



## Eurozine Review

*Le Monde diplomatique* (Berlin) enjoys the view from Slovenia's presidential balcony; *Krytyka* debates genocide; *Osteuropa* compiles a green book on eastern Europe; *Vikerkaar* revisits the Bronze Soldier debate; *Merkur* is wary of the Left's use of opinion polls; *Roots* poses the Macedonian question; *L'Homme* thematizes caring and fighting women; and *Esprit* watches the world in a hurry.

### Le Monde diplomatique (Berlin) 6/2008



As Slovenia's EU presidency draws to an end, [Boris Cizej](#), editor-in-chief of the Slovenian edition of *Le Monde diplomatique*, [takes stock](#) of the last six months. Looking down from his balcony in the centre of Ljubljana, he finds his country's political career has been unbelievable: "For centuries we've been a kind of nothing located somewhere in Europe, just an unremarkable spot, and now we are president of the world's most economically and culturally developed region. Science fiction!?" As EU president, Slovenia has done a decent job as mediator between the Balkans and the West over the Kosovo question, reckons Cizej. "All in all, politics doesn't happen only under the spotlight of a global audience. It's more a steady disentangling of problems."

**Racial violence in South Africa:** Is a new apartheid on the rise in South Africa? No, it's the old one dressed up in new clothes, [writes](#) Johann Rossouw, editor-in-chief of the Afrikaans edition of *Le Monde diplomatique*. Looking back over the country's recent history, he illustrates how South Africa's worldwide image as role model for a peaceful, multicultural society has been a romantic illusion nourished by an ignorant belief in liberal democracy and economic growth. "The real challenge" has been ignored: "How to reconcile imported colonial modernity with local needs."

After independence, the new black elite, craving the West's recognition, failed where it mattered most: in improving the lives of the majority of the country's citizens:

"Against the background of [...] crumbling infrastructure and continuing poverty in a number of townships and squatter camps [...] desperate black South Africans, who very seldomly if ever in the twentieth century displayed xenophobic behaviour, [...] finally turned against foreign citizens [...]. In sum, a classic example of the traumatized victim that demands recognition by unleashing violence on a weaker party."

**Dossier DNA:** Pierre Darlu, researcher at the CNRS, [doubts](#) that a project tracing the global genealogical tree will turn humanity into a peaceful and

united family: genomic "differences could turn out to [...] strengthen group identification and separation".

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### Krytyka 5/2008



In *Krytyka's* series of articles on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the catastrophic famine in Ukraine, the *Holodomor* of 1932–1933, Kyiv historian Andrii Portnov notes that western scholars and intellectuals have had a hard time grasping the scope of the disaster. The *Holodomor* (from the Ukrainian words *holod*, "hunger" and *mor*, "plague") is one of the most debated events in Ukrainian history;

controversial issues range from the cause of the famine (was it engineered by Soviet authorities or an unintended consequence of Soviet industrialization?) to the death toll (between two and ten million people) and whether the term "genocide" can be applied.

Portnov argues that western academics are overly dependent on the body of English–language publications and have traditionally focused on Soviet and later Russian perceptions of the event. Using the Holocaust as the defining case, they have been reluctant to accept the *Holodomor* as genocide. However, this seems to be changing, notes Portnov. Genocide, he concludes, cannot be treated solely as an ethno–national phenomenon but must also be interpreted in social and political terms.

**A new constitution for a European Ukraine:** Vsevolod Rechytskyi, professor of law and legal council to the Kharkiv Civil Rights Group, discusses how issues such as the development of civil society, Ukraine's hopes of EU membership, and ecological sustainability are to be dealt with in the framework of a new Ukrainian constitution.

**Also to look out for:** In an article entitled "The place of memory as a school for forgetting", Belarusian historian Ales Smalianchuk looks at how WWII is treated in Belarusian textbooks. Rhetoric of "us and them" and stress on the legitimacy of the regime are patterns pertinent not only to Soviet textbooks, but also to the neo–Soviet approaches of the Lukashenka era, writes Smalianchuk.

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### Osteuropa 4–5/2008



Eastern Europe is still trying to copy a western course of development that has proven to lead to a dead end: modernization via growth. Introducing a five hundred–page issue of *Osteuropa* on political ecology in eastern Europe, the editors regret that little remains of the ecological consciousness of former dissidents. Twenty years ago, the environmental crisis was considered a legacy of Soviet rule and democracy

and ecology were spoken of in the same breath; today, energy politics is seen exclusively in terms of securing energy supply. Russia's nuclear industry scents an advantage in the era of climate change and believes that the

"Chernobyl hysteria" has at last come to an end. And despite dangers to energy infrastructure posed by the thaw in the Siberian permafrost, Russia's political and economic elite fails to treat the issue with the urgency it deserves.

**Eco-lobbying:** Why are alternative energy sources underdeveloped in eastern Europe? As the editors point out, centralized and hierarchical state structures

prefer conventional energy sources that can be controlled by a technocratic elite. Renewable energy, on the other hand, is decentralized and requires a civil society capable of complex self-regulation. Yet the distinction is not so cut and dry: environmental causes can serve state interests, as the Kremlin's reaction to protests from global NGOs against oil speculation off Sakhalin Island revealed. Michael Bradshaw describes how, as a result of eco-lobbying, the international consortium led by Shell had its license revoked and in 2007 was taken over by Gazprom. However there are no signs that the new owners take their social and ecological responsibilities any more seriously.

**Growth vs. fuel consumption:** The ambiguity of environmental-political consciousness throughout eastern Europe is best revealed in transport policy. Construction on Poland's "Via Baltica", a motorway linking Warsaw and Helsinki that will run through a unique nature reserve, has been put on ice after meeting with widespread opposition. A victory for EU environmental law over the Polish government, write Helen Byron and Malgorzata Gorska. Yet, as the transport situation in Moscow proves, the hope that technology will divorce growth from fuel consumption is an illusion. As Viktoriia Bitiukova and Ekaterina Sokolova write, Moscow is choking on its own traffic. Why, then, instead of strengthening public transport, is the city building more roads, which quickly fill with more cars?

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#### Vikerkaar 4-5/2008



In Estonia, the April riots in 2007 brought the situation of the Russian minority into sharp relief. The riots were triggered by the removal and re-positioning of the "Bronze Soldier", a Russian war memorial, from central Tallinn to a military cemetery on the outskirts.

One year on, Tonis Saarts thinks that the integration of the Russians has been superficial from the start. He describes the decline of tolerance and lack of constructive ideas in Estonia after the EU accession in 2004 and considers it a setback after years of serious efforts to meet EU norms.

Martin Ehala, however, states that calling the integration process a failure is a false conclusion. "A close analysis of the trends of the last fifteen years show that integration has been rapid and broad, considering how slow the changes of identity usually are. [...] The more intense participation of Russian-speakers in the affairs of the Estonian Republic has given rise among the conservatives of both ethnic groups to a fear of the obliteration of ethnic boundaries."

**Quiet protests:** Oudekki Loone, a student activist, relates her impressions of the April riots. She writes that the escalation of the conflict was prevented not by the harsh measures of the government, but by a conscious decision of Estonian Russians not to respond to hate with hate.

**Also:** A translation of [Tatiana Zhurzhenko's "The geopolitics of memory"](#) and a section on contemporary Russian language poetry written in Estonia.

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**Merkur 6/2008**

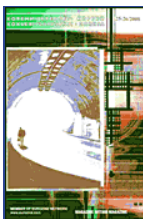
In *Merkur, Zeit* correspondent Thomas E. Schmidt adds to the ongoing debate in Germany about the newly formed "Left Party". Opinion polls, he argues, have come to be seen as the new source of democratic legitimacy in contemporary media-driven politics. When one such poll (commissioned by Schmidt's own paper in summer 2007) indicated a dramatic "left turn" in the population, Left Party chairman Oskar Lafontaine presented the survey results not merely as respondents' opinion about government policy, but as the "direct will of the political body" and an "expression of social reality".

In order to compete with the Left Party, the Social Democrats have followed suit, argues Schmidt. Under chairman Kurt Beck, the SPD has done a *volte face* on Schröderite welfare reforms and is rediscovering itself as a "movement". Yet what the SPD terms the newly reinstated "primacy of politics" is, Schmidt notes, "the primacy of communication".

"Policies that necessarily respond to ever new and painful problems of redistribution will always meet with disapproval in opinion polls. [Yet] in the context of a general election in 2009, which is likely to be overshadowed by worldwide recession, [...] the appeal to the social will of the people could prove counterproductive. [...] Opinion polls and the media ennoble leftwing politics with ominous 'social reality' only as long as the Left constitutes an identity-providing community. Otherwise, the phenomenon will return from whence it came: the political margins."

**Aesthetics:** Ever caught yourself musing about shower gel? Then you've been responding to what product designers call "cue management". According to Wolfgang Ullrich, consumer articles like shower gel don't count as cultural products because there's barely anyone who keeps, collects, or catalogues them. "My guess is that will change in the next few years. Precisely because of the complex mise-en-scène that 'cue-management' evokes, everyday products such as shower gel will be perceived as high cultural achievements."

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**Roots 25–26 (2008)**

In *Roots*, literary historian Valentina Hristovska-Mironska sees in Macedonia's modern history a series of attempts by foreign powers to appropriate its territories and infringe upon its sovereignty.

The "Macedonian question", depending on how you look at it, began with the conquest of the Ottoman Turks in the first half of the fourteenth century; the battle of Lepanto (1577), when the Turks were defeated by Holy League; the fight between the European and Russian powers for Turkish territories after the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji (1774); the Napoleonic wars (1803–1815); the Russian–Turkish wars and the Berlin congress (1877–78)...

Despite the efforts of Macedonian intellectuals and the struggles of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, not to mention the advocacy of prominent foreign politicians (William Gladstone: "Macedonia to the Macedonians"), from the mid–eighteenth century onwards Macedonia has been carved up according to the wishes of Britain, France, Italy, Austro–Hungary, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Bulgaria. Yet for Macedonians, the biggest culprit of all is Greece, which in more recent times has opposed the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's use of the straight–forward name "Macedonia" and blocked its entry into Nato.

"For a whole century, the Greek government has been employing a national strategy whose sole purpose of destroying Macedonian history and tradition. [...] This process has been carried out with most intensity since the 1990s, following the disintegration of Yugoslavia," writes Hristovska–Mironska.

**Also to look out for:** A translation of [Slavenka Drakulic's](#) seminal essay "Whose afraid of Europe?", first published in Eurozine in 2000 and, after the Irish "no", as relevant as ever. Drakulic, a committed European, expresses doubts about the continuing momentum of European integration amidst rising anxieties about loss of national identity.

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## L'Homme 1/2008



Current upheavals in social and family structures have arisen from the demographic shift affecting western industrial nations: society is ageing. The core topic of the current issue of *L'Homme* is one that is omnipresent on the political agenda yet rarely illuminated from the inside: "Care".

A domiciliary carer in Berlin with more than twenty years of experience describes to Karin Hausen how times have changed:

"When I started, the individuality of each person in need of care came first and foremost. This accorded with my concept of professional care–giving. Interest in each person's wishes and life stories was an important and acknowledged part of the work. Today, what rules is the standardized division of working time and tight schedules. There is barely room for individual wishes."

Discussing "the ethos of care praxis and the dilemmas of the modern service economy", Eva Senghaas–Knobloch and Christel Kumbruck view the contemporary approach to care–giving through Adam Smith's "Theory of moral sentiments". The replacement of "holistic ministrations" by a market–oriented service is reflected in a language shift whereby elderly or ill people become "customers" instead of "patients". The authors' conclusion: that "the precondition for an ethos of caring is an environment of appreciation both for care–givers and those in need of care".

**Also in the focus:** Susanne Kreutzer on narratives and reports by parish nurses active in evangetic communal care between the 1940s and 1960s; Relinde Meiwes on how Catholic nursing in nineteenth century Prussia can inform the German healthcare system today; and Arnlaug Leira on childcare, parental

responsibility, and social rights in Scandinavia.

**Fighting women:** Tracing the history of female partisans in the Yugoslavian National Liberation Movement from 1941 to 1945, Barbara N. Wiesinger finds that fighting women were redefined as men, comrades, and heroes and their "unfeminine" behaviour justified by their will to sacrifice themselves for their children.

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### Esprit 6/2008



Each of us is the product of some national culture. Must we abandon that identity to become cosmopolitan? In *Esprit*, Pierre Guenancia argues that culture is not only produced within a national context, but also understood in that framework. We don't communicate with members of other nations as "citizens of the world", but by translating their ideas into the terms of our own background. Meanwhile our national identity itself

depends on the world, shaped by how foreigners see us, and by how we find the differences between our culture and that of others. Nations need the world, just as the world needs nations.

**The world in a hurry:** Historical epochs are useful fictions. They help us tame the past, but what do they mean to the people experiencing events first-hand? Olivier Remaud investigates people caught up in turning points of history, without the clarity of hindsight to shape their perceptions. What emerges is confusion: the impossibility of understanding changes in real-time, the cacophony of hopes and dreams that may never be realized. Amid this confusion, we struggle first to find the "spirit of the age", and then to embody it. But is this an act of social solidarity, or just meaningless imitation of our neighbours?

In the same feature, Paul Zawadzki asks whether our obsession with the present blinds us to the past and the future; Gil Delannoi names the inhabitant of an age defined by speed the "tachysanthrope", the man in a hurry; and Alexandre Escudier traces beliefs in "the acceleration of history" back through the last three centuries.

**Museums policy:** Free admission to museums boosts attendance but it is the wrong way to draw new people into the museum—going public, says Françoise Benhamou. The people it aims to attract — those who have rarely visited before — avoid museums not because of the cost (they seldom know ticket prices) but because they aren't interested, or they don't know what's on offer. Rather, free entry represents a subsidy to those who would have visited anyway. Could museum budgets be better spent improving services and advertising exhibitions?

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