



Eurozine Review

The enzyme of freedom

Transit advocates a concerted EU approach to Russia; on '68, *Osteuropa* mends a split consciousness while *Mittelweg 36* regrets nothing; *Mute* critiques Green capitalism; *Esprit* observes democracy's transformations; *Wespennest* awaits something better; *Kulturos barai* defends Fluxus; *Host* hits the road; *Le Monde diplomatique* (Oslo) follows the comic strip of empire; *Dialogi* warns against experts; *Reset* seeks perspectives for Italy's Democrats.

Transit 35 (2008)



How should the West react to Russia's unrestrained pursuit of national interest? In a report made to the German Marshall Fund and republished in *Transit*, [Ivan Krastev](#) argues that "What threatens Europe today is not mutually destructive nuclear war, but destabilization of Russia and the European Union that can result in the marginalization of Europe in global politics."

"A policy of engagement defined as a focus on national interest, and a radical turn from value-based foreign policy to nineteenth century *Realpolitik*, is not a workable option for today's relations between Russia and the West. The advocates of a 'grand bargain' between Russia and the West fail to take into account the peculiar nature of the EU as a global policy player. [...] The grand bargain will result in the re-nationalization of the big EU member states' foreign policies and will destroy the hope of a common European foreign policy."

Online personality cult: In Russia, the personality cult of Vladimir Putin is being cultivated online, writes Henrike Schmidt. A web-log about the fictive life of Putin in the Kremlin shows that, "The character of the virtual president, along with his entourage, the Kremlin administration, both reflects and influences the current attitudes of Russian society towards politics." Moreover, in some cases it cannot be ruled out that the more popular of these sites are sponsored by oligarchs close to the Kremlin.

European politics of memory: Burkhard Olschowsky maps the gulfs in European memory and searches for a common narrative; [Aleksander Smolar](#) undertakes a critical survey of present-day Polish commemorative culture; [Timothy Snyder](#) recounts eastern Europe's forgotten Holocaust; Dirk Rupnow diagnoses a fundamental shift in memory of the Holocaust.

1968: [Jacques Rupnik](#) argues that while the political goals of May '68 and the Prague Spring were antithetical, central European dissent had a significant

impact on the French Left after '68. In an interview made a year before his death, [Rudi Dutschke](#) admits that: "In retrospect, the great event of '68 in Europe was not Paris, but Prague." [Aleksander Smolar](#) recalls that the Western '68ers were often hostile towards supporters of the Warsaw March revolt and indifferent towards the subsequent "anti-Zionist" purges. And [Mykola Riabchuk](#) describes how the politics of the Prague Spring filtered through to Ukraine until the crackdown on "bourgeois nationalism" five years later.

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Osteuropa 7/2008



"There is a direct connection between 1968 and 1989. It is the enzyme of maturity, of autonomy, of freedom." In the current issue of *Osteuropa* — focus 1968 East — Gerd Koenen writes that for a large segment of young West Germans, the GDR and eastern Europe had in 1968 become "a blind spot on the retina of its own worldview".

"This active blocking out of eastern Europe was the result of a social-psychological process [...] that linked the rebels of '68 far more closely with majority society than either like to admit." The Cold War order, Koenen argues, offered the citizens of both halves of Germany the chance to place themselves on the side of the victor: "One slipped into a new democratic or socialist skin." If the Berlin Wall represented the physical and symbolic division of Europe, then West Germans largely adjusted to this — "each generation in its own way".

Back in the USSR: [Aleksander Daniel](#) locates the birth of the dissident movement in an appeal broadcasted by western radio on 11 January 1968, protesting against the trial of Aleksander Ginzburg and three other system-critical writers. "This represented a strike against one of the standard elements of Soviet psychology, one which had been cultivated over many decades: the concept of 'hostile encirclement', the complex of the 'besieged fortress'. To appeal to world public opinion, to the 'enemies' — i.e. airing dirty laundry in public — was equivalent to treason, to betrayal of the homeland."

Nevertheless, according to [Lev Gudkov](#), a movement among the Russian intelligentsia comparable to the Czech movement for "Socialism with a human face" ended with the onset of the stagnation of the Brezhnev era. "This state of demoralization was one of the reasons for Soviet intellectuals' total inability to act politically at the end of the 1980s."

Also: Richard Wagner compares the "normalization" in Czechoslovakia after 1968 with the national communist volte face in Romania under Ceaucescu at the same time; and Doris Liebermann recalls how for East German poet Jürgen Fuchs, the Prague Spring was the formative moment for the dissident activity that would lead him to be imprisoned and later deported to the West.

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Mittelweg 36 4/2008



Compared to the morbid fascination with the errors of their youthful selves demonstrated by many '68ers in this year's run of anniversary publications, Lothar Menne's recollections in the current issue of *Mittelweg 36* are a breath of fresh air: action-packed, fast-moving, and entirely unrepentant. What else should one expect from a veteran publisher of bestsellers whose career went from "Guerilla rainforest to the media jungle", encountering on the way everyone who was anyone in '68?

The anecdotes are priceless: The communist who stayed at home looking after the child of his girlfriend's former husband while she broke bourgeois strictures by "renting out" her body (a scene Menne claims to have passed on to John Le Carré). Or going to Budapest with Rudi Dutschke to meet Georg Lukacs, who wanted only to talk about Goethe and Thomas Mann (Dutschke's "spirits were lifted" after meeting a young man who was hatching a plot to blow up the leaders of the Eastern Bloc). Later, stopping in on Herbert Marcuse en route to Guatemala to join the rebel group FAR, who sent back him to Europe to raise funds. Or flying to Bolivia with the *New Left Review* to cover the trial of Régis Debray and walking past Debray's prison cell with Perry Anderson whistling the Internationale...

"We certainly didn't have liberal reforms in mind when we sang Spanish Civil War songs, but perhaps we and Rock 'n' Roll and the Pill did nonetheless contribute to loosening up the countries of western Europe and America. In those days one would probably have called this the 'cunning of reason'. At any rate, I have a friendly relationship with that part of my life."

Also: [Jan Philipp Reemtsma](#) on the reception of violent crime in the media. Does the public have an inalienable right to be informed or are there limits to press freedom in reporting on victims of violence?

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Mute 9 (2008)



"Manufacturing scarcity" is the new watchword in "Green capitalism". In *Mute*, [James Heartfield](#) explains how for the energy sector, it has become a license to print money.

In California in the 1990s artificial caps put on energy production allowed generating companies to hike up charges to utility companies — companies owned by Enron. "Whatever else it was doing, there was no denying that Enron was cutting back its own CO2 emissions and getting rich doing it. One company memo stated that the Kyoto treaty 'would do more to promote Enron's business than will almost any other regulatory initiative'."

Instead of the old-fashioned incentive of reducing energy bills by insulating one's home, the model of restricted supply together with domestic energy generation is now promoted worldwide. This "reverses the division of labour that saw specialized energy producers distribute electricity, turning it into an eighteenth century cottage industry. The simple economic lesson that mass

production avoids reproduction of effort has been lost."

"The battle of all mothers": In an article with the wittiest title we've seen for a long time, Madame Tlank writes that the UK's health and social services have become tools of surveillance, with working-class women the most vulnerable to state intervention:

"Under recent UK policies [...] frontline services have been cut while a general 'patient'/'client' database is built up. The cuts [...] effectively force patients to assent to data-sharing, lest (already scarce) treatment be withheld. The claimant's claim is turned against her ever more directly, making her responsible for conditions imposed by economic factors and by the institutions themselves, which attempt to 'cure' the problem by 'educating' her to change her behaviour so she no longer fits the 'claimant' profile."

Jacques Rancière: Declaring the economic off-limits to politics, the art world's favourite philosopher does have something to hide, argues Paul Helliwell:

"As material production vanishes from the West and the word 'worker' loses currency, we are trapped in an imaginary relation to our (immaterial) labour [...]. It is no surprise that sections of the art world experience Rancière's formulations as a liberation — from the spectres of autonomy, economic determination, from the frustration of the cadaver with its own autopsy."

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Esprit 8–9/2008



In *Esprit*, Robert Castel charts the history of the concept of "social property", which understands social rights as "goods" that one can own. The concept emerged at the end of the nineteenth century in response to mass poverty and the disappearance of the minimal security provided by feudal networks of obligations and community ties. A world based on status and community transformed into one based entirely on private property. Politics provided little help: the French Revolution had been concerned with equality in law, not equality in fact, and almost all political thinkers were united in their support for property.

Between 1890 and 1920, "social property" developed from workers' insurance to a comprehensive system of state support for the ill and the elderly. Part property, part right, this hybrid resolved some of the greatest social problems of the nineteenth century and survived through two wars and beyond. With privatization and the decline of the welfare state, however, social property has been under attack. It remains to be seen whether social property will regain its role or come to be seen as a mere pause in the development of private property.

"No democrats, please": Pierre Rosanvallon argues that since 1980, the unity of the people built up throughout the nineteenth century has been shattered. Today, government claims legitimacy not as the representative of the general will, nor as the provider of services, but as a passive mediator between groups of citizens. Universal only in so far as it devotes impartial attention to the details of each situation, government turns into a balance of power between courts, interest groups, media, and other forces. This change, almost

unrecognized, has transformed democracy.

Also: For the Chinese Communist Party, the Olympic Games came as an opportunity to awaken the patriotic streak among the populace, writes Jean-Philippe Béja. Yet it could not help showing its authoritarian face in dealing with political opposition and as a result has tainted China's image as a prosperous, responsible nation.

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Wespennest 152 (2008)



"Social critical undertones have run through this magazine since it was founded", note the *Wespennest* editors in their introduction to the latest issue, announcing "The end of capitalism". "The focus of this issue is to contest the still worshipped axiom that with the 'victory of capitalism', history has reached its highest possible stage of development."

"In the second half of the nineteenth century, the end of capitalism and something better than it seemed near; yet in the course of the twentieth, it slipped ever further out of view", write Christine Resch and Heinz Steinert. Nevertheless, the contemporary form of capitalism — neoliberalism — will destroy itself because it means a return to elements of real socialism (short-term economic strategy that allows no interference), early capitalism (because it's only interested in work and not in workers), and feudalism (the people are blinded by populist politics).

For Peter Rosei, changes in the present-day economic system can come from only two areas. First: "Almost all industrial nations are confronted with the serious over-ageing of their societies and hence the question of how it will be possible to guarantee the financing of the existing welfare system." Second: "The ecological situation of the planet necessitates drastic courses of action that have arisen in response to an awareness of the consequences that an unaltered and uncontrolled continuation of the existing systems of production and distribution could have."

And Peter Moeschl discusses capital as metaphor: "What is interesting about the increasing metaphorical use of the concept of 'capital' is that it is not a concrete, objective concept that originated from the physical environment, like 'chalk and cheese' or 'milk and honey'. It is not the sensual memory that creates the metaphorical image; on the contrary, the abstract concept of 'capital', its scientific career behind it, has been transferred to everyday praxis."

Also: In the Eurozine series [Literary Perspectives](#), [Matt McGuire](#) demonstrates how contemporary Northern Irish poets and prose writers defy the assumption that "the troubles" are all there is to the country's literature. And a visit to Walter Benjamin's memorial in Portbou leads [Les Back](#) to [reflect](#) on the fate of the African migrants found dead on the coasts of Spain today.

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Kulturos barai 07–08/2008



On 11 June, the Lithuanian government decided to go ahead with plans for a branch of the Guggenheim in Vilnius, a joint project with the Jonas Mekas Centre for Visual Arts. In an article published before the decision was taken, art critic [Skaidra Trilupaityte](#) wrote that the plan was indicative of the conviction that cultural "de-provincialization" can only be achieved by taking part in global projects.

Now she points out the paradox in exhibiting Fluxus art in global museums. The Fluxus movement has a strong following in Lithuania and many works are owned by the Jonas Mekas Centre. While some argue that the Guggenheim will be the only way to save the national collection of Lithuanian Fluxus artist Jurgis Maciunas, Trilupaityte remains sceptical. The idea of a "marriage" between Fluxus and the global museum, she writes, has been imposed from above and lacks insight into the live character of Fluxus and its cultural programme.

Romualdas Lankauskas is also unhappy: "Vilnius will be decorated with an Arabic dumpling", he exclaims, referring to Zaha Hadid's Guggenheim design. Hastily inflicted upon Vilnius by the former mayor and backed by the prime minister, no one has bothered to ask the residents of Vilnius what they think of it, nor does it seem that anybody is worried about the declining number of visitors to the Bilbao Guggenheim.

The national as advertising repertoire: In Bulgaria, the national has ceased to be a specific political project, writes Mila Mineva: on the contrary, it is the lowest common denominator. "The 'national' in political discourse means to talk non-politically, using 'common sense'. Advertising is the visible symptom of the depolitization of the national."

Also to look out for: In the Eurozine series [Literary Perspectives](#), [Gábor Csordás](#) finds in recent Hungarian novels a common concern with narrative, as if holding out to the reader the hope of "mastering history". And [Béla Egyed](#) writes that a Nietzschean politics is less a critique of political events so much as a diagnosis of the forces and tendencies driving them.

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Host 06/2008



In a section on travelogues, Veronika Faktorová writes that the form is not only an accessible source of information, but also often assumes surprising artistic forms. Travelogues consist of many micro-stories that contribute to the work's main subject. And they oscillate between providing reliable facts with the free play of imagination, in which strange encounters become a source of inspiration.

Lithuanian author Jurga Ivanauskaite's nearly twenty books include a trilogy describing her journeys through the Himalayas. [Almantas Samalavicius](#) writes that Ivanauskaite (1961–2007) was one of a few female Lithuanian writers to have gained broad popularity in a society that is still masculine and where feminist ideas are still in development.

Also to look out for: [Pavel Janousek](#) on Czech popular fiction at the turn of the 1990s; and an interview with author Honza Volf.

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Le Monde diplomatique (Oslo) 8/2008



Morten Harper writes on a new comic-strip version of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, entitled *A People's History of the American Empire*, in which authors Mike Konopacki and Paul Buhle feature Zinn as the all-knowing narrator. Told from the people's point of view, the comic's main characters are figures such as the union leader Eugene Debs and the peace activist Dan Berrigan. "The comic's sharpened edge against the American elite's empire project is both informative and challenging", writes Harper.

Prague Spring: Years ending in eight are inauspicious for Czechs, writes Peter Wiedswang. The defenestrations of Prague in 1618, the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia in the name of peace in 1938, the communist takeover in 1948, the Soviet invasion in 1968 and now, in 2008... the choice to host the American rocket shield.

Also: Shlomo Sand on "the myth of the Jewish people" and Philippe Pataud Célérier on how market value is dictating artistic value.

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Dialogi 7–8/2008



In his editorial introduction to the current issue of Slovenian journal *Dialogi*, Boris Vezjak writes bitterly: "It began with the promise of a 'politics of good, honest management'. They talked of a relaxed Slovenia, they promised a golden age, they talked of Slovenes as the best people on earth, even if not the most numerous. They changed the tasteless populism of 'whoever is not with us is against us' to 'whoever is not against us is with us', in a seemingly self-critical way."

Even politicians accept that Slovenian politics has deteriorated, yet suggestions to hand political functions over to "experts" is no solution. This would remove citizens from the democratic process and make representative democracy pointless, writes Vezjak.

Communication theory: Ciril Oberstar writes that marketing and advertising have usurped the media space. Yet critical thought is awakening also in this area in Slovenia, as illustrated in an interview with communication theorist Oliver Vodeb, who could be described as an advocate for socially responsible communication.

Also: Primoz Jesenko on educational tendencies in contemporary dramatic arts. "In the present irrational social context, these activities are being saved only by enthusiasm."

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Reset 108 (2008)



Reset hosts a debate on the future of the Italian Democratic Party (PD) following its recent election defeat, when it failed to attract either coalition partners on the centre–right or voters on the far–left. After the election, many questions remain unresolved: Which leadership? What approach to a historically divided political territory? How to be secular without being secularist? How to gain new credibility?

Contributors Giuliano Amato, Filippo Andreatta, Carlo Carboni, Roberto D'Alimonte, Gad Lerner, Roberta Pinotti and Nadia Urbinati come to the following conclusions: The construction of the PD must be based upon clear values that serve as points of identification for the electorate and that are the basis for grass–root politics. These values must be represented by a strong leadership that is able to reunite the party, to connect it to the regions in the North especially, and to reach out to the electorate from the centre.

Religion and psychoanalysis: [Giancarlo Bosetti](#), Muriel Drazien, Charles Melman and Jacqueline Risset analyze the relationship between religion and psychoanalysis. Will religion prevail over psychoanalysis as Jacques Lacan, contradicting Freud's thesis in "Civilization and its discontents", prophesied? The explanatory role of religion remains essential in our societies and neither can science substitute religion, they argue. In a more atheist vein, René Girard contend that religion is based upon two key concepts — that of the victim and the scapegoat, while Massimo Rosati claims that it is the sacred that gives power and prestige to conservatives.

Also: The opposition between "multiculturalism" and "Enlightenment fundamentalism" is misconceived, [argues Jürgen Habermas](#) in a lecture given at the Dialogues on Civilizations conference held in Istanbul in June this year. "The universalist claim of the political Enlightenment does not contradict the particularist sensibilities of a correctly understood multiculturalism."

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