



## Eurozine Review

### Shaken not toppled

Mittelweg 36 cheers the libero of the '68 movement; *Osteuropa* sees Gagarin enter Putin's forcefield; *Polar* squints into the future of democracy; *Arena* counters general opinion on the Rwanda genocide; *Edinburgh Review* hears why Iraqi journalism is struggling; *dérive* exposes institutional racism in urbanism; *Revista Crítica* seeks pockets of solidarity in capitalism; and *Res Publica Nowa* asks "Are we East or West?"

## Mittelweg 36 5/2009



In *Mittelweg 36*, [Wolfgang Kraushaar](#) portrays German writer and publisher Hans Magnus Enzensberger as a "picture puzzle" of the German '68 movement. Enzensberger, though belonging to a slightly older generation, was involved in a variety of protests — not only via his journal *Kursbuch*, the '68ers *vade mecum*. Yet in retrospect, Enzensberger describes his role as "an active observer"; without denying the movement's

importance, he criticizes it heavily — for example in the essay "The end of consequence":

"The flimsier one's identity, the more urgent the demand for clarity. The more servile the dependence on fashion, the more urgent the call for fundamental convictions. [...] The weaker the brew, the firmer the principles; the more helpless the fidgeting, the more imploring the love of consistency."

Words that, in the eyes of unrepentant '68ers, turn the former mentor into a traitor and compromiser. Yet Kraushaar's interpretation follows a different track:

"The praise of inconsistency, the non-linearity and the smooth transition is a kind of re-education programme for former '68ers who have walled themselves into their thinking, their mentality, their attitude to life. At the same time, it is an expression of an erstwhile intellectual pioneer who has undergone a marked transformation."

Kraushaar comes to see Enzensberger as a specific yet multiple character: to employ a footballing metaphor, the "libero" of the '68 movement, but less in the sense of a sweeper than of a "free man":

"His role was not that of a spokesman, rather that of a mentor, a highly influential prompter, later a critic that gave his former

comrades a ticking off, but also a sometime activist. [...] His roving position allowed him not only to commute to-and-fro between various cities and parts of the earth, but also to develop conceptual figures and critical models that many viewed as innovative."

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## Osteuropa 10/2009



Today's networked world is prompting historians to rethink the Cold War period as the "shared history of an interwoven modernity", write [Klaus Gestwa](#) and Stefan Rohdewald.

Science and technology became arenas of war in which the power blocs tested their strength, with each side investing huge amounts of time and money in observing the progress of the other. In the USSR, a department of the Academy of Sciences employed 2000 full-time and 20 000 freelance linguists to summarize and translate articles from 11 000 foreign periodicals. "The superpowers not only learned from their allies, but also from their enemies on the other side of the Iron Curtain."

The process was not only one of polarization: from the 1950s onwards, international scientific communities began to re-form, with scientists functioning as communicators in the Cold War. Cybernetics and biomechanics became international languages and computer networks penetrated the trenches between East and West. "Scientists met at disarmament conferences in order to conduct objective conversations free of ideological clichés. They did not automatically lead to consensus, but always to better understanding. The ice of ideological rigidity first began to thaw in the academic milieu."

**Columbus of the cosmos:** "Nowhere else are the contradictory constellations between the societies of the Cold War clearer than in the cult surrounding cosmonauts and astronauts," writes Gestwa in an [article on Yuri Gagarin](#). Despite being shaken in the 1980s and 1990s — typical was Victor Pelevin's satirical novel *Omon Ra*, in which the hero's space flight is portrayed as a cosmic Potemkin village — Gagarin's monument was not toppled. "After a short period spent in ideological weightlessness, he succeeded in re-entering the post-communist world."

Not only did Gagarin become a symbol for human rights groups (his death in 1968 was planned, they say, to prevent him voicing dissident sympathies), Vladimir Putin also used his reputation for the patriotic re-interpretation of Soviet history. Having previously rejected the advances of the Kremlin, Gagarin's family took the stage on the fortieth anniversary celebrations of Gagarin's voyage in 2001, and his daughter Elena was appointed director of the Kremlin Museum.

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**Polar 7 (2009)**

In *Polar's* new issue on "The future of democracy", editor [Peter Siller](#) lists negative factors effecting modern democracies: globalization's fraying of statehood and democratic responsibility; the increase in political influence of private economic interests; diminishing media diversity and quality... The list goes on. On the other hand, standards of education are higher; the significance of digital media has grown; the decision-making power of the EU is greater...

"Balancing the effects of individual factors, major doubts arise as to whether the nostalgic lament for democracy's decline is to be seconded", writes Siller. "It seems rather to be the case of a transformation with strong ambiguities; with endangerments to democracy, but also things that boost it [...] When was this 'back then', when democracy was still in order?"

In "untying the knot", a major aspect to consider is the oft-noted tendency to measure political decisions in terms of "output" and not "input". Political legitimacy is obtained from the efficiency of policies, rather than their origin in democratic participation. "How is a politics of good governance supposed to know whether the results of its policies are good if it sets its goals in advance, rather than submitting them to debate?"

"Without the impetus of political ideas, a lively democracy cannot exist. Here the political parties gain new relevance in their function as transformative mediators between society and institutions — and thereby also between particularity and universality."

**Open source democracy:** How does the Wiki model of democratic participation effect established divisions between politicians, media elites and scientific experts? Wiki users/producers, says media theorist Axel Bruns, are more or less explicitly urged to intervene where they have most knowledge. "Why shouldn't this principle also apply to politics? It is not a demand for more referenda [...] but rather to involve citizens in decision-making processes where they have particular expertise. This means not just waiting for an invitation to participate, but to become active in advance."

**Also:** "Solving the riddle of all constitutions": A [round table debate](#) with "new Frankfurt School" members [Nicole Deitelhoff](#), [Rainer Forst](#), [Stefan Gosepath](#) and [Christoph Menke](#).

The full [table of contents](#) of *Polar 7* (2009)

**Arena 5/2009**



In a themed section on Rwanda after the genocide, journalist Felix Holmgren rails against Philip Gourevitch's international bestseller *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*.

Gourevitch's book has probably influenced world opinion on the 1994 genocide more than any other and is something of a modern classic. This is highly unfortunate, writes Holmgren, since *We wish to inform you...* is not really an account of the genocide but rather "a political defence of individuals and governments that are largely responsible for the disastrous conflicts in Central Africa raging in the wake of the genocide".

Holmgren points to numerous flaws in Gourevitch's argumentation, but his main objection concerns the description of the genocide as having been carefully planned for a long time. It was not, says Holmgren. On the contrary, it took place in a context characterized by widespread fear and political confusion. This does not mean that the burden of guilt of those involved is any less, but if we do not understand the circumstances under which the genocide took place, we will not be able to understand how the perpetrators made use of and manipulated the situation.

Not only has Gourevitch influenced public opinion with his defence of Paul Kagame's regime in Rwanda, but as an unofficial adviser to the Clinton administration he also played an important role in guiding US policy in Central Africa. It is high time, writes Holmgren, to listen to other voices in the debate and not denounce all critics of the Kigali regime as potential deniers of the genocide.

**Also:** Anna Lyrenäs proclaims the death of hardcore pornography in Sweden; Anna Adenji asks why feminists choose to get married; and Martin Gelin checks up on Barack Obama's promises one year on.

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### Edinburgh Review 127 (2009)



"There is a secret history to the country that its people do not know and do not want to know as long as the price of knowing is so high, perhaps as high as their lives." Thus opens Zuhair Al-Jezairy's book *The Devil You Don't Know*, excerpted in *Edinburgh Review*. Al-Jezairy gives a chilling account of working conditions for journalists in Saddam Hussein's Iraq and of the chaotic aftermath.

Anyone who strayed even remotely outside the officially approved storyline was a target for suspicion, risking arrest and torture. Journalists did not investigate stories they would not be able to publish or talk about. "They knew by bitter experience that the censor was never punished for excessive zeal. [A journalist] would rather move the censor inside himself and double it after seeing colleagues taken away from their workplaces, never to be seen again, or coming back broken."

Later, at his news agency Voice of Iraq, teaching young journalists about credibility and neutrality held its own challenges for Al-Jezairy:

"Holding on to [neutrality] in a country polarized to death is like grasping a hot coal. My correspondents were not from the secular generation spared the pull of sectarian allegiance. They had their own doctrinal, regional and religious affiliations. One of them, for example, from a Shia heartland, would not mention the leading Shia ayatollah Ali Sistani in a news item without adding religious titles, such as 'His Grace', and 'May God protect his shadow'."

**Returning from exile:** In interview with Jennie Renton, [Hussain Al-Mozany](#) speaks with love about the Iraq he left behind as a 24-year-old. "Diversity makes up the real Iraqi culture", he says, pointing out that Iraq has a literary heritage that stretches back 7000 years in addition to being the centre of Islamic culture for 1400 years. It was the country "that laid the basic principles of the western and eastern worlds" as Al-Mozany put it in a [speech](#) in 2006.

**Also:** [Hannah Adcock](#) on western women travelling to the Middle East in the nineteenth century, comparing the journeys described in *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan* by Isabella L. Bird and *By Desert Ways to Baghdad* by Louisa Jebb.

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### dérive 37 (2009)



"From a historical perspective, not sedentariness but mobility is the norm", writes Erol Yildiz, professor for intercultural education at Klagenfurt University, in a new issue of *dérive* on "Urbanity through migration". Yet European societies are still oriented towards ethnic homogeneity, a tendency constantly reproduced even in scientific research: "Racism has become everyday normality", writes the sociologist:

"The image of the 'inadaptable' immigrant who retreats into his niche, reproduces his 'culture of origin', lives in a medial and real parallel world and leans towards fundamentalism and violence, permeates almost the entire discourse on migration."

This hegemonic perception, states Yildiz, fails to notice immigrants' everyday reality. This reveals "that they have various 'homes', that they are able to generate multiple cultural and social networks and relationships, that they handle extraneous ethnic attributions and classifications in creative and subversive ways. They thus create a transcultural everyday practice that transcends ethnic and national borders, and at the same time is locally and globally shaped. [...] It is a form of locality that is organised on the basis of a global society."

It is not the dreaded "parallel societies" that need to shift their perspective, writes Yildiz, but the majority that needs to adopt a point of view that values social diversity and acknowledges its resources.

**"Institutional racism":** Reviewing recent studies and reports on "ghettoization" in German and Austrian cities, [Klaus Ronneberger](#) and Vassilis Tsianos arrive at a similar conclusion: "Mainstream urbanism is characterized by blindness to power and the state. [...] Ethnic conflicts and the limits of minorities' potential for integration are analysed, but hardly ever national practices of exclusion and minority-formation."

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### Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais 84 (2009)



In an issue devoted to economics, *Revista Crítica* is concerned with finding alternative economic systems that go beyond mere profit. These types of economy already exist alongside and within capitalism.

Rui Namorado writes that although the aim of the "solidarity economy" is to give swift responses to immediate problems, it also looks to the future. Its territorial embeddedness makes it one of the most reliable partners in processes of local development, while also having worldwide relevance. Pedro Hespanha ponders how the solidarity economy can serve as a basis for far-reaching change and contribute to a fairer system that is better equipped to match resources to needs, and to maximise human and social wellbeing.

In continuation, Jordi Estivill reflects on economic, domestic, market and public spaces. He suggests that by revisiting the history of the solidarity economy in the peripheral and Mediterranean countries of Europe, a picture emerges of an itinerary that corresponds to that of Latin America, which can serve as a basis for further development of a sustainable economy.

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### Res Publica Nowa special issue



*Res Publica Nowa* (Poland) publishes a special English language issue in collaboration with *Magyar Lettre Internationale* (Hungary), *Host* (Czech Republic), *Kritika & Kontext* (Slovakia) and Eurozine, with the support of the International Visegrad Fund. Do the "Visegrad Four" share a common identity, contributors ask, and if so: "Are we East or West?"

[Samuel Abrahám](#) asks if the EU has the means to defend itself from the illiberal movements gaining ground in the Visegrad countries: "The Kaczynski brothers in Poland, Robert Fico in Slovakia, Viktor Orbán in Hungary or Jiri Paroubek and Vaclav Klaus in the Czech Republic are politicians that are very different personally and politically, but might under certain circumstances threaten the stability of the EU. Not because they wish directly to undermine the EU, but because their policies might unleash processes that the EU would not be able to halt."

"The EU is not a holy cow!" writes Marek Seckar, editor of *Host*, in response. "The question is not how we can protect the EU from demagogic leaders, but how the EU can protect us from them." Wojciech Przybylski, editor of *Res Publica Nowa*, adds that: "Nation-states have enough instruments of their own to ward off the threat of populism." Evá Karádi, editor of *Magyar Lettre* is more cautious: corruption inherited from the communist period continues to play a decisive role in the relationship between the state and its citizens, she writes.

**Anti-communism:** In a second article, Marek Seckar argues that anti-communism in the Czech Republic distracts from more pressing problems, as a recent incident in Brno showed. When the local authorities ruled that a monument to a Red Army soldier be restored, a local councillor led a spectacular protest: "The pragmatism of this conduct was impossible to miss", writes Seckar. "A little-known local politician carries out a heroic act, which nevertheless involves no real risk to him, and at once draws a degree of media attention he would never be able to gain after years of keen political work."

**Also:** Wojciech Przybylski calls for renewed debate among the Polish "born-free" generation; Przemyslaw Czaplinski examines the figure of the German in recent Polish literature; and Zsolt Csalog and Gábor Nemeth fictionalize national prejudices and the legacy of socialism.

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