

*Eva Illouz*

Social Democracy  
and Capitalism

*Serhii Plokhii & Philippe Sands*

Humanity and  
Catastrophe

*Arjun Appadurai*

The Revolt  
of the Elites

*Ivan Krastev*

Is It Tomorrow, Yet?



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Editorial

Is it heute schon morgen? Diese Frage stellt **Ivan Krastev** an den Beginn seines neuen Buchs, das sich mit der Frage auseinandersetzt, wie die Pandemie Europa verändern wird. Neben **Jiří Příbáň** und **Steven Lukes**, die über die Lehren aus der Krise und die Auswirkungen der „neuen Normalität“ auf die Solidarität in unserer Gesellschaft schreiben, werfen **Alida Vračić** und **Ranabir Samaddar** einen Blick auf die konkreten Auswirkungen auf das Gesundheits- und Pflegesystem. Politische Entwicklungen wie der „Aufstand der Eliten“, den **Arjun Appadurai** in seinem Beitrag beschreibt, werden durch die Pandemie ebenso eine neue Dynamik bekommen wie der Mythos vom Zusammenbruch Europas, wie **Hugo Brady** nach dem Abtritt von Donald Tusk Bilanz zieht. Während **Eva Illouz** über die Herausforderungen der Sozialdemokratie nachdenkt, analysiert **Grigorij Mesežnikov** die politischen Umwälzungen in der Slowakei nach dem Mord an dem Journalisten Ján Kuciak. Zwei neue Bücher aus der IWM/Passagen-Reihe, die sich mit der Automatisierung von Arbeit (**Robert Skidelsky**) und den Folgen von künstlicher Intelligenz und Digitalität (**Timothy Snyder**) beschäftigen, haben vieles vorweggenommen, was durch die Pandemie noch beschleunigt wurde und u.a. von **Walther Zimmerli** in dieser Ausgabe thematisiert wird. Eine Unterhaltung zwischen **Serhii Plokhii** und **Philippe Sands** basierend auf deren Bestsellern zu zwei Katastrophen der Menschheit – Tschernobyl und der Zweite Weltkrieg – leitet zu einem weiteren Schwerpunkt dieser Ausgabe über, der sich dem Gedenken an 75 Jahre Kriegsende (**Vlasta Korda**) sowie neuen und alten Formen des Antisemitismus (**Laura Engelstein**) widmet. Dass uns in Zukunft auch eine ökologische Katastrophe bevorstehen könnte, daran erinnert uns **John Keane** am Beispiel der verheerenden Buschbrände in Australien. **Adèle Blazquez** hat in ihrer Feldforschung in Mexiko wiederum die Auswirkungen des organisierten Drogenhandels auf die lokale Bevölkerung dokumentiert. Während sich **Clemena Antonova** und **Jan Sowa** abschließend fragen, welche Relevanz die russische religiöse Philosophie heute noch hat, helfen uns die Beiträge von **Cornelia Klinger** und **Shalini Randeria** / **Ilija Trojanow** vielleicht dabei, im Leben und Wirken der historischen Figuren Emma Goldman und Mahatma Gandhi Inspiration und Anregung für die Krisenbewältigung der Gegenwart und den Kampf gegen wachsende Ungleichheit zu finden. <

Is it tomorrow yet? This is the question **Ivan Krastev** asks at the beginning of his new book, which deals with the question of how the current pandemic will change Europe. Alongside **Jiří Příbáň** and **Steven Lukes**, who write about the lessons of the crisis and the impact of the “new normality” on social solidarity, **Alida Vračić** and **Ranabir Samaddar** take a closer look at the impact on the health and care system. Political developments such as the “revolt of the elites”, which **Arjun Appadurai** describes in his contribution, will be given a new dynamic by the pandemic, as will the myth of the EU’s collapse, as **Hugo Brady** takes stock at the end of Donald Tusk’s term in office. While **Eva Illouz** reflects on the challenges facing social democracy, **Grigorij Mesežnikov** analyses the political earthquake in Slovakia following the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak. Two new books from the IWM/Passagen series, which deal with the automation of work (**Robert Skidelsky**) and the consequences of artificial intelligence and digitality (**Timothy Snyder**), anticipate much of what has been accelerated by the pandemic and what is also discussed by **Walther Zimmerli** in this issue. A conversation between **Serhii Plokhii** and **Philippe Sands** based on their best-selling books on two other catastrophes of mankind—Chernobyl and World War II—takes us to another focus of this issue, which is devoted to the commemoration of the 75-year anniversary of the end of the war (**Vlasta Korda**) and new and old forms of antisemitism (**Laura Engelstein**). **John Keane** reminds us that an ecological catastrophe may await us in the future, using the example of the devastating bush fires in Australia. In her field research in Mexico, **Adèle Blazquez** has in turn documented the effects of drug trafficking on the local population. While **Clemena Antonova** and **Jan Sowa** conclude by asking what relevance Russian religious philosophy still has today, the contributions of **Cornelia Klinger** and **Shalini Randeria** / **Ilija Trojanow** may help us to find inspiration and encouragement in the lives and work of the historical figures Emma Goldman and Mahatma Gandhi for contemporary crisis management and the fight against growing inequality. <

Anita Dick  
Marion Gollner



# Is It Tomorrow, Yet? Learning to Live with the Unthinkable

BY IVAN KRASTEV

*What will the world look like after the Coronavirus? What impact will it have on our democracy? How will the crisis change the way we live together? And what can we learn from it? In his most recent book *Ist heute schon morgen? Wie die Pandemie Europa verändert* (Ullstein, June 2020), political scientist and IWM Permanent Fellow Ivan Krastev identifies five paradoxes of Covid-19. This is an excerpt of his introduction.*

I suppose it has happened to us all at one point or another. The moment when it occurs to you that you are living in the sort of dystopia that lingers in the popular imagination. Perhaps you sense that some sort of Big Brother is watching over you, or that you are enveloped in a kind of Matrix.

Sometime in March 2020, during the second week of my Covid-19 confinement, a friend emailed an amusing Venn diagram. It depicted twelve overlapping circles, each representing a popular dystopia. All the famous ones were there: 1984, *Brave New World*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Lord of the Flies*. In the small area where they all intersected, 'You are here' was written. And we are there indeed—living through all these nightmares simultaneously. 'In the middle of the journey of our life,' Dante wrote in *The Divine Comedy*, 'I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost.'

"The first thing that plague brought to our town was exile", notes the narrator in Camus's *The Plague*, and these days, we have a decent sense of what he meant. A society in quarantine is literally a 'closed society'. People cease working, they stop meeting their friends and relatives, they quit driving their cars, and they put their lives on hold.

The one thing that we absolutely cannot stop doing is talking about the virus that threatens to change our

world forever. We are imprisoned in our homes, haunted by fear, boredom and paranoia. Benevolent (and not-so-benevolent) governments closely follow where we go and whom we meet, determined to protect us both from our own recklessness and the recklessness of our fellow citizens. Unsolicited walks in the park may elicit fines or even time in jail, and contact with other people has become a threat to our very existence. The unsolicited touching of others is tantamount to betrayal. As Camus observed, the plague erased the 'uniqueness of each man's life' as it heightened each person's awareness of his vulnerability and powerlessness to plan for the future.<sup>1</sup> After an epidemic, all those still living are survivors. The Covid-19 pandemic has turned out to be a classic 'grey swan event'—highly probable and capable of turning our world upside down, but nonetheless a huge shock when it arrives. In 2004, the US National Intelligence Council predicted that 'it is only a matter of time before a new pandemic appears, such as the 1918–19 influenza virus that killed an estimated 20 million worldwide', and that such an occurrence could 'put a halt to global travel and trade during an extended period, prompting governments to expend enormous resources on overwhelmed health sectors'. In a 2015 TED Talk, Bill Gates predicted not only a global epidemic of a highly infectious virus, but also warned us

that we were unprepared to respond to it. Hollywood also presented us with its own blockbuster 'warnings'. But it is no accident that there are no grey swans in *Swan Lake*; 'grey swans' are an example of something predictable yet unthinkable.

Although great epidemics are, in fact, not such rare occurrences, for some reason their arrival always surprises us. They reset our world in a similar way to wars and revolutions, yet these other things stamp themselves on our collective memory in a way that epidemics somehow do not. In her marvellous book *Pale Rider*, the British science writer Laura Spinney shows that the Spanish flu was the most tragic event in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but is now mostly forgotten. A century ago, the pandemic infected a third of the world's, a staggering 500 million people. Between the first recorded case on March 4, 1918 and the last in March 1920, the pandemic wiped out between 50 and 100 million people. In terms of loss of life from single events, it surpassed both the First World War (17 million dead) and the Second World War (60 million dead) and may have killed as many people as both wars put together. Yet as Spinney notes, 'When asked what was the biggest disaster of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, almost nobody answers the Spanish flu.'<sup>2</sup> More surprisingly, even historians seem to have forgotten the epidemic. In 2017, WorldCat, the world's largest library cata-

logue, listed roughly 80,000 books on the First World War (in more than forty languages) but barely 400 on the Spanish flu (in five languages). How can it be that an epidemic that killed at least five times more people than World War I has resulted in 22 times fewer books? Why do we remember wars and revolutions, but forget pandemics, even though the latter change our economies, politics, societies and urban architecture just as fundamentally?

Spinney believes that one key reason is that it is easier to count those killed by bullets than those who die from a virus, and the present controversy regarding the mortality rate of Covid-19 seems to prove that she was right. The other reason is that it is difficult to turn a pandemic into a good story. In 2015, the psychologists Henry Roediger and Magdalena Abel of Washington University in Missouri, suggested that people tend only to remember 'a small number of salient events' from any situation, namely those 'referring to beginning, turning and end points'.<sup>3</sup> It is very hard to tell the story of the Spanish flu (or of any other great epidemic, for that matter) with this narrative structure; epidemics are like orphans, in that we never can be wholly sure of their origin, and also like Netflix series, where the end of one season is merely a hiatus before the next one. The relationship between the epidemic and war resembles the relationship between

some modernist literature and the classical novel: it lacks a clear plot. For how long will we remember the horror we felt in the first week of the pandemic, when somebody next to us on a public transport was coughing and spluttering? For how long will we recall waking up in the night to check that a family member is still breathing properly? Our inability, or perhaps our unwillingness, to remember epidemics might also have something to do with our general aversion to random death and suffering. The meaninglessness of arbitrary pain is hard to bear; the victims of the current epidemic suffer not only a tragic demise because they are unable to breathe, but also because nobody can really explain the meaning of their death. <

- 1) Albert Camus, *The Plague* (New York, Vintage, 1991), p. 183.
- 2) Laura Spinney, *Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How It Changed the World* (London, Random House, 2017).
- 3) Ibid.

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# Lessons from an Unfolding Emergency

BY JIŘÍ PŘIBÁŇ

*The pandemic prompts fundamental questions. How do we think about society's relationship to nature? How resilient will our democracies be towards the abuse of emergency powers? How far can science dictate political decision-making? And can the primacy of the economy remain unassailable?*



surrounds us from without, but that it is also the place into which we are born, in which we die, and which we must respect. Nature does not roar like a lion but makes itself heard through organisms that are much more dangerous to us, because they creep into human communities only to take them apart with deadly force.

The first lesson we can take away from the current state of pandemic emergency is that society, if it is to survive, must communicate with what surrounds and transcends it as its environment. We cannot simply extend our sovereignty over natural resources and declare ourselves the supreme rulers of nature. This is the sort of absurd notion that should provoke our contagious laughter.

## A virus of absolute power

Yet it is equally evident that our response can only come from within society, rather than in the form of ecological or religious fatalism. The more the coronavirus spreads and kills, the more it stokes questions about the essence of politics.

Modern politics begins with the birth of Leviathan, the fictional monster brought into the world by Thomas Hobbes. Leviathan's voice, however, is not the roar of unfettered nature transported into the brutal world of politics, nor the seductive song of kindly human nature, as the Enlightenment would later dream. It is a realistic voice telling us that human society is dependent on political authority that is formed not because it is backed by some higher truth, but because it has the power and ability to assert and enforce obedience, if necessary by force.

Many have argued that the current state of emergency is tantamount to a state of war. In fact, it teaches us less about the thin line between life and death than about the capacity of politics to take, implement and enforce collectively binding decisions and rules. Nor is it true that, in a state of emergency, all power is unconditionally assumed by a dictator. On the contrary, to declare a state of emergency is to confirm that emergency powers have a clear constitutional framework that cannot be transgressed.

We can recognise how free and democratic a society is by how it deals with abnormal situations. Moreover, the ability to tackle such crises is guided by a society's historical experience, cultural and political practices, and unwritten rules.

While, in the United Kingdom, the government had a special law passed in parliament that laid down rules restricting and controlling its own power, in Hungary Viktor Orbán pushed through a law handing him unlimited emergency powers. And in Sweden, where eugenics has historically been more popular than elsewhere in Europe, the government embraced a risky epidemiological experiment that left schools, shops and even restaurants open.

Instead of an overarching state of emergency, we are seeing a global pandemic engendering many different states of emergency. Even then, however, political will cannot take absolute precedence over the rule of law. The principle of proportionality still applies to all steps taken by a government during a state of emergency, and the constitutionality and legality of those actions must be assessed retrospectively.

The second lesson, then, is that where democratic immunity is weakened, there is a risk of a virus much more virulent than Covid-19: the virus of absolute power. In exceptional situations, we expect to be strong-armed into obeying rules that will save our lives. But in democracies we protect the luxury of free elections. These guarantee political accountability no matter how exceptional and catastrophic the circumstances.

## Scientific knowledge, public opinion

While a state of emergency may seem like a sovereign moment of politics, the current pandemic reveals, in reality, how much power lies in expert knowledge. Politicians today are dependent more than ever before on virology, epidemiology, mathematical modelling and artificial intelligence.

The political distinction between public opinion—the *doxa* that steers populists—and the expertise derived from scientific knowledge—the *episteme* that guides technocrats—becomes blurred in a state of emergency. The slightest political mistake can have incalculable and fatal consequences. The *doxa* is stuck in absolute uncertainty, expecting the *episteme* to show the way.

However, whereas scientific knowledge is never definitive, a political decision is irreversible. Modern history is crawling with instances of politically abused science and cases of bad science. That is why, in the last decade, we have seen attacks on expert knowledge from both the

left and the right. The radical left was buzzing with the vision of the mobilisation of the masses and what Ernesto Laclau described as 'populist reason', while the far right cut to the chase and railed elite scorning of national common sense.

However, natural disaster requires that the hard *episteme* dictates decisions to the soft *doxa*. The public sphere is a theatre of permanent conflict between different regimes of the *doxa* that all claim permanent validity. The scientific sphere, on the other hand, is an expanse of clear, but necessarily temporary, solutions of the *episteme*.

The third lesson, therefore, lies in the paradox that the calm voice of scientists must resound with the pathos of political persuasion if it is to convince the public of the wisdom of its measures. But scientists' voices, too, can be difficult to discern in a polyphony, when what society is looking for is absolute unity and submissiveness.

There can be no straightforward decision, from either a medical or economic point of view, on whether to opt for the most stringent quarantine, in the hope that it will stop the infection in its tracks, or to fix upon more moderate measures, in an attempt to mitigate the worst effects while keeping society running. In the end, it is up to the politicians, and they rely on the vagaries of public opinion.

## The value of the economic system

In recent weeks, we have all asked ourselves the question of whether to save human lives even at the cost of becoming much poorer in the years to come, or whether to sacrifice tens of thousands of fellow citizens so as not to jeopardise the prosperity and wealth of society.

Most of us dismiss the calculation out of hand, believing that saving people's lives always takes precedence. However, although we refuse to admit it, our lives and everything we do carry only relative value. In healthcare, the considerations that always come into play are not only whether the treatment is effective, but also whether society can afford it and what quality of life the patient would have. We have waiting lists for some treatments, while others are so costly that they are available only privately or for patients up to a certain age.

But it should not just be economists and technocrats who get

to decide what we can afford. We should also listen to voices on the other side. For example that of the Spanish doctor who, exhausted from placing herself at risk every day in the fight against the epidemic, berated the nation, saying that if doctors and nurses are paid thousands while football stars rake in millions, it is Messi the people should be going to for a vaccine.

Similarly, we can query the value of an economic system that, in the past three decades, has deepened social inequalities, reduced people's opportunities in life, and indebted first households and then, to prevent itself from collapsing, entire states by resolving its own crisis on their dime. What sort of economic system is this that values so poorly the work of nurses, teachers, carers and others without whom society would have collapsed long ago in today's state of emergency?

The last lesson, then, is that even the value of economic profit is socially relative. That is why our present emergency is an opportunity to rectify global economic asymmetry and the colonisation of other social areas, from science and education through health and public services, all the way to the environment.

It is not a battle between capitalism and socialism, globalism and nationalism, or democracy and authoritarianism. It is a much more fundamental conflict in which the rationality of the economic system threatens to engulf all other social systems; in which, through money, it dictates to the law what justice is, to politics what power is, to art what beauty is, and to science what to explore.

When the financial crisis erupted just over a decade ago, political institutions proved so weak that they let the patient dictate the treatment, covering all the costs while saving on other patients. Today we are in a different situation. We are reassessing not only political, but also economic values. The next *doxa* of public opinion must consider the value of economic profit in the light of its relationship to other public goods. <

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[www.iwm.at/corona-focus](http://www.iwm.at/corona-focus)



# Social Democracy and Capitalism

BY EVA ILLOUZ

*The political Left worldwide finds its source in two struggles: one against the exploitation of human labor; the other for the emancipation of disenfranchised groups and individuals. The first is identified with the socialist Left, the second with the liberal Left. The first emphasizes economic policies of redistribution and regulation of labor. The second struggles to enforce group and individual rights through courts and cultural representations. These two Lefts need not be opposites, yet the recent world-wave of populist, xenophobic, conservative, authoritarian regimes has compelled many to wonder how to hold both projects together, with many calling for discarding identity politics and returning to socialism. Is the Left condemned to be a hydra, or can it unite its two heads into a plausible overall vision of the struggles to come?*



Since the 1960s, the liberal Left has successfully fought for minority rights, but could not do this without neglecting what had historically been its vocation: the struggle against economic domination and inequality. Exactly as, from the 1980s, markets and market-thinking invaded all spheres of social life (the famous turn to neoliberalism), the Left in most parts of the Industrial West started emphasizing cultural rights and sexual politics at the expense of the struggle against the class inequalities produced by capitalism: The shift away from politics of redistribution occurred at the same time that capitalism was starting to reach into all interstices of society to slowly tear apart the social fabric.

The Left's disaffection with the rhetoric of class struggle has multiple

causes. Identity politics and sexual equality, initially at least, did not sit well with materialist views of history. It was mostly middle-class women and homosexuals who fought for equality, because only those above

brutal extraction of value in coal pits, but a highly sophisticated machine that had made work "creative" and tapped into the desires and aspirations of workers through consumption. Mass markets created broad

became a matter of discourse, images and stories. Social movements and academic studies focused on the media as the arena for the transformation of images, stereotypes, prejudices against minorities. Ironical-

ing the Left's new politics of identity, promoting multiculturalist, feminist, or pro-gay content in movies and TV series, the media neglected to portray working class lives. Studies of media content in the USA have consistently found that the media express middle and upper-middle classes world views and the working classes are symbolically erased. Finally, the critique of capitalism declined also because various leaders of the Left—Blair, Mitterand, Clinton, Macron—increasingly accepted the free-marketers' premise that markets could not be surpassed.

*Former class alliances—between the working and middle classes and intellectuals—are no longer possible because the moral chasm between these social groups is too large.*

subsistence level could notice they were victims of non-economic forms of exclusion. In addition, the nature of capitalist domination became less clear. In the 1970s, capitalism in the Industrial West was no longer the

frames which made the idea of class struggles seem outdated: more and more social groups could consume more and more goods. A third reason was that inspired by post-modern and post-structuralist theories, equality

ly, media industries were also the source of new forms of extraction of surplus-value: through stories and images identity was refashioned to become a matrix of tastes and consumer choices. Moreover, in reflect-

## How to save social democracy

But while capitalism was slowly corroding the fabric of work, of family, of democracy and of solidarity, its transformative impact was no lon-



ger intelligible. The struggle to understand and contain capitalism remains the main goal of the Left. Let me propose four theses how the two Lefts can and should join to save social democracy:

1. Capitalism has had a direct impact on democratic participation. In most Western countries, soon after the vote became universal the capacity of the *demos* to shape political processes was considerably diminished by the increasing role played by capital. Oligarchies and/or their representatives in the form of “bureaucratic experts” started shaping state-level decision processes. Recent examples are too numerous to count: tax cuts which benefit the super-rich; the EU imposing stiff austerity politics on Greece, the deregulations of labor law in various countries, the relative impunity of the financial brokers who caused the 2008 financial collapse, down to the enormous role which capital now plays in political machines through “philanthropic” foundations, lobbies, think tanks, and informal networks where business and political elites mix. Nor should we underestimate the role which economists have played by using their scientific expertise to serve the free-market worldview of this oligarchy, indirectly undermining not only democracy but more crucially *the belief* in democracy. Exposing systematically and fighting the dispossession of democratic power by oligarchies and their experts should be one of the first items on the agenda of the Left to restore trust in the democratic process itself.

2. The second major issue which the Left must address is that of work. Traditional work has been destroyed by technology, by downsizing, by the permanent obsolescence of skills, and by the delocalization of production. The precarization of all forms of employment, the stagnation of salaries, the rising costs of education, the difficulty to achieve social mobility, and the prospect of technology replacing human beings, all suggest that capitalism erodes both the quality of work and the very capacity to work. While urban centers have experienced an economic and cultural renaissance in the last two decades, exurbs, suburbs, the countryside and small towns have declined because they do not generate wealth or offer attractive work prospects (Trumpism, Brexit or *Les Gilets Jaunes* are all expressions of the economic dwindling of zones on the periphery of urban zones). The degradation experienced in these zones metastasizes to other spheres of daily life, affecting family stability, social mobility, and crucially, trust in the future. This degradation of working class lives is a fundamental element of the vast unrest and social malaise throughout Europe and the USA, which only the extreme right has known how to capitalize on. Rehabilitating work in non-urban zones, repairing infrastructures and revitalizing associative and democratic life in non-urban centers is thus a primary goal.

3. The modes of capitalist accumulation since the 1960s have considerably diminished the capacity to form class alliances. Cities—not in-

dustrial towns or agrarian lands—are now the major source of wealth. They are the privileged sites for the flourishing of what Richard Florida has called the “creative classes” who live in large urban centers (or proximate suburbs) and constitute a large segment of liberal, left-wing voters. Its members have college degrees, work in the media, in art and design, advertising, publishing and journalism, in academia, or other

roles and identities, and question the Christian and white identity of the West. In contrast, the emphasis on religious tradition, on territory and the (white) nation, and on the traditional family is located on the other side of a chasm that has opened between two competing political views. These views now engage *moral* perspectives, raising the stakes of political opinions, making them more fundamental to one’s identity. The

extreme right suggests that such voters have not necessarily adopted right-wing narratives but rather explain their political allegiance in terms of their sentiment of devaluation.<sup>1</sup> Material and symbolic devaluation fuels the perception that “no one cares” and hence feeds resentment directed at the groups who seem to be cared for, such as women or ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities. The Left has to realize that

ple experience a dwindling of state resources, if immigration flows increase competition at the bottom and benefit the rich, then the question of how resources should be shared with newcomers should no longer be taboo to the Left. This goes against the internationalism that has been an attribute of the Left since at least the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the internationalism of yore has merged with the cosmopolitan consumer lifestyle of the liberal classes, who share with business elites their knowledge of English, their Frequent Flyer miles, their intense touristic practices and their fluency in different cultures. Instead of disdaining nationalist reactions to immigration, the Left needs to understand them as a plausible response to the uncertainty and insecurity entailed by the competition which cheaper labor represents, by the degradation of work and neighborhoods, by the perception of the devaluation of one’s life world. Nationalism can be endorsed as long as it is inclusive, that is, as Yascha Mounk put it, devoid of racism and xenophobia, and able to inquire directly how borders and immigration should be regulated.

It is no longer as easy to identify capitalist exploitation as it was for Engels in 19<sup>th</sup> century Manchester; its connections to its current victims’ insecurity and tensions are less direct. This is why liberal free-marketers conservatives and far righters can eat their cake and have it too: the free-marketers promote ruthless economic policies which drive down jobs and disempower the working-classes, but the deep social malaise which their own economic policies entail can be harvested by the far right-wing.

The antidote to right-wing populism might thus be left-wing populism—not as a long-term strategy, but as a short-term response to the current crisis of democracy. This left-wing populism would expose the true enemies of the people—the class of experts and corporate power that have disempowered democratic forms of participation—and function as a mode of political recruitment that addresses ordinary people’s daily struggles. Finally, it would use intelligence rather than morality in politics: preferring to understand what motivates popular resentment, fear or hatred rather than responding with moral disgust. It is incumbent on the Left to overcome the moral tribalism that increasingly constitutes the core of contemporary politics. <

1) [www.progressives-zentrum.org/politically-abandoned/?lang=en](http://www.progressives-zentrum.org/politically-abandoned/?lang=en)  
2) See for example: [www.progressives-zentrum.org/politically-abandoned/?lang=en](http://www.progressives-zentrum.org/politically-abandoned/?lang=en)

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📺 [www.youtube.com/IWMVienna](https://www.youtube.com/IWMVienna)



Eva Illouz at her IWM Lecture in Human Sciences at the Radiokulturhaus in December 2019.

positions of the intellectual/cultural labor process. They are the most likely to identify with the politics of identity of the post-1960s Left. This has created a cultural and ideological chasm between the creative classes and the working and lower-middle classes. Traditional socialism represented the working classes and the lower segments of the *petite bourgeoisie*, frequently includ-

deep cultural alienation between the working and creative classes around key topics like sexuality, the family, religion, immigration and nationalism, is thus both material and symbolic, and has morphed into a struggle about morality itself. In parallel to this moral chasm, the creative classes became increasingly perceived as illegitimate elites because they enjoy (a very moderate) accu-

for many members of the working classes, transgender bathrooms or norms of gender-neutral speech do not constitute any significant improvement of their lives.<sup>2</sup>

The Left needs to address the causes and pathological expressions of the malaise affecting the working classes with the cold scalpel of the surgeon and the empathy of the nurse. This means engaging with bigotry

*The Left has to realize that for many members of the working classes, transgender bathrooms or norms of gender-neutral speech do not constitute any significant improvement of their lives.*

ing intellectuals who functioned as a vanguard for the working classes. Since the 1980s, such alliances between members of the working and the upper-middle classes have come undone mostly because the latter have made alliances with LGBTQ, ethnic, racial, gender and religious minorities, and developed value systems very different to the working classes.<sup>3</sup> Their main ethos is what we may call individual and sexual expressivity, tolerance for all forms of life, cultural relativism and cosmopolitanism. To be sure, the struggles for women and LGBTQ were and remain crucial for the democratization of our societies and for the emancipation of genuinely oppressed groups. But large working and lower middle-class groups have not joined these struggles, which remain the apanage of the educated and urban, generating deep class divisions that are not only material but mostly cultural. For the working and lower middle classes, the traditional family has remained a key value, a source of social solidarity and mutual help. The creative classes favor new family forms, challenge gender

mulation of wealth accrued by cities and the symbolic power of creative industries. They attract far more attention than the Wall Street and corporate oligarchs who have been quietly amassing unprecedented levels of wealth and undermining democratic processes. The result is clear: former class alliances—between the working and middle classes and intellectuals—are no longer possible because the moral chasm between these social groups is too large, a fact that has been capitalized on by the likes of Steven Bannon, Marine Le Pen or Salvini, who are able to create alliances between workers, religious-traditionalist people and free-marketers liberals.

The working classes have been devalued materially—by the precarization of work, the stagnation of salaries and the decay of neighborhoods—and symbolically, because they did not join the moral identity of so many urban and liberal people. They could not participate in the politics of recognition because they themselves were increasingly denied recognition. An important study of German and French voters of the

or racism. Blanket condemnations of racism cannot substitute for an understanding of what it stands for. In particular, the Left should separate what in xenophobia and racism expresses a hierarchical view of human beings from what in it contains an aspiration to pride. However abhorrent racism is, it often is a way of organizing in-group boundaries and restoring pride in one’s group. To bridge the cultural chasm between the creative and the working classes, the Left has to abandon its Olympian moral position and reflect on what can restore a sense of pride to the people.

4. Current immigration flows are largely connected to the unequal distribution of wealth worldwide and have to do with the multi-fold strategies which the wealthy nations have used to exploit economically weak nations. A left policy of immigration should not only oppose the ultra-nationalistic reactions, but also expose immigration as the result of the globalization of capitalist processes of production.

Immigration will continue to be a deeply divisive issue. If many peo-



# The Meaning of Tusk and the Myth of Europe's Collapse

BY HUGO BRADY

*A former advisor to Donald Tusk reflects on the past 5 years and the European Union's future.*

In C.P. Cavafy's 1904 poem, 'Waiting for the Barbarians', the people of a stagnating Greek city state—the social set, senators, even the Emperor—idle in the forum, certain an enemy is about to storm the gates. The barbarians fail to appear, and the disappointed citizens, dressed up for their own annexation, exclaim: "Now what's going to happen to us? Those people were a kind of a solution."

Today, the West is that city, its voters dangerously fatigued by *fin de siècle* anxiety. This has given us Brexit and Donald Trump, but was palpable already back in 2014, when Donald Tusk, then Poland's prime minister, became president of the European Council. The first (and still the only) east European to hold a top EU post, Tusk pledged to bring the energy and optimism of the fast-growing countries that joined in 2004 to Europe's highest decision-making body.

That, at first, seemed a very dark Polish joke. 2015 began with Charlie Hebdo and an escalating campaign of Islamic State-inspired terror; progressed to a near-fatal shootout between the blundering Syriza party and Greece's eurozone creditors; and culminated with the world's worst-ever boat people crisis at the EU's outer border. Then, the ultimate heartbreak: the June 2016 Brexit referendum. Rumours of the Union's demise were now everywhere, especially in the English-speaking media where the notion of recurring European collapse is key to Anglophone self-confidence.

Tusk had no illusion about the powers at his disposal. The Council president calls and chairs EU summits, and represents the Union to other world leaders. The office has influence, but no other access to the levers of power. Yet Tusk—a wily political communicator—weaponised it to help jolt the Union out of introspection, partly by not caring too much what other people thought. Europe had, as he put it, too many Cassandras: politicians and intellectuals who warned of impending doom but were equally helpless to prevent it; and too few Odysseuses: smart, efficient leaders, ruthless where necessary, capable of sacrifices and practical to the extreme.

Tusk began the EU's rhetorical push-back in Lake Bled, Slovenia in August 2015. In a speech recalling Raymond Aron's *In Defence of Decadent Europe*, he aimed to circle the wagons, reminding everyone Europeans had endured long periods of great uncertainty before, precisely by *not* impulsively embracing abso-



Photo: European Union / Dario Pignatelli

lutist solutions. Only one of many, the Bled speech is worth quoting at length: "When Aron was writing his defence of Europe in the mid-1970s, the prevailing mood was one of pessimism and doubts about the future of democracy and free market, as well as about Europe itself. Religious violence ran riot, with geopolitical consequences. Nationalists rose on the left and right; the energy crisis shook the European economy, discrediting mainstream pol-

In summary, if EU leaders kept their heads, held firm to the middle path of common sense and rationalism, without being hesitant or weak or divided by external malefactors, they would win out in the end. For Tusk, Europe was the best place in the world to live, but quite naïvely, "unaware of its own superiority", in Aron's phrase. The president returned to this idea: defending Europe—both as a place and an idea—as synony-

is not the only one who can recite Homer's *Iliad* from memory, or Pericles' funeral oration, as set down by Thucydides.

Brussels traditionalists hated him for it, but the president was determined to bring a little Polish 'jakoś to będzie' to EU business, meaning embracing the present and breaking free of the paralysing fear of consequences. The EU system needs precise instruction, but sometimes has

taught him that a leader's job is 90% communication, 10% technical work. As with the Covid-19 crisis, Brussels usually operates the other way around. The latter has its admirers. But in politics, technocratic know-how without effective public communication is an 800 horsepower sports car with no keys. Moreover, in a world where geopolitics observes the rules of a nasty teenage schoolyard, EU actors more often behave

*Thirty years in the cage fight of Polish politics, as well as his political beginnings in Solidarność, had taught him that a leader's job is 90% communication, 10% technical work. Brussels usually operates the other way around.*

itics. Terrorist groups emerged, particularly aggressive in Italy and Germany while the students' revolts and radical movements, often backed by Soviet secret services, shattered societies from within. Europe was losing clout on the world stage and many thought that they had found themselves at a crossroads of blind alleys... The voice of Raymond Aron, barely audible in the seventies and drowned out by the avant-garde outcry of radical intellectuals, proved to be the voice of reason and shrewdness. Europe and her traditional values which constitute liberal democracy, have not only survived, but have also become, once again, a universal positive model for millions of people, not only Europeans."

mous with the defence of liberal democracy, frequently. To its flag, he recruited "the heroes of my imagination", including amongst others Hannah Arendt, James Joyce, Max Weber, Ivan Vazov, Denis de Rougemont, Milan Kundera, Sándor Márai, Stefan Zweig and Nichita Stănescu; as well as contemporaries Václav Havel, Adam Zagajewski, Claudio Magris, Herfried Münkler and Ivan Krastev. Passionately Hellenophile since his schooldays, Tusk surprised many with a near-academic knowledge of the classics, notably in the Athenian agora in late 2019, to honour life-long friend Paweł Adamowicz, the mayor of Gdańsk murdered the previous January. Boris Johnson

to make do with opaque virtue signalling from agreed political texts. To make decisions clearer, Tusk slimmed down summit communiqués that risked becoming "as empty as possible and as posh as possible", as he once put it to me. He cut the *politesse* from summit invitations, setting out the issues facing leaders in frank, political terms. One of the best regarded, issued on 31 January 2017, was a stark analysis of the current geopolitical reality, underlining that Europeans would either stand united in the world of Putin, Xi and Trump—or fall separately.

Thirty years in the cage fight of Polish politics, as well as his political beginnings in *Solidarność*, had

like a Montessori, routinely failing to grab popular attention, or in communications jargon: 'cut through'. Tusk regularly demonstrated cut through *could* be achieved from the European level. This is an important part of his legacy.

The first EU figure to reach over a million followers on Twitter (modest for Hollywood, not bad for politics), the president knew how to troll opponents effectively, asking what special place in Hell awaited Brexiters for terminating their country's trading and political links without a plan. Or confronting Donald Trump as the US president dramatically escalated transatlantic trade tensions: "With friends like that, who needs



enemies?" And in June 2019, when Vladimir Putin declared liberalism "obsolete", Tusk immediately shot back from the fringes of the G20 in Osaka: "What I find really obsolete are authoritarianism, personality cults and the rule of oligarchs."

A liberal-leaning conservative and die-hard atlanticist, Tusk immediately recognised Trump as an anti-Western adversary, or as he later put it at the UN, a 'fake leader'. Aside from forcing a new Sino-American settlement, the US president's obsession is to break open the single European trading regime, as an aardvark does an ant-hill. For that to happen, the European institutions theoretically have to collapse. Boris Johnson, too, hinted at this, referring to the Union in the past tense immediately after the UK referendum. ("The EU was a noble idea in its time.") With Trump's re-election entirely likely and Johnson's government soon to return to remodelling Britain into a buccaneering dystopia, the barbarians are marching (from the right this time; last time it was from the left). In the world they would create, Europe is "a large but peripheral peninsula of the great Eurasia", as Tusk told students of the College of Europe's Hannah Arendt promotion, days before his term ended.

Ask yourself: what international crisis would *not* prompt the exact same voices to propagandise the end of the European Union to its own citizens? Whether we talk about the financial crash of 2008, mass irregular migration from Turkey and Libya since 2014; or Covid-19 in 2020. This includes nationalist China, Russia, the Brexiteers and Trump; but also embittered European federalists and pouting political failures such as Yanis Varoufakis. Each plays Nostradamus to convince ordinary Europeans that the EU is the leaning tower of Pisa, in the hope perception will become reality. More accurate: the Union is the Sagrada Família of international relations, a beautifully unique (and perhaps permanently unfinished) network of freedom that neither centralises power nor allows the anarchy of the past to return. If only by virtue of the political forces that hate this, Donald Tusk understood the seriousness of protecting today's EU, and "that which is common" amongst Europeans. Should the Union's current leadership ever seek inspiration to see the road ahead, they can always set their watches to Gdańsk time and recite its motto: *Nec temere, nec timide*, ('Neither rashly, nor timidly'). Meanwhile you may well lose good money betting on 'the end of Europe'. <

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# Stopping Medical Brain Drain from the Balkans

BY ALIDA VRAČIĆ

*Circular migration allows governments to leverage the talents of their highly skilled citizens, at home and abroad, to respond to challenges such as Covid-19. They can achieve this by allowing portability of benefits across countries; by readily recognizing their training, education, and specializations; and by valuing and utilizing their talents, skills, and contributions made at home and in host countries.*

It is no secret that thousands of health workers have departed and continue to leave the Western Balkans every year. The flight of doctors, nurses and other medical workers to the West in recent years has been documented in every formerly socialist country in southeast Europe and the Balkans.

Doctors from Poland to North Macedonia and Kosovo are departing by the thousands. Romania alone lost half of its doctors between 2009 and 2015.<sup>1</sup> Between June 2013 and March 2016, some 4,213 Bosnians took up jobs in the German health care sector, bringing the total number of Bosnians employed in this sector in Germany to 10,726. In recent years these numbers rose sharply. It is estimated that for every six doctors in Bosnia, one now works in Germany.<sup>2</sup>

The Federation of Health Workers of Kosovo claims the country lost 400 medical staff in 2013 alone, with an upward trend continuing in subsequent years. In North Macedonia, an estimated 300 doctors left in 2013 and 2014. In 2018, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina lost around 300 doctors to emigration. A recent study carried out in Albania by the nonprofit organization *Together for Life* and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation found that 78% of doctors wanted to leave Albania, with 24% wanting to do so immediately.<sup>3</sup> The main reasons cited include a lack of professionalism in the workplace, low wages and poor working conditions, no possibilities to advance in their scientific work and no access to the state-of-art in medicine. This comes as no surprise as annual spending for research and science in the Western Balkans amounts to less than 0.4% of GDP. Similarly, Kosovo health workers are paid a few hundred euros per month, while in Germany their initial monthly salary starts at 2,000 EUR. The monthly salaries for health workers at the University Clinical Center in Pristina, Kosovo's biggest hospital, total a mere 632 EUR for a doctor and 403 EUR for a nurse.

"The EU countries are getting 'ready-made' medical doctors without investing anything in their education and training. Ready-made and for free! This is a great gift for the health systems of the EU countries."<sup>4</sup>

Available statistics show that countries in the region now educate many skilled health workers



almost solely for the purpose of export. This state of affairs is no longer affordable for the Western Balkans. Media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, calculate that it costs an estimated 150,000 EUR to educate a doctor and suggest that the country spends more than 50 million EUR annually on educating health workers who will eventually leave the country.<sup>5</sup> The problem has been loosely recognized at the EU level, but the EU greatly profits from this emigration.

Germany's new healthcare plan projects the use of newly allocated funds to train people abroad and prepare them for healthcare work in Germany. Kosovo, North Macedonia, Bosnia, the Philippines, and Cuba are routinely listed as possible cooperation partner countries. With an increasing number of people in Germany in need of ongoing care, predicted to increase from 2.86 million to 4.5 million by 2060<sup>6</sup>, it is fair to ask whether any medical staff will remain in the region?

## Covid-19 crisis

This decade-long mass emigration of health workers from the Western Balkans and the wider southeast European region has taken on an entirely different dimension in the past few months. Worldwide medical competencies, hospital facilities and scientific capabilities have been put to great test, and those in the Western Balkans and southeast Europe as a whole even more so. The reason is two-fold. First, health care systems are chronically underdeveloped and investment in the public health sector is minimal. A decreasing number of doctors, nurses and medical staff and a recurrent lack of essential drugs and equipment often pushes public health institutions, even under normal circumstances, close to the point of collapse.

Second, the Balkans' demography is very unfavorable, given the number of elderly people, who have

been characterized as a vulnerable group in this pandemic, in these countries. The countries of this region have ageing populations, with 15% aged 65 and over; this figure is set to rise to 26% by the middle of the century.<sup>7</sup>

During March and April 2020, the health systems' limitations (lack of respirators, often confusing protocols, lack of trained intensive care personnel) became so evident that governments in the region decided to introduce very strict lockdown measures, dreading the Italian or Spanish scenario. They were simply not willing to experiment with an already weakened health system. Salary bumps and bonuses were offered for health workers and medical students, and doctors in retirement were asked to come help. At the same time, Austria introduced charter flights for medical staff from the Bulgarian capital Sofia and the Romanian city of Timisoara, to make sure that full-time care went uninterrupted. This becomes even more noteworthy when put in perspective: according to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2016 Austria had almost 52 doctors per 10,000 citizens, which is roughly three to four times higher than in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, who reported 12 and 21 respectively.

Undeniably, the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the capacity and limitations of Western Balkan countries' health sectors. It has intensified the deep-seated and long-running disregard of healthcare systems across the region. It has also reminded us of the real importance of retaining skilled and talented professionals in country. But it is precisely this kind of crisis that can turn policies around. If analyzed critically, the Covid-19 crisis is a huge opportunity for governments to rethink their strategies, to strengthen existing public abilities, to start investing in science and research, to reform and solidify health systems in the region and to focus on retain-

ing professionals at home. Finally, to be able to respond to any future challenges similar to Covid-19, governments in this region must leverage the talents of highly skilled citizens who have not emigrated and offer programs to slow the emigration of skilled workers.

Circular migration offers a pattern of movement that presents an opportunity for the region and, in the short run, shows promise of delivering positive results. Temporary migrants in developed countries outnumber permanent migrants three to one, and 20–50% of migrants leave their host country within 3–5 years.<sup>8</sup> By allowing portability of benefits across countries, extra training and specializations, but also making sure that skills gained abroad are recognized and valued back home, governments can profoundly change the dynamics of labor and emigration within a society.<sup>9</sup>

This way, the Western Balkan countries could quickly transform skills and know-how into visible results. Furthermore, each country should be working actively with the countries where most of its emigrated citizens reside to develop circular migration policies. Given the rate at which emigration and depopulation are progressing, governments should include the issue of circular migration and emigration in general as part of a comprehensive foreign policy dossier and treat it as a matter of the highest importance. <

1) "Romania's Brain Drain: Half of Romania's Doctors Left the Country Between 2009 and 2015," *Romania Insider*, March 6, 2017.

2) Ibid.

3) togetherforlife.org.al

4) Katarina Panic and Danijela Kozina, "Germany Drains Bosnia of Doctors and Nurses," *Balkan Insight*, December 23, 2016.

5) "Odlasci ljekara: BiH godišnje gubi 50 miliona eura," *Al Jazeera Balkans*, February 4, 2018.

6) Ibid.

7) Stephan Sievert et al., *Europe's Demographic Future* (Berlin: Berlin Institute for Population and Development, 2017).

8) 2019 *International Migration and Displacement Trends and Policies Report to the G20* (OECD, June 2019).

9) Amelie F. Constant et al., "The economics of circular migration," in *International handbook on the economics of migration* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013).

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# In the Wake of the Pandemic: The Ethics and Politics of Care

BY RANABIR SAMADDAR

*The political economy of health has never been as paramount as in the battle against the Coronavirus. The pandemic, that forces us to confront the question who will care for the care workers in times of crisis, calls for a new kind of public power based on the principles of responsibility and solidarity.*

Care involves a whole range of institutions—the state, the nation, various collectives, families, and individuals, and denotes above all the responsibility of caring for the sick and the vulnerable. Neo-liberalism, however, has put paid to the order of linking power, responsibility, protection, and care. While care has become a vast industry—deploying hundreds and thousands of workers—the profession of care has at the same time developed into another branch of economy. Re-ordained by the market, care, essentially a humanitarian notion, has become an economic category. In the UK, for instance, till recently only the deaths in the hospital system (NHS) were counted as deaths due to Covid-19, but not the unfortunate ones who died in small nursing homes, at home, or in old age homes. A report of 2014, warning that NHS reforms along the line of reducing staff and defining spare capacity as waste would make it vulnerable to pandemic, was ignored. In Spain innumerable cases of elderly people being left alone to die unnoticed in old age homes have been reported.

Or take the case of India. The country spends less than 1.2% of its GDP on public health; it has 0.7 beds per 1,000 inhabitants and 51% of all hospital beds in the country are in private healthcare institutions, which in any case are not affordable for the poor. The relief package announced by the government was a mere 0.8% of the GDP, while the small and medium-sized enterprises employing nearly 40% of the workforce were probably the biggest hit due to the lockdown.<sup>1</sup> All these had cascading impact on migrant workers. Considered a health hazard by the landowners they were forced to leave first their jobs and finally their places of stay.

As public healthcare organisations have been reeling worldwide under reduction of public funds, and an all-round failure to keep up with demand for public services, long-term residential care has dropped out of the public health care system. Everywhere new managerial policies are promoting part-time jobs, contract work, privatization of health care facilities, and shrinking of municipal services. What happens then to 24-hour nursing services, which should be accessible, based on need and not ability to pay? How is the state going to protect homes for the lower middle classes and the poor? In the case



Police officers using 'Corona' helmets to raise awareness on Covid-19 during India's lockdown.

Photo: ARUN SANKAR / AFP / picturedesk.com

of long-term care, relatives and volunteers, mostly women, are under pressure. The contractualized women, often racialized migrants, perform the precarious work of caring and nursing. Whether in hospitals or in nursing homes or in individual families the bulk of the work is carried out by personal care providers. There is no dedicated work-force for an ageing population.

The epidemic now forces us to confront the question: how will the entire society be cared for? This calls for a new kind of public power, a new republican authority built on the sans culottes of the society—slum dwellers, neighbourhood committees, local clubs and associations, associations of health care workers, workers in waste processing and reprocessing—sections in greatest danger, who will be also engaged in defending the vulnerable. In view of the global morbidity and mortality patterns of the pandemic the vision of a caring society centred round the urban and semi-urban poor is gaining in significance. They will trust the government because the latter will be able to provide the necessary number of say ventilators, protective gear, arrangement of work and food during lock down, transportation facility, hospital beds, volunteers, etc. Trust is crucial. Without trust, society cannot rely on its rulers to save people's lives. "Care of the self" will mean an alternative politics of life, caring for each other—a principle of solidarity. Mitigating risk will mean the first principle of care—care for the care workers in times of an epidemic. These front soldiers in this war include all logistical workers who maintain collective life by supplying food, water, medicines, sanitation, warehouses, electricity, connectivity, etc.

This raises the possibility of thinking of post-capitalism bio-politics at the core of which will be the role of the urban and semi-urban poor. They will support surveillance methods needed to fight the epidemic, they will sanction the toughness the society requires, because on them people have trust. At the base of this trust is a *bio-politics from below* if one can use such a phrase, admitting that it is an awkward phrase.

To put the question differently: Can we imagine a society based on collective practices to help the health of populations, including large-scale behaviour modifications, without a large-scale expansion of forms of superintendence? What will collective "care of the self" mean in such circumstances, an alternative politics of life? How will that principle of "care of the self" admit self-supervision? Can we pose this question at all if workers are forced to choose between life and livelihood? Will "care of the self" mean anything if it does not mean caring for each other, a principle of solidarity? A new bio-politics will mean self-organizing which produces a new public power. Admittedly there will be a tension between self-organisation and public power—particularly in the postcolonial context where the supply chain workers are crucial to the maintenance of life. Which is why, it will be a new kind of public power that all revolutions and great wars have produced on the basis of local autonomy combined with a new general authority.

Commentators including quasi-liberal and anarchist philosophers only oversimplify or misrepresent the question, when addressing the dilemma between authoritarian biopolitics and a democratic polity that supposedly allows persons to make rational individual choices. As one

said "naked life" is closer to the pensioner on a waiting list for a respirator or an ICU bed, because of a collapsed health system. The political economy of health has been never as paramount as in the battle against the virus. The ethics of care calls for a material structure. Till now economics influenced population health, now the pandemic makes us realize the impact population health has on economy. Banal statements have become crucial: importance of cleanliness, adequate food, social support for the sick and elderly—ordinary things that call for greater public provision, governmental intervention, organisation of social support, and public arrangement of care. There is no doubt that the public power will win this war, if it has to. It will promote more collective strategies of care and sharing of responsibilities. In this sense, this war calls for a new type of public power.

Corona virus is no doubt a serious health problem, but not the deadliest one. In case of Covid-19, fatality rate is estimated at 3.5%, in case of Sars it was 11%, and for Mers 34%. And yet, Covid-19 has exposed the malaise of global economy, the system of public health, and the overall state of social vulnerability under capitalism as nothing else before in recent time.

What will be the response to the resurgence of neo-Malthusianism in global politics of care modelled around the notion of "herd immunity" and affordable deaths? Political philosopher Sandro Mezzadra calls for "care of the common". In his words, "Corona virus is a threat to something essential, to 'the common'. The ongoing epidemic shows the fragility and precarity of such a common (as well as our very lives), together with the need of 'care'.<sup>2</sup> However, I want to add to this important perspective

the fact that care needs appropriate political organisation of society, and that we must not shrink away from the kind of power we need and the society has to struggle for. We have to consider the questions: What kind of power will guard the society, which we shall treat as the common? What kind of power will nourish the world of care, which would mean protection and adhering to a consequent norm and principles of responsibility—precisely the principles which have been central to care of the self and manipulated by modern democracies? It will be important to interrogate the conduct of some states, which tried to "get them through the crisis" and in the process accumulated vulnerabilities now brought out in the open by the virus, while some other states managed to cope with the virus in a more competent manner as to be able to save lives?

Remember, viruses are part of nature and attacked human beings in the past. In 1918, the Spanish Flu killed 6% of the population at that time. The colonial state of India was responsible in a big way for the deaths of an estimated 18 million Indians. So, the question is: Does the state build up public health properly to strengthen the society's preparedness. Such question points to the need of new policies and new modes to reinforce and widen the social bases of care and protection, and more fundamentally a new politics of responsibility?

Perhaps the biggest political struggle in a post-Corona time will be between those powers that function along neo-Malthusian line of "necessary loss" of a section of population in a time of epidemic (or a war), and those who will uphold the cause of life. The former will have the power to arbitrate the number of deaths, the latter will draw legitimacy from the fact that it will fight till the end to guarantee life. <

1) Christophe Jaffrelot and Utsav Shah, "Keeping Poor Safe in Lockdown is State Responsibility, not an Act of Charity", *The Indian Express*, March 30, 2020.

2) Sandro Mezzadra, "Politics of Struggles in the Time of Pandemic", *Verso blog*, March 17, 2020.

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# Social Solidarity

BY STEVEN LUKES

*What was normal before? And what will look normal afterwards, when the crisis finally abates? Which individual lives did the social solidarity of recent times enable to flourish and which others did not in consequence?*



Photo: Imaginima / iStock.com

Under the dire circumstances of the covid crisis social solidarity takes the unanticipated, paradoxical form of 'self-isolation' and what is called 'social distancing,' exhibiting fear of contact with friends, neighbors and strangers. The distancing is actually physical with a social goal: it is practiced in collective self-defense to restore the social solidarity that renders individuality possible, providing the social framework, social norms and social bonds that will enable people to live their normal individual lives, as before.

But what was normal before? And what will look normal afterwards, when the crisis finally abates? Which individual lives did the social solidarity of recent times enable to flourish and which others did not in consequence? Though the virus itself is blind to social divisions, the crisis itself has vividly distinguished the privileged and sheltered from the exposed and endangered, above all those 'essential' workers, black and other minority communities, the poor, the aged, the chronically sick, the homeless, the incarcerated and detained. Suddenly, as during Hurricane Katrina, the truly vulnerable become visible to all.

So it is time to think about social solidarity, which is why Durkheim is the classical sociologist for this moment. His entire life's work consisted in seeking to understand it and explore its mechanisms. His inaugural lecture at the University of Bordeaux was on 'Social Solidarity' and his first book, *The Division of Labor in Society*, advanced his famous distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity. The first sustains collective identities, common sentiments and shared beliefs; the second unites ever more interdependent people across and despite

their divergent life courses, values and interests. It was in 1898 in his essay 'Individualism and the Intellectuals' that he deepened that latter idea by asking how a complex modern society can survive a crisis. A society, he came to see, 'cannot hold together unless there exists among its members a certain intellectual and moral unity.'

The crisis was the Dreyfus Affair, which polarized France between those adamantly opposed to questioning the army and the Church, who condemned Dreyfus, seeing them as pillars of national unity and those, like Emile Zola, outraged at the conviction of the innocent Jewish captain falsely accused of betraying his country. Durkheim turned the anti-Dreyfusard argument on its head, arguing that national unity in an advanced, heterogeneous society demands a society-wide commitment to individual rights, holding 'the individual in general' to be sacred, by according a kind of 'religious respect' for 'the human person, wherever it is to be found, and in whatever form it is incarnated.' 'The idea of the human person,' he wrote, 'given different emphases in accordance with the diversity of national temperaments, is... the sole idea that survives, immutable and impersonal, above the changing tides of personal opinions, and the sentiments which it awakens are the only ones to be found in almost all hearts.' This 'religion of humanity whose rational expression is individualist morality' was 'the only system of beliefs that can ensure the moral unity of the country.' Its 'motive force' was 'not egoism but sympathy for all that is human, a wider pity for all sufferings, for all human miseries, a more ardent desire to combat and alleviate them, a greater thirst for justice.' And Durkheim contrasted individ-

ualism thus understood with another kind of individualism, typified for him by Herbert Spencer and those he called 'the economists': 'that narrow commercialism that reduces society to nothing more than a vast apparatus of production and exchange.'

The crisis Durkheim addressed was local, while the pandemic we face is global, and yet we can see two striking parallels. In both cases we can see intense polarization tearing at the social fabric. In France it was largely driven by antisemitism. In Trump's America and post-Brexit Britain the pandemic invaded societies whose civic morale was already sapped by exceptionally bitter political hostilities. And in both cases the proposed remedy lies in the rejection of the market fundamentalism that in the United States has wreaked social devastation and promoted unbridled inequalities.

And yet the Durkheimian secular religion of individualism, if it is to prevail in the world after the pandemic, will need to go far beyond the liberalism and the socialism that went before. It will need really to take seriously the sacredness of individual lives, extending 'religious respect' to all those defined by social categories that have hitherto functioned to exclude them from it. On the most optimistic assumptions, people will learn from the current crisis that the interdependence of organic solidarity demands recognition of everyone, including all health workers, from doctors to those who dispose of dead bodies, the delivery man and the cashier in the grocery store. ◀

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# Gandhi heute

ILIJA TROJANOW IM GESPRÄCH MIT SHALINI RANDERIA

*Welche Lehren lassen sich aus dem Leben und Wirken Mahatma Gandhis für das 21. Jahrhundert ziehen? Seine berühmte Autobiographie birgt mögliche Antworten. Der Text schildert die Geschichte seines Kampfes gegen Gewalt, Rassismus und Kolonialismus. Gleichzeitig ist er eine vernichtende Kritik der modernen Industriegesellschaft und eine Präsentation Gandhis utopischer Vision von Selbstgenügsamkeit und Selbstermächtigung. Ilija Trojanow ist der Herausgeber einer neu erschienenen ungekürzten Übersetzung. Beim Vienna Humanities Festival 2019 sprach er mit IWM Rektorin Shalini Randeria über Gandhis anhaltende Relevanz für den Kampf gegen politische, ökonomische und ökologische Ungerechtigkeit.*

**Shalini Randeria:** Gandhi gibt seiner Autobiographie einen sehr rätselhaften Untertitel: „Meine Experimente mit der Wahrheit“. Kann man mit der Wahrheit experimentieren?

**Ilija Trojanow:** Er hat ja auf Gujarati geschrieben und im Gujarati ist es nicht klar, ob er mit der Wahrheit oder die Wahrheit mit ihm experimentiert. Gandhis Wahrheitskonzept ist ein religiös-philosophisches, ein Moment der Erlösung, das große Ziel, nach dem der Mensch streben muss. Aber er war auch durch und durch Pragmatiker und wusste, dass dieser extreme Anspruch an Wahrheit im Leben nicht zu erreichen ist. Es ist ein Weg, ein Horizont, den er mit dieser Wahrheit formuliert. Und weil es ein Weg ist, ist es nicht klar, welche Pfade man nimmt. Da war er bewundernswert radikal. Immer wieder, wenn er gemerkt hat, dass ein bestimmter Weg nicht funktioniert, hat er einen anderen Weg genommen. Das meint er mit „Experimenten“: dass man immer wieder mit Selbstskepsis die beschlossenen Wege überprüft, hinterfragt, und dann unter Umständen einen radikal anderen Weg geht.

**Randeria:** In deinem Nachwort schreibst du, dass du der Verklärung von Gandhi entgegenwirken und seine politische und geistige Aktualität herausstreichen möchtest. Gandhi ist in Indien sowohl von der rechten Ecke als auch von der feministischen Linken zunehmend unter Kritik geraten. Kannst du etwas zu dieser Kritik sagen?

**Trojanow:** Die Kritik der Rechten war eigentlich von Anfang an da. Der Mörder von Gandhi kam aus demselben Stall, aus dem die heutige indische Regierung kommt. Es gibt eine direkte Genealogie des Hasses auf das Völkerverbindende, Religionsübergreifende und Multikulturelle im Wirken und Denken

von Gandhi. Bei der Linken kam das erst später. Hier hat die Kritik sehr stark damit zu tun, dass Gandhi zu einer sinnentleerten Ikone wurde. Er wurde auf eine Art Landesvater reduziert, ohne seine vielen Provokationen zu thematisieren. Die feministische Linke hat zwei Kritikpunkte angebracht: Zum einen, dass er gendernmäßig blind war. Das war so, überhaupt keine Frage! Er kam aber aus einem Umfeld, in dem er wahrscheinlich kaum anders hätte agieren können. Was meines Erachtens schwerer wiegt, ist der Vorwurf, dass er gegenüber den Unberührbaren, die im Kastenwesen die unterste Schicht bilden, einen eher paternalistischen Ton angeschlagen und nicht einer sozialen Transformation in Richtung Egalität das Wort geredet hat. Obwohl Gandhi ein politisches Gesamtkunstwerk war, wurde er immer wieder auf eine Tonart reduziert, was unglaublich schade ist, da gerade die Widersprüchlichkeit und Vielschichtigkeit diesen Menschen spannend macht.

**Randeria:** Gandhi war das Produkt einer bereits globalisierten Welt. Sein Pazifismus und Vegetarismus und viele weitere Facetten seiner Persönlichkeit gründeten sich nicht nur auf die hinduistische Tradition seiner Familie, sondern auch auf intellektuelle Traditionen im Westen wie die anti-modernen romantischen Ideale von Ruskin oder Tolstoi. Er sagte: Mein Haus steht auf einem so sicheren Fundament, dass ich mir erlauben kann, alle Türen und Fenster offen zu lassen, damit Winde aus aller Welt durch mein Haus wehen.

**Trojanow:** Seinen Umgang mit Traditionen finde ich beeindruckend. Das war kein Gehorsam gegenüber, sondern eine Überprüfung der Tradition. Er hat den Vegetarismus, mit dem er aufgewachsen ist, an sich selbst überprüft. Er hat eine





Mahatma Gandhi mit seinem Gefolge beim Salz-Marsch, 1930.

Zeit auch Fleisch gegessen, sich dann mit den Schriften des englischen Autors Henry Salt auseinandergesetzt, und dann mit einer selbstgefundenen neuen Überzeugung diese Tradition des Vegetarismus bekräftigt. Mit seinem Kosmopolitismus war es ähnlich. Seine Heimatregion hat seit Jahrhunderten in einem großen Austausch mit der Welt gestanden. Seine Mutter hing der kleinen religiösen Pranami-Gemeinschaft an, für die jede religiöse Überlieferung einen Kern Wahrheit in sich enthält. Dann ging er zum Studieren nach England. Er trägt Anzüge, er hat auch mal Alkohol probiert, hat sich als Gentleman versucht – auch wieder ein Experiment – aber festgestellt, dass das alles für ihn nicht das Richtige ist. Aber er hat das englische Rechtskonzept, das von der Aufklärung kommt, inhaliert. Er hat immer wieder ein legalistisches Denken an den Tag gelegt, was im antikolonialen Kampf sehr wertvoll war, weil er die Briten daran erinnert hat, was ihre eigenen Werte und Rechtsvorstellungen sind.

**Randeria:** Gandhi setzt auf radikale Weise seinen eigenen Körper als Mittel des Widerstands ein. Diese Körperlichkeit ist für ihn im politischen Denken und Handeln genauso wichtig wie Schreiben und Reden. Das ist schon etwas...

**Trojanow:** sehr Modernes...

**Randeria:** ...und manchmal auch fremd Anmutendes.

**Trojanow:** Ja und nein. Er hat den Hungerstreik erfunden, der dann im Laufe des 20. Jahrhunderts ins Arsenal des politischen Widerstandes weltweit eingeführt wurde. Auch eine bestimmte Form des Streiks. Was er mit dem Widerstand gegen das britische Monopol auf Salzherstellung an der indischen Küste gemacht hat, war nach einem Symbol zu suchen, das möglichst viele Men-

schen teilen und als Notwendigkeit aus ihrem persönlichen Leben heraus verstehen können. Ein weiteres hochmodernes Moment des politischen Widerstandes ist, dass er immer wieder mit einer extremen Selbst-

gesagt, die einzige Möglichkeit auf Gewalt zu reagieren ist, bereit zu sein sich selbst auszulöschen. Er hat das teilweise von den anderen auch verlangt. Und das darf man nicht unterschlagen.

ten. Ich war neulich wieder in Südislandien und da waren auf dem Markt zwei oder drei Reissorten – und diese von Saatgut, das jedes Jahr von Großkonzernen neu gekauft werden muss. Es geht tatsächlich um eine

*Mein Haus steht auf einem so sicheren Fundament,  
dass ich mir erlauben kann, alle Türen und  
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aufopferung vorne weg gegangen ist, was dann den starken Effekt hatte, dass die Anderen, die hinterher gingen, wenigstens teilweise das nachgemacht haben.

**Randeria:** Gandhi sagte, unser Körper ist verwundbar und in dieser Verwundbarkeit setze ich ihn ein –

**Randeria:** Gandhi hatte Salz zum Symbol gemacht, ein in jedem Haushalt täglich verwendetes Produkt, dessen Herstellung aber dem britischen Monopol unterlag. Gandhi hielt die Salzsteuer für ungerecht und wollte das Monopol brechen. Vielleicht hätte er heute im Kampf gegen die

existentielle Enteignung der Menschen, nicht nur im ökonomischen, sondern auch ökologischen Sinn. Einer der Gründe, wieso er das Salz genommen hat, ist, dass das Salzmonopol für das britische Imperium ein Vehikel war, jeden Menschen in Indien in die ökonomische Pflicht zu

*Was er mit dem Widerstand gegen das britische  
Monopol auf Salzherstellung an der indischen Küste  
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nicht um Gewalt zu erzeugen, sondern um Gewalt Einhalt zu bieten.

**Trojanow:** Jeder weiß, dass Gandhi für Gewaltfreiheit war. Was aber missverstanden wird, ist dass es bei ihm natürlich auch ein Moment der Gewalt gibt, nämlich – wie du angedeutet hast – der Gewalt gegen sich selbst. Er war immer wieder bereit, sein eigenes Leben zu opfern. Er hat

Monopole der Agrarkonzerne Saatgut als Symbol genommen. Saatgut wäre heute als Symbol sehr geeignet, um genau in dieser radikalen Form die Machtfrage zu stellen.

**Trojanow:** Ich bin 1998 zum ersten Mal nach Indien gekommen, hab dann fast 6 Jahre dort gelebt. Ich kann mich erinnern, auf den Märkten gab es 15 oder 20 verschiedene Reissor-

nehmen. Die vielen Substistenzbauern, die an den schon damals globalisierten Wirtschaftsprozessen nicht partizipierten, sollten mit Steuern gezwungen werden, am ökonomischen Prozess teilzunehmen.

**Randeria:** Kommen wir zurück zur Frage der Gewalt. Gandhi hatte ein sehr weites Verständnis von Gewalt. Die Sprache war für ihn ein

wichtiges Feld der Gewaltausübung. Er war sehr behutsam in seiner Sprache, insbesondere gegenüber seinen politischen Gegnern.

**Trojanow:** Der Mensch, der ihn vielleicht am meisten beeindruckt hat, war Tolstoi. Und Tolstoi war wiederum vom russischen Philosophen und radikalen Humanisten Alexander Herzen geprägt. Dieser sagte: „Man muss den Menschen die Augen öffnen und nicht rausreißen“. Gandhi hat das ein Leben lang gepflegt. In Südafrika reagiert er auf eine Politik des institutionalisierten Rassismus ohne Ausfälligkeit und völlig sachlich. Er glaubt, dass sein Gegenüber noch in einem humanistischen Dialog erreichbar ist. Er sagt jedes Mal: „Wir können unsere Menschlichkeit noch finden“, „ich habe dich nicht abgeschrieben“. Ich glaube, dass er tatsächlich stets in dem Gegner einen Mitmenschen sieht, der ein Instrument einer strukturellen Gewalt ist, und sagt: „Lass uns doch gemeinsam diese strukturelle Gewalt überwinden.“◀

Das Gespräch fand im Rahmen des Vienna Humanities Festivals 2019 statt, das dem Thema „Unheil und Hoffnung“ gewidmet war und eine gemeinsame Initiative von IWM, Wien Museum und Time to Talk ist. Videos zu allen Veranstaltungen sind verfügbar auf: [www.humanitiesfestival.at](http://www.humanitiesfestival.at)

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# The Relevance of Russian Religious Philosophy Today

BY CLEMENA ANTONOVA AND JAN SOWA

The movement within Russian religious philosophy, defined by the adherence of its followers to the concept of *vseedinstvo* (translated here as “full unity”) goes back to the Slavophile philosophers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, then via Vladimir Soloviev, informed the works of the brothers Trubetskoy, Pavel Florensky, Sergei Bulgakov, V.F. Ern, etc. at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The concept was used to cover a wide range of phenomena—the relationship between subject and object, between immanent and transcendent, etc. What we will be interested in here are the implications of this concept in the sense of the unity of faith and reason, of religion and secularism.

As many at the turn of the century, the Russians felt that they were living through a “crisis of modernity.” Some were passionately convinced that the crisis was the result of the failure of the Enlightenment project of modernity and of the mainstream of Western philosophy, associated with it. The main fault was found with the false oppositions of Western thought, as exemplified by the Kantian disjunction between noumenon and phenomenon and the more general opposition between religious and secular reason. Probably the main contribution of the Russian project lay in opening Christianity to modernity by drawing attention to the complex relationship between religion and secularism.

## The contemporary relevance of *Vseedinstvo*

As Charles Taylor and others have shown, the strict opposition between secular and religious reason is a phenomenon typical of the modern West and foreign to other cultural and intellectual traditions. Moreover, it is an opposition that is profoundly misleading since there is a religious genealogy to many of the modern ideas that we tend to accept as exclusively secular. As Habermas said in his dialogue with Joseph Ratzinger in 2004, there is a need for “philosophy’s self-reflexion with regard to its own religious-metaphysical origins.”<sup>1</sup>

The notion that modernity is the result of the secularization of Christian ideas was voiced most provocatively by Nietzsche in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nietzsche’s observation that “the democratic movement is the inheritance of the Christian movement”<sup>2</sup> was certainly not meant as a compliment to either democracy or Christianity. More recently, Charles Taylor’s award-winning *A Secular Age* (2007) tells the story of the rise of secularism from spirit of



Photo: Nikos Avramidis / EPA / picturedesk.com

Reform within Latin Christianity in the Late Middle Ages, while Michael Gillespie shows that there is a “metaphysical, theological core of the modern project”<sup>3</sup> and that religion plays a central role in “the formation of the idea of modernity.”<sup>4</sup>

What comes across in contemporary secularization theories is that they are usually done from within a Western intellectual tradition. The Russian material is almost entirely missing. At the same time, the very absence in Russia of some of the defining moments of the Western secularization process—the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, the Enlightenment—means that the interrelationship among religion, secularism, and modernity was much more strongly interwoven than in the Western paradigm. Contemporary authors in the field of secularization theory may find natural allies among the Russian *vseedintsy*. <

- 1) Habermas, J. and Ratzinger, J., *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, (San Francisco, 2005), p. 38.
- 2) Nietzsche, F., *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (1885), (Edinburgh and London, 1909), p. 127.
- 3) Gillespie, M., *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, (Chicago and London, 2008), p. XII.
- 4) Ibid., p. XI.

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Much of post-secular thought derives from Carl Schmitt’s thesis that political concepts are secularized theological concepts.<sup>1</sup> However, it is also true that many—if not most—theological concepts developed through a sacralization of the philosophical ones. The influence of Aristotle on Thomas Aquinas is not the only example. Plotinus, Plato or earlier Greek

philosophers such as Anaximander with his concept of *apeiron* were relevant for the development of Western theology. There has been a constant circulation of ideas within the Western European civilizational space with some concepts becoming sacralized and then “recycled” back into the secular sphere.

## Marx as a Christian philosopher?

Marxism is sometimes characterized as a secularized version of Christian theology with future communism being an equivalent of Heavenly Kingdom. Marxism operates with the same linear concept of time that Christianity implies in its progress from Creation, through Original Sin, the Fall, redemption and the future Second Coming of Christ. Communist revolution can be viewed as a kind of apocalypse and Final Judgement (at least for the bourgeoisie). There is, however, a key difference: Marxism is arguing for a radical immanence. While Jesus insisted that “[his] kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), Marx, following Feuerbach, declared a war on the transcendent, urging people to change their condition and relations in this very world.<sup>2</sup> The origin of Marxist materialist framework is classical not Christian; the doctoral dissertation of Karl Marx engaged with the philosophy of Epicurus and Democritus, not Teresa of Ávila nor Meister Eckhart.

What relevance may the post-secular critique of modernity have in the East? The histories of modernity—and the Enlightenment—

have been different in East and West. Bruno Latour claimed that “we have never been modern”<sup>3</sup> and—ironically—an Eastern European intellectual could state exactly the same, but in a very different sense. While Latour demonstrates that the West has never lived up to its own assumptions, especially to its ambition of separating various spheres of social reality (“purification”), the attempts to introduce such separations in the East—for instance the separation of state and church—were either minoritarian or short-lived. Technically, the very term “post-secular” does not apply to the situation of Eastern Europe, because it never went through a successful secularization. This is a basic fact determining current political debates and social developments. Both Poland and the United Kingdom are dominated by populism, however the British populists are not obsessed with stripping women of the right to control their bodies by totally banning abortion. Thus, any critique of modernity and the Enlightenment in the East risks slipping into the reactionary camp.

## The holy and the institutional

When it comes to the actual functioning of societies, institutions play a bigger role than philosophical concepts or theories do. The translation of any religious teaching into political practice is not given by the content of those teachings alone, but by their interpretations coined by preachers and religious institutions. The actions of those actors often bear no resemblance to the ideas conveyed in religious writings.

During the Sermon on the Mount Jesus allegedly affirmed: “Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:38–42). How does one infer the Inquisition and the Crusades from such a prise of pacifism? Surely, some theological trick devised by Vatican’s theologians resolved that troubling conundrum, while, at the same time, it must have required a lot of intellectual dishonesty and bad will. <

1) See C. Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, (Chicago, 2006), p. 36.

2) See Engels, E., *Ludwig Feuerbach and End of Classical German Philosophy*, (Peking, 1976), pp. 61–65.

3) See Latour, B., *We Have Never Been Modern*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1993).

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# Antisemitism Resisted and Denied

BY LAURA ENGELSTEIN

*Antisemitism is back. As right-wing nationalist movements gain popularity in Europe and North America, physical attacks on Jewish institutions, Jewish symbols, and Jews themselves have become more frequent. Left-wing critics of Israeli politics, for their part, sometimes fail to distinguish between Israel as a nation among nations and Israel as an expression of Jewish power. The shock of the Holocaust and years of post-Holocaust education banned the public expression of antisemitism in the West, but the taboo has recently lost its force.*

As an ideology of popular mobilization, the term was introduced in 1879, in connection with rising German nationalism, but antisemitism has allied with a range of political interests. Russia and Eastern Europe provide classic examples. Fighting for an independent Poland, the National Democrats refused to accept the Jews as part of the envisioned nation. The Russian empire, from which the Poles wished to escape, used antisemitism as well, in an old-fashioned mode, as one element in a broad policy of control over its ethnic and religious minorities. At moments of political crisis or war, the same traditionalist regime used antisemitism in its modern form, to bolster its waning authority and appeal to a restive popular base. Attacks against Jewish lives and property, known as pogroms, earned the regime a sinister reputation.

Jews became vulnerable, in short, when political authority wavered or had yet to be confirmed. In the atmosphere of uncontrolled violence that followed the Bolshevik coup in 1917, they again fell victim to pillage and murder, now perpetrated on a much greater scale by armed forces of every political persuasion. Defenders of the old order rallied their troops against the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy. Among Polish and Ukrainian nationalists challenging Russian domination, now in Soviet guise, some resorted to antisemitic appeals. The Communists rejected antisemitism in favor of class warfare and accepted Jews in positions of authority. Yet Red troops also indulged in pogroms and Soviet campaigns against commerce and religion threatened the Jews in their livelihoods, culture, and often their very existence. Altogether, at least 60,000 Jewish inhabitants, and perhaps twice as many, lost their lives in the three years of conflict.

## Resisting antisemitism

From the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as propaganda and violence aimed at Jews assumed ever more virulent forms, antisemitism nevertheless did not go unopposed. It was confronted in the transnational sphere by Jewish leaders and their non-Jewish allies, who linked the issue of Jewish rights to a broader platform of liberal values. In the last decades of the Russian empire, this coalition

Holocaust-Memorial in Budapest at the Danube  
by Gyula Pauer and Can Togay.



Photo: Ernst Weingartner / picturedesk.com

worked to arouse public opinion, at home and abroad, in protest against the pogroms and on behalf of constitutional change. They shared the belief that liberal democracy provides the only conditions in which Jews, as individuals and communities, can hope to attain equal citizenship and the protection of the law. Their project was defeated by the revolution and civil war, but their strategies prepared the way for future battles.

In the wake of the First World War, advocates for Jewish rights pressed the great powers to intervene on behalf of minority populations in the newly emerging nations. Reborn Poland found its image tarnished by the overtly antisemitic program of the National Democratic Party. An aspiring Ukraine, appealing for foreign support, was obliged to explain or deny the involvement of its troops in the waves of civil war pogroms. The Poles managed to resist the force of Soviet arms and establish their independence, but were compelled in 1919, as the price of recognition, to accept restrictions on the treatment of ethnic minorities. The Ukrainians, by contrast, failed for complex reasons to consolidate an independent nation. In emigration, Semyon Petliura (1879–1926), leader of the short-lived Ukrainian People's Republic, remained as a symbol of deferred hopes.

Unlike the anti-Bolshevik Whites or the Polish National Democrats, Petliura had rejected antisemitism

on principled grounds, but he was unable to control the behavior of his troops or the attitudes of their commanders. The contradiction caught up with him in 1926, when he was assassinated on a Paris street by Solomon Schwarzbard (1888–1938), a Russian Jew claiming revenge for relatives murdered in the civil war pogroms. The trial in a Paris courtroom focused not on the assassin's guilt, which was uncontested, but on Petliura's reputation. The leader's posthumous advocates insisted he had not been antisemitic. Schwarzbard's defenders publicized the extent of the damage the Jews had suffered, partly at the hands of Petliura's men, and denounced the use of antisemitism as a political tool. Their case was endorsed by French intellectuals, in the name of republican values, and by the diasporic network of Jewish rights organizations. Schwarzbard was acquitted.

## Continuities of Polish antisemitism

Liberal mobilization was unable, however, to prevent the resurgence of political antisemitism or the rise of fascist movements in the 1930s. Indeed, the Nazis turned the taboo on antisemitism to their own advantage: in taking the Wilhelmine precedent to extremes, they signaled the radical nature of their project. Interwar Polish antisemitism, for its part, was not a break, but a continuation of the nationalist heritage. In 1934

the government renounced the minority rights treaty of 1919. In 1939 Poland fell victim to Nazi (and Soviet) aggression. The Polish underground and the home population retained their hostility toward the Jews, whom they identified with Soviet power. Under Allied pressure, Polish leaders in exile modified their rhetoric, but only with obvious reluctance. The postwar Communist regime had its own issues with antisemitism. It is only since 1989 that Polish society has begun to deal with the legacy of the war. The present conservative regime insists, however, that evidence of Polish involvement in the atrocities committed on Polish soil must be refuted. Antisemitism must be disavowed because it signals a moral failing, yet resentment of the charge only manifests the posture it disclaims.

## The case of Andrzej Bobkowski

The case of Polish writer Andrzej Bobkowski (1913–1961) replicates the pattern in which antisemitism persists but is denied or disguised without being confronted. Caught in occupied France between 1940 and 1944, the young Bobkowski kept a journal. Published by the émigré Polish press, *Kultura*, in 1957, it presents him as a nonconformist who rejects heroic Polish patriotism and the totalitarian ideologies of both right and left. He makes a point of rejecting antisemitism, as well. The original manuscript, by contrast, tells a

different story: at the time, in fact, Bobkowski echoed all the standard antisemitic clichés. After the war he complained that the Jews were relentless in believing all Poles were antisemites, a reproach he personally resented. When it came to publication, he quietly adjusted the record.

Before, during, and after the war, Jews and their liberal allies had indeed been relentless in protesting mistreatment and mass murder. They had been tireless in promoting the cause of Jewish rights and the liberal democratic institutions they believed would guarantee them. This assumption had its critics at the time, among those who believed only a nationalism of one's own or a socialist society presented the solution. Liberal democracies do not solve the problem of antisemitism, to be sure, but they provide the platform on which to conduct the fight. Today, as the liberal paradigm itself falters, the question of how to combat antisemitism arises once again. <

**Laura Engelstein** is Henry S. McNeil Professor Emerita of History at Yale University and the author of *The Resistible Rise of Antisemitism: Exemplary Cases from Russia, Ukraine, and Poland* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2020), on which this essay draws. From September to December 2019 she was a Visiting Fellow at the IWM. She gave a talk at the Vienna Humanities Festival entitled "Antisemitism: Russia, Then and Now" as well as a Monthly Lecture at the IWM. Both are available on [www.youtube.com/IWMVienna](https://www.youtube.com/IWMVienna)



A popular poem penned by Sydney-born Dorothea Mackellar in 1904 speaks lyrically of a 'wide brown land' shaped by 'ragged mountain ranges', 'sweeping plains', a 'jewel-sea', a 'gold hush of noon' sun, 'droughts and flooding rains'. My grandmother taught me its lines. I later recited it in primary school and hummed and sang it as a farm boy, rather proudly. The poem *My Country* left lumps in my throat. It taught me to adore the perfume of the local eucalyptus, the exotic flowers and hopping, pouched animals. And, although I didn't quite understand its chilling line about the 'beauty and terror' of the sunburnt country, the poem had humbling effects. It made me feel dependent on the landscape I loved.

Some years later, as my political brain germinated, I understood that Mackellar's 'sunburnt country' had been stolen from peoples who form the oldest continuous civilization on our planet. I learned that the first Australians had managed the country's sun-drenched mountains and flooded plains differently, more modestly and prudently than invading Europeans. They thought of its 'far horizons' and 'sapphire-misted mountains' as their material embodiment. They were its spiritual and physical extension. As custodians of their ancestors and future generations, they acted as the land's guardians and stewards.

### A natural disaster?

Now what they loved has been badly burned. The scale and depth of the unfinished calamity is hard to fathom at a distance. At close range, things look disastrous. Just two months ago, two hundred fires were still burning out of control. Nearly nine million hectares of land were incinerated, a collective area equivalent to the size of Ireland, over ten times what was destroyed in 2018 by the deadliest fires ever recorded in California. Never mind the multibillion-dollar damage to the country's tourism and communications infrastructure; a billion native animals have died and countless others have been maimed and bewildered by their loss of habitat. The infernos have increased the rate of bottom-up species destruction; the chances of ecosystem collapse in several regions have escalated. Not even the native worms, spiders, grasshoppers and other tiny creatures that dwell humbly and honourably at the base of our local biomes are safe. Crops, farm animals and several thousand homes have gone up in flames. Nearly 30 people have lost their lives. A third of the continent's citizens are either suffering ruin or know others whose lives have been damaged.

City-wide water bans have been imposed. Nearby reservoirs were emptied. January temperatures in Sydney's western suburbs reached nearly 50°C, the warmest place on Earth. This was just the beginning of what turned out to be the sunburnt country's second hottest and driest summer ever recorded with temperatures 1.88°C above average. Based on warming trends dating back to 1950, the local Bureau of Meteorology is now forecasting

# A Sunburnt Country: Australia 2020

BY JOHN KEANE

*In the wake of the most serious environmental disaster since colonization, Australia's long-term democratic resilience is now being tested, says John Keane.*



Photo: Lindsay Imagery / iStock.com

information by bots and trolls. A state of disaster emergency, as first declared in Australia by the state of Victoria's management act, might become more widespread, frequent and even permanent.

One thing is certain—in the wake of the most serious environmental disaster since colonization, Australia's long-term democratic resilience is now being tested. Fortunately, the federal election cycle in Australia is short: three years only, which means that Morrison's government will be facing rough music in or before 2022. I very much hope it gets the defeat it deserves.

### Re-imagining democracy

Australian democracy is cursed by complacency. The political class is excessively white, male and heavily unrepresentative of an impressively multicultural society. Indigenous peoples are denied formal political representation. The gap between rich and poor is widening. There is no federal anti-corruption commission. Dark money poisons elections. Public service institutions are under assault. Public service media are legally and financially vulnerable. In a system of compulsory voting, hundreds of thousands of young people have gone missing from the electoral rolls. Well over a million permanent residents are denied the vote. And the entire political system is wedded to a carbon-based capitalism whose bell is now not just tolling but melting.

An energy regime change and a political revolution are needed. A re-definition of democracy is definitely required. During its remarkably long and stormy history, democracy has always functioned as an anthropocentric norm—it supposes that self-governing humans are the rightful masters and possessors of 'nature'. Democratic principles need to become viridescent. In an age of monitory democracy, humans need to embrace popular self-government and acknowledge their obligation to treat the ecosystems in which they live as equals entitled to proper political representation in human affairs. ◀

average temperature increases of up to 4°C by 2100.

The sunburnt country's most extensive and savage bushfires began in September 2019 and since then a dollar-pinching, neoliberal and soft-populist government has largely acted as though the calamity does not exist. It still presumes that the brave energies of volunteer fire fighters—tens of thousands were in action—and the generous donations and strengthened self-belief of Australian citizens in the 'Land of the Rainbow Gold' are all that is required.

In terms of Prime Minister Scott Morrison's media strategy, it has been all mirrors and no smoke. And, in matters of strategy, for months the government has been acting out social and political scientist Karl Deutsch's famous dictum from 1966 that power is 'the ability to talk instead of listen' and 'the ability to afford not to learn'.

### Complacency

The more the situation edged in recent months towards catastrophe, the less Morrison's government seemed capable of acting wisely and decisively. Pleas made by fire commissioners for additional aerial firefighting equipment were repeatedly snubbed. In mid-December 2019, after helping the United States, Saudi Arabia and Brazil derail the COP25 climate talks in Madrid, the Prime Minister packed his bags and went on holiday to Hawaii. His absence coincided with the period when average national temperatures soared to 41.9°C, the hottest ever recorded.

As the infernos worsened, the government offered no additional funding and twice refused to meet

with the Emergency Leaders for Climate Change, a body comprising the most senior experienced former emergency services leaders. Then things changed, or so it seemed.

Gate-keeper journalists and gate-watching social media platforms cried out for leadership, and the government began singing to a different tune. Initially, 500 million dollars had been tabled for bushfire recovery—a pittance in comparison with the near 30 billion dollars granted annually to the local fossil fuel industry. More dramatically, on January 4<sup>th</sup> the government announced that 3,000 army reservists would be called up, without consulting the chief rural fire services commissioner in New South Wales, who learned of the deployment from the news media. And, in mid-January, rather like reaching for condoms in a maternity ward, a plan for establishing a 2 billion dollar-funded National Bushfire Recovery Agency was announced. Hampered by bureaucracy and unspent funds, it has never since functioned properly.

### Opal-hearted citizens

There is rising public awareness that the catastrophe has more than its fair share of entirely local causes. People understand the science behind the fires: eucalyptus oil easily explodes and burns with a fury when vaporized; scorched gum trees explode and fireballs spread flames and ash in all directions; and massive heat-stoked clouds called pyrocumulonimbus trigger lightning bolts that spread the infernos, without delivering so much as a drop of desperately needed rain.

Despite government blather about 'natural disasters', citizens are convinced that there are links, between spiralling carbon emissions, rising temperatures, warming oceans, drought and raging bushfires. People are aware that Australia, when measured per capita, spits more carbon gas into the atmosphere than any other country except the US. They have heard that Morrison's coal and gas-loving government is globally ranked the lowest in matters of climate heating action.

### Normality?

A quick return to normalcy is most unlikely. Vast areas of unburned bush remain vulnerable. Military intervention cannot compensate for government ineptitude and societal hurt. The worst-affected, small-town communities may not recover. Inadequate insurance claim payouts are already being bitterly contested in the courts. Most probably, the current warming and drought trends will worsen. Forecasts predict long-term infrastructural damage. According to University of Melbourne estimates, rising costs of 1.19 trillion dollars will be incurred for failing to meet the Paris Accord target of capping carbon emissions to zero by 2050. And, despite the bush's regenerative capacities, species destruction, including the extinction of much-loved koalas, glossy black cockatoos and native honeybees, is now on the cards.

The Morrison government could well survive and be re-elected with the backing of a Murdoch press that owns nearly three-quarters of the local media and the spread of dis-

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# Old Axes of Inequality and New Concerns

BY CORNELIA KLINGER

*On the occasion of the Inaugural Emma Goldman Award Ceremony on 13 February 2020, Cornelia Klinger gave a lecture at the IWM that addressed old and new patterns of socio-political inequality and injustice along the axes of race–class–gender.*

Over the four decades of my professional life in academia I have developed a deep-seated aversion to grants, scholarships, fellowships, awards, and the like. I perceive them as a symptom of a distortion and degradation that has befallen the cultural and educational system of Western societies in recent decades—that is to say, the decades of the rise and fall of neoliberalism. Let me take a step back:

Wilhelm von Humboldt's groundbreaking idea of *Bildung* involved culture and nature, implying the vision of the unfolding of the branches and leaves of a plant, the limbs of a living–human–being. In brief: at the outset of the specifically modern concept, culture and education were taken to be something organic—not a fad of nineteenth-century German Romanticism, but summarized by T.S. Eliot as late as 1948: “culture is something that must grow”.<sup>1</sup> Growing is an interactive process. Yes, you can, you should do something about it: you must prepare the soil, provide warmth and water, pray for sunshine and rain. But then—you have to leave it alone and wait for the seed to take root, for the flower to flourish, or not—there is an inevitable risk of failure in our human condition of nature and culture.

Recently, the motion and motives of education are being turned around: from *planting* to *digging* for the heavy-metal talent. Mindcrafting and drilling for human capital as a resource instead of spending the public good(s), spreading warmth and pouring water on the next generation's education *even-handedly*. Extraction instead of insertion, driven by the greed for immediate returns instead of provisions. In short: *taking* instead of *giving*.

Actually, it is not only the award business that I scorn but, more generally, the obsession with excellence (preferably in clusters—a contradiction in itself). It goes together with measuring the immeasurable, calculating the priceless, gauging the outstanding. This strategy is driven by a thrifty educational system bound down to the rigid austerity principle of the ministry of finance. Public institutions as well as private ‘donors’ are unleashing a relentless rat-race of perpetual competition among promising candidates. I have watched generations of young scholars writing project proposals forever, vaunting future achievements self-advertising self-applauding in a system that turns humans into the adorned oxen bel-

ly-dancing on vanity fairs in vain.

Although the award business is a traffic in *futures*, the awards are named after heroes and geniuses, idols and superstars of the past. In this respect, the culture industry sets the trend: Acclaiming the heroes on their birth and death anniversaries: “Jahres-Regenten”, princes of the year in particular in the domain of music—to be sold as sweets: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart may have been the first to suffer this fate: Mozart-kugeln (Mozart balls) made in Salzburg. Not only does it not matter if it is the anniversary of a birth or a death that we commemorate; neither does it matter whether we are celebrating the winners or the losers of the past. The victims may make even more shining heroes than the victors. There is a special “romanticism of defeat”. By way of an example, let me evoke a reminiscence of my youth: a copy of the (still well-known) Che Guevara poster in my girls-only-high school. We, the girls in the late 1960s insisted on moving our paper idol annually from one class-room to the next in the course of our sour school career—we meant it as an act of resistance against the institution—our teachers complied smilingly—both sides, students and teachers, ignorant of or ignoring what was going on in Bolivia, Cuba, Argentina, Chile ... we were raving over a dream-world revolution, while the real-life movement was violently crushed by real world-powers.

✱

At this point the name Emma Goldman comes to mind for the first time. I still recall posters, buttons, t-shirts, coffee mugs and whatever else ... with scant quotations from her writings:

“If I can't dance I don't want to be in your revolution.”

“... the right to self-expression, [is] everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things.”

I cannot think of any other phrases to match the late-capitalist-neoliberal ideology more perfectly than these. This regime does not suppress our dreams but wrings them from our hearts and drains all substance from them by turning them into commodities: sweets, posters, coffee mugs. It expropriates all kinds of visions and images, ideas and ideals including those of revolutionary and liberation movements. This mystification by dint of aestheticization, through aesthetizing and facial-



Photo: big-images / picturedesk.com

izing a hero, the sell-out of a hero's face in the capitalist market place occurred to Uncle Che Guevara and of course, the overwhelming majority of the faces who qualify for the hero-culture, adulation and glorification are *male* faces (with ever more beards to come back in our recent days).—But no, for me it will not do that Emma Goldman is a woman instead of a man—I don't care whose sex or gender fits this pattern that I deeply despise.

✱

At this point it seemed to me I heard Emma Goldman knock on the door of my mind. In the deep silence of my study I heard her say:

## Let me make two points

1. *Our (my and your) liberal feminist sisters have criticised me for not supporting the campaign for women's suffrage. But it seems you would accept the reasons that I gave for my position? You agree with me that it is of no avail for women to tread the same path that men have taken under the conditions of the established socio-political system of my days and the hegemonic economy of yours? Comrade Che on a poster or me on a coffee mug amounts to the same, go awry.*

2. *And would you go along with me one step further: capitalism cannot be revised, reformed, reworked, modified, corrected, improved, cured, but must be done away with entirely?*

Suddenly, I feel the 80 years that have gone by since Emma Goldman's death in 1940 as a burden weighing on my shoulders and the weight of the unredeemed hopes of history is growing evermore heavy. Instead of an answer I take refuge to turning around the question:

Ms Goldman, as far as I know you were considered to be the most dangerous woman in America; you were a formidable orator who could agitate, enthuse and fire up the masses; your ideas covered a remarkably wide array of issues blending social and political emancipation with personal/individual/bodily liberation; you were intrepid and unwavering in your convictions. Given all that, why did you not succeed? Why has the overthrow not taken place that you—along with so many others—have ardently and bravely fought for. Ms Goldman, It is not about fighting a battle, fiercely—it is about winning the war, finally! *We have seen countless waves of riot, revolt, rebellion, insurrection, mutiny and protest rising up and receding, falling down—until the next wave started to build up again. It has been and still*

*is obvious from the early days of industrialisation and urbanization onward: the expanding capitalist-cum-nationstate system/regime did not/could not/will not bring about equal freedom and free equality to universal mankind globally.*

✱

Now, there is an almost audible silence in my room, resonating in my ears. I understand that I need to speak for myself and, if not for my generation, at least for my peers and companions. We, the post-1968 generation (in the West) witnessed two events:

1. A negative experience: The fiasco of the revolutionary activities of the international youth or students' or protest movement. The most radical and audacious spearheads sliding into terror, attempting violent acts against individual representatives of the established system—an act of comprehensible despair but at the time they could and should have learnt the lesson of anarchism: to assassinate a banker or an industrialist (Henry Clay Frick, Hans-Martin Schleyer or by any other name) as an act of propaganda of the deed is to no avail: It does not overthrow the hateful system but gives an excuse to the executive powers to muffle opposition with the means of legal but all the more extreme violence—sending the activists to prison or to hell or both.

2. Instead of pointless efforts to ignite a revolution, the surviving members of this generation took up the idea of “the long march through the institutions” (Mao Zedong / Rudi Dutschke). In the long run, this strategy did have an impact ... Not in the shape of a workers movement, but New Social Movements of different colours (peace, ecology) appeared and cultural movements (sexual liberation), last but not least: a new wave of the women's movement sitting on the fence between the social, political and cultural sides of movements and: generating a new branch of theory: feminism.

Taking its departure from the shortcomings of male-industrial-worker-movement theories (Marxism, Trotskyism and other narrow-minded, boring and flawed -isms), feminist theory flourished/thrived over the years through the mid-1990s. We started studying ... not only turning the pages of old books (as Kafka's New Advocate did) but soon enough and at an astonishing speed we began to fill libraries with our findings and new explorations:



Women who read become dangerous very quickly! And if I may take pride in one accomplishment in particular: we discerned, differentiated but then also integrated diverse axes of socio-political inequality and injustice, tackling the nexus of race-class-gender on a global scale. That is to say, we broadened the scope of the theoretical understanding of the structures of power, of the regimes of domination and the patterns of violence.

But before I could go on into any more details I heard the voice of Emma Goldman in my ear: *Professor Klinger, with all due respect, but did you, your generation of feminists, of theorists, win the war?* The short version of the answer is clear: *No, ma'am!* And before she may utter the question “*Why not?*” I will try to put it bluntly:

We may have brought about change (small change) in society. We got access to carriers and curricula. And at the same time, this society altered us, bribed us with the credit they gave us. Even if this exchange was inevitable and also fruitful ... there are new concerns: we endeavour to cope with hegemonic neoliberal late capitalism. This is a regime that not only exploits labour power during working hours from nine to five. Rather, this techno-turbo-driven integrated system of augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI) buys and sells our physical, psychological and intellectual life energy, extracts, excavates all kinds of resourc-

es and turns them into commodities ... Not only what we produce, the goods we have but what we ARE: it is a land grab, not only in the exterior world but also and much more importantly in the interior spheres of our thoughts and ideas, visions and dreams. And while we are still trying to grapple with the problems that I tried to indicate at the beginning of my reflections, a new turn is taking place. After the glitch of finance capitalism in or about 2008, we have witnessed a return of state authoritarianism blending populism, nationalism and other spectres of the past.

All things considered, we have made some but not irrevocable progress in our project of understanding global societal inequality, while we have lost a lot of real ground through the rampant growth of material inequalities adding up to threatening power asymmetries (including the overwhelming armories all over the planet). And on our long and patient march through libraries and academic career paths, we have lost the momentum of activism, the thrust of radicalism, the persuasive energy that you possessed, dear Emma Goldman! <

1) T.S. Eliot, *Towards the Definition of Culture*. London: Faber & Faber 1948. S. 119.

**Cornelia Klinger** is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tübingen as well as a Permanent Fellow em. at the IWM, where she served as Rector ad interim from 2013 to 2014.



Photo: IWM / Klaus Ränger

## Emma Goldman Awards

*“I may be arrested, I may be tried and thrown into jail, but I never will be silent; I never will acquiesce or submit to authority, nor will I make peace with a system which degrades woman to a mere incubator and which fattens her on innocent victims. I now and here declare war upon this system...”* those words come from Emma Goldman (1869–1940) a political activist and major figure in the history of American radicalism and feminism. She was an early advocate of free speech, birth control, women’s equality and independence, and union organization.

In memory of Emma Goldman, the newly founded FLAX Foundation has created awards for talented and committed scholars on feminist and inequality issues in Europe to support their research and development. The first Emma Goldman awardees, each receiving 50,000 euros, were presented at the IWM by **Mieke Verloo**, Chair of the FLAX Foundation and IWM Non-Resident Permanent Fellow, on February 13, 2020. After short opening words by IWM Rector and co-host **Shalini Randeria** the award ceremony was accompanied by an audiovisual presentation on Emma Goldman by **Florian Duijsens** (Dead Ladies Show Berlin) and a lecture by **Cornelia Klinger** (see p. 15).

**Marta Rawtuszek**  
Assistant Professor, Institute of Applied Social Studies, University of Warsaw; co-founder, *Fundusz Feministyczny*

**Akwugo Emejulu**  
Professor of Sociology, Warwick University

**Andrea Krizsan**  
Research Fellow, Center for Policy Studies, and Adjunct faculty in the rank of Associate Professor, School of Public Policy, Central European University

**R. Lucas Platero**  
Juan de la Cierva Researcher, Social Psychology Department, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona; Director of publications for trans\* studies, *Bellaterra Publishing House*

**Rossella Ciccio\***  
Lecturer in Social Policy, Queen’s University Belfast; Marie-Sklodowska-Curie-Fellow, Department of Political and Social Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence

**Amade M’charek\***  
Professor of Anthropology of Science, University of Amsterdam

\*) The IWM will host two Emma Goldman Fellows each year, beginning in 2020, until 2025, funded by the FLAX Foundation. Further details: [www.flax-foundation.net](http://www.flax-foundation.net)

# Humanity and Catastrophe

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN SERHII PLOKHII AND PHILIPPE SANDS

As part of the December 2019 conference “Between Kyiv and Vienna” (see p. 17) Harvard historian **Serhii Plokhii** and lawyer and author **Philippe Sands** took part in a wide-ranging public conversation about the shared themes of their recent award-winning books, *Plokhii’s Chernobyl* and *Sands’ East West Street*. Here are a few excerpts from this conversation.



Katherine Younger, Serhii Plokhii, Philippe Sands and Sofia Dyak

## On Chernobyl and the circulation of information

**Philippe Sands:** I learned about Chernobyl a few days after the accident when the British press started to evoke the possibility that something had happened. I was 25 at the time, a young lawyer. We didn’t know much about what was going on in the Soviet Union. My memory of Chernobyl was that it was essentially used in the UK and in Western countries for propaganda purposes, even though there was also obviously a real substantive issue. It was used to reinforce the sense of the other, of the dangers of the terrible Soviet system, including the failure to provide information. In Britain, what people cared about was the failure to provide information to Britain.

**Serhii Plokhii:** After my book came out, people kept asking me, “How do you remember April 26, 1986?” I don’t remember the day at all. The reason was, of course, that there was no information for days. When we were eventually informed in the Soviet Union, there was just a short announcement that an accident had taken place at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, but don’t worry, everything is under control.

We learned too late about what happened. The Soviet system was a particular type of regime where human life (and health) was of secondary importance. It took Gorbachev three weeks to address the Soviet people. Even then, two-thirds of his speech was devoted to attacks on the United States and the West for allegedly using Chernobyl for propaganda reasons. The information in this particular case may not have been a matter of life and death exactly, but it was certainly a matter of what quality of life lies ahead for you and your children.

## On selective narratives of the past

**Plokhii:** I remember the first lecture that I attended at university in Dnepropetrovsk (now the city of Dnipro) very well: the dean of the faculty gave the inaugural lecture, called Lenin’s lecture. And the message was very clear: you’re all fighters in an ideological war. That was my first memory of university. In terms of the war itself, it was everywhere. Both of my grandfathers were in the war, and both of my grandmothers and my parents lived under German occupation in Ukraine.

My father showed me where he hid while the Germans were retreating and cleansing the territory around Dnipro. So the war was very present. But as for the Holocaust, I really only learned about it when I was already at university: our university was actually built around the ravine where the city’s Jewish population was shot. At the time, it was considered totally fine that there was no monument of any kind. Now there is a modest monument there, but back then there was no indication. My knowledge of the Holocaust didn’t come from lectures or from books. It came from the people who lived through it. You learned about these things, but not from official sources.

**Sands:** The point of commonality here is, of course, the dominance of silence on all sides of these stories. I grew up in a world of silence about these matters: you spent time with your grandparents, and the one thing you knew you didn’t talk about was what happened before 1945. It was there, but it was not there. I begin *East West Street* with a quote from two psychoanalysts, which I think applies equally in relation to the subject of your book. I became interested in how



stories get transmitted between family members without actually talking about them. I was directed to the work of two Hungarian psychoanalysts, Mária Török and Nicolas Abraham, who studied the relationship not between parent and child, but between grandparent and grandchild: patients who had somehow picked up information from their grandparents without any memory of having talked about it. The quote that I start the book with is: “What haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others”. In other words, everyone is a member of a community in which there are secrets. And when something bad happens, the person to whom it happens buries it and assumes that that’s the end of the matter: it will never come out again. But it does. Every time I am in Lviv, I have the

sense that there is a population living with a past that it does not want to talk about, but that is incredibly present. Actually, I feel that also very strongly in Vienna: there are things people do not want to talk about or to confront. This is not a critique. It’s just an observation. The question is, does this come from me or is it something I’m picking up externally? Or is it a bit of both?

**Plokhii:** We don’t want to talk about our own experience—we don’t want to relive it. It’s a threat to our self-understanding, and we don’t want to pass that to the next generation. But in my particular case, beyond the personal factor, the Soviet government also promoted selective memory; it didn’t allow you to remember and pass certain information on. There was the Holodomor, the Ukrainian famine of 1932–1933,

I think Britain is not hugely different from Ukraine.

**On silence, stories and forms of justice**

**Sands:** Justice is a complex issue; it doesn’t only exist in the formal sense of a court of law. It happens in many ways. It happens informally, truth and reconciliation. And it happens within communities and within families. Just talking is a form of the delivery of justice. I recently published *The Ratline*, a sequel to *East West Street*. It tells the story of Otto Wächter, who was a deputy of Hans Frank. He escaped on May 9, 1945, disappeared and turned up dead a few years later. He was indicted for mass murder, genocide, crimes against humanity, but he was never tried, and therefore was nev-

in a decent way. Silence has a protective instinct, but it doesn’t prepare children for what they will pick up later on. So the link between silence and justice and what we carry forward is enormously complex and not well understood. Yet it is the beating heart of both of our stories.

**Plokhii:** The question of what you say and what you don’t say in a particular context is an important one. The reaction in Ukraine when I speak about Chernobyl is often negative because in my story, the “perpetrators” and the “victims” are very often one and the same. The very same people who were there in that control room on the night of April 26 and who made those decisions, they were also the first victims. They were the first to die. And how do you deal with that as a historian? The top management of the nuclear power plant was put on trial in the summer of 1987. Quite a few of those people died from radiation exposure. So how do you put dying people on trial for what they did? On the other hand, the Soviet government concealed the biggest secret: that the explosion happened not only because of the violation of the safety rules and regulations, but because there were major problems with the design of the reactor. What happened after the fall of the Soviet Union? The truth became known that there was a big issue with the design of the reactor, which auto-

matically removed a degree of responsibility from the engineers and operators of the reactor.

So today in Ukraine there is a dangerous, widespread belief that Chernobyl happened because of problems with the reactor, while the operators were just scapegoats. And to a degree, they were scapegoats. But the explosion would not have happened because of problems with the reactor alone. You also needed the human factor, the lack of safety culture. It’s a matter of responsibility how you talk about this confluence of factors. ◀

Transcript has been condensed and edited for clarity. The full video is available on: [www.youtube.com/IWMVienna](http://www.youtube.com/IWMVienna)

**Serhii Plokhii** is the Mykhailo Hrushevsky Professor of Ukrainian History and the director of the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University. His book, *Chernobyl: History of a Tragedy* received the 2018 Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction, and the 2019 Pushkin House Prize. His latest book is *Forgotten Bastards of the Eastern Front: An Untold Story of World War II* (London: Penguin, 2019).

**Philippe Sands** is Professor of Law at University College London and a barrister at Matrix Chambers. *East West Street* won the 2016 Baillie Gifford Prize and the 2018 Prix Montaigne. His new book, *The Ratline*, was published in April 2020 and will be presented in Vienna on December 1 (see below).

The conversation was moderated by **Sofia Dyak** (Center for Urban History, Lviv) and **Katherine Younger** (Research Director, Ukraine in European Dialogue, IWM).



Performance ‘East West Street: A Song of Good and Evil’

Patočka  
Memorial Lecture  
**Philippe Sands:  
The Ratline**  
December 1, 2020

To mark the publication of the German language version of *The Ratline*, which follows his prize-winning book *East West Street*, Philippe Sands explores the ideas that underpin his new work, an account of the lives of Otto Wächter, an Austrian SS Gruppenführer indicted for mass murder, and his wife Charlotte, from the moment they met Vienna in April 1929 to his unexpected death in Rome in 1949. The lecture is built around a set of deeply personal stories that explore the role of justice, the legacy of memory across generations, and the impulses that generate our search for truth.  
Details: [www.iwm.at/events](http://www.iwm.at/events)



which was never talked about during the Soviet period. My grandmother believed that something bad might happen to me because I was talking publicly about the Holodomor. And the same would be true for the Holocaust in the Soviet context.

**Sands:** But here’s some bitter news for you: it’s not just your country. It’s the same in my country. I grew up in the United Kingdom. At school, we went through our entire educational process without ever talking about slavery and colonialism. Literally not once. We were just told Britain is a great country. And frankly, my own interpretation right now of the convulsions that are happening in the United Kingdom, is that they are a reaction to the failure to confront the past and the effort to bury the negative side, now manifesting itself in the rise of populism and nationalism, which seeks to reinforce the impression that Britain is a great country. And the irony of it is that one of the vestiges of colonialism, Northern Ireland, which Britain wants to hang on to, is the epicenter of the debate on Brexit. In other words, the history of colonialism has come home to roost and is exerting a huge price on the British psyche. So it’s not just Ukraine.

er convicted. And that allows his son to say: “My father was an honest man. He died an innocent man”. In strict formal terms, as a lawyer I recognize that he’s right: there was no court sentence. The unintended consequence of the trials that followed the war was that while a certain number of people were tried, tens of thousands more were not tried. And that created a sort of matrix in which you could proclaim your innocence, and it allowed those people to return to society and rise to very powerful places, which caused problems in Germany in ’68: young people suddenly realized that their teachers were senior Nazis who had been involved in drafting and interpreting the Nuremberg laws. This is a familiar story in Austria, too.

The simple point is that the absence of formal justice creates a space in which the individual, the family, the community and the country is able to say, “We are innocent”. And the consequence of that is felt across the generations. In the absence of formalized court-based justice, people want to maintain the fiction in future generations, to protect future generations. But in my view, it’s actually better if you’ve prepared children by telling them about the past



Photo: IWM

**International Conference:  
Between Kyiv and Vienna**

From 5–8 December 2019, the IWM hosted the international conference “Between Kyiv and Vienna: Histories of People, Ideas, and Objects in Circulation and Motion”. This conference was organized by the IWM’s Ukraine in European Dialogue program, the Center for Urban History (Lviv), and the Ukrainian Institute (Kyiv), as a concluding event to the Cultural Year Austria-Ukraine 2019.

Bringing together 32 scholars from across Europe and North America, the conference re-examined the modern history of the space broadly bounded today by Ukraine and Austria, through the lens of circulation and motion. It considered people who moved within, out of, and into the region, interrogating the forces that drove them and the consequences of their movement; examined the flow of ideas that were articulated, set in motion, and resonated in lived experience; and asked how the circulation of material objects, goods, and resources impacted societies and the environment, shaping the relations and hierarchies between places and people.

Eight panels—on topics such as “Choices, Chances, and Borders in Flux,” “Visions for Subjects” and “Promises of Change, Premises of Tomorrow”—looked at the dynamics of the region’s history from innovative perspectives. Additionally, a graduate student workshop gave students a chance to present work in progress and receive feedback from leading scholars in the field.

The conference was accompanied by a varied public program, beginning with Serhii Plokhii’s keynote lecture “Atomic Energy and the Arrogance of Man: Revisiting the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster.” A performance of “East West Street: A Song of Good and Evil,” based on Philippe Sands’s book *East West Street*, was staged at MuTh, featuring Sands and actress Katja Riemann. The conference concluded with “Humanity and Catastrophe,” a public discussion between Plokhii and Sands held at Singer Bookshop (see p. 16).



# Political Earthquake in the Shadow of Coronavirus

BY GRIGORIJ MESEŽNIKOV

*The murder of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová in 2018 has changed the political dynamics in Slovakia. Mass protests of citizens forced prominent politicians to resign from their governmental posts and launched the process of reshaping the whole political scene. As a result, the main ruling party Smer-SD—responsible for corrupt practices—was heavily defeated in the February 2020 elections.*

In the second half of March 2020, a new government led by Prime Minister Igor Matovič took over power in Slovakia. It is the only new government in Europe that started its operation during the pandemic. The circumstances under which it took office were the most dramatic in the whole period of political freedom since the restoration of democracy in Czecho-Slovakia in 1989.

## Virus overshadowing politics

The coronavirus almost completely paralyzed social life, limited the activities of political actors to a minimum, reduced the operation of state institutions to meeting people's primary needs and drove the country's population into quarantine. The pandemic pushed the details of the recent electoral campaigns and the results of the parliamentary elections held at the end of February 2020 to the margin of public attention. At the moment when the new ruling coalition was formed, the Slovak media were overloaded with news of the infection spreading in Slovakia and the world and of the restrictive measures taken by the outgoing Slovak government of Peter Pellegrini. The elections themselves, which took place only two weeks prior, seemed to be perceived as something that had taken place long time ago.

However, the results of the parliamentary elections 2020 were no less dramatic for the country's political life than the Covid-19 pandemic was for its inhabitants. What actually happened in Slovakia's politics at the turn of February–March 2020?

## Political earthquake

On March 1, 2020, when the results of parliamentary elections were officially announced, the country's political map was completely redrawn. The democratic opposition had notched an overwhelming victory over the dominant ruling party, Smer-SD.

The opposition's victory was not a big surprise. Public opinion polls had long signaled that opposition parties were more likely to form a government after the elections. Surprising, however, was how this victory was achieved and the consequences this victory had for the democratic opposition itself.

The opposition's success must be seen in the context of the two-year-struggle of Slovak civil society and democratic political forces for ma-



Demonstrators take part in a protest rally marking the second anniversary of the murder of the investigative reporter Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová, one week ahead of the country's parliamentary election in Bratislava, Slovakia, February 21, 2020. The banner reads: "Enough with corruption".

For social change after the murder of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová in February 2018. During the week preceding the elections, activists from the civic initiative *For a Decent Slovakia* organized a number of public commemorative events across the country on the occasion of the second anniversary of the murder. These gatherings slotted organically into overall pre-election developments. The investigation and trial of the murderers brought shocking revelations of corrupt ties between the main organizer of the killing, mafia-style businessman Marián Kočner; leading figures in the ruling Smer-SD; and judges, prosecutors and policemen. These revelations resonated highly among the public: people demanded radical change and the restoration of justice.

## Focused on corruption

It was not surprising that the main theme of the election campaign was corruption in politics. Virtually every democratic opposition party included an anti-corruption agenda and calls for the restoration of justice and punishment for those responsible for corrupt practices in its pre-electoral mobilization strategies. However, this agenda did not bring equal success to all parties in the elections.

The most successful actor and unequivocal winner of the elections was the center-right soft-pop-

ulist OĽaNO movement, led by Igor Matovič. It got into parliament with a staggering 25.02%. At the beginning of 2020, the rating of OĽaNO was hovering around 5–6%. Gradually, however, it began to increase, mainly thanks to anti-corruption initiatives organized by OĽaNO's leader. The movement attracted a large mass of previously undecided voters and non-voters, but also some supporters of other opposition parties who reacted positively to OĽaNO's appeal, stressing the necessity of anti-corruption measures. According to the FOCUS agency's exit-poll, up to 70% of OĽaNO's voters opted for this movement solely because of its ability to combat corruption.

## New political make-up

Who are OĽaNO's partners in the new government? First, the movement *We Are Family*, an amorphous populist social-conservative formation with leftist economic rhetoric led by controversial entrepreneur Boris Kollár (8.24% of votes); and second, two minor center-right formations: economist Richard Sulík's libertarian party SaS (6.22%) and former president Andrej Kiska's civic-democratic party *For the People* (5.77%). In parliament, the new ruling coalition has 95 seats out of 150, crossing the 60% supermajority threshold.

There are two parties in the opposition: the "social-democratic" (in reality, nationalist left-leaning popu-

list) Smer-SD (18.29%) and the neo-fascist ĽSNS.

Smer-SD suffered a painful defeat. This was not its first considerable loss. Since 2018 Smer-SD had already lost presidential and municipal elections, as well as elections to the European Parliament. After the murder of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová, the party came under strong public pressure, and many citizens associated Smer-SD with this terrible event. This was not surprising: the investigation disclosed undeniable facts about close contacts between some prominent members of the party and people of known corrupt and criminal background.

The neo-fascist ĽSNS, led by Marián Kotleba, was re-elected to parliament. ĽSNS finished fourth with 7.97%, receiving twenty thousand votes more than in 2016. The atmosphere in the final days of the campaign—numerous anti-fascist initiatives in online media; messages and appeals of popular figures from culture, arts and sports; public events organized by opponents of ĽSNS—put strong public pressure on the fascists. In addition, Matovič's OĽaNO managed to address some potential Kotleba voters and succeeded in neutralizing the possibility of a more significant increase in support for the fascists.

## Who will be missing?

Before the 2020 elections, the democratic opposition camp was fragment-

ed like never before. All attempts to integrate the divided opposition before the voting failed, and as a result—despite the opposition's overwhelming victory over Smer-SD—a significant segment of the democratic forces remained without a seat in the parliament. This applies mostly to pro-European parties: the social-liberal centrists (PS-Spolu), the moderate Christian democrats (KDH) and the "Hungarian" parties (MKS, Most-Híd).

Taken together, this segment of the electorate constitutes 20% of votes. Representatives of these voters will be excluded not only from drafting laws in parliament, but also from enforcing governmental policies, since the participation of these parties in the government was expected if they got into parliament. The absence of these opinion groups in the relevant political space creates a more favorable environment for representatives of the populist, nationalist and fundamentalist enclaves in the new governmental camp (i.e., the entirety of *We Are Family* and some factions inside OĽaNO). In addition, the absence of "Hungarian" parties in the parliament may reduce ethnic Hungarians' feeling of belonging to the state in which they live and might increase the risk of political radicalization in this minority environment due to insufficient representation.

## Swimming in stormy waters

The new Slovak government started its operations by introducing measures to counter the pandemic. This was what the population most anticipated. However, other urgent social issues wait for their solutions. No one can predict today how sustainable the new government, formed by four parties with different ideological profiles, will be. It is clear that the new coalition will swim in stormy water: it is faced with an irreconcilable opposition, internal discrepancies in terms of political programs and values, and a lack of experience. And all this with extremely high expectations from the population. As the pessimist would say, they have no other option than to win. <

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# The Revolt of the Elites

BY ARJUN APPADURAI

Ortega y Gasset is a largely forgotten 20<sup>th</sup> century thinker, an unconventional Spanish philosopher whose most important social science work, *The Revolt of the Masses*, reflected his fears about a world in which liberal individuals were disappearing and the “mass man” was emerging. Ortega’s idea of the mass man was not a picture of the poor, the destitute or the proletarian multitude but of a mass of average men, who were rendered similar by their tastes, dispositions and values, rather than by their dispossession. In this way, Ortega was closer to the later American critics of the men “in the gray flannel suit” than to the Frankfurt School critics of mass society. Still, Ortega was an early voice in seeing the masses, of whatever kind, as revolting against the liberal ideals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

I return to Ortega now because I think the 20<sup>th</sup> century has exhausted the major forms of mass revolt and that we have entered a new epoch which is characterized by the “revolt of the elites”. These revolting elites are those who support, surround, promote and flatter the new autocracies of Modi, Trump, Erdogan, Bolsonaro, Johnson, Orban and many others who have created what could be called populism from above, where the people are electoral tools for a mass exit from democracy.

Why call this behavior of the new autocratic elites a “revolt” rather than simply predatory capitalism, cronyism, neo-liberalism in its latest guise, disaster capitalism, all of which are available terms? Who are these new elites and what are they revolting against?

First, they are revolting against all the other elites whom they despise, hate and fear: liberal elites, media elites, secular elites, cosmopolitan elites, “Harvard” elites, WASP elites, older economic elites, intellectuals, artists and academics (these categories are a pool, from which different national populists choose

the appropriate national and cultural terms). So, this is an elite which disguises its own elitism in a discourse of anti-elitism.

Second, this revolt is against all those who are believed to have betrayed the real elites and captured power illegitimately: blacks in the USA, Muslims and secularists in India, leftists and gays in Brazil, dis-

senters, NGO’s and journalists in Russia, religious, cultural and economic minorities in Turkey, immigrants, workers and unionists in the United Kingdom. This is a revolt by those who think they are true elites against those they consider usurpers or

false elites.

Third, the revolt of these new elites is against the chains that have bound them in the epoch of liberal democracy. They hate liberty, equality and fraternity, except for themselves. They hate checks and balances, which they view as illegitimate restrictions on their freedom to act without restraint. They hate regulations of any type, especially of corporate privileges, which they see as a conspiracy against capitalism which they view as their private jurisdiction. And above all, they hate deliberation and procedural rationality, since they involve listening, patience and adherence to collective rationalities. They also do not believe in the separation of powers, except when their friends control the legislature and the judiciary.

What this means, most simply, is that the revolt of the new elites is against democracy, but the twist is that this revolt is undertaken in the name of the

people. In other words, the modern idea of the people has been completely split from the idea of demos and democracy. This is a revolt, (in the sense that uprisings to seize power are always revolts), but not a revolution, intended to change something in the fundamental order of polity or economy. This revolt is the effort by one elite to replace another.

All this might seem overly general and historically familiar if we do not ask a few sociological questions. What is the nature of this new elite? Who defines its conditions of entry? Who speaks for it? What are its social roots? These questions quickly bring us to specific societies and states. In the case of the United States, the elite that Trump speaks for and to come from backgrounds like his: they are not over-educated, they are mobile entrepreneurs or politicians, they are the ruling scum of the Republican senate, the Republican side of the House, and Tea Party jetsam and flotsam at every level of politics. In addition, they include the more megalomaniac or neo-fascist CEO’s (including Silicon Valley icons like Peter Thiel), the vast majority of the television and radio media, and the extensive network of racist and greedy evangelical pastors, churches and donors.

Add to this the careerist hacks in the major right-wing thinktanks.

At the very core of this network of elites without any obvious cultural roots, status or history are secret networks such as those in the Federalist Society, with ties to such transnational groups as Opus Dei. These are networks of opportunism, greed and teering which other traditional or values.

A similar picture could be painted of the elites in India, which is openly contemptuous of every democratic institution except elections. It is composed of half-educated economists, career thugs, kleptocratic business tycoons that work through monopoly, lobbying and straightforward corruption, and the new-

ly shameless class of criminal politicians and legislators. The revolt of this elite is against every person or group associated with Nehruvian socialism, secularism and pluralism. It is an elite that believes that the Hindu Right (their own club) are the sleeper-saviors of Indian history, waking up after the long slumber of Mughal, British and Congress rule, an alliance forged in the crucible of anti-Muslim ideologies, policies and pogroms. There is no real class unity for this revolting elite, except for their hold on the means of impunity, political, social and economic. Like Trump’s elite partners, this is an elite of opportunism, lubricated by contempt for participatory institutions of every type.

Although I do not know enough about the social origins and pet peeves of Erdogan’s crew, or Putin’s, or Bolsonaro’s, or Duterte’s, I am prepared to speculate that each of these revolting elites has a similar profile: resentment of traditional cultural and social elites, contempt for liberal proceduralism, hatred of intellectuals, academics, artists, activists, socialists, feminists, admiration for capitalism so long as it regulated only in their favor, and a hatred of democracy matched by their cultish pursuit of the voter (rather than the people). Viktor Orban has just declared his eternal and absolute power in Hungary, Trump has required his name to be printed on Covid relief checks and said that he can use emergency powers to do whatever he likes in the present crisis. Modi has more or less declared himself above the Constitution of India, has made common and public cause with Bolsonaro, Trump and Netanyahu, and has used the Covid crisis to extend to all of India the policies of curfew, police beatings, false imprisonments and generalized repression tested in Kashmir. In all these moves, these leaders rely on a network of sympathizers and collaborators who are believe that they will thrive if they comply with the Supreme Leader.

Thus, if the elites who characterize many of the world’s new populist autocracies are “populists from above” elites revolting against previous elites, revolted by liberal democracy, how do we account for their followers, their voters, and their base, the “people” in whose name and with whose burning consent they are undoing many democratic structures, values and traditions?

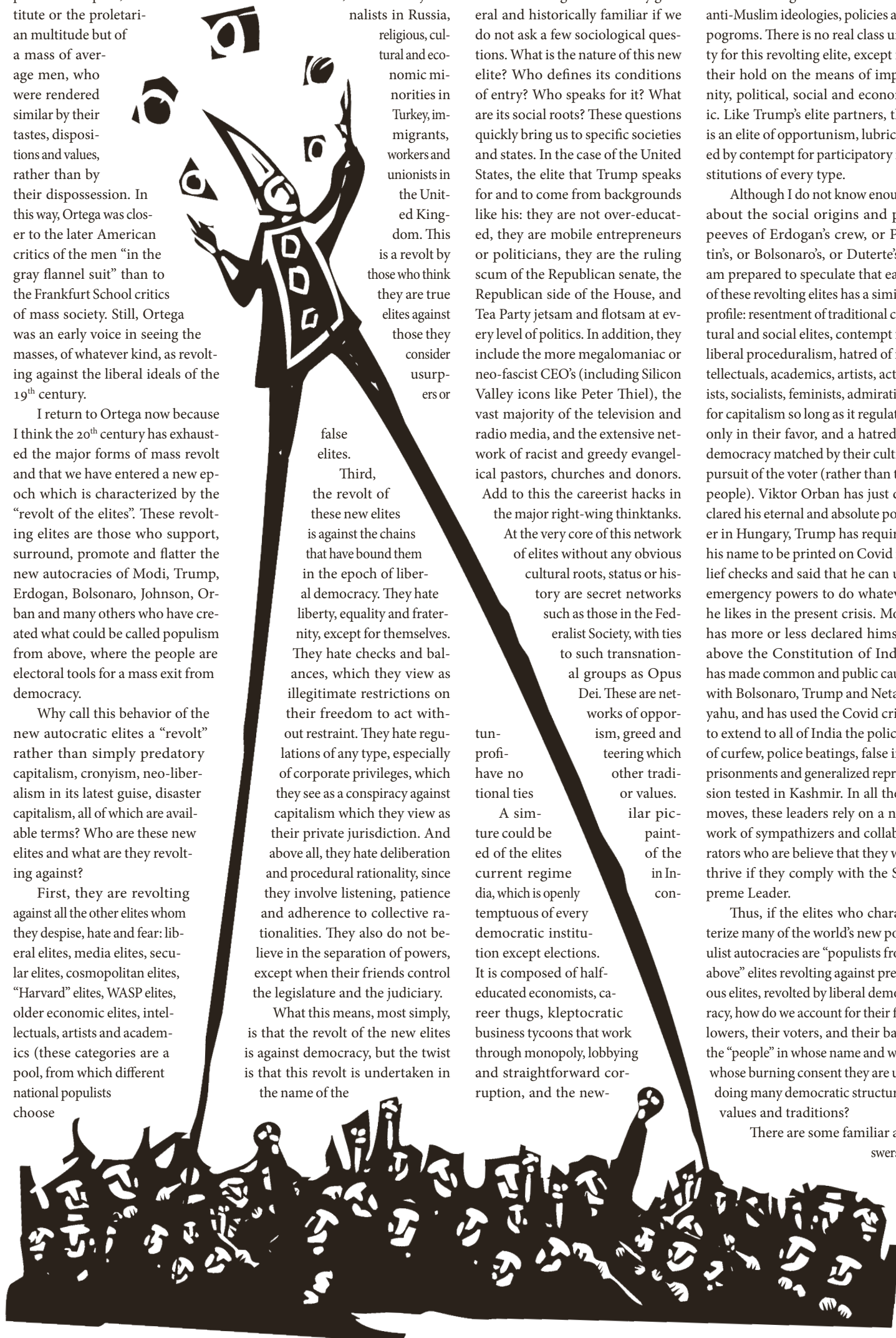
There are some familiar answers to

this most troubling question. One is that these autocrats understand and use the instruments of affect (sentiments of love, loss, sacrifice, hate, anger) whereas their opponents are adrift in a sea of quasi-academic arguments about concepts, norms and logic, which has lost all popular purchase. The second is that there is something about the global rise of technologies of aspiration (advertising, consumer goods, celebrity cults, corporate windfalls) that has made the poor and subaltern classes impatient with the slowness of liberal deliberative processes. They want prosperity and dignity now, and these leaders promise it to them. Another argument is that the lower classes are so fed up with the exclusion, impoverishment and humiliation that they identify with their predatory leaders (who simply grab what they want) and that they are more than ever susceptible to the distractions of ethnophobia (against Muslims, refugees, Chinese, Gypsies, Jews, migrants, and so on). All these arguments make some sense in some national contexts.

But I suggest that the biggest insight that Ortega y Gasset offers is to help us to see that we are in the beginnings of an epoch in which the revolt of the masses has been captured, coopted and displaced by the revolt of the elites. The most troubling thing about this capture, which the continuing use of elections by autocrats reveals, is that the masses (whoever they may be) have come to believe that the revolt of the new elites is indeed their revolt, and that all they need to do is to cheer (and if possible to emulate) their demonic leaders, who might offer them a quicker fix than a genuinely popular or insurrectionary effort to change the order of things. In a manner of speaking, the new electoral masses have begun to feel that the benefits of their predation of their leaders will soon trickle down to them. The main such trickledown deliverable is that the poor and subaltern classes can now kill, maim and humiliate their weaker scapegoats with impunity. The trickledown of the more quotidian benefits, such as jobs, health care, higher incomes and safer cities, still calls for endless patience from those at the bottom of the pyramid. If hate can trickle down to them, so perhaps can prosperity. ◀

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◻ [www.youtube.com/IWMVienna](https://www.youtube.com/IWMVienna)





# Deus Malignus: The Digital Rehabilitation of Deception

BY WALTHER CHRISTOPH ZIMMERLI

Since Alan Turing's pathbreaking 1950 article "Computing Machinery and Intelligence", published in *Mind*, the debate on Artificial Intelligence and digitalization has opened up new avenues of philosophizing and has also put an end to important cornerstone elements that have been taken for granted in traditional philosophy. This applies especially to René Descartes's major contribution to the methodology of modern thinking, the 'Descartes postulate', which will be thoroughly scrutinized here in the light of a non-standard interpretation of Turing.

Modern philosophical and scientific methodology seems to follow Descartes' postulate of methodical scepticism, to take nothing for granted, i.e. to doubt everything unless it be perceived clearly and distinctively ('clare et distincte percipitur'). To put it differently: to avoid deception by following the postulate to transform conjectures (in science: hypotheses) into insights, or rather convictions (in science: confirmed knowledge). So the methodologically relevant question is: How do we go about this process of transformation? One possible methodological clue is that we might replace 'conviction' or 'knowledge' by 'what has been confirmed beyond any reasonable doubt'.

The Cartesian instrument is methodical doubt, and Descartes went to great length in order to develop a systematic methodology of doubt in a series of increasingly powerful arguments:

(1) *The starting point of doubt:* Every kind of methodical and constructive doubt has to begin with the destruction of all former beliefs.

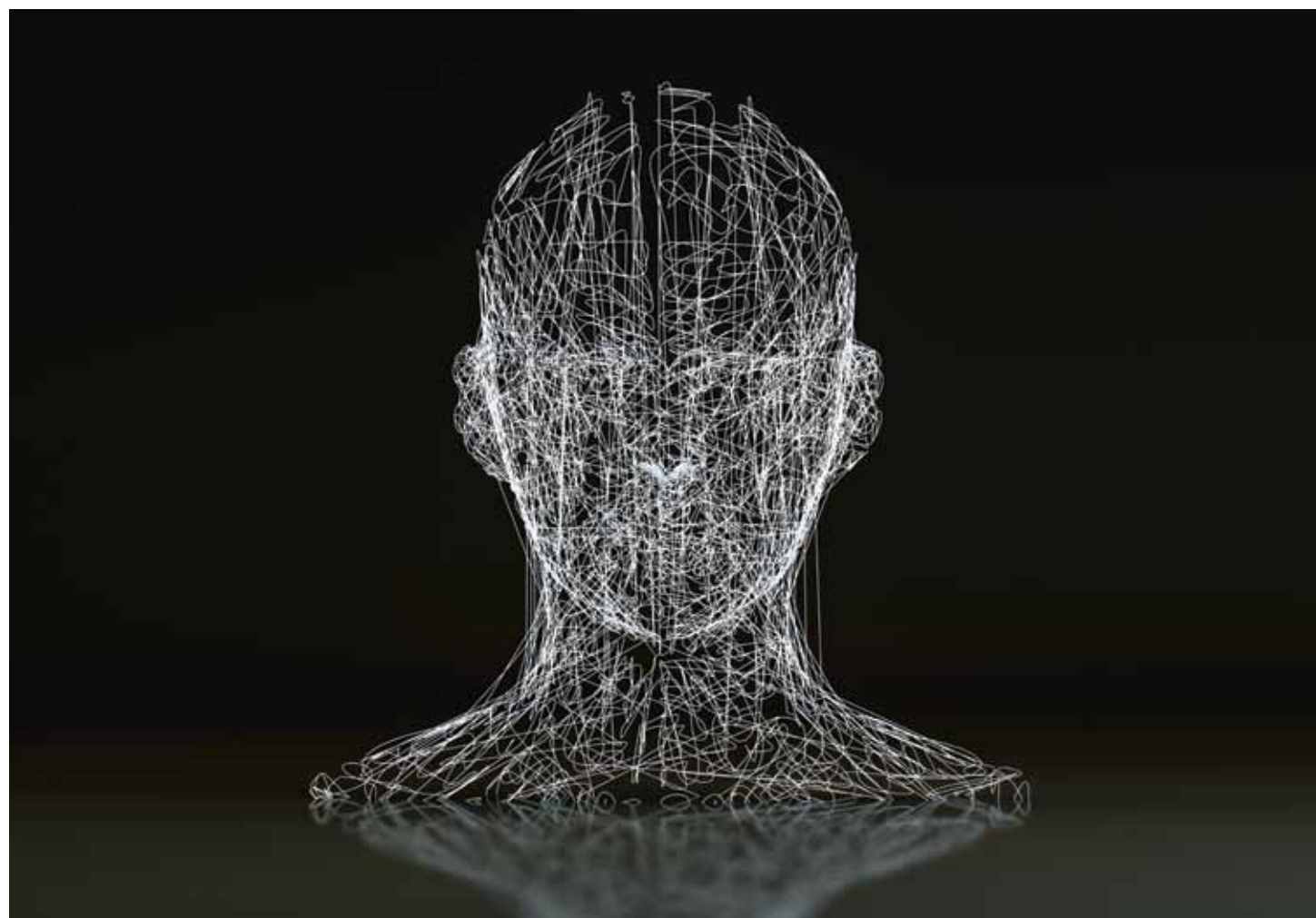
(2) *The generic and pragmatic principle of doubt:* As it is literally impossible to destruct each and every single opinion, the postulated methodical character of doubt consists in withholding assent with respect to opinions which are not completely certain and indubitable.

(3) *Doubting the information provided by the senses:* As the senses sometimes deceive, it seems to be prudent, according to the aforementioned pragmatic procedure, to generally mistrust all information provided by the senses.

(4) *Doubting the distinguishability of dream and reality:* Again generalized, this also applies to such basic certainties as 'I am sitting here by the fire', because it is possible to doubt this due to the argument of the indistinguishability of dream and reality.

(5) *Doubting the results of sciences:* because astronomy, medicine, and all other disciplines which depend on the study of composite things are doubtful.

(6) *Doubting the results of mathematics and logic:* In order to submit even these seemingly self-evident truths to generalized doubt, Descartes had to take recourse to his strongest weapon, asking: '...how do I know that God has not brought



it about that I too go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square?'

## Deus Malignus: the strongest argument

The aim of this methodology of doubt, which is constitutive for modern thinking in science, technology, and philosophy, was not just truth, but truth's reflexive mode: *certainty*. That is to say, it was not a matter of truth, but of *guaranteeing* truth. Since Aristotle, truth had been defined as a relation of adequacy between a state of affairs and propositions/thoughts: in medieval terminology, 'adaequatio rei et intellectus'. St. Thomas Aquinas claimed that in order to answer the question of the reflexive mode of truth, i.e. certainty, an additional theorem was needed. In his terminology, this was the theorem of the 'analogia entis', which was guaranteed by God himself. In Spinoza's later wording, it was that the order and connection of (human) thoughts is the same as the order and connection of things.

Descartes knew that the strongest argument in his methodology of doubt was the argument of a de-

ceiving, malign God. For various pragmatic and political reasons, he couldn't possibly dare to call this entity 'God' and thus called it 'genius malignus'.

To avoid being misled and deceived by this malign genius, the strategy is radical scepticism, i.e. refraining from assenting to any belief that had not previously passed the test of the Descartes postulate.

## Philosophical implications of digitalization

If we now look at the philosophical implications of the process of binary technologization, called 'digitalization', we see that what has been called 'the paradox of (intelligent) information technology' becomes unavoidable: The more effective and 'better' the machine component of the human-machine tandem is, the less possible it is to meet the Descartes postulate.

Although very complex in its implications, this paradox can be demonstrated quite easily using simple machine theory. If, as per the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hegelian philosopher of technology Ernst Kapp, every machine should be considered a projection of

a human organ ('Organprojektions-these'), then digital ('intelligent') machines are projections of the thinking organ, i.e. the brain. As, however, the very task of every machine is to surpass as far as possible the performance of the human organ it is the projection of, it follows that by definition there is no way to meet the Descartes postulate, i.e. the possibility to control the results.

In a high-tech environment, like the complex IT machinery of an airplane cockpit, for example, this problem is dealt with by means of redundancy: a number of additional machines are charged with mutually controlling each other 'autonomously', as it were. This, however, results in missing the Cartesian goal of direct cognitive control by human beings even further. To put it differently: in human-machine tandems, the Descartes postulate is honoured at the expense of statistically externalising it through binary technology which, however, in fact equals getting rid of literally meeting it.

## What is the Turing Test testing?

The implications of this 'anti-Cartesian experiment' (as I would like

to call it) become obvious especially with respect to our case of Artificial Intelligence. Already Alan Turing had replaced the initial question of whether machines are capable of thinking with the description of a functionally equivalent experimental arrangement: the 'imitation game'.

Thus, from the very beginning, almost 70 years ago, it was never a question of whether machines, or the programmes run by them, were capable of thinking or were in this sense 'intelligent'. The one and only question was whether they could be made to behave in a way that renders an observer (or even more important: a user) unable to distinguish them from intelligent behaviour or thought.

Philosophically speaking, this shift is of the utmost importance. What the Turing Test is testing in actual fact is whether a machine, or a program running on a machine, is capable of *deceiving* not just one, but *any* observer/user by performing seemingly cognitive tasks such that the observer/user will not be capable of distinguishing it from human cognitive behaviour. In brief: the task of AI is to bring about a sit-



uation of absolute *indistinguishability*, i.e. of perfect deception.

### Deception: revisited and rehabilitated

In order to better understand this, we might remind ourselves that Alan Turing didn't call his game a 'deception game', but an 'imitation game'. Keeping in mind that the fourth step of Descartes' methodology of doubt consisted in the argument of the indistinguishability of dream and reality, we realize the inversely symmetrical structure of the Cartesian paradigm and our anti-Cartesian experiment. Whereas the former resulted in the attempt to overcome indistinguishability, that very indistinguishability is the ultimate goal of the latter. Success in passing the Turing Test consists in permanently failing to distinguish machine performance from human performance. In brief: Failure in the former defines success in the latter, as long as we replace 'deception' by 'simulation'.

Even with respect to the very core of the Cartesian attempt to reach a situation of evidence-based certainty in science, i.e. the scientific experiment, simulation takes over slowly but gradually, and the same applies for different reasons to the field of technology. And as far as the life-world is concerned, there is almost nothing left that isn't covered by 'deceiving' simulation tools like apps, smartphones, navigation systems, electronic timetables, and the like.

Although these examples illustrate the anti-Cartesian experiment 'beyond any reasonable doubt', it seems to be impossible to overcome the almost inevitable *moral* connotation of the concept of deception. In the semiotics of the Cartesian paradigm, deception is usually associated with moral wickedness and cunning. In order to fully come to terms with the paradigm shift represented by the anti-Cartesian experiment we have to develop an understanding of deception in an extra-moral sense, following Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of 'truth and lie in an extra-moral sense'.

If interpreted accordingly, digitalization puts an end to the Cartesian paradigm, correcting at least two main features of modern thinking: the conviction that philosophy and science are adversary to deception on the one hand and to technology on the other. By means of digitalization, a whole new world is being opened up to philosophical reflection, based on a new anti-Cartesian insight: that *to know* in actual fact is *to make*—but that's another story... <

Abbreviated and revised version of a paper that was presented to the IWM Fellows Colloquium in Vienna on October 21, 2019. The complete article will be published as a book chapter in B.P. Göcke and A. Rosenthal-von der Pütten (eds.), *Artificial Intelligence. Reflections in Philosophy, Theology, and Social Sciences*, Paderborn: Mentis Brill 2020, 15–35.

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## Neuerscheinungen in der Publikationsreihe von IWM und Passagen Verlag

*Im Rahmen der Kooperation von IWM und dem Passagen Verlag erschienen im März 2020 zwei Bände, die sich mit den Auswirkungen von Automatisierung und künstlicher Intelligenz auf die Zukunft der Arbeit, der Demokratie und der Freiheit befassen.*

## Und wie elektrische Schafe träumen wir: Humanität, Sexualität, Digitalität



Photo: IWM / Klaus Ranger

„So wie ein lädiertes Apfel Fliegen anlockt, zieht menschlicher Leichtsinns Algorithmen an. Digitale Wesen nutzen unsere Selbstüberschätzung aus, bestärken unsere falschen Überzeugungen, instrumentalisieren unsere sexuellen Ängste, reduzieren uns auf isolierte Tiere und veranlassen uns schließlich dazu, die Reste unserer Intelligenz dazu zu verwenden, ihnen ein Alibi für ihre Taten zu geben.“ **Timothy Snyder**

Timothy Snyder diskutiert in seinem originellen essayistischen Text die Implikationen künstlicher Intelligenz für die menschliche Zukunft. Als Einstieg dienen ihm der 1950 vom englischen Informatikpionier Alan Turing entwickelte Test, der der Frage nachging, ob Maschinen menschliches Denkvermögen unterstellt werden kann, sowie Science-Fiction-Erzählungen Isaac Asimovs und Philipp K. Dicks. Ausgehend davon analysiert Snyder

verschiedene Konstellationen der Interaktion zwischen menschlichen und digitalen Wesen und zwischen unterschiedlichen Denkstilen, und diskutiert die weitreichenden Konsequenzen, die diese für Wahrheit, Freiheit, Ethik und nicht zuletzt für unser Menschenverständnis haben. Snyder sieht in der digitalen Tyrannei der Gegenwart eine kapitale Herausforderung für die Demokratie. Sie ist ein Regime, das einerseits die Wahrheit systematisch negiert, und andererseits Menschen glauben lässt, sie agierten selbstständig, obwohl ihre Handlungen vielmehr von nicht greifbaren digitalen Wesen gesteuert werden. Um Demokratie und Freiheit zu bewahren, so Snyder, bedarf es eines kritischen Umgangs mit Digitalität, eines Pluralismus von Denkstilen sowie eines

kompromisslosen Festhaltens an Wahrheit und Fakten. <

**Timothy Snyder** ist Richard C. Levin Professor für Geschichte an der Yale University und ein Permanent Fellow am IWM.

**Timothy Snyder**  
*Und wie elektrische Schafe träumen wir: Humanität, Sexualität, Digitalität*  
Wien: Passagen, 2020



## Automatisierung der Arbeit: Segen oder Fluch?



Photo: IWM / Klaus Ranger

„Die Politik sollte ständig das Ziel vor Augen haben, den ‚notwendigen‘ Arbeitsaufwand zu reduzieren. Dies war das Hauptversprechen der Mechanisierung, nicht ein unbegrenztes

Konsumwachstum. (...) Wir haben das Wachstum des Bruttoinlandsprodukts zum Selbstzweck gemacht – ein Vergehen an den Göttern, aber auch an dem Planeten, dessen Treuhänder wir sind. Die Politik kann wenig tun, um uns besser zu machen; aber sie kann uns helfen, kluge Entscheidungen für uns selbst und für die kommenden Generationen zu treffen.“ **Robert Skidelsky**

Die vier Essays dieses Buches repräsentieren die Entwicklung der Überlegungen des Wirtschaftshistorikers Robert Skidelsky zu den Auswirkungen arbeitssparender Technologien auf das menschliche Leben. Er geht ihren Auswirkungen auf die Arbeitswelt und auf das „gute Leben“ nach und umreißt die Utopien und Dystopien, die mit ihrem Einsatz verbunden sind. Ausgehend

von der Prämisse, dass die Reduktion von Arbeitszeit zum materiellen und spirituellen Wohlergehen der Menschen beiträgt und daher erstrebenswert ist, analysiert er ferner die Gründe für das Nicht-Eintreten der von Keynes vorausgesagten 15-Stunden-Arbeitswoche in den Industrieländern und zeigt Möglichkeiten und Bedingungen für die Reduktion von Arbeitszeit heute auf. Skidelsky plädiert für einen ethischen Einsatz von Technologie und für eine Wirtschaft, die nicht das Wachstum, sondern das Wohlergehen der Bevölkerung als oberste Maxime hat. Anstatt Menschen einem sinnlosen Wettlauf mit den Maschinen auszuliefern, fordert er eine Würdigung der Unvollkommenheit als Voraussetzung jeglicher menschlichen Bemühung und eines Lebens, das menschlich und zugleich menschenwürdig ist. <

**Robert Skidelsky**, britischer Wirtschaftshistoriker und öffentlicher Intellektueller, ist Autor einer dreibändigen, mehrfach prämierten Biografie über John Maynard Keynes. Am IWM verbrachte er zwei Forschungsaufenthalte: Von April bis Juni 2018 als Krzysztof Michalski Visiting Fellow und im Juni 2019 ein einmonatiges Fellowship in Kooperation mit dem IHS, Wien.

**Robert Skidelsky**  
*Automatisierung der Arbeit: Segen oder Fluch?*  
Wien: Passagen, 2020



## The Dangers of Digital Democracy Europa im Diskurs – Debating Europe

All over the world, elections are manipulated by fake news, public opinion is radicalized via social media and electronic voting processes are subject to hacker attacks. The internet was once seen as an opportunity for more democracy, but today concerns about the future of free elections prevail. On January 26, a debate at the Burgtheater, moderated by **Eric Frey** (editor of *Der Standard*), addressed the transfor-

mation of mass media and the (in) steerability of the Internet. The panelists included: **Franco Berardi** (author, media theorist and media activist), **Ingrid Brodnig** (journalist and author) and **John Frank** (Vice-President EU Government Affairs, Microsoft). A video of the event—a joint initiative of *Burgtheater*, *ERSTE Foundation*, *IWM* and *Der Standard*—is available on: [www.youtube.com/IWMVienna](https://www.youtube.com/IWMVienna)



Photo: Matthias Cremer



# 75 Jahre Kriegsende: Umkämpfte Erinnerung

VON VLASTA KORDA

75 Jahre nach Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges wird niemand ernsthaft bestreiten, dass dieser Krieg der schlimmste und schmerzhafteste Einschnitt der Weltgeschichte war. Trotzdem ist heute in vielen postkommunistischen Länder die Frage höchst umstritten, ob der Tag des Kriegsendes am 8. Mai tatsächlich ein Grund zum Feiern ist.

Anfang der neunziger Jahre fanden sich die Menschen in den Ländern Ostmitteleuropas befreit von der kommunistischen Ideologie, die vier lange Dekaden ihre Weltsicht bestimmt hatte. Der *homo sovieticus* schien dem *verführten Denken*, das Czesław Miłosz so eindringlich geschildert hatte, entkommen zu sein. Doch der Sklave bleibt ein Sklave, auch wenn sein Herr gestorben ist. Deshalb setzte vielerorts eine Geschichtsschreibung ein, die sich äußerlich zwar scharf distanzierte, aber in den Stereotypen ihres Denkens allzu sehr dem vorangegangenen Regime ähnelte. Die wieder-gefundene Unabhängigkeit der Staaten Ostmitteleuropas fiel zusammen mit der allgegenwärtigen Begeisterung über die gesellschaftliche Befreiung und den Sieg, den der Westen über den Osten errungen hatte. In diesem Umfeld entstand das Bedürfnis, sich gegen alles „Östliche“ abzugrenzen, weil Held und Schurke, Gut und Böse quasi als synonym für Ost und West begriffen wurden.

In dieser Zeit hätten Historiker das Fundament für eine unabhängige Geschichtsforschung legen können, bot sich doch die einmalige Gelegenheit, nicht nur die Zukunft, sondern auch die komplexe Vergangenheit neu zu begründen. Aber statt innovative Perspektiven voranzubringen und eine kritische Haltung zu entwickeln, verengte sich das Blickfeld der Geschichtsauslegung größtenteils auf die bloße Umkehr der bisherigen Historiographie: eine 180-Grad-Wende in der Überzeugung, dass ein Perspektivenwechsel allein den freien Lauf der bis dahin verheimlichten Wahrheit garantieren werde. Dazu bediente man sich der bereits im Kommunismus bewährten Kategorisierung in Helden, Opfer und Schurken.

Für die Selbstvergewisserung der in ihrer Unabhängigkeit wiederhergestellten Nationen war es wichtig, sich in der Historiographie mit den Jahrzehnten unter bolschewistischer Herrschaft auseinanderzusetzen und die Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkriegs umzuschreiben: statt der Erzählung vom vielgerühmten Sieg der Roten Armee über die Wehrmacht ging es in den revidierten Interpretationen zunehmend darum, die Fähigkeiten der Sowjetarmee anzuzweifeln. Dementsprechend wurde etwa betont, dass Hitlers Soldaten im Osten nicht von der Roten Armee, sondern vom Winter gestoppt wurden. Sowjetische Partisanen wurden hingegen als Verbrecher dargestellt, die – statt

militärischen Widerstands zu leisten – räuberische Übergriffe auf hilflose Dorfbewohner unternahmen. Weitläufig bekannt wurde das Narrativ von der Roten Armee, die mit verschränkten Armen bei der unbarmherzigen Niederschlagung des War-

Zudem fanden die mittelosteuropäischen Nationen in der Kriegsgeschichte, in der sie sich gern als Opfer der von den Großmächten verursachten Entwicklungen sahen, plötzlich ihre eigenen Helden. Wie Phönix aus der Asche tauchten etwa

tor Reinhard Heydrich verübten, das die Hinrichtung und Deportation tausender unschuldiger Zivilisten zur Folge hatte. Aus den Soldaten der polnischen Untergrundarmee *Armia Krajowa* wurden Ritter im weißen Harnisch, die aufopferungs-

Und die Nation, die Reinhard Heydrich umbrachte, war keineswegs eine einige Nation des Widerstands, sondern stellte für das Dritte Reich eilig jene Panzer her, die bis nach Stalingrad kamen. Viele ukrainische Freiheitskämpfer, die sich Schlachten mit der Roten Armee lieferten, verübten nicht nur Massaker an den polnischen Zivilisten in Wolhynien, sondern führten auch als freiwillige Helfer in den Schutzmannschaftsbataillonen der deutschen Okkupanten die schmutzigsten Arbeiten aus. Oder die neu entdeckten litauischen Partisanen-Helden, die in einem ganz anderen Licht erscheinen, wenn man sich deren Kriegskarrieren davor näher anschaut. Und auch die lettische Historiographie wollte die Volkszugehörigkeit der Wachmannschaften oder die Opferzahlen im KZ Salaspils lieber nicht in den Vordergrund rücken.

Anstatt an den Geschichten von Martyrium und Heldentum festzuhalten, sollte die postsowjetische Geschichtsschreibung in diesen Ländern bestrebt sein, den eigenen Nationalismus kritisch aufzuarbeiten, so wie es Teilen der deutschen Historiographie nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg gelungen ist. Am Anfang standen einige wenige Wegbereiter der kritischen Kriegsgeschichtsschreibung, die schon in den 60er Jahren über die Verbrechen der Wehrmacht schrieben. Ihrer Beharrlichkeit ist es zu verdanken, dass es endlich gelang, die Legende von der sauberen Wehrmacht, die im Unterschied zur SS angeblich keine Verbrechen begangen hatte, zu widerlegen. Ohne die faktischen Grundlagen, die Forscher wie Christian Streit, Manfred Messerschmidt, Wilhelm Krausnick oder Wolfram Wette mit ihrer Arbeit gelegt hatten, wäre eine gesellschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit den „Verbrechen der Wehrmacht“, wie sie in den gleichnamigen Wanderausstellungen dokumentiert wurden, unmöglich gewesen. Bei der sogenannten *Wehrmachtausstellung*, die auf Initiative von Hannes Heer in Zusammenarbeit mit Historikern des Hamburger Instituts für Sozialforschung entstand, handelte es sich eben nicht um ein singuläres Ereignis, sondern um das konsequente Resultat einer langen Entwicklung selbstkritischer Geschichtsforschung. Wenn dies das Ergebnis kritischer Historiographie ist, dann – so könnte man polemisch hinzufügen – erntet gerade auch die postsowjetische Geschichtsschreibung in Mitteleu-

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Ankunft der Roten Armee in Prag, 9. Mai 1945.

Photo: Getty / CTK / picturedesk.com

schauder Aufstands zuschaut. Die Ermordung der polnischen Offiziere in Katyn oder die gnadenlose Unterdrückung der nationalen Widerstandskämpfer in Litauen und der

in der Ukraine schon an der Wende der 80er und 90er Jahre die Nationalisten Stepan Bandera und Roman Shukhevich auf, um die ein regelrechter Persönlichkeitskult entstand.

voll gegen beide totalitären Regime kämpften und für die Unabhängigkeit Polens starben. In der Slowakei rückte für manchen Historiker statt der Kollaboration mit Hitler unter

*Die Fehlerinnerung an den Kommunismus trägt nun wieder zu einer Fehlerinnerung an den Antikommunismus bei.*

Tony Judt 1992

Ukraine sind ein weiterer Teil dieser Geschichtsschreibung. Zu kritisieren ist selbstverständlich weder die entsprechende Würdigung dieser Ereignisse noch deren Aufarbeitung und Diskussion, sondern die Verengung und Ausschließlichkeit der Perspektive, die damit oft einhergeht. In diesem Sinne beschrieb etwa Tony Judt schon 1992 in seinem Artikel *The Past Is Another Country* die unkritische Geschichtsschreibung in den post-kommunistischen Ländern als Folge des vierzigjährigen kommunistischen Narrativs über den Zweiten Weltkrieg.<sup>1</sup>

Auch im Baltikum wurden die Partisanen, die bis zum letzten Mann gegen Stalin gekämpft hatten, als neue Helden glorifiziert. In der ungarischen Reflexion auf den Krieg wies das Horthy-Regime statt einer Nähe zum Faschismus nur mehr schwach autoritäre Züge auf. Und im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren gab es einen zunehmenden Trend in der Geschichtsschreibung zufolge kaum Sympathisanten und Unterstützer des Dritten Reichs, sondern tapfere vor allem tschechoslowakische Fallschirmspringer, die ein Attentat auf den stellvertretenden Reichsprotektor

Jozef Tiso vielmehr der berühmte slowakische Nationalaufstand in den Mittelpunkt. Und schließlich wurde das Konzentrationslager Salaspils von Teilen der lettischen Historiographie lieber als Arbeits- und Erziehungslager beschrieben.

Dabei wurde jedoch vergessen: Für alle nicht-polnischen Nationen hatte die *Armia Krajowa* wenig ritterliche Taten vorzuweisen und das Horthy-Regime – wenn auch nicht so radikal wie die Pfeilkreuzlerbewegung – betrieb unzweifelhaft eine scharf antisemitische und expansionistische Politik des Nationalismus.



# Beyond Organized Crime. Violence and Drugs in Mexico

BY ADÈLE BLAZQUEZ

*Within the criminalized, marginalized population in drug production areas of Northern Mexico, the distinction between those who exploit and those who are exploited disappears, writes IWM Visiting Fellow Adèle Blazquez. Her article, based on 18 months of field research, focuses on the experience of violence and vulnerability of the inhabitants and poppy cultivators of Badiraguato, the birthplace of Joaquín Guzmán Loera (“El Chapo”), and commonly considered the cradle of drug trafficking in Mexico.*



Photo: RASHIDE FRIAS / AFP / picturedesk.com

Dealing with contemporary Mexico poses a major challenge. The 300,000 deaths since 2006 represent a higher death toll than most of the armed conflicts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More people have died in Mexico through drug-related violence than in Afghanistan since 2001 and Iraq since 2003; only the war in Syria from 2011 onwards has led to more deaths. Moreover, Mexico displays similar phenomena to countries affected by armed conflicts and recognized as such in international law: armed groups, clashes with heavy weapons (machine guns, rocket launchers, armored vehicles, combat helicopters), competition for territorial control, massacres, millions of displaced persons fleeing violence. Yet some salient features of contemporary armed conflicts are absent: no application of international humanitarian law, no refugee status for those fleeing, and no UNHCR camps. Moreover, fighting and violence coexist with unusual phenomena in armed conflicts: elections that lead to political alternation, a vibrant tourism industry and a cosmopolitan capital city where life is good for the wealthy.

This ambivalence and the scale of the violence are dismissed by the term commonly used to describe it: “organized crime”. In this narrative of a country ridden by organized crime, the municipality of Badiraguato, located in the northwestern State of Sinaloa, occupies a distinc-

tive place: it acts as the paradigmatic example of a criminal community. Birthplace of notorious figures of the Mexican drug trade such as Rafael Caro Quintero or Joaquín “el Chapo” Guzmán, the municipality is considered the cradle of drug trafficking and the base of the “Sinaloa Cartel”. The municipality’s 30,000 inhabitants are therefore systematically suspected—by national and international media, but also by state

a drastic reduction in other sources of income and the price increase for poppy linked to the attempts to repress its production. The inhabitants had started growing poppies at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a complement to food crops, notably in response to the growing American demand for morphine. State policies and military operations in the 1970s made poppy production the sole livelihood of an increasingly

tures the Californias (Mexican and US) and places the State of Sinaloa in the global chain of both the tomato and heroine trades. The isolation of the *sierra* has become its only comparative advantage, inaccessibility being a key resource as the growing repression of poppy and marihuana cultures made concealment necessary. Moreover, in 1977, the massive spraying of defoliants left over from the Vietnam War to de-

intermediary who enjoys the necessary political protection to process and transport the drugs. Counter-intuitively, the sector relies on the military repression of the Mexican state and the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), which strengthens the local intermediaries’ monopolistic position vis-à-vis the producers. The latter bear all the costs of the destruction of crops and of the bribes paid to soldiers in exchange for not destroying their harvest. Faced with these risks, producers are forced to sell their harvest to the local intermediary as quickly as possible and on unfavorable terms. Conversely, the intermediaries can divest themselves of any obligation and claim to be only those who buy the crops of people who have entered an illegal business of their own volition. Moreover, it feeds the illusion that families for whom the repair of a tin roof is an uncertain investment and the powerful people who display majestic villas are united in a common condition.

## Condition of vulnerability

More broadly, the exclusion from the law, coupled with the violence of Mexican soldiers and conflicts between rival intermediaries in the drug trade, keeps the inhabitants in a state of radical uncertainty. The impossibility to recourse to the courts in cases such as a land dispute, the abduction and rape of a woman or

*In a village, the victim—or the killer—  
is often an acquaintance or even a relative.*

institutions—of being members or at least accomplices of this major criminal organization. In fact, Badiraguato demonstrates what the categorization of the current situation as ‘organized crime’ conceals. An ethnography of inhabitants’ everyday life and family histories can undermine this reading, which insists that the inhabitants choose to pursue illegal activities, supposedly in order to enrich themselves.

## An uncertain and dangerous crop

The cultivation of poppy emerged as a monoculture in Badiraguato in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to

marginalized area. Indeed, the poppy sector in the mountainous areas expanded in parallel with the rise of agro-industry in the coastal plain. Irrigation works aimed at increasing agricultural production for export to the United States exacerbated the already existing disparities between the coastal plain—the setting for the Sinaloense version of the “*Mexican miracle*”—and the neglected foothills of the western Sierra Madre. The latter not only did not benefit from the investments, they also suffered from falling agricultural prices caused by the growth of the agro-industry. The poppy monoculture in Badiraguato is thus part of the broader process of capitalist formation that struc-

stroy poppy plantations wiped out the remaining food crops. Together with the decline in local mining activities, this finally sealed Badiraguato’s fate. Whereas for their parents, poppy and marihuana used to provide complementary revenue, today’s inhabitants now exclusively depend on this uncertain and dangerous crop.

The common interpretation in terms of organized crime that focuses on the famous Cartel ignores this history. Besides, it misses the actual organization of the poppy production. Indeed, most of Badiraguato’s inhabitants are small-scale producers who cultivate less than one hectare and sell their harvest to a local



the murder of a relative makes everyone captive of those able to solve matters, whether they are part of the state apparatus or drug traffickers. Their collective criminalization maintains the inhabitants in a condition of vulnerability that is both common and singular, depending on whether one is a man, a woman, a poppy grower, his wife, or an employee of the municipality. This dire situation is ignored by local state authorities in their administration of the territory, which is characterized by bureaucratic routine. The succession of neoliberal programs detached from local problems reinforces the domination of the few over the rest of the population by delegating the management of the most pressing issues to a supposedly centralized organization of the criminal sector.

The lives of those caught in this context are both precarious and tragic. Several times a week, the inhabitants wake up to grim news: “dawn rose over a dead man”. In a village, the victim—or the killer—is often an acquaintance or even a relative. Making a life in a situation where violence is lodged in close relationships induces an intense activity of evaluation and self-protection. Following each murder, the question arises as to whether it is likely to be avenged and will lead to further homicides. These threats weigh heavily on how the inhabitants express their views. In addition, the local administration denies the violence suffered by the inhabitants, both that of the army and traffickers and that of men against women. It is thus unsurprising that people refrain from talking about violence, its causes and the ensuing suffering.

The lack of access to the law and the daily threat of violence, therefore, make it particularly difficult to formulate any collective criticism, whether it is directed at political representatives or traffickers. The allegation of the population's complicity contributes to crushing the possibility of political protest. The mere formulation of a common condition is hampered by violence and exclusion. The inhabitants' need to carefully assess the possible repercussions of each homicide according to the violent resources of the people involved leads to a personalization and singularization of each conflict. Conversely, the formulation of a general diagnosis—i.e. their politicization—would require the possibility of going beyond the specificity of each situation to identify the common elements and thus put the finger on what makes their life so precarious. These constraints weigh heavily on the emergence of a formalized discourse on the *common condition* of the *vulnerable* inhabitants of Badiraguato. Within this criminalized, marginalized population, the distinction between those who exploit and those who are exploited disappears behind the collective stigmatization of a supposedly criminal community. <

**Adèle Blazquez** holds a PhD in Social Anthropology and Ethnology from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris. From January to April 2020 she was a Visiting Fellow at the IWM.

**Vlasta Korda**  
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ropa die Früchte ihrer Arbeit: Zum 75. Jahrestag des Kriegsendes wissen wir nun endlich, dass der Zweite Weltkrieg ein bewaffneter Konflikt zwischen zwei totalitären Mächten war, in dem die Nationen Mitteleuropas bloße Marionetten waren, die keine eigenen Taten initiierten und keinerlei Verantwortung für die verübten Verbrechen tragen.

Drei Jahrzehnte einer mitteleuropäischen Kriegsgeschichtsschreibung von Helden, Opfern und Schurken haben uns ein reichlich simplifiziertes und unkritisches Bild der eigenen Nation geliefert: Helden sind immer nur die eigenen mutigen Kämpfer, ein Opfer ist die heimische, unschuldig leidende Bevölkerung, während die Rolle der Schurken ausschließlich „den Anderen“ (den Nazis und/oder Kommunisten) vorbehalten ist. Dieses stark vereinfachte und stereotype Narrativ gibt eine allzu leichte Beute für den politischen Radikalismus und seine nationalistischen Unterströmungen ab, wie etwa Krisztián Ungvári oder Wilfried Jilge am Beispiel Ungarns und der Ukraine gezeigt haben.

Mangelndes kritisches Bewusstsein bei der Aufarbeitung von Krieg und Kriegsverbrechen in Verbindung mit einer konsequenten Gleichsetzung von Kommunismus und Nazismus könnte uns zu dem nicht überraschenden Schluss kommen lassen, dass es anlässlich des 75. Jubiläums des Kriegsendes tatsächlich nichts zu feiern gibt, weil am 8. Mai 1945 lediglich eine totalitäre Herrschaft durch eine andere abgelöst wurde. Denn, wie Timothy Snyder 2005 in seinem Artikel *Vereintes Europa, geteilte Geschichte* für die mittel- und osteuropäischen Nationen analysierte, bedeutet 1945 für sie „den Übergang von einer Besatzungszeit zur nächsten, von der Nazi Herrschaft zur Sowjetherrschaft“. Allerdings ist dieser historisch unbezweifelbare Umstand kein Grund dafür, sich in den postsowjetischen Ländern einer kritischen und differenzierenden Geschichtsschreibung zu verweigern, die mehr kennt als die Schuld der Anderen und die eigene Opferrolle. 75 Jahre Kriegsende mögen ein willkommener Anlass sein, dies wieder ins Bewusstsein zu rufen. <

- 1) „Antikommunistische Geistliche überall in der Region, Nationalisten, die in Estland, Litauen und Ungarn Seite an Seite mit den Nazis kämpften, rechte Partisanen, die im Zuge der mörderischen Abrechnungen in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit, vor der Machtübernahme durch die Kommunisten, wahllos Juden, Kommunisten und Liberale ermordeten – sie alle können jetzt damit rechnen, als Männer von gemäßiger und löblicher Gesinnung rehabilitiert zu werden; ihr stärkster Trumpf sind die Schmähungen, mit denen das frühere Regime sie überhäuft hat.“ Zitat aus Tony Judt: „Die Vergangenheit ist ein anderes Land. Politische Mythen im Nachkriegseuropa“, in: *Transit* Nr. 6 (Herbst 1993), S. 106–107.
- 2) Die deutsche Fassung des englischen Originalbeitrags erschien in Übersetzung von Klaus Nellen in *Transit* Nr. 28 (Winter 2004/2005) sowie in weiterer Folge auf [www.eurozine.com](http://www.eurozine.com) in mehreren Sprachen.

**Vlasta Korda** ist Doktorandin für Geschichte an der Jan Evangelista Purkyně Universität in Ústí nad Labem. Von Februar bis Juni 2020 ist sie Jan Patočka Junior Visiting Fellow am IWM.

## #Closed But Active

As an academic institution, which fosters intellectual exchange across disciplinary boundaries and national borders, we at the IWM are experimenting with new formats to keep in touch with you during these difficult times.

We have closed our doors until it is possible to safely reopen the Institute to welcome you back in person.

Starting in March 2020 we launched a new blog on our website with contributions from current and former fellows not only sharing an account of life under the current conditions of curfew in various corners of the world where they live or research on, but also reflecting on the implications of the Covid-19 pan-



Photo: IWM / Klaus Ranger

dem for democracy, sociality, solidarity, social justice, surveillance and the economy.

Furthermore, we are presenting a thematic focus each week by using our wealth of recorded audio-visual material along with articles from *IWMpost* and *Transit*. For those of you, who missed an event or publication this presents a chance to catch up. Some of you may wish to revisit a talk or a debate, or re-read a piece.

We hope to be back with an exciting events calendar soon. Until then please bear with us as we do our best to preserve the academic community built up over several decades. <

Shalini Randeria, IWM Rector

[www.iwm.at/closed-but-active](http://www.iwm.at/closed-but-active)

## Coronavirus: How Will It Affect Our Lives?

What short and long-term effects will the corona pandemic have on our social, academic and political life? IWM Visiting and Permanent Fellows share their thoughts, concerns and hopes.

With contributions by Yuri Andrukhovych, Clemena Antonova, Timothy Garton Ash, Albena Azmanova, Irina Borogan, Hugo Brady, Avrum Burg, Holly Case, Tim Corbett, Evgenii Dainov, Andrii Dostliev, Lia Dostlieva, Michael Geyer, Aleksandra Głos, Nataliya Gumenyuk, Geoffrey Harpham, Eva Illouz, Maxim Kantor, John Keane, Biray Kolluoglu, Ivan Krastev, Ste-

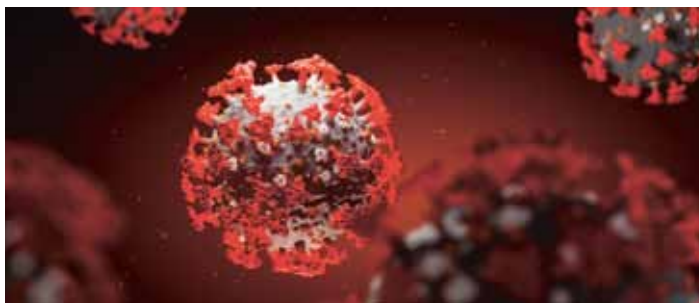


Illustration: Maksim Tkachenko / iStock.com

ven Lukes, Bernd Marin, Alessandro Monsutti, Jan-Werner Müller, Claus Offe, John Palattella, Jiří Příbáš, Till van Rahden, Shalini Randeria, Dani Rodrik, Ranabir Samaddar, Martin Schürz, Adam Shatz, Anton

Shekhovtsov, Marci Shore, Robert Skidelsky, Andrei Soldatov, Eugen Stancu, Gáspár Miklós Tamás, Ilija Trojanow, Miloš Vec, Katarzyna Wężyk, Ruth Wodak, Karolina Wigura and many more... <

## Hidden Treasures of the IWM Archive

The IWM archive houses a rich collection of texts, audio and video files that are worth being rediscovered. Once a week, thematic foci, related to different research projects at the IWM, are presented on the IWM website including the following topics:

Corona and Resurgence of Communitarian Ideas, The Return of Geopolitics, Digitality and Democracy, Virus Without Borders—Of Migrants



Photo: IWM

and Closures, Between Amnesia and Hypermnesia-Victory Day, 75 Years

Later and Nationalism and Europe's Turn to the Right. <

## Fellows Colloquium Goes Virtual

During the closure of the institute, we shifted our Monday afternoon Fellows Colloquia to a virtual format, which allows us to come together once a week to discuss the research projects of our current fellows, some of them publicly, others internally. <



Photo: IWM / Klaus Ranger