. Denn das Schreiben über ihn evokiert Erinnerungen an die gemeinsame Studienzeit in Wilna/Vilnius. Für Miłosz eine „verträumte Provinz Europas“, in der Polnisch, Litauisch, Belarussisch (oder ein Mix von allem) gesprochen wurde und in der die jüdische Kultur eine herausragende Rolle spielte. Die lebendige Erinnerung an diese einmalige Kultur „inmitten der Wälder“, die sich lange dem Zugriff der Moderne widersetzte, ist wahrscheinlich die Hauptquelle seines später gefeierten dichterischen Werkes. In den frühen 50er Jahren, nach den Schrecken des Krieges, der doppelten Okkupation und Sowjetisierung des Landes, aber schien ihm diese Region mit all ihren Geschichten „ebenso verschüttet wie Pompeji von der Lava“. ◀

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Czesław Miłosz bei einem Besuch in Polen 1981.

Mit allen vier Porträtierten war Miłosz persönlich bekannt, doch obwohl sie unschwer zu identifizieren sind, verzichtet er auf Namen, sondern benennt sie nur als Alpha, Beta, Gamma und Delta. Er betont damit auch, dass es nicht um das Urteil über eine individuelle Biographie geht, sondern um das Exemplarische an den Mechanismen der Verführung. Zwei dieser Porträts – Alpha und Gamma – seien hier vorgestellt, weil sich in den Charakterisierungen als „Der Moralist“ und „Der Sklave der Geschichte“ eindrücklich die intellektuellen Motive der Handelnden spiegeln.

Alpha – Der Moralist

Für Alpha ist die Schriftstellerei eine Form der Erhabenheit. Sie erhebt ihn über die Nöte des Alltags und sein ungeordnetes Privatleben. Als katholischer Schriftsteller (so versteht er sich vor dem Krieg, ohne tief verwurzelt zu sein) schlägt er einen moralischen Ton an, und um die Erhabenheit zu betonen, strebt er im Schreiben große moralische Reinheit an. Vor dem Krieg ist er in Polen erfolgreich, auch wenn (oder weil) seine Erzählungen schematisch

des, weil er Angst hat allein zu sterben. Bei der Hinrichtung treffen sich die beiden wieder, und der Verräterne verzeiht seinem Freund. Alphas gesamtes Schreiben folgt einer Ethik des Mitleids. Miłosz' Respekt für diese Haltung ist spürbar und ehrlich (viele Jahre standen sich beide sehr nah). Alpha widersetzt sich auf bewundernswerte Weise den Nützlichkeitsabwägungen – zu welchem Zweck soll man einem Verräter verzeihen? Miłosz kommentiert: „Hätte ein Sowjetschriftsteller diese Erzählung geschrieben, dann hätte sich der Verräter voller Verachtung vom Menschen, der einer so erbärmlichen Schwäche erlegen ist, abwenden müssen.“

Alphas Motivation aus dem Mitleid trägt sein Schaffen auch nach dem Krieg weiter. War vor dem Krieg ein Dorfpriester der Protagonist seines Werkes, so ist es nun ein „alter Kommunist“, rein wie ein Diamant im Streben nach dem Guten. Auch dieses Werk ist erfolgreich und wird von den neuen Machthabern gern gesehen. Alpha wird hofiert, weil er eine nützliche Brücke zu den konservativen Teilen der Gesellschaft ist. Doch dann kommt der Moment der Wahrheit: Um seine hervorgehobene

es „Beichte“ genannt). Darin spricht er von seinem Wunsch, ein echter kommunistischer Schriftsteller zu sein, doch dies, so fügt er in Demut hinzu, müsse er mit Hilfe der neuen Lehre und ihrer Methoden erst noch werden. Er schreibt weiter im gleichen salbungsvollen Ton des Moralisten – und weiß doch, dass seine moralische Autorität für immer erschüttert sein wird.

Gamma – Der Sklave der Geschichte

Wie der Titel des Porträts, „Sklave der Geschichte“, ausdrückt, ist Gamma so etwas wie die paradigmatische Personifikation des historischen Materialismus. Auch er ein Schriftsteller, doch mit mäßigem Erfolg, und mit einem Stil, der keine echte eigene Überzeugung zeigt. Inmitten der politischen Wirren der Zeit und der geistigen Leere, die der Untergang der alten Welt bedeutete, wird Gamma Stalinist. Es sind die Sinngänge von außen, die Festigkeit der Doktrin und die Vorgabe eines Stoffes, die sein Schreiben beflügeln, aber auch die eigene Karriere im Dienste der Partei befördern. Gamma wird nach dem Krieg Gesandter in einer

Despicable Matter: Deborah Vogel's Cubist Prose

BY ALICJA RYBKOWSKA

Deborah Vogel—art critic, philosopher, writer, poetess, translator, and educator of the interwar period—is little known for any of these activities in her native Poland and even less so in the English-speaking world. Alicja Rybkowska restores the memory of the plastic value of her work and documents Vogel's struggle to achieve this value.

Deborah Vogel was born in 1900, in the small Galician town of Burshtyn, in today's western Ukraine, as the single child of a well-to-do Jewish family. She studied philosophy and aesthetics in L'viv and Kraków and remained active in these fields for the rest of her life, publishing internationally critical texts and giving lectures. She also completed a considerable number of poetic and prosaic texts that she wrote in Yiddish and sometimes translated into Polish. Together with her mother, her husband, and their six-year-old son, she was killed during the liquidation of the L'viv ghetto in August 1942.

In her literary works and her aesthetic theory, Vogel consistently stressed the role of systematic attempts to organize and transform the matter, be it philosophical thought, plastic representation, or language. Despite her pessimism about the possibility of such transformation, her works remain a brilliant, yet little known, example of the creative usage of plastic imagery for narrative imagination.

The few personal statements made by Vogel to have survived testify that she struggled to combine plastic and literary means of expression. She believed that life can only be made understandable when organized and structured in artistic forms. She felt, however, that there is a disparity between the richness of the world and the modest means of making it comprehensible. The efforts to achieve a satisfactory form from the eluding, “despicable” matter, the “icky and dissolute mass,” are only partly successful. For Vogel, life itself is chaos over which one must gain control. It has no form and is meaningless, “greasy,” “reeky” as long as it is not mediated in artistic forms. This struggle to achieve the desired form from the resistant, intractable material reminds us of the modernist experience of the cubist breakdown of the object.

In Vogel's times the term “cubism” still had a generic meaning of all avant-garde figurative art but her expertise in the newest artistic trends would have prevented her from such a vague use of the term. I believe it was rather the seminal character of cubism that convinced Vogel of its crucial role in the development of art. By initiating the geometrization of painterly forms, it opened new possibilities for other genres as well. Vogel was of the opinion that



Photo: Debora Vogel / commons.wikimedia.org

artists working in other genres became forced to match the originality and ingenuity of cubist painters. The latter's unconventional mode of presentation of objects, she believed, was an incentive for writers and poets to confront the problem of conventionalization of literary language.

Vogel's articles on art prove that she had an extraordinary plastic imagination. It comes almost as a surprise that she never attempted to draw or paint, of which there is absolutely no indication. Her poems and novels, on the other hand, are a worthwhile attempt to translate the cubist imagery into poetry and prose. The result is something like cubist literature: use of words and sentences that does not cater to habitual expectations and an ambiguous portrayal of reality that renders the recognition of the relationships between its elements highly difficult. The choice of mundane subjects that gain meaning through their transmutation into

an artistic experiment and the lack of any apparent narrative make her writing like a cubist painting. She pointed out this similitude herself, calling her stories “montages” and claiming that their plastic equivalent were the “so-called photomontages,” which can be traced back to cubist *papiers collés*.

Cubism is a term that is relatively rarely used in reference to literature. There was never a collective effort to apply the principles of cubism to literature, nor are there any statements or typical representations of this genre. Perhaps the caution in using the term “literary cubism” stems also from the fact that cubism, as opposed to such avant-garde movements as expressionism or surrealism, which influenced literature significantly, is a term that refers directly to the method of construction of the painterly object, and not to what may become this object (the inner states and experiences of

an individual, the reality of dreams, and the like). Notwithstanding this, the name cubism was hugely accidental and was initially meant by its originator, Félix Fénéon, to be an ironic comment on the painterly manner of young Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Moreover, even if the name refers only to the ways of perceiving and representing reality—and thus is restricted to the visual sphere—literature undoubtedly has the capacity of describing the visual as well. The cubist revolution influenced not only the way we see things and, arguably, the way we describe them, but also the way we can imagine things. For imagination, like cubist compositions, offers numerous perspectives at once and allows us to see what we generally know of the object. Paradoxically, this breaking up of the object into a multitude of perspectives does not deny its continuity but rather stresses the plurality of possible interpretations. The aim of

this procedure is to better depict reality in all its abundance and diversity.

However, the underlying principle of Vogel's montages was putting manifold elements together in order to achieve a new entity, whereas in cubism the principle appears to be more formal and it is to break a given entity in order to achieve a new outlook of its elements. Vogel protested against the view that her poetry is just a formal experiment with no connection to life. In poetry, she believed, the analogue of geometrical forms in painting are banal, unrefined words. Vogel described them as typical, banal, anonymous, even stupid, but she was convinced that in this precisely lies their power: they name the things that typically remain overlooked. The repeatability of life may cause melancholy, but transformed into poetry it offers consolation. The poetry of “cold statics,” as she named it, was the cubist-constructivist poetry: dispassionate,

minimalistic, even boring. It followed from a systematic reduction of the literary language, analogous to the reduction carried out in early cubism: restricted use of adjectives, replacement of abstract names with particular feelings and incidents, substitution of metaphors with comparisons. Furthermore, Vogel's later montages also lack individualized protagonists. They are often difficult to follow, challenging in their choice of words and themes. Eliza Kącka recently noted that it is almost impossible to learn from any paper on Vogel what her works are—partly because they are about nothing particular at all. But, if we read them as a record of grappling with the unresponsive matter—and unresponsive readers, perhaps—the seemingly formal experiment reaches a psychological depth and it becomes an appealing and relatable story.

The result of the constant struggle with the material was an overpowering feeling of sadness that is best depicted in Vogel's artistic credo: “The monotony, laid bare as the structure of reality, may become the program of life—it means then the rehabilitated dailiness. It is a hierarchical, and therefore also a heroic worldview: it sees the proper value in the heavy repetition of a few plain, every-day gestures, in the miracle of movement as such, to the very end.”¹ She called this attitude a “sort of modern stoicism,” the art of wilful resignation from the unfettered participation in the fast-paced flow of sensations. In her work she chose to concentrate rather on the often overlooked material of these sensations: life itself, too big a subject to fit into an artistic project of just one person. Her tenacity and determination to modify, nuance, and refine her theories in order to remain up-to-date ceased with the outbreak of the war. She did not publish anything in the last years of her life and rejected a friend's offer to escape the L'viv ghetto. It is as if the matter had triumphed—but Vogel was very well aware of the impossibility of overpowering it once and for always. ◀

1) Szymaniak Karolina, *Być agentem wiecznej idei: przemiany poglądów estetycznych Debory Vogel*. Kraków: Universitas, 2006, p. 272.

Alicja Rybkowska, trained in philosophy and art history, works for international projects in higher education. She was a guest of the IWM in 2019 and Józef Tischner Junior Visiting Fellow in 2020.

Between Neuroscience and the Arts: Where Is the Body?

BY MARIKA GRASSO

The technological oculo-centric design of daily mundanity has placed the brain far from embodiment and self-awareness. Consequently, the conversation between neuroscience and contemporary art forgets the nervous body. The excluded bodily innervations and sensations that allow us to explore embodiment and self-awareness are neglected to give attention to the brain.

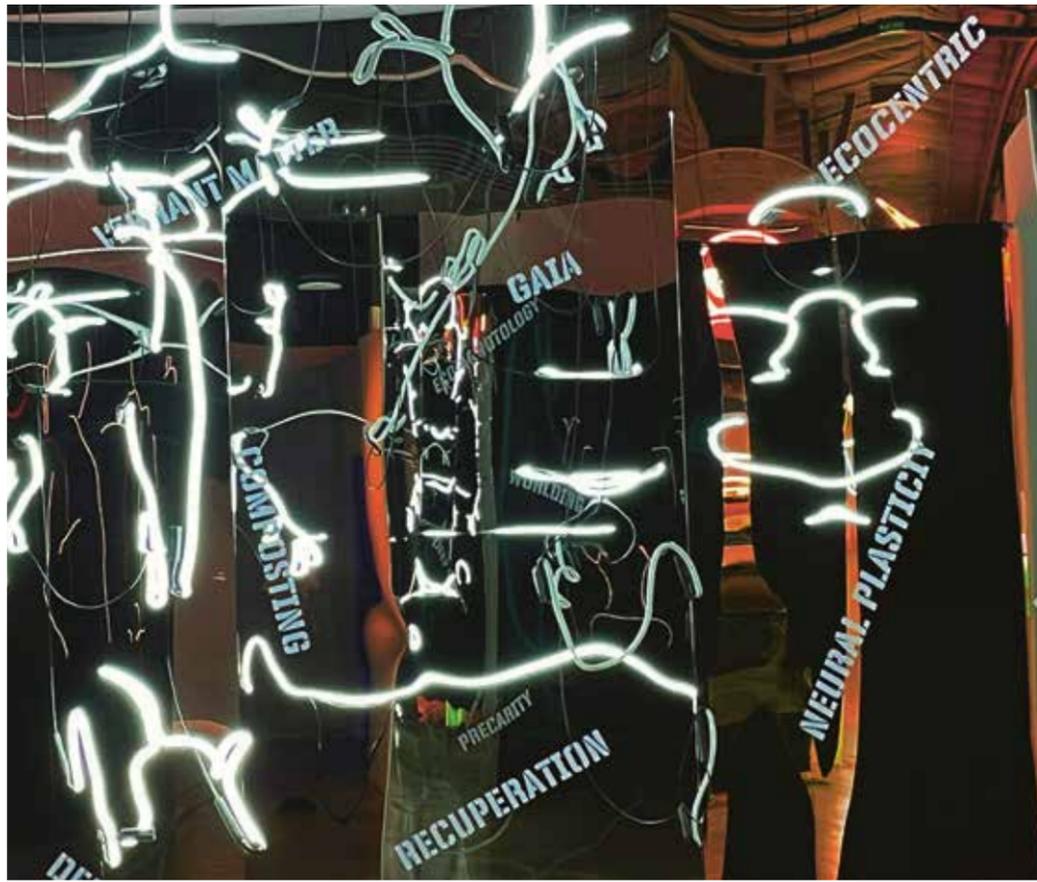
In the evolving landscape of collaboration between contemporary art and neuroscience, the human brain has gained a prime position. The cerebrum becomes for artists a gateway to access the unconsciousness and to develop unexpected forms from our brain waves. It remains the center of investigation for neuroscientists and technicians trying to find new correlations and to explore what visual arts can show of how we think.

Over the past decade, perhaps no other bodily apparatus has been dissected, extrapolated, and turned inside out as extensively as the human brain. In terms of surgery and of philosophy, the brain has moved from structuralism, and a computer-like approach, to being understood as a complex organ, always reshaping itself through the process of neuroplasticity, as Gerald Edelman proclaimed.¹

The brain's encounter with art focuses on the certainties of neuroscience, considering hormones part of the brain or focusing on its behavior during sleep or intense activities. The production of visual or sound outcomes evolves into artwork that first stimulates the eyes and the ears, as the first organs to be impacted. And even when the brain is not present, such as in *The Brain Without Organs* (2022) by Warren Neidich, the output is rather a visual and moving installation. The brain locked in its skull in darkness becomes political and is yet always concerned with what happens above the neck.

In the collaborative realm of neuroscience and art, where the matter and systems of the brain converge with curated gallery spaces, there is a conspicuous absence of the body. The intelligent system of movements and known behaviors often becomes a vessel for the enigmatic network inside our cranium. However, the wonders of our brain and its perceptions are entangled with our body; the lace of its linked synapses with our organs and the rest of the body is complex and rich.

The efficiency and speed of the nervous system to communicate goes beyond the connections in the head; it is extended to all our body. Explained by Antonio Damasio in his *Human Brains Discussions* talk (2020) for the Prada Foundation, the speed of information running between skin, heart, guts, and intestine is faster than with the brain.



Warren Neidich, *Brain Without Organs*, 2022 (detail), Museum of Neon Art, Glendale, CA.

The whole body processes and comprehends emotions before they are elaborated in the brain, thanks to the peripheral nervous system.

Why then does the collaboration between the art practices and neuroscience focus mostly on the brain, forgetting the nervous body?

There is no correct answer to this question, but this possibly correlates with the fascination for the visual world and the mysteries of our perceptual capacities, all symbolized by the brain as a conceptual organ. The allure might also relate to the novelty of neuroscientific discoveries on human behavior, neuroplasticity, diseases, and the brain's response to stimuli and their elaboration. New technology such magnetic resonance imaging and electroencephalograms (EEG) enable exploring a particular brain segment, and can inspire the artist to explore and exploit.

Our oculo-centric society has discovered the apparatus behind the eyes, providing product designers and contemporary artists with a discipline to investigate for aesthetic and functional purposes. It is the pursuit of the beautiful, the useful, and the intelligent. Yet, perhaps something essential has been overlooked in this quest for neuro-centric perfection.

Within this neuro-centric perspective, the brain is often reduced to a simplistic black box, failing to encapsulate the true intricacies of the nervous system. In the uncharted territory of unconsciousness and bodily responses, the artist Pierre Huyghe has emerged as a provocateur, posing profound questions about the abstract space of the mind. Rather than delving into the Cartesian mind-brain dualist vision, his work *Umwelt* (2018) at the Serpentine Gallery in London concentrates on shaping and visualizing possibilities by translating brain waves into shapeless being.

This relates to the body by creating and intertwining nervous fibers, organs, muscles, and the cerebellum into relatable beings that are far from human, but still represent something visceral and primordial. And yet, a proper inquisition of the body is still missing.

Another poignant example of the brain's material presence in art and research is found in Neidich's concept and artwork *The Brain Without Organs* as the installation concerns the dismantling of the brain, the synapses represented by decomposed LED lights, and a mirror with words mentioned often as concepts and findings in neuroscience. The cerebellum is absent but this piece

constantly alludes to the pink and grey, wet organ that is so central to our existence.

What becomes readily apparent is the ease with which we can externalize the sensations of our bodies. Through putting on a cap with electrodes (EEG), we can get a feel for how our body relates to brain activity, exploring a direct connection between the external and internal realms of our consciousness. As consciousness resides only in the brain, does it not?

The embodied carnal approach to the collaboration between neuroscience and art today leaves a gap in considering the complexities of the nervous system underneath the neck.

Future exploratory artistic practices could include the comprehension and awareness of the active participation of the sensitive body, accompanied by its sensorial and regulatory capacities such as interoception and proprioception. The perceptual and responsive nervous matter of the body should become part of the neuro-artistic collaboration to delve further into the liminal spaces of awareness of movements and embodiment.

Delving into the essence of what existed before these technological marvels raises questions about the symbiotic relationship between

the body, the skin, and new technologies. Here, we could delve into the depths of nervous myelinations with the body as our guide. But is it merely about observation, thinking, and feeling?

After reflecting on the past *Ars Electronica* festival, one is left pondering the role of the artist. What should they do in the spaces between the brain and the audience? Installations frequently offer journeys into the mind, navigating the dreamscape and decoding the mysteries of the unconscious. Often Brain Computer Interface artistic production is concerned with making the encounter between the different brain and audience agency into a visual meaningful outcome; however, little space is left for questions and poetical uncertainties. In this exploration, the body often seems to be overshadowed.

In Huyghe's *Umwelt* the body assumes a tangible form for participation, shaping thoughts and collaborating with artificial intelligence. While the human form is not absent, the intelligence of the body and its vital role in shaping our thought processes are frequently overlooked.

As we delve deeper into the realm of thought, we must question whether we have forsaken not generally the rest of the body but specifically touch and its sensory organs in favour of pure mental contemplation. Has the nervous body been pushed aside to make way for the domination of the brain?

The issue at hand is that, as the brain enters its uncanny world, it severs the vital links that connect the corporeal and the ecological. In the triad of vision, brain, and technology, the body is often remembered and referenced but forgotten when it comes to understanding its sensations and thoughts.

In the ever-evolving exploration of the intersection between art, neuroscience, and self-awareness, the artist's body emerges as a crucial component. It beckons us to reconsider the boundaries between the mind and the body, inviting us to bridge the gap between them and to acknowledge the profound connection that shapes our existence <

¹) Gerald M. Edelman, *Wider Than the Sky: The Phenomenal Gift of Consciousness* (Yale University Press, 2005).

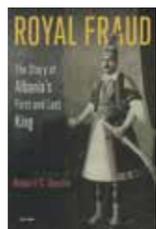
Marika Grasso is an artist, lecturer, and PhD candidate in art and design at Sheffield Hallam University, funded by Lab4Living. She was a digital humanism visiting fellow at IWM in 2023.

Publications by Fellows

Robert C. Austin

Royal Fraud: The Story of Albania's First and Last King

Vienna: Central European University Press, March 2024, 200 pp., ISBN: 978-963-386-710-5



Beginning in 1961, when Albanian King Zog I died in a Paris hospital after 22 years in exile, this book tells the story of this Balkan country's first and only monarch. The road to becoming Europe's youngest

president in 1925 and king of Albania in 1928 was paved with feuds and assassinations, a political career-path common in the region. Zog retained his power until his "friend" Mussolini ousted him in 1939. Robert Austin holds that Zog left Albania almost as he found it, with almost no roads or trains, thoroughly uneducated and utterly impoverished. On the surface a Westernizer, the king banned the veil but achieved little else.

Zog may have regretted sending a young Enver Hoxha to France on a state scholarship, where Hoxha learned some basic communist principles later used against the king. But one thing Hoxha did learn from Zog: it makes sense to have your rivals murdered. The book also describes the decades during which Hoxha practiced this lesson. The collapse of communist rule and the chaotic years of regime change saw, among other things, the miserable attempts of Zog's son Leka to revindicate his royal power.

In his book, Robert Austin combines Zog's adventurous life story with a studious analysis of Albania's political history from the fall of the Ottoman Empire to the threshold of Euro-Atlantic integration.

Yannis Ktenas

Value Polytheism during the Pandemic. Politics and Epistemology of a Virus (Greek)

Athens: Polis, 2023, 168 pp., ISBN: 978-960-435-853-3



In his new book, written during his fellowship at the IWM, Yannis Ktenas, using Max Weber's concept of "value polytheism," aims at shedding light on the debates and polemics that

arose during the pandemic. These debates were not only political but also epistemological; they focused not only on what should be done departing from a shared conception of the situation, but also on what the situation really was and on which were the indisputable facts regarding the virus, the correct data regarding its spread, and the appropriate measures and tools to treat the disease or prevent its occurrence. Ktenas challenges the idea that the recognition of various and indeed divergent forms of rationality ends up in relativism. He argues for the establishment of valid criteria both in politics and in science, while reserving a space for argumentation, disagreement and political conflict.

Éva Forgács

Malevich and Interwar Modernism. Russian Art and the International of the Square

London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022, 304 pp., ISBN (or DOI): 9781350204188



This book examines the legacy of international interwar modernism as a case of cultural transfer through the travels of a central motif: the square. The square was the most emblematic

and widely known form/motif of the international avant-garde in the interwar years. It originated from the Russian artist Kazimir Malevich who painted The Black Square on White Ground in 1915 and was then picked up by another Russian artist El Lissitzky and the Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg. It came to be understood as a symbol of a new internationalism and modernity and while Forgács uses it as part of her overall narrative, she focuses on it and its journey across borders to follow its significance, how it was used by the above key artists and how its meaning became modified in Western Europe.

It is unusual to discuss interwar modernism and its postwar survival, but this book's chapters work together to argue that the interwar developments signified a turning point in twentieth-century art that led to much creativity and innovation. Forgács supports her theory with newly found and newly interpreted documents that prove how this exciting legacy was shaped by three major agents: Malevich, Lissitzky and van Doesburg. She offers a wider interpretation of modernism that examines its postwar significance, reception and history up until the emergence of the New Left in 1956 and the seismic events of 1968.

Umüt Kuruözüm

Building from Scrap: War, Recycling, and Labor in Iraqi Kurdistan

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 214 pp., ISBN-10: 3030922197, ISBN-13: 978-3030922191



This book is about the flourishing scrap recycling industry, reconstruction, and state-making in Iraqi Kurdistan within the wider conditions of the war economy, ruination, and

state disintegration in Iraq. Through a dialectical relationship between the afterlife and continuity of war over distinct but conjoined landscapes, it examines industrial work, labouring, and statelessness on a frontier territory near the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS). By documenting the advance of the global steelmaking industry, the spread and erosion of selective state sovereignty, and the struggle of dispossessed workers, the book sketches the economic geography of a contemporary market expansion over the northeast of Iraq in a relational and dynamic way.

Mikhail Minakov (editor)

Philosophy Unchained: Developments in Post-Soviet Philosophical Thought

Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2022, 224 pp., with a forward by Christopher Donohue, ISBN: 9783838217680



The East European nations' common past in the Soviet Union connects them in terms of both their political histories and the evolution of their philosophical thought. The USSR's dissolution

created new opportunities, domestic and international, in science, politics, and business. De-Sovietization meant for philosophy that it lost its former significance as a political-ideological tool of the authorities, and its previous role in society. Philosophers of the former Soviet bloc now found themselves able to communicate with colleagues around the world.

This volume's chapters analyze the renewal of the philosophical enterprise over the last thirty to forty years, in Belarus, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Among its authors are Yevgeniy Abdullaev, Viktoras Bakhtmetjevas, Alexandru Cosmescu, Maija Kule, Denys Kiryukhin, Giorgi Khuroshvili, Mikhail Maiatsky, Tatyana Shchittsova, and Mikhail Minakov.

Edward Ashford Lee

Co-Evolution: Die Symbiose von Mensch und Maschine

Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2023, 104 S., ISBN: 978-3-99136-027-8



Die rasante Entwicklung der Künstlichen Intelligenz wirft fundamentale Fragen für unsere Zukunft als Menschen auf. Edward A. Lee widerspricht der frommen Erwartung, dass die neue technologische Entwicklung planbar und kontrollierbar bleiben kann. Zugleich distanziert er sich von apokalyptischen Szenarien, die in der KI nur eine Bedrohung und das Ende der Menschheit sehen wollen. Er beschreibt das zukünftige Verhältnis von Menschen und Maschinen eher als „Ko-Evolution“ und „Symbiose“. Menschheit und neue Technologie werden in wechselseitiger Abhängigkeit zusammenwachsen, so dass sie in Zukunft nicht mehr unabhängig existieren können. Das birgt große Risiken, die jedoch als Pathologien einer Symbiose und nicht als existentielle Gefahr für die Menschheit behandelt werden sollten. Die größte Bedrohung für die Menschheit besteht nicht darin, dass Maschinen uns überflüssig machen, sondern dass sie das Wesen unseres Seins – das, was es bedeutet, ein Mensch zu sein – grundlegend verändern werden.

Das Buch von Edward Ashford Lee erscheint im Rahmen des Programms *Digitaler Humanismus* am Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, und ist das erste Projekt einer neuen Kooperation zwischen dem IWM mit dem Mandelbaum Verlag.

Edward Ashford Lee ist Computerwissenschaftler und Robert S. Pepper Distinguished Professor Emeritus an der University of California, Berkeley. Seit mehr als 40 Jahren arbeitet Lee sehr erfolgreich in der Entwicklung von Cyber-Physikalischen Systemen (CPS) und Embedded Systems, der Einbindung von Computern in technische Prozesse. Weithin bekannt geworden ist er durch seine Bücher *Plato and the Nerd: The Creative Partnership of Humans and Technology* (2017) und *The Coevolution: The Entwined Futures of Humans and Machines* (2020). Lee ist Mitinitiator und Erstunterzeichner des Wiener Manifests für Digitalen Humanismus; 2022 war er im Rahmen des *Digital Humanism*-Programms in Kooperation mit der TU Wien Fellow des IWM.

Ewa Atanassow, Thomas Bartscherer, David A. Bateman (editor)

When The People Rule: Popular Sovereignty in Theory and Practice

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (SSRX Anxieties of Democracy), 2023, 350 pp., Online ISBN: 9781009263757



In recent decades, popular sovereignty has come under increasing pressure. The rise of populism, often illiberal or authoritarian, has undermined minority rights, individual autonomy, and

Seyla Benhabib

Kosmopolitismus im Wandel:

Zwischen Demos, Kosmos und Globus
Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, Februar 2024, ca. 100 S., aus dem Amerikanischen von Andreas Wirthensohn, Herausgegeben vom Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (IWM Vorlesungen). ISBN: 978-3-99136-053-7



Seit den letzten beiden Jahrzehnten des 20. Jahrhunderts ist ein starkes Interesse am Kosmopolitismus in den Sozial-, Kultur- und Rechtswissenschaften zu verzeichnen. Allerdings hat der Kosmopolitismus seit Beginn des neuen Jahrhunderts einen schweren Stand. Vor diesem Hintergrund formuliert Seyla Benhabib den Kosmopolitismus neu. Im Fokus ihrer Überlegungen steht die Frage, wie wir den Kosmopolitismus in der heutigen Welt zusammen mit dem Bemühen um Gerechtigkeit im Globalen Süden und dem Streben nach planetarischer Nachhaltigkeit neu denken können. Benhabib geht den zeitgenössischen Kritiken am Kosmopolitismus nach und kommt zum Schluss, dass es weiterhin möglich ist, den Kosmopolitismus zu verteidigen, indem man ihn von der Geschichte des westlichen Kapitalismus und dem Zeitalter des Imperialismus und Kolonialismus löst. Sie grenzt den Kosmopolitismus von gängigen liberalen normativen Modellen unserer Zeit klar ab, und zeigt auf, dass allein der Kosmopolitismus die Fortschritte im Bereich der internationalen Menschenrechte integrieren kann. Nicht zuletzt plädiert sie für ein Verständnis von Kosmopolitismus, in dem auch das neue planetarische Bewusstsein, das im Gefolge der ökologischen Katastrophen unserer Zeit entsteht, seinen Niederschlag findet.

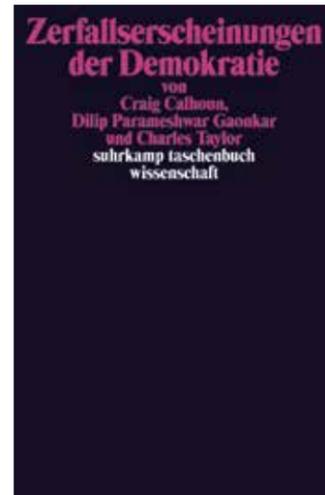
Seyla Benhabib ist emeritierte Eugen Meyer Professorin für Politikwissenschaft und Philosophie an der Yale University und hatte Professuren an der New School for Social Research und der Harvard University inne. Sie ist weithin bekannt für ihre Arbeiten zur europäischen Sozial- und politischen Philosophie des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, insbesondere zum deutschen politischen und Rechtsdenken, zur Kritischen Theorie, zur feministischen politischen Theorie, zur Theorie der Demokratie sowie zu Fragen von Citizenship und Kosmopolitismus. Sie hat umfangreich zu Hannah Arendt und

Jürgen Habermas publiziert und zahlreiche Preise erhalten, u.a. den Ernst-Bloch-Preis, den Dr. Leopold Lucas-Preis und den Meister-Eckhart-Preis. 2023 war sie Albert Hirschman Fellow am IWM.

Craig Calhoun, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, Charles Taylor

Zerfallserscheinungen der Demokratie

Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag (suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft), Februar 2024, 500 S., ISBN: 978-3-518-30019-0, Originaltitel: Degenerations of Democracy (Harvard University Press), Deutsche Erstausgabe, aus dem Amerikanischen von Andreas Wirthensohn, Herausgegeben vom Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen.



Mit analytischer Schärfe zeichnen Craig Calhoun, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar und Charles Taylor in diesem Buch aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven die Aushöhlung unserer Demokratie nach. Sie beleuchten, wie die herrschenden Eliten versuchen, ihre Privilegien zu sichern, und wie individuelle Freiheit zum Feind von Gleichheit und Solidarität wurde. Aber sie zeigen auch Wege einer möglichen demokratischen Erneuerung auf: Zum einen gilt es, die Idee des Gemeinwohls wiederzuentdecken und an republikanische Traditionen anzuschließen, zum anderen könnten soziale Bewegungen wie Black Lives Matter oder der Green New Deal als Kompass dienen. Ein Weckruf.

„Ein konzeptionell beeindruckender Beitrag zum Wiederaufbau der Demokratie.“

Pierre Rosanvallon

„Vielfach wird die Krise der westlichen liberalen Demokratien auf den Aufstieg populistischer und autoritärer Bewegungen zurückgeführt. Drei herausragende Theoretiker argumentieren nun dafür, sie als Ausdruck einer tieferliegenden Problematik zu begreifen.“

Foreign Affairs

„Who are The People? Should they rule? Can they? Do they? How? These are among the oldest and deepest questions in political theory. The answers offered by the erudite and provocative essays in this stellar collection set the terms for debating the most pressing issues facing democracy today.“

Josiah Ober, Stanford University

Joanna Bernatovicz

(Translator, Belarussian > Polish)
Diuga droga do domu – Wasil Bykau
Kolegium Europy Wschodniej (Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe), 2023, ISBN:978-83-7893-332-8

Demokrat, überzeugter Europäer und Freund des IWM

VON LUDGER HAGEDORN

Er war beliebt, doch nie populistisch, adelig in seiner Erscheinung und oberster Repräsentant des fränkisch-böhmischen Hauses der Schwarzenbergs (auch wenn er den Titel nicht mehr trug), doch dabei zutiefst demokratisch und den Menschen zugewandt. Karel Schwarzenberg, dem IWM eng verbunden, wird uns sehr fehlen.

Bei den tschechischen Präsidentschaftswahlen im Jahr 2013 trat er als Kandidat der bürgerlichen Parteien an. Im ganzen Land wurde „der Fürst“, wie er in Tschechien oft genannt wurde, damals als Punk mit rotem Irokesenkamm plakatiert. Es war dies keine populistische Anbiederung, sondern eher im Gegenteil ein Reflex darauf, dass er – dessen Sprachmelodie im Tschechischen etwa so besonders war wie sein Auftritt mit der obligaten Fliege – gerade von der jungen, hippen, städtischen Wählerschaft innig geliebt wurde. Die Wahl verlor er dann trotzdem knapp gegen Miloš Zeman, und viele Analysen zeigten, dass womöglich seine differenzierte und kritische Haltung zum Unrecht der Vertreibung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg dafür ausschlaggebend war. Doch selbst wenn es so gewesen wäre: Schwarzenberg hat die Klarheit seiner Haltung weder in dieser noch in anderen Fragen je bereut.

Wer Karel Schwarzenberg kannte, wird sich erinnern an einen überzeugten Europäer, dem besonders die Geschichte und das Geschick der Länder in Mitteleuropa am Herzen lagen. Er sagte gern von sich, er sei ein geborener Prager, aufgewachsen in Wien, was sonst könne er da sein als ein Mitteleuropäer? Die Ereignisse des Jahres 1989 sah er nicht kommen, obschon er entschieden darauf hingearbeitet hatte. Von Österreich aus unterstützte er die tschechischen Dissidenten, auch ohne konkrete Aussicht, dass sie in absehbarer Zeit einen politischen Wandel herbeizuführen vermöchten. In engem Kontakt stand er mit dem Dramatiker Václav Havel, Mitinitiator der Charta 77, der in den 70er und 80er Jahren nach und nach zum Zentrum der politischen Opposition in der Tschechoslowakei wurde.

Von 1984 bis 1991 war Schwarzenberg Präsident der Internationalen Helsinki-Föderation für Menschenrechte, eine Ernennung, die auf einen Vorschlag Bruno Kreiskys zurückging – wie überhaupt seine Kontakte zur Sozialdemokratie intakt und respektvoll waren, wenngleich er sich politisch liberal-konservativ verortete. 1986 trug er maßgeblich zur Gründung des Dokumentationszentrums zur Förderung der unabhängigen tschechoslowakischen Literatur bei, auch wenn er seine eigene Rolle dabei immer als unwesentlich beschrieb. Die von dem Emigran-



Photo: Renate Apstein

ten Vilém Prečan angelegte Sammlung von Samisdat-Literatur fand Unterkunft auf Schloss Schwarzenberg in Scheinfeld, dem namensgebenden Stammsitz der Fürsten von Schwarzenberg in Mittelfranken, den Karel Schwarzenberg wie selbstverständlich für diese Zwecke zur Verfügung stellte.

Die „samtene Revolution“ des Jahres 1989 veränderte dann auch entscheidend sein eigenes Leben. Ab 1990 wirkte er zunächst als Kanzler des neu gewählten Staatspräsidenten Havel auf der Prager Burg, eine Zeit, die er rückblickend oft als die schönste seines Lebens beschrieb. Später fungierte er dann zweimal als Außenminister der Tschechischen Republik, das erste Mal (2007–2009) als parteiloser Politiker auf Vorschlag der Partei der Grünen (SZ), das zweite Mal (2010–2013) schon mit dem Ticket der liberalen Partei TOP 09, deren erster – und äußerst erfolgreicher – Vorsitzender er war.

Karel Schwarzenberg war charismatisch, gebildet, dem Leben zugewandt, gesegnet mit einem Talent fürs Erzählen und einem wunderbaren Humor. Gespräche mit ihm waren vergnüglich, doch immer getra-

gen von Klugheit und einer großen Weitsicht, die es ihm erlaubten, auch schwierige politische Konstellationen pointiert zu formulieren. Sein Urteil war bestechend klar und bestechend oft richtig. Die Gefahr eines russischen Übergriffs auf die Ukraine hat er vorausschauend klar benannt. Schon 2014 warnte er nach der Annexion der Krim vor dem russischen Appetit, dem die Krim möglicherweise nur als Vorspeise diene, wohingegen die ganze Ukraine der Hauptgang werden könne.

Die Klarheit seines Urteils führte aber nie zu Ungeduld oder maßlosen Forderungen. In einem Interview, das ich Anfang dieses Jahres mit ihm führte, sagte er auf meine Frage nach politischen Enttäuschungen: „Die Leute sind, wie sie sind. Ich habe nie übertriebene Erwartungen.“ Gerne zitierte er in solchen Zusammenhängen Albert Einstein: Es gebe nur zwei Dinge, die unendlich seien, nämlich das Weltall und die menschliche Dummheit, allein – und bei diesem Zusatz freute er sich schon mit seinen Zuhörern auf die Pointe – beim Weltall sei die Frage nach der Unendlichkeit noch nicht abschließend geklärt. Wann immer er

so etwas sagte, lag darin nichts Herabwürdigendes, kein Verlassen oder Bloßstellen, sondern das weise Akzeptieren menschlicher Schwächen. Karel Schwarzenberg wusste um die Notwendigkeit, Nachsicht zu üben mit den Menschen, und er schloss sich darin stets auch selber ein.

Schwarzenberg war neben Erhard Busek einer der ersten, die das Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in seinen Anfangsjahren tatkräftig unterstützten. Diese Verbundenheit sollte über mehr als vier Jahrzehnte andauern. Viele Jahre war er Vorsitzender des IWM-Kuratoriums. Auf den Veranstaltungen des IWM war er über die Jahre ein treuer und gern gesehener Gast. Bei vielen Konferenzen saß er mit auf dem Podium, regelmäßig nahm er teil an den jährlichen Fellows Meetings (2005 hielt er dort selbst den traditionellen Vortrag), und nicht zuletzt war er auch ein wiederkehrender Diskutant bei den vom IWM initiierten großen Debatten im Burgtheater. Diese füllte er mit seiner Lebendigkeit und seinem Esprit, und nicht nur einmal hörte man anschließend das zufriedene Resümee, schon „der Fürst“ allein sei den Besuch wert gewesen.

Bei der Durchsicht der alten Newsletter und Veranstaltungsprogramme des IWM fällt noch etwas anderes auf: Nicht nur war Karel Schwarzenberg regelmäßiger Gast des IWM, mehr noch war er ein guter und generöser Gastgeber. Unzählige Veranstaltungen des IWM fanden im Palais Schwarzenberg statt, das er dem IWM besonders in den ersten zwei Jahrzehnten nach dessen Gründung im Jahr 1982 immer wieder zur Verfügung stellte. Die Patočka Memorial Lecture als wichtigster Vortrag des Jahres fand regelmäßig ihr würdiges Ambiente im Palais Schwarzenberg, ebenso die Verleihung des Hannah-Arendt-Preises, mit der das Institut von 1995 bis 1999 innovative Bildungsreformen in Osteuropa auszeichnete, dazu politische Empfänge und Mittagessen mit illustren Gästen. Immer fiel dabei etwas vom Glanz seines Hauses auch auf das Institut.

Seine letzte öffentliche Rede bei einer Veranstaltung des IWM hielt er am 13. Februar 2023 anlässlich einer Gedenkfeier zum 10. Todestag von IWM-Gründer Krzysztof Michalski. Was er damals über Michalski sagte, klingt aus heutiger Sicht wie die schönste Charakterisierung seiner selbst: „Ein Patriot, aber frei von jeglichem Chauvinismus, mit gesunder Kritik auch seiner eigenen Nation gegenüber. Er war jemand, der genial vermittelt hat zwischen den Ländern, die damals noch hinter dem Eisernen Vorhang waren (...) Sein großer Verdienst ist das Bewusstsein um die Notwendigkeit des Kampfes für die Freiheit und um die Notwendigkeit, eine tiefe geistige Grundlage für sie zu schaffen.“ Schwarzenbergs Auftritt und seine Worte an diesem Abend waren bewegend und werden allen, die dabei waren, lange in Erinnerung bleiben. Neben Michalski sprach er auch über Václav Havel als die zwei Menschen, die ihm persönlich viel bedeuteten, aber es lag in seinen Worten auch Wehmut und ein Gefühl von Abschied.

In der Nacht des 11. November 2023 ist Karel Schwarzenberg im Alter von 85 Jahren verstorben. Mit ihm verliert das IWM einen seiner großen Freunde und Förderer. Seine Ratschläge waren unaufdringlich, dafür umso klüger. Wir werden sie schmerzhaft vermissen und ihm ein ehrendes Andenken bewahren. <

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