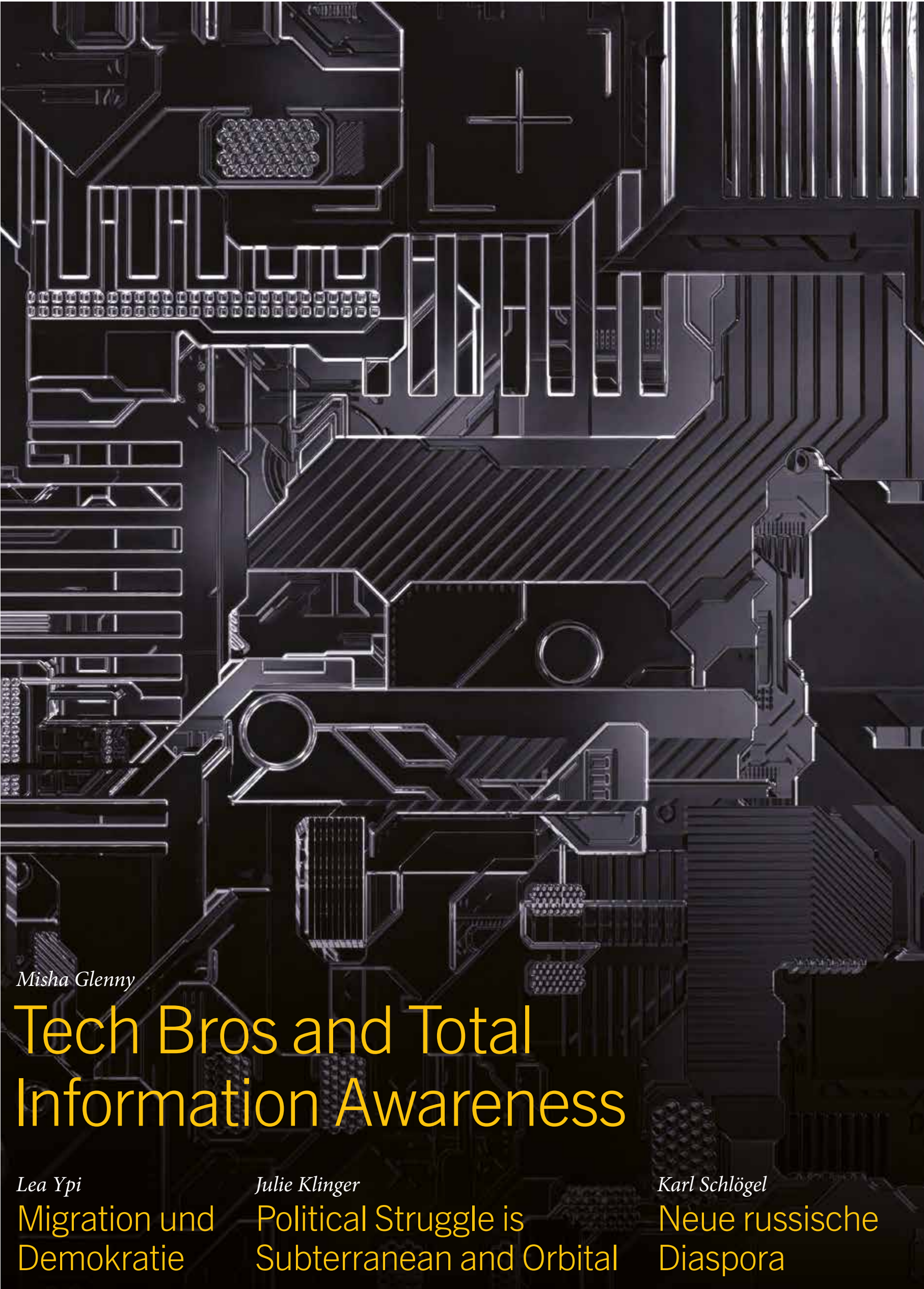




Misha Glenny

Tech Bros and Total Information Awareness

Lea Ypi

Migration und Demokratie

Julie Klinger

Political Struggle is Subterranean and Orbital

Karl Schlögel

Neue russische Diaspora

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NO. 135 • SPRING / SUMMER 2025

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Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen
Institute for Human Sciences

Imprint: Responsible for the content: Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (IWM), Spittelauer Lände 3, 1090 Vienna, Austria, Phone: +43/1/313 58-0, Fax +43/1/313 58-60, iwm@iwm.at, www.iwm.at; Editor: Evangelos Karagiannis; Editorial Assistance: Nicolas Bouchet, Katharina Hasewend; Design: steinkellner/zotter, www.steinkellner.com. IWMpost is published two times a year. Current circulation: 3.000, printed by Print Alliance HAV Produktions GmbH, 2540 Bad Vöslau, www.printalliance.at. Copyright IWM 2025. An online archive of IWMpost is available on the Institute’s website at www.iwm.at.

Editorial

Vielleicht ist es den gewaltigen Umwälzungen unserer Zeit geschuldet, dass ein Großteil der Beiträge der vorliegenden Ausgabe der IWMpost politische Fragen zum Gegenstand haben. Eine Reihe von Beiträgen geht auf die aktuelle Krise der Demokratie ein. Im Leitartikel diskutiert IWM-Rektor **Glenny** den Machtzuwachs der Techindustrie in den USA, den diese sich durch einen außergewöhnlichen Zugang zu Geheiminformationen sichert. **Özel** bietet eine nüchterne Analyse des Trumpismus in den USA, **Khorsand** thematisiert die Reaktion von Richtern auf Bemühungen, ihre Unabhängigkeit einzuschränken, und **Ypi** bringt in ihrer „Rede an Europa“ die restriktive Migrationspolitik westlicher Staaten mit der Krise ihrer Demokratie in Verbindung. **Slačálek** und **Sharon** fokussieren auf Dimensionen des neuen Nationalismus, die ihn von seinen früheren Formen radikal unterscheiden, während **Antonova** über das zunehmende Verschwinden ethischer Bezüge in der politischen Sprache reflektiert. Schließlich diskutiert **Korda** die Relevanz von Hegels Einsichten für die gegenwärtigen internationalen Beziehungen.

Das Bild Europas in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart ist Gegenstand der Beiträge von **Kuchno** und **Merli**. Drei weitere Texte fokussieren auf Russland: **Meister** richtet das Augenmerk auf die Schwäche Russlands, **Schlögel** diskutiert die neue russische Diaspora und **Mostovshikov** die Propagandafunktion russischer Museen in Kriegszeiten. Der Erinnerungs- und Museumspolitik in Polen ist der Beitrag von **Kostro** gewidmet.

Neue Herausforderungen der Gegenwart haben drei weitere Essays zum Gegenstand. **Klinger** verweist auf die beträchtliche Komplexität politischer Kämpfe, die subterrane und orbitale Dimensionen einschließen. **Akkermans** und **Bon** fordern die demokratische Kontrolle der Technologie angesichts der explosiven Entwicklung der KI und **Striano** diskutiert die Frage der digitalen Gewalt.

Während die meisten Beiträge auf problematische Entwicklungen verweisen, macht **Georgiev** auf Zeichen eines Aufschwungs und einer Umkehrung des Bevölkerungsrückgangs in Mittel- und Osteuropa aufmerksam.

Dem Publizisten, Erinnerungsarbeiter, Demokraten und IWM-Freund Martin Pollack, der im Januar verstarb, gedenken die Beiträge von **Hagedorn**, **Contius** und **Czyżewski**.

Schließlich stellt **Nellen**, Mitbegründer und ehemaliger Permanent Fellow des IWM, das Archiv des IWM vor.

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

Perhaps it is due to the tremendous political changes of our time that a majority of the essays in this edition address political issues. Several contributions focus on the current crisis of democracy. In the lead article, IWM Rector **Glenny** discusses the growing power of the tech industry in the US, which is attempting to consolidate its position through extraordinary access to classified information. **Özel** offers a sober analysis of Trumpism in the USA, **Khorsand** addresses the response of judiciaries to efforts to restrict their independence, and **Ypi**, in her “Speech to Europe,” links the restrictive migration policies of Western states to the crisis their democracies are facing. **Slačálek** and **Sharon** focus on dimensions of the new nationalism that radically distinguish it from its earlier forms, while **Antonova** reflects on the increasing suspension of ethical references in political language. Finally, **Korda** discusses the relevance of Hegel’s insights for contemporary international relations.

The image of Europe in the past and present is the subject of the essays by **Kuchno** and **Merli**. Three articles focus on Russia: **Meister** draws attention to Russia’s weakness, **Schlögel** tackles the new Russian diaspora, and **Mostovshikov** addresses the propaganda function of Russian museums in times of war. Memory and museum policy in Poland is the subject of **Kostro’s** contribution.

Contemporary challenges are at the center of three essays. **Klinger** points to the considerable complexity of political struggles, which include subterranean and orbital dimensions. **Akkermans** and **Bon** call for democratic control of technology in view of the explosive development of AI, and **Striano** discusses the issue of digital violence.

While most contributions point to worrying developments, **Georgiev** draws attention to signs of an upturn and a reversal of population decline in Central and Eastern Europe.

Hagedorn, **Contius**, and **Czyżewski** pay tribute to the writer, memory worker, democracy advocate, and friend of the IWM, Martin Pollack, who passed away in January. Finally, **Nellen**, co-founder and former permanent fellow of the IWM, introduces the IWM archives.

I hope you enjoy the read! ◀

Evangelos Karagiannis

Tech Bros and Total Information Awareness

BY MISHA GLENNY

The presence of the tech industry's top executives at Trump's second inauguration signifies more than a tribute to the office of the US president.



Mark Zuckerberg, Lauren Sánchez, Jeff Bezos, Sundar Pichai, and Elon Musk at the 60th Presidential Inauguration in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Monday, January 20, 2025.

The presence of some of the most influential and richest figures from the tech world was arguably the most talked about aspect of Donald Trump's second inauguration as president of the United States. The most glaring absence was Bill Gates or indeed any senior representative of Microsoft.

These men, known collectively as the Tech Bros or more recently the Broligarchy, took their place in the front row, an honor usually conferred on the president's family, former presidents, and foreign dignitaries. Not this time though. Given Donald Trump's affection for transactional relationships and loyalty, this prominence immediately begged the double-headed question: what are they giving and what are they getting in return?

Broadly, the Tech Bros who now support Trump can be divided into opportunists and ideologues. The former are primarily concerned to advance their business interests and, by extension, their personal fortunes. The ideologues also want to maximize their earnings but, in addition, they aim to play the decisive role in the revolutionary change which Trump 2.0 seems determined to pursue.

Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg are the best-known representatives of the first group. Their craven bowing and scraping before the altar of the MAGA movement's agenda since Trump's election victory has been transparent. In Bezos's case, his offering came in the shape of a decision to turn the *Washing-*

ton Post's op-ed page into a booster forum for capitalism and "personal liberties". Zuckerberg's desperate measures to please the president are more serious. Since he effectively scrapped Facebook's system of moderation that aimed to prevent the spread of disinformation, unverified conspiratorial hogwash has drowned out the voices of meticulous research and journalism on the platform.

But for those of us clinging to the idea that rational democratic politics is still possible, it is to the ideologues that we must turn our attention, above all to Elon Musk and Peter Thiel. They aim to influence Trump's political agenda in pursuit of an ideology known in some circles as the Dark Enlightenment and in others as the Network State. Its ideas are not only the driving force behind the rapid dismantling of the American state that Musk and others have engaged in since January 20, they also include seizing the United States' national security infrastructure in pursuit of a global version of policy first deployed after 9/11 to neutralize terrorist threats: Total Information Awareness. The key financiers and executives of this expansion belong to a community known as the Thielverse—the disciples and executors of Thiel's almost Calvinist grand vision of an elect of technocratic *Übermenschen*.

Thiel freely confesses to the influence of the Nazi philosopher, Carl Schmitt, on his political thinking, especially antipathy toward liberal democracy and dismissal of state bu-

reaucracy as a break on technological and economic progress.

To Musk and Thiel, one must add David Sacks, who like them grew up in part in apartheid South Africa—in Russian intelligence circles these three Tech Bros are reportedly referred to as the "South African Babes". Sacks's primary agenda has been to persuade Trump of the need to embrace cryptocurrency, seeking to downgrade the dollar as the global reserve currency in alignment with Thiel's aim of steadily stripping the state of its political power in favor of global (tech) corporations.

To what extent Trump understands the aims and ideologies of the Thielverse is unclear. Musk and Thiel have invested considerable time and money in cultivating the president. As the only major Silicon Valley figure to publicly back Trump in 2016, Thiel seems to enjoy the president's loyalty. Musk, by contrast, has in the past expressed support for the Democrats. His switch to Trump's campaign last year was accompanied by huge sums of money.

Loyalty and cash go a long way in Trump's world. Under their influence, the revolution has devoured the first of its children: Steve Bannon, briefly White House chief of staff during Trump's first term, and the most senior ideologue of the MAGA movement, and now sidelined by the emperor's new favorites. The second Trump administration is designed more to pander to billionaires than to disaffected losers of globalization.

But although Musk and Thiel's influence on Trump has been demonstrated in the policies he has introduced at breakneck speed, their primary cypher is JD Vance. The vice-president has been an acolyte of Thiel since they first met in 2011. Vance has described this encounter at Yale as "the most important moment of my life". He has been repaying Thiel ever since for his mentorship and his employment in one of Thiel's venture-capital companies. Thiel masterminded the campaign to persuade Trump to pick Vance as his running mate. We are now a heartbeat away from a Vance presidency and, potentially, the supremacy of the Thielverse.

In *Owned*, his recently published book on the rise of the Tech Bros, the American journalist, Eoin Higgins, argues that Thiel is the only person to whom Musk defers, intellectually and politically. This is despite some bitter fallings-out early in their relationship as key members of the "PayPal Mafia". In line with Thiel's agenda, as the head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), Musk certainly took to ripping up federal institutions with gusto.

The concept of DOGE was initially based on another acronym, RAGE, for "retire all government employees". This was thought up by Curtis Yarvin, a disaffected coder in Silicon Valley who has become the revered philosopher of the Dark Enlightenment and was recently selected by the *San Francisco Standard* as one of the city's most influential people.¹ Called MAGA's house phi-

losopher, his long interview with the *New York Times*² earlier this year reveals the paucity of thinking behind the movement.

In April, Musk announced he was pulling back from his role in government in accordance with a pre-arranged 130-day limit. He also said he needed to concentrate on the rapidly declining fortunes of Tesla, his electric-vehicle enterprise. But Musk will remain deeply involved in politics in his pursuit of expanding the role of his other major venture, SpaceX, which incorporates the Starlink satellite communications network. This ambition received a big boost recently when the Federal Communications Commission granted Starlink the right to provide T-Mobile with connectivity for its consumer cell network in the teeth of fierce opposition from the United States' largest telecoms providers, AT&T and Verizon. The two giants fear that Musk's intention is to provide complete coverage across every inch of the globe with his satellite network, thus shutting out traditional providers.

Concern about Musk's potential monopoly over network communications is born out by the dramatic expansion of Starlink, which currently has almost 7,000 satellites in orbit. Its nearest rival, the European conglomerate Eutelsat, boasts a mere 634 and has dropped plans to provide coverage to individual phone users. Over half of Starlink's almost five million subscribers are outside the United States. According to the

to be continued on page 23

A New Republic

BY SOLI ÖZEL

“But we must not lose sight of the much larger consequence of Trump’s victory: it decisively shifts the idea of who is a normal American... Trump has moved American politics away from parties and toward movements, away from process and toward performance.” (Fintan O’Toole)

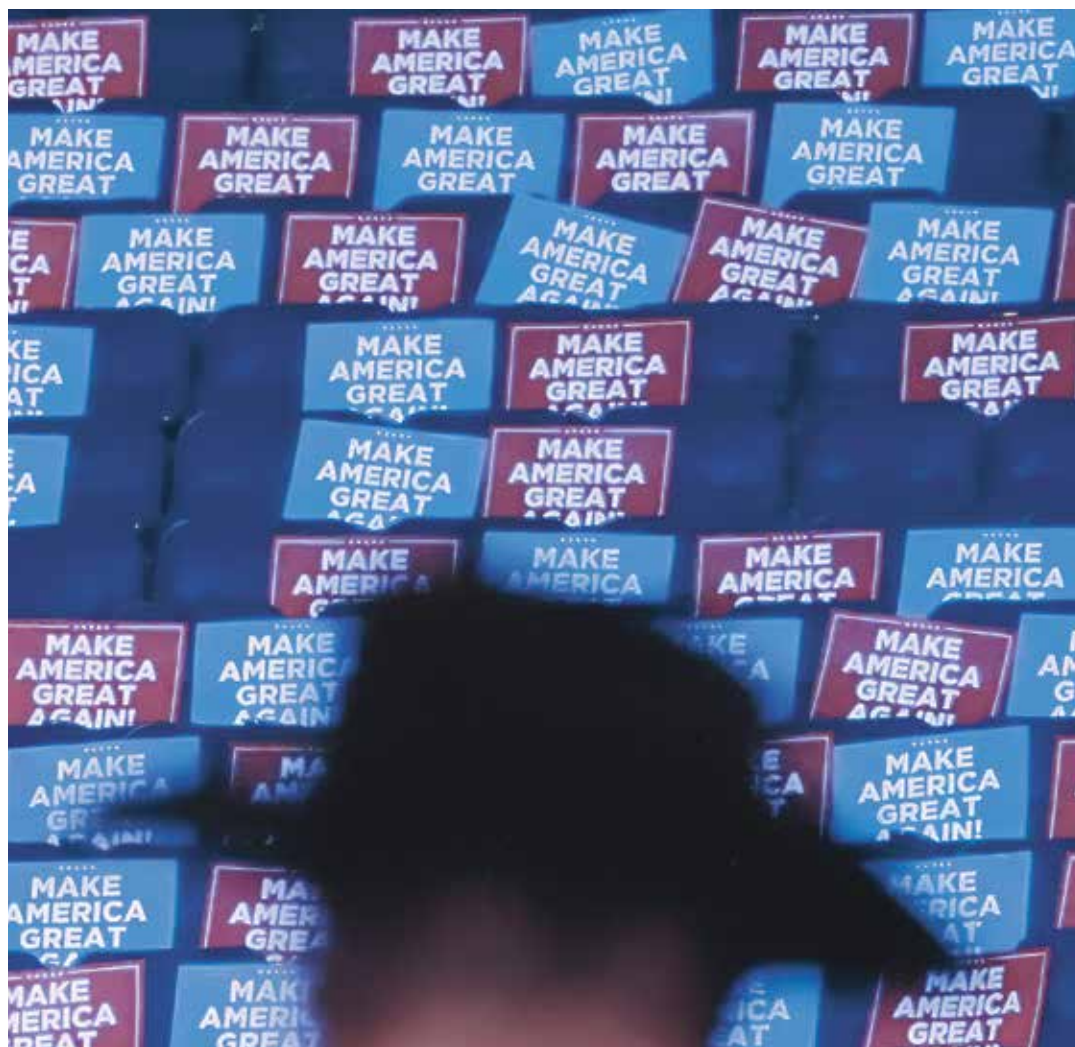
The second Trump administration is taking the world by storm. At home and abroad, it has attacked institutions as well as the established norms, patterns, and rules. The United States has begun to dissociate itself from the rest of the world, throwing any pretensions to care about the problems of others or the importance of its soft power. Dismantling a whole array of organizations, the hegemonic power of the world order has opened space for its rivals to fill the void left by its withdrawal without any clear indication of how it means to maintain its influence, except by the use or the threat of the use of force. At the same time, the administration has had to find out the hard way the limits of its economic power as the tariff cascade of “liberation day” turned into an embarrassment and an unnecessary exposure of the United States’ vulnerabilities, particularly to China’s economic retaliation.

Possibly far more consequential for the world are the domestic developments in terms of the redistribution of power in the United States’ economic order, whereby the technology corporations would be the ascending force, and the nature of its polity. This is consequential for the contest between democracies and autocracies because the United States is the standard bearer for many things political and economic internationally. The speed of the autocratic turn there is emboldening authoritarians everywhere and deepening the crisis of democracy worldwide.

How did it come to this? Very few people imagined that the institutional order in the United States would cave in so rapidly. Powerful actors in the body politic, the economic realm, and the media have chosen the path of least or no resistance when confronted with the wrath of the executive. One conclusion one can draw from the success of the *Blitzkrieg* against the established order is that US executive power is overwhelming and that the functioning of the separation of powers necessitates more than the formal arrangements between the branches. It requires respect for intangible norms, for liberal democratic codes of conduct and propriety of behavior. It is also clear that the much-celebrated institutions as the would-be protectors of democratic principles can crumble easily when faced with a determined executive.

The Trajectory of Trumpism and Trump

One need not fall into a deterministic trap and judge the ascent of Don-



Campaign rally for Donald Trump at Madison Square Garden, October 27, 2024, in New York.

ald Trump and the movement that bears his name as inevitable. There were plenty of occasions when a different approach to politics and more humility in self-assessment by the elites could have turned the tide.

Contingency is the essence of history, however strong structural causes and currents may be. Agency does matter and Trump’s agency managed to pull victory from the jaws of defeat between 2021 and 2024. In power for a second time, his rule gives new urgency to Benjamin Franklin’s caution about the regime of the newly founded state at the end of the Philadelphia Convention: “A Republic if you can keep it.”

Trump rode a wave of discontent that grew stronger by the year and whose roots were planted in the mid-1970s, if not earlier, as US manufacturing started to lose ground to competition from abroad and, eventually, manufacturing jobs became scarcer and wages stagnated. Economic hardships faced by those who were in one fashion or another victims of roaring globalization, and the growing estrangement between the more locally planted working classes and the cosmopolitan liberal elites that translated into a furious *Kulturkampf* (particularly over issues related to women’s empowerment, race, and gender) prepared the ground for a shake-up in American politics. For example, even part

of the economically globalist elites concluded by the presidential election of 2016 that some degree of protectionism and even the adoption of industrial policy would be expedient to protect American economic power.

Trumpism had many antecedents as well. There has always been in the American body politic a consistent illiberal/antiliberal vein that was only defeated by the end of the Second World War, when the previously insulated country ascended to international hegemony. Even then, in the liberal era of the Cold War, American conservatism was alive and well. But it was under attack, subdued, and certainly not ascendant.

Trump is probably the unluckiest of personalities to articulate and to amplify the deep resentment of the mostly less educated white American males who felt they were being left behind. Their discontent first gained an organizational home in the Tea Party movement that gradually redefined the Republican Party and culminated in the success of 2016. As Tim Alberta notes, “The revolt was near. Not everyone could see it—and not all those who did took it seriously. Trump saw it. He took it seriously. And he became its voice, as the unluckiest of insurgents, the commercial tycoon who cheated the little guy, who employed illegal workers, who made his products

overseas, and who enhanced his inherited fortune through scams and fixers and lawsuits, railing against a shredded social contract from the gilded penthouse of his Manhattan skyscraper.”

All this is true, but Trump has also exhibited a high degree of consistency in his political and economic views. As early as 1987, he paid \$100,000 to publish in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Boston Globe* an open letter excoriating US leadership, defense spending, and economic policy with views that were considered marginal. The basic tenets of Trump’s worldview have not changed since. What makes his second term different and more dangerous for the “Republic” is that he now has a blindly loyal movement behind him, an intellectual fount, and powerful corporate support. He now knows how to wield the enormous power of the executive branch, unchallenged by the Republican majority in Congress, and scornful of rules, norms, and legalities.

As Jennifer Miller argues, Trump has a well-articulated mercantilist ideology. For him, its allies have taken advantage of the United States economically. To reverse this, an economically aggressive, protectionist, and interventionist state in areas such as trade is needed. Yet, this activist state should disappear when it comes to taxes and regulating the

economy domestically. Finally, as Fintan O’Toole points out, the state of affairs Trump decries could be reversed by political will, by a strong and determined leader. No doubt Trump sees himself as that leader. At the same time, the countries that took advantage of American foolishness and weak leadership (Japan in the 1980s and China later) should carry on underwriting American profligacy. Hence their capital and their investments in the economy are welcome.

For all his complaints about the ways the United States has been exploited economically by the world and his promises that he will bring manufacturing back to the country to help blue-collar workers, Trump’s economic policies have been consistently in favor of the very rich. Meanwhile, his voter base relies on government loans and programs to access healthcare and other essential services that are now in jeopardy. Neither Trump, nor his vice president or any of the cabinet members have much, if anything, to say about income inequality. In fact, the administration’s budget, which the Republicans in Congress support, will exacerbate the inequalities in society. It will lift the meager protections offered particularly to the poor by the federal government, whose capacity has been considerably diminished by the cuts to and closures of many of its services and agencies. This could be a recipe for future social instability.

That a shake-up of the “administrative state” was necessary is a valid thought. But destroying its capacity, undermining the rule of law, defunding research, and belittling science, intellectual freedom, and international cooperation ill suit a functioning capitalist democracy. Given the vulnerabilities of the United States related to its dysfunctional educational system, blocking the migration of even qualified people threatens its future in terms of innovation and scientific accomplishments, and hence economic growth and technological superiority.

The challenge for the United States’ people, ruling classes, and politics will be to reverse this direction and to use the destructive attack on the “administrative state” as an opportunity to start anew and to build a better-functioning one. Whether or not they have the wherewithal to do this may well be the key to keeping the “Republic” democratic. <

Soli Özel is a political scientist. He was a guest at the IWM in 2024–2025.

Widerstand der Korinthenkacker und Paragraphenreiterinnen

VON SOLMAZ KHORSAND

Moderne Autokraten konsolidieren ihre Macht nicht mit Waffengewalt, sondern mit den Mitteln des Rechts. Wer sich gegen sie wehren will, tut gut daran, sich an jene zu wenden, die wissen wie dies funktioniert: Juristen. Doch will diese Berufsgruppe in den Widerstand gegen die Antidemokraten, die den Rechtsstaat aushöhlen? Mancherorts tut sie es bereits.

Jedes Regime hat seine Anführer und seine Anhängerinnen. Und es hat auch seine Rebellen. In den USA sehen diese derzeit aus wie John Coughenour: 84 Jahre alt, weiß, aus Kansas und seit 44 Jahren Richter. „Es wird immer offensichtlicher, dass für unseren Präsidenten die Rechtsstaatlichkeit nur ein Hindernis seiner politischen Ziele ist. Für ihn ist die Rechtsstaatlichkeit etwas, das man umgehen oder einfach ignorieren kann, sei es aus politischen oder persönlichen Gründen“, sagte Coughenour Anfang Februar vom Richterstuhl vor einem vollen Gerichtssaal in Seattle aus. „In diesem Gerichtssaal und unter meiner Aufsicht ist die Rechtsstaatlichkeit ein helles Leuchtfeuer, dem ich zu folgen gedenke.“¹

Coughenour blockierte US-Präsident Donald Trumps Plan, in den USA geborenen Kindern von ausländischen Eltern die Staatsbürgerschaft zu verweigern. Verfassungsbruch sei das. Der 14. Verfassungszusatz garantiert nämlich jedem in den USA geborenen Menschen die Staatsbürgerschaft. Trump wies die Behörden an, die Staatsbürgerschaft von Kindern, die nach dem 19. Februar geboren wurden, nicht anzuerkennen.

Coughenour, der 1981 vom republikanischen Präsidenten Ronald Reagan zum Richter bestellt wurde, machte sehr schnell klar, was er davon hält. Nichts. Er ist nicht allein. Auch andere Kolleginnen und Kollegen haben bereits Anordnungen der Trump-Regierung gestoppt. Sie zählen zu den Akteuren eines neuen Widerstands in den USA: Richter und Richterinnen, die bereit sind, mit den Mitteln des Rechts dem US-Präsidenten Einhalt zu gebieten. Und das, indem sie einfach nur ihren Beruf ausüben.

Es ist ein Widerstand, dessen Präsenz vielen nicht vertraut oder sogar geheuer ist, politisiert er doch vermeintlich ein Amt, das sich aus aller Politik rauszuhalten hat. Ein Amt, das neutral sein soll, das nur kontrollieren und dabei sogar eine gewisse Zurückhaltung an den Tag zu legen hat. Schließlich hat jeder Träger und jede Trägerin dieses Amtes Alexander Hamiltons Federalist Essay 78 verinnerlicht, in dem er die Judikative in der Gewaltenteilung als das schwächste Glied skizziert. Ihre Macht beruht lediglich auf anderen, die bereit sind, sie ihr zuzugestehen. Sie hat keine Armee, und sie hat auch kein Geld zu verteilen. Ihre Autorität ist Abstraktion. Das



Richter aus ganz Europa schließen sich beim „Marsch der Tausend Roben“ dem Protest polnischer Anwälte und Richter gegen einen Gesetzesentwurf der polnischen Regierung an (Warschau, 11. Januar 2020).

weiß sie und hat einen Berufsstand hervorgebracht, der nur in Maßen den Veto-Player gibt und gemeinhin nicht für widerständiges Verhalten berühmt ist.

Ein Fehler in Zeiten des „autokratischen Legalismus“, wie die amerikanische Soziologin und Rechtswissenschaftlerin Kim Lane Scheppelle, die Machtergreifungsmechanismen moderner Autokraten einmal beschrieben hat.² Es bedarf wehrhafter Anwälte, Richterinnen und Rechtswissenschaftler, wenn die Trumps, Erdogans und Orbáns dieser Welt nicht mit Panzern und Maschinengewehren eine Demokratie aushebeln, sondern ganz legal und ohne offenen Rechtsbruch. Es braucht jene, die darauf aufmerksam machen und aufklären, wenn die Möchtegernkönige jedes geschriebene und ungeschriebene Gesetz, jede Formalität, jedes Rädchen, das der Rechtsstaat zum Funktionieren benötigt, zu ihren Gunsten pervertieren; wenn Autokraten, nach dem Motto „Gesetz ist Gesetz“ die Rechtsstaatlichkeit von ihrer liberaldemokratischen DNA entkernen und für das ungeübte Auge den Anschein geben, dass ihre autoritäre Machtübernahme rechtmäßig abläuft; wenn Institutionen der Verfassung als politische Werkzeuge betrachtet werden, mit denen der Rechtsstaat zu einer rein legalistischen Hülle gemacht wird, die sich jeder beliebig überstülpen kann, ohne auf die Rechte der Bürger Rücksicht zu nehmen.

So beginnt die autoritäre Machtübernahme unserer Zeit in der Regel

mit einem Angriff auf die Gerichte. Erstes Ziel: der Verfassungsgerichtshof, jene Instanz, die der Exekutive in einem funktionierenden System auf die Finger klopft. Erfahrene Richterinnen werden frühzeitig in Pension geschickt, ein neuer Senat mit einem einfachen Gesetz im Parlament, wo man die Mehrheit hat, ins Leben gerufen. Ein neues Organ, das sich wunderbar mit Loyalisten füllen lässt. Der Öffentlichkeit wird das dann als Entlastung der Gerichte verkauft, die mit zusätzlichem Personal schneller und effizienter im Dienste der Allgemeinheit arbeiten können. Klingt doch gut, nicht wahr?

Die Prepper

In Deutschland sind die Grundlagen für den Widerstand gegen eine autoritäre Machtübernahme stärker entwickelt als in Österreich. 1968 wurde mit Art. 20, Abs. 4 des deutschen Grundgesetzes den Deutschen das explizite Recht auf Widerstand eingeräumt, „gegen jeden, der es unternimmt diese Ordnung zu beseitigen.“ Zudem gibt es in der deutschen Rechtswissenschaft ein sichtbares Bewusstsein für die Wehrhaftigkeit des eigenen Berufsstands, und die Vorstellung, dass „nur, wenn auch die Justiz ihre Instrumente zur Verteidigung von Demokratie und Vielfalt nicht verstauben und verrostet lässt“, der „rechte Marsch durch die Institutionen“ zu verhindern ist.³ Seit einigen Jahren treten diese „legal warriors“ für den Rechtsstaat auch zunehmend für eine breitere Öffent-

lichkeit in Erscheinung, sei das in traditionellen Medien wie auch auf ihren eigenen Social-Media-Kanälen. Zu den renommiertesten Organisationen zählt hier der *Verfassungsblog*. Gegründet 2009 vom Verfassungsjuristen und Journalisten Maximilian Steinbeis, ist die Plattform bekannt dafür, mit ihren Szenario-Analysen rechtswissenschaftliches „Neuland“ zu betreten.⁴ Was wäre, wenn die Autokraten in Deutschland an die Macht kämen? Im preisgekrönten „Thüringen-Projekt“⁵ hat der Verfassungsblog detailliert aufgezeigt, wie eine extremistische Partei den Rechtsstaat als Regierungspartei im ostdeutschen Bundesland Thüringen aushebeln und selbst als starke Oppositionskraft gefährden kann. Etwa wenn sie über ein Drittel der Stimmen bei einer Wahl gewinnt (wie es die AfD bei der Landtagswahl im September 2024 getan hat) und dadurch jede Entscheidung im Landtag, die eine Zwei-Drittel-Mehrheit erfordert (wie die Bestellung von Richtern im Thüringer Verfassungsgerichtshof), stoppen kann. Die Autorinnen bieten Empfehlungen, wie derartige Entwicklungen verhindert oder zumindest abgefedert werden können. Im Falle einer Blockade der Richterbestellung durch eine „Sperrminorität“ könnten etwa die Stellvertreter im Gerichtshof als temporäre Zwischenlösung dienen. Bei anhaltender Renitenz der erpressenden Opposition ließen sich gar die Aufgaben des Landesgerichtshofs auf den Bundesverfassungsgerichtshof in Karlsruhe auslagern.

Aktuell arbeitet der Verfassungsblog an einer Gesamtanalyse der Verwundbarkeit der Justiz. Es gilt die Schwachstellen von Gerichtsorganisation und Gerichtspersonal auszumachen und die Resilienz der Verfassungsgerichte abzuklopfen, um auch hier die konkrete Gefährdungslage in eine für juristische Laien verständliche Sprache aufzuzeigen und ungeklärte Fragen in der Öffentlichkeit und der Politik anzutreiben.

Vulgärneutralität reicht nicht.

Dieses Prepping mag auf den ersten Blick wie eine akademische Trockenübung aussehen. Wie soll ein beherztes Thesenpapier den Rechtsstaat retten, wenn es hart auf hart kommt? Gar nicht. Das wissen die Rechtswissenschaftlerinnen. Um die Demokratie zu retten, bedarf es schon Demokraten. Idealistischen Juristinnen allein gelingt das nicht. Aber was ihnen gelingt, ist nicht zu unterschätzen. Einerseits signalisieren sie mit derartigen Initiativen ihren Kollegen, die eigene Disziplin auch in einem wehrhaften Sinne ernst zu nehmen und gegebenenfalls auch so einzusetzen, statt bei einer autoritären Machtübernahme sich auf eine vulgärneutrale Position zurückzuziehen und sich so zu Komplizen eines neuen Systems zu machen, das nur mehr den Anschein von Rechtsstaatlichkeit hat. Andererseits ermächtigen sie mit diesem (auch sprachlich) zugänglich gemachten Wissen eine breite Öffentlichkeit darin, Möglichkeiten des Widerstands an verschiedenen Fronten zu erkennen und rechtzeitig Druck auf politische Entscheidungsträger auszuüben, damit schon die erste Phase des autoritären Umbaus verhindert wird: der Sieg der Antidemokraten an der Wahlurne. ◀

1) Rückschlag für Trump: Richter wirft US-Präsident Verfassungsbruch für „persönlichen Gewinn“ vor, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 10. Februar 2025 (fr.de).

2) Kim Lane Scheppelle, *Autocratic Legalism*, in: *The University of Chicago Law Review* 85, No 2, 545–584.

3) Nele Austermann, Andreas Fischer-Lescano, Heike Kleffner, Kati Lang, Maximilian Pichl, Ronen Steinke, Tore Vetter, Warum „Rechts gegen rechts“? Prolog, in: dies. (Hrsg.), *Recht gegen rechts. Report 2024*, Frankfurt am Main 2024, 13.

4) Marie-Müller-Elm und Friedrich Zillesen, Für einen zivilen Verfassungsschutz, *ZeitOnline*, 24. Januar 2024.

5) verfassungsblog.de/thueringen-projekt/

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The New Nationalism's Utopia of Industrial Society

BY ONDŘEJ SLAČÁLEK

The success of Donald Trump and other contemporary nationalists is largely due to the fact that they are offering a utopia. How can we understand this phenomenon through a dialogue with Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism?

New nationalists have delivered several surprises over the last 15 years. The first is the level of their success. But what is even more surprising is their profile. These nationalists mostly do not care about national culture; language is mostly secondary in their mind; and they are definitely not obsessed with searching the “spirit of the nation.” Quite the contrary! Their politics is almost a copy-and-paste version of one another's. Even their claim to fight for national sovereignty is secondary to a struggle against the “decadence” of liberal culture and migrant “others,” for “western civilization.”

If once the nation was embodied by an anonymous, heroic “unknown soldier” and leaders fit to be represented in statues in city squares, now the representative of the nation can be a Père Ubu-like figure, a bankrupt entrepreneur well-known equally for his “grab them by their pussy” boast and for the political slogan “Make America Great Again.” It is as if the nation's main task were to demonstrate inclusiveness: “Look how ugly and uncultured I am, and I still can represent the nation.” You can be whoever you want and still be part of the nation; the only condition is to win the correct passport in the lottery of birth. As the historian Holly Case wrote, unlike the dictators of the early 20th century, today's authoritarian leaders do not want to create a “new man.” The new nationalist leader does not call on the individuals that make up the nation to “mobilize all your forces for your community” but simply to “relax, bro.”

In our contemporary context, it may seem strange to remember Ernest Gellner. His theory of nationalism, which was often challenged even during his lifetime, seems very far removed from our reality. Above all, he defined nationalism as the ideology that cultural and political units should overlap, but does this make any sense in a context where nationalism does not care very much about national culture?

Gellner also connected the invention and success of modern nationalism with the advent of industrial society and its tendency toward equality, as opposed to the extreme hierarchy of agrarian society. However, some have questioned Gellner's argument regarding this connection, including Rogers Brubaker who pointed out that Gellner demonstrates a functional logic for why industrial society needs nations but



definitely not that historically industrial society produced the nation. The problem today is not only that we live in societies that have been described as “post-industrial” or “de-industrialized” for almost 50 years but that we do not live in a world that exhibits a tendency toward equality as depicted by Gellner. Instead, we are faced with deepening inequality, and contemporary nationalism contributes to this phenomenon. The almost cartoonish illustration of this was the recent inauguration of Donald Trump, which could also be considered as the coming-out of the US oligarchy.

The question this raises is clear: if nationalism once worked as a promise of some level of equality, as a negation of a previous society of “estates,” and as a coping mechanism for accepting some level of inequality within the nation, how can it work today given the obscene level of inequality—especially when nationalism contributes to this inequality, giving even more advantages to the people who are already at the top of the oligarchic pyramid and are trying to raise inequality to an almost unimaginable level?

In my view, there are three interconnected answers.

First, contemporary nationalism is strongly linked to the social Darwinist imaginary. Those who have something simply have it: those who do not have it have themselves to blame and no one else. This is a “natural” situation and any attempt to change it makes things worse.

And any power relationship is legitimate. After decades of neoliberalism, one cannot doubt where this came from—the difference is in emphasis, not in content.

Second, and even more important, this social Darwinist imaginary somehow corresponds to experience. In a world that is becoming interconnected ever faster, the huge amount of illegitimate injustices is much more visible. The climate crisis, for example, is exacerbating the extent of these injustices.

This can be read as definitive confirmation of the diagnosis of the Hungarian philosopher Gaspar Miklóš Tamás, who referred to post-fascism as the loss of the horizon of universal citizenship, the acceptance that the fate of a huge part of humanity will not include the basic human and political rights that the rest take for granted. First formulated in the late 1990s, this might sound a typical example of the radical left-wing excessive use of the word fascism, but in its core Tamás's diagnosis has unfortunately proven correct.

The radical nature of global inequality is evident in mass migration and wars. It is no longer the case that we can only watch the suffering in distant countries on our screens with mixed feelings. In Western societies, there is a widespread belief that mass migration can cause exactly the violence that migrants are fleeing. This brings back a dichotomy discussed by Gellner: that between the order of coercion and violence and the order of economic inequality

and redistribution. While migration is linked to both, the contemporary situation looks like an illustration of Gellner's thesis that the order of violence and coercion plays a more important role. As images of migration conjure images of disruption, nationalists can harvest fear. In this context, even obscene economic inequality can be accepted. Confronted with images of disruption and collapse, people are inclined to accept the wealth and power of billionaires—and it can be even reassuring for them to have the feeling that such wealthy and powerful men are on their side.

Third, while contemporary nationalists are often depicted as purely negativist because they focus on rejecting the liberal world, they have also a positive dimension: the return to industrial society. While every nationalist movement needs an image of a golden age of the nation, these nationalists do not seek it in the distant past. Their golden age (or in their words “normal times”) is the industrial decades after the Second World War, which in retrospect can be seen as a time of order and wealth. Since industry today is often spatially dispersed due to globalization and often attacked by environmentalist movements, nationalists come as its vocal defenders.

While in the period relevant to Gellner, the industrial revolution was a modernizing and innovative force, today the defence of traditional industry, which has been uprooted and relocated, has a conservative charac-

ter. While the 19th-century nationalists could seek the “heartland” of their nation in the collective memory of the rural areas and in their reconstructed (and heavily edited) culture, for contemporary nationalists, the “heartland” is the culture of former industrial centers with factories that have been shut down and disappointed voters. These are people who can embrace the nationalists' promises to humiliate peacock-like liberals and to reconstruct “normal” industrial society.

Nevertheless, two key questions remain unanswered. Do Père Ubu in the White house and the other new nationalists in power mean what they promise? And, if so, are they capable of rebuilding the old-style Western industry?

At least one thing we know for sure: even if the answer to both questions is “yes,” the return of industry to Western countries will not have the impact that nationalist leaders promise and their followers expect. It will neither bring about the utopia of a “normal world” nor overcome contemporary social problems and uncertainties. Of course, this is not the purpose of utopias. Their purpose is not to be materialized but to inspire social action and hope. The industrial utopia of the new nationalists is the element of hope in their imaginary. ◀

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Civil War Nationalism

BY ASSAF SHARON

Defying expectations, nationalism is once again resurgent. But, unlike previous iterations, it is now primarily a weapon in domestic culture wars.

In 2018, at a rally in Houston, President Donald Trump announced to cheering crowds: “I am a nationalist!” The context was the imposition of tariffs on imports. “For once we’re taking care of ourselves.” Had it been delivered a century earlier (probably in Europe), such a pronouncement would likely have been followed by a catalogue of enemies—rival states, minorities, communists. But for Trump the enemies of nationalists were, and are, the “globalists,” who he identified with the Democrats.

Nationalism, many predicted, would be a thing of the past in what Clifford Geertz called “the post-wall world.” Globalization was expected to usher in a “flat world,” as Thomas Friedman announced in 2005. An interconnected world where collaboration and competition on a level playing field of trade would replace conflict. Frictionless circulation of goods, services, and information would breed convergence and quell national hostilities.

But, rather than through convergence, the world had become flat in a different sense, as Olivier Roy observes in *The Crisis of Culture*. The French title of his 2022 book is *L’Aplatissement du Monde*—the flattening of the world, by which he means not the absence of barriers but a cultural flattening, or rather the loss of culture as such. This may have reduced cultural disparities, but it has not quelled nationalist sentiments.

This is not the first time post-nationalist optimism had been frustrated. A century and a half before Friedman, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels made a similar prediction. “The bourgeoisie has ... given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country,” they wrote in the Communist Manifesto. “National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible” (a bold assumption to make amid “the spring of nations”). Yet, just when they were supposed to unite against the oppressors of their class, German, Russian, and other workers of the world enthusiastically marched off to kill each other for no good reason but the pride of their nations. Carl Schmitt drew the obvious conclusion: “the energy of nationalism is greater than the myth of class conflict.” The treatment of migrants, many of them laborers, by members of the working class evinces the lingering relevance of this observation.

If Marxists saw nationalism as a form of false consciousness, liberals often spurn it as archaic. Even as keen an observer as Tony Judt could write in 2003 that the nation-state was an anachronism in “a world of individual rights, open frontiers and



President Donald J. Trump holds a Bible in front of St. John's Episcopal Church, known as the Church of Presidents, on June 1, 2020.

international law.” Now it seems that it is these latter notions that might become anachronisms.

False consciousness or not, nationalism is proving more resilient than many of its detractors. Nationalism is forever returning, but—as Sigmund Freud said of the repressed—it returns, but in altered forms.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries nationalism inflamed, even when it did not ignite, international conflicts. Now the main front is the home front. Our era is shaped less by wars than by civil wars. In the early 1990s, the German poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger wrote an essay titled “Civil War” in which he observed that political aggression had been domesticated. Enzensberger was looking at internal violence—militias in Afghanistan and the Balkans, African warlords, German skinheads, and rioters in Paris and Los Angeles—and what he saw was violence without conviction, violence that had “freed itself from ideology.”

The current civil wars, however, are mostly cold wars, conducted not in inner-city alleyways, but in legislatures, courtrooms, and the court of public opinion. And there is a lot of conviction in these cold civil wars, even if not a systematic ideology (they do not promote universal recipes as communism, fascism, and liberalism did before). These are not “wars about nothing at all,” as Enzensberger saw the civil wars of his time.

The current civil wars are about narrative and identity. (Is it surprising that an era of identity politics leads to identity wars?) Rather than a “clash of civilizations,” suggesting a homogenized West confronting a

uniform East, we are faced with parallel clashes within civilizations. And the question at the heart of these civil wars is: what is the nation?

Nationalism is a strategic weapon in these civil wars. The nationalist warriors do not hurl Molotov cocktails; they refashion history and tradition. They use the instruments of constitutional democracy but only to upend it from within, making it subservient to the needs of the nation. Or rather of the nation as they conceive it. Their enemies are not other nations or a colonizing empire but primarily their fellow citizens who hold a different social morality, a different conception of the nation. The current fault lines are internal: nationalists against globalists, conservatives against liberals, traditionalists against secularists. Though these concepts are hardly synonymous, the social categories they designate are largely overlapping.

Classic nationalism was about self-determination, which meant release from alien domination and the sovereignty to determine a group's own destiny. This included the liberty to define and redefine its identity and to remake its culture. That is why many nationalists saw nation-building as an opportunity to forge a new national culture (think of Kemalist Turkey, Tito's Yugoslavia, or Zionism). The new nationalists often reject these national cultures in favor of real or imagined primeval identities. They have an essentialist conception of the nation, only tangentially and contingently related to its actual constituents.

Rather than self-determination, the new nationalism is about pre-determination and pre-commitment. Actual living citizens are not sov-

ereign to define their identity—instead they are committed to identities fixed and defined for them by previous generations. As cultures and traditions are never closed and determinate, these “essential” identities are highly selective. They tend to be socially conservative, sexually repressive, ethnocentrist, traditionalist, and masculinist. All other eras and aspects of national history, culture, and tradition are ignored or spurned as foreign influences, imposed by others or imported by soulless copycats. These atavistic identities are the justification for authoritarian impositions that supposedly express the “real will” of the people. Those who dispute them are by definition disloyal and dislocated, not genuine members of “the people.” This is the political substance of civil war nationalism, one far more important than the occasional populist rhetoric used by some of its champions that has captured so much attention.

The new nationalism is also reshaping the topography of international relations. The Cold War opposed alliances of states along ideological lines. NATO versus Warsaw Pact. In the “post-wall” era, an alliance of movements has replaced the alliance of blocs. When a French court recently convicted Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's National Rally, of embezzlement, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán immediately tweeted “Je suis Marine!” Other nationalists around the world also rushed to express solidarity.

The network of like-minded leaders and parties that Orbán was central in facilitating is evident and in some contexts operational. The participation of many European nationalists in the Conservative Polit-

ical Action Conference (CPAC) in the United States and the formation of CPAC Hungary, as well as that of the Patriots for Europe group in the European Parliament are just the most glaring examples—I suspect the more significant collaborations are less glaring. It is a coalition of nationalists who see each other as brothers in arms. Their enemies are not other nations but other factions within their own. Unlike the Cold War or imperial alliances, this association is not about expanding spheres of influence or building military coalitions; it is more a fraternity of previous underdogs banding together to fortify their domestic power. What unites them is not a shared universalist vision, but an overlapping political agenda—to dismantle the liberal order.

The emergent Nationalist International demands an equally spirited liberal coalition. This requires more than the expression of moral outrage or treating authoritarian nationalism as an aberration that must simply go away so we can return to the good old times before Trump and Brexit. The vision of a free society must be refashioned in full cognizance of the betrayals of neoliberalism and neo-conservatism. It should not dismiss people's longing to belong or delude itself that technology will dissolve identity. But, at the same time, it must not surrender to the manipulative exploitation of these all-too-human traits. <

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On the Suspension of the Ethical in Political Language

BY CLEMENA ANTONOVA

As talking morality in politics has come to an end, we are witnessing something that appears radically new: the language of politics has been decoupled from that of ethics. One specific way of the suspension of the ethical in political language is when one talks religion in place of, rather than alongside, morality.

In Oscar Wilde's play, *An Ideal Husband*, Sir Robert Chiltern, a successful and highly respected politician, is blackmailed for having sold a Cabinet secret in his youth. Distraught, he seeks advice from Lord Goring, his closest friend. Lord Goring's response is: "If you did make a clean breast of the whole affair, you would never be able to talk morality again. And in England a man who can't talk morality [...] is quite over as a serious politician." It is this talking morality in politics, which has accompanied liberalism from the very beginning and has been dominant especially since the end of the Second World War, that has now come to end.

On Talking Morality in Politics

Just like late Victorian politicians, modern political leaders, particularly in liberal democracies, have felt themselves bound to justify every decision in moral terms. Even the West's military interventions, some of which have resulted in the killing of hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions, of people, have been presented as a necessary part of what is at heart an ethical project—spreading democracy and liberal values. Today, we are witnessing something that looks radically new, even revolutionary. Almost overnight, the language of politics has been decoupled from ethics in ways that would have been almost inconceivable only a year or two ago. One could argue that the much-discussed crisis of democracy, associated with the rise of populism, is accompanied by the ongoing suspension of the ethical in political language.

For many it could be exciting to have at last someone who "says it as it is." It is remarkable that President Donald Trump's numerous falsehoods never hurt his standing among his followers. What his supporters mean when they say that Trump "says it as it is" is not at all that he sticks to the factual truth. Rather, he has demonstrated that he has no inhibitions about making statements with complete disregard to moral norms. Consider ideas such as Ukraine having to give up its mineral resources or the Palestinians in Gaza being cleared from their land, a piece of real estate that will be turned into a resort or, as a Republican senator said with no sense of irony, into a large Mar-a-Lago. It is not that no other country has been



James Tissot, *Abraham sees Sodom in Flames* (1896–1902).

robbed of its resources or a people of their land before, but this was not the sort of thing that political leaders would openly and proudly acknowledge. If we forget about the real-estate aspect, Trump's plan for Gaza, based on the forcible removal of its inhabitants, is in essence what the previous administration attempted to do. That was presented, as could have been expected, in the language of human rights. The population of Gaza would be provided with "humanitarian corridors," which would lead to the Sinai desert in Egypt. Everyone fully realized that once the Palestinians left there would be no going back. Now Trump has completely done away with this kind of language. Thus, the ugliest and most outrageous "truths" are being spelled out in a confident manner and with no sense of shame.

On Talking Religion in Politics

There is one specific way of dispensing with talking morality in politics: by talking religion in place of, rather than alongside, morality. This is a much more intriguing and conceptually more complex phenomenon than using the language of business and real estate. The reason is that there is a widely accepted, but rarely examined, idea that there is a natural affinity between ethics and religion.

Let me give a recent example. Soon after the Hamas terrorist attack of October 7, 2023, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood before Israeli soldiers and solemnly asked them to "remember what Amalek did to you." He was referring to one of the most violent and morally repugnant episodes in the Hebrew Bible: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way when ye were come out of Egypt: how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God" (Deut. 25:17–18). In other words, the people of Israel, after fleeing bondage in Egypt and arriving in Canaan, the Promised Land, were attacked by one of the Canaanite tribes, known as Amalek or the Amalekites. As a result, King Saul was instructed by Samuel to annihilate Amalek: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass!" (1 Sam. 15:3). The God of Israel himself issued a divine command to his people: "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget" (Deut. 25:19). The biblical narrative about the fate of Amalek falls under the category named with the ancient Hebrew term of *herem*,

which means to "totally annihilate a population in war."¹ It is one among many passages that, when read ethically, cannot but "amaze us," as the one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century, Karl Barth, acknowledged, "by [its] remarkable indifference to our conception of good and evil."²

Someone who was not "amazed" was the nineteenth-century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. His provocative insight is that the ethical and the religious are fundamentally different: ethics belongs to the "immanent" sphere while religion is a matter of divine authority, which is unconditional and cannot be judged by criteria drawn from the world of immanence. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard's intentionally shocking example of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son at the command of God is a model of religious dedication, which, from an ethical perspective can only cause horror. On Kierkegaard's terms, this is what religion is: it is the "teleological suspension of the ethical." What we need to think through today is something altogether different, which, nevertheless, shares some features with Kierkegaard's concept. Political speech, drawing on biblical stories such as Amalek exactly because it implies unconditional authority and forecloses critical judgement—aspects

that belong to the religious, not the immanent, sphere in Kierkegaard's terms—should put anyone who cares about democracy and liberal values on the alert. We have here a radically secularized "suspension of the ethical."

Instead of a Conclusion

Biblical references in modern, secular contexts are frequently much more revealing about the one who selected the reference than about the original text. We could, therefore, end with another episode from the Hebrew Bible, again involving Abraham, that is relevant to the present situation. When God orders his people to go and destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, they all obey and only Abraham remains, alone in fear and trembling, to face a terrifying God. This episode became a familiar iconographical type, known as "Abraham Pleads (or Intercedes) for Sodom and Gomorrah." I have always found this title inadequate, as it obscures the real import of the story. The whole point is that Abraham is not pleading—no courage is required for that. He challenges God, even shames him, and that certainly requires the greatest courage possible. Consider the narrative in Genesis 18:22–33. Abraham's questioning of God starts with: "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city ... Far be it from you to do such a thing ... Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" Abraham persists: "suppose forty are found there ... or twenty." All the while he is fearful and yet he keeps challenging God: "Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again this once." Notice that what Abraham demands of God is not compassion. It is justice. And there are times when even keeping the idea of justice alive requires courage. <

1) G. Johannes Botterweck, Heinz-Josef Fabry, Holger Gzella, and Helmer Ringgren, *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1973). For the most detailed study of *herem*, see Philip Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).
2) Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (London: Pilgrim Press, 1928), p. 38.

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Hegel on International Relations: Is the West Doomed to Walk Alone?

BY TOMÁŠ KORDA

Among the four major figures of German classical philosophy, Hegel engaged most distinctly with international relations—a topic that philosophers typically either avoid or relegate to a passing footnote. Yet even in Hegel's work, we do not find a fully developed theory of international relations that could be easily reproduced.

To construct a theory of international relations based on the writings of G.W.F. Hegel, it is helpful to rely on the well-established division in Hegelian scholarship: on one side, the traditional reading him as a realist; on the other, a more modern, Kantian interpretation. According to the realist reading, Hegel essentially echoes the views of thinkers like Niccolò Machiavelli or Thomas Hobbes. The Kantian reading, by contrast, presents him as building on legacy of Immanuel Kant, “who first channelled the doctrine of progress into international theory through his Perpetual Peace.”¹

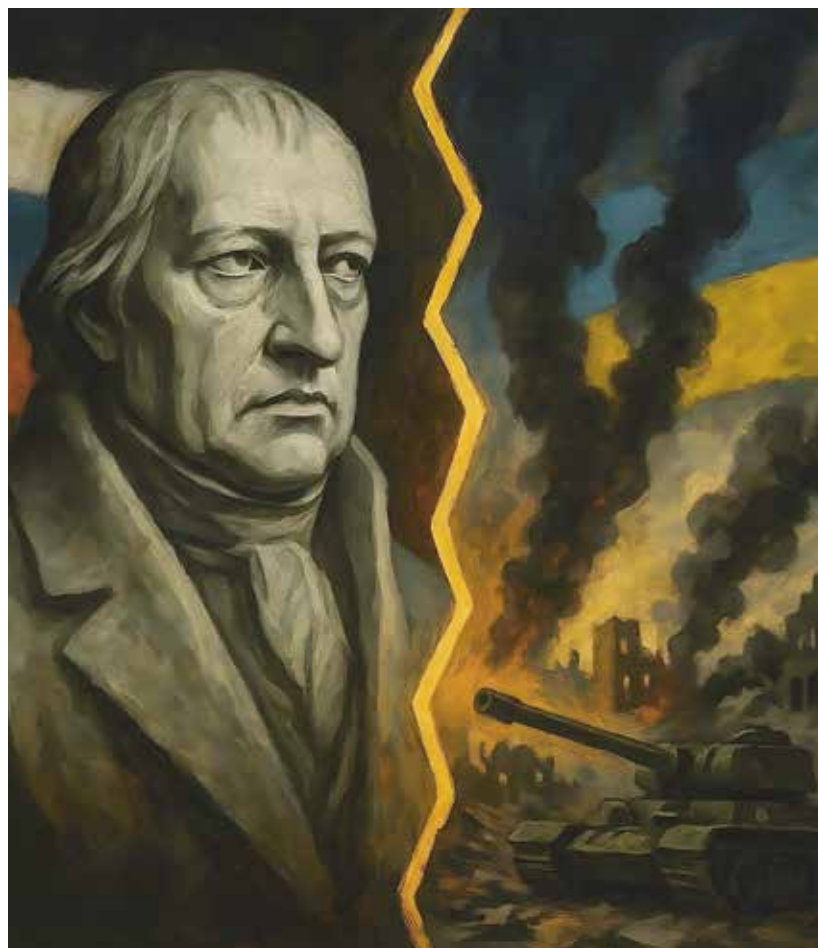
At first glance, the traditional interpretation seems convincing. One of its most prominent proponents, E.H. Carr, even elevates Hegel to the rank of arch-realist:

*The realist view that no ethical standards are applicable to relations between states... found its most finished and thorough-going expression [in Hegel]. For Hegel, states are complete and morally self-sufficient entities; and relations between them express only the concordance or conflict of independent wills not united by any mutual obligation.*²

Hegel, however, pushes realism even further. As Walter Jaeschke observes, “Outrageous is the fact that Hegel not only accepts war as the ‘ultima ratio’ in [an interstate] dispute, but that he also finds a ‘ratio’ in it.”³

Hegel notes something obvious: war treats finite things, including state institutions and infrastructure, according to their very concept: as finite and therefore perishable. In this spirit, he ironically remarks that people go to church, where they are told that only God is eternal, and yet they return home surprised to find their houses destroyed by war—despite just having heard that only God, not their house, is eternal. More provocatively, Hegel suggests that war has a rejuvenating function for nations, reminding them of their own mortality.

Progressive readers of Hegel focus on very different passages. Like Karl Marx, they place their hopes in his dialectic. The dynamic, historically evolving vision of international relations they derive from Hegel stands in stark contrast to the stat-



AI / Prompt: Tomáš Korda

ic, ahistorical worldview of realism. As Andrew Vincent writes, “Hegel is describing the actual state of affairs of his time. He is not prescribing for all time that this should be so.”⁴

Other scholars, such as Klaus Vieweg and Andrew Buchwalter, emphasize that not only individuals but also states strive for recognition from others. To be genuinely recognized as sovereign, states must cultivate their domestic institutions, respect constitutional order, and uphold the rule of law. This concept of interstate recognition is often used to challenge the notion that states merely collide like billiard balls or interact like Democritean atoms, as the mechanical model of realists’ balancing of power suggests.

Proponents of this reading also point to passages from Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* where he describes European nations as forming one family with a shared culture, which suggests the possibility of resolving tensions peacefully. Customs (*Sitten*) thus serve to moderate and civilize the state of nature. Others highlight the transnational character of Hegel’s concept of civil soci-

ety, upon which states depend as part of a global capitalist system, which creates the need to manage shared economic conditions collectively. Finally, some emphasize the key methodological difference between realism and Hegel’s systematic philosophy. Whereas for realists anarchy “marks the starting point of theorizing about international life,”⁵ Hegel insists that the complete picture of the whole must emerge only at the conclusion of philosophical exposition. This is consistent with his critique of Baruch Spinoza’s geometric method, which begins prematurely with definitions of God (the whole).

The realist and Kantian-progressive interpretations of Hegel thus appear irreconcilable. But with Hegel one needs not fear contradiction. “Contradiction is the criterion of truth; non-contradiction, of falsehood”—so reads Hegel’s first habilitation thesis. Even the simple dialectical schema of thesis–antithesis–synthesis suggests that encountering contradiction is not a sign of error or a moment of “either-or” decision but rather a sign that thought is encountering truth. To express that truth,

one needs only to synthesize these opposing positions—in this case, realism and Kantianism.

Hegel’s synthesis of progressivism and realism is perhaps most clearly expressed in the following passage:

*Alone the state is individual, and in the individuality the negation is essentially contained. If therefore also a number of states forms itself into a family, then this club as individuality must create an opposition for itself and produce an enemy.*⁶

The progressive element lies in the insight that states do not interact like billiard balls but can genuinely recognize each other and form familial relations. Just as war is inconceivable within a family, conflict can become unthinkable within a family of nations.

What at first appears to be a utopian ideal—friendship between states—turns out to be genuinely possible.

However, peace among friendly nations comes at a cost. The union of some necessarily involves the exclusion of others, and the excluded state is not merely left out but actively constructed as a potential enemy. This follows not from Hegel’s whim but from the very structure of individuality itself. Individuality, by its very nature, is exclusive.

An individual—whether a private person, a state, or a family of nations—constitutes itself by setting boundaries and distinguishing itself from an external other. Friendly relations within a family of nations stand in direct contrast to hostile relations beyond it. In relation to whom would individuality appear as individuality if it did not create a foreign counterpart for itself? Without defining itself against something external, individuality would dissolve like a drop in the ocean—and international politics would cease to exist altogether.

In other words, friendly or familial relations between a group of states

are a precondition for the possibility of eventual global peace, but they are also the condition for its impossibility. Progress toward world peace does not encounter external obstacles but rather limits inherent in its very structure. The issue is not, as realists claim, that progress is impossible from the outset. Rather, because progress is genuinely possible, as Kant argued, it ultimately reaches the limits of its own continuation and gradually becomes impossible.

Today, we are witnessing the sobering truth of Hegel’s insight into how a family of states inevitably constructs its own enemy. The North Atlantic alliance, built fundamentally on mutual trust, is falling apart before our eyes, not because its members lack an enemy but because they are constructing different ones. NATO did not collapse immediately after the Cold War due to the disappearance of a common enemy, as some realists predicted, but only after approximately three decades as a result of divergent views of who is friend and who is foe.

Yet I do not believe the West is doomed; rather, the concept will become more refined when it is no longer narrowly tied to one country, the United States, but loosens into an ad hoc coalition of those willing to defend the international order. <

1) Wight, M., “Why is there no international theory?”, in Butterfield, H. and Wight, M. (eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, 1966, p. 48.

2) Carr, E.H., *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939* (2nd edn). New York: Harper & Row, 1946, p. 153.

3) Jaeschke, W., *Hegel-Handbuch*, Heidelberg: J.B. Metzler (3rd ed). 2016, s. 366.

4) Vincent, A., “The Hegelian State and International Politics,” *Review of International Studies*, 9 (3), 1983, p. 195.

5) Bull, H., “Society and Anarchy in International Relations,” in Butterfield, H. and Wight, M. (eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations*, p. 55.

6) Hegel, G.W.F., *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, translated by Nisbet, H.B., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 362, § 324, translation modified by the author. Glenn Snyder has remarked that “alliances have no meaning apart from the adversary threat to which they are a response.” Snyder, G.H., *Alliance Politics*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 192.

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Problematizing Europe: The Illusion of a Core Identity and the Intercultural Challenge

BY SOFIA ELENA MERLI

Can the question of Europe's identity still be asked, or has it already shattered under the weight of its contradictions? This essay examines Jan Patočka's reflections about European and Czech identity to expose the limits of pursuing a definition of Europe. Today's challenge is to acknowledge Europe's problematic and multifaceted reality through intercultural dialogue and solidarity.

Grappling with the concept of “Europe” is a sensitive task. It means engaging with a fractured, volatile field of meanings perpetually slipping beyond any stable or coherent form. But Europe is also an idea whose very understanding is entangled with the burden of past and present violence that the term evokes.

The root of Europe's complexity resides in an epistemological and ethical/emotional struggle. Epistemologically, the quest to define Europe appears incompatible with a multifaceted reality. Ethically and politically, it exposes the problematic issue of establishing boundaries and thus enacting a principle of exclusion. Therefore, the question of defining Europe today is misdirected, rooted in an ill-conceived idea.

From the sixteenth century, the *topos* of a strong and coherent European identity has been predicated on the selective appropriation of perceived virtues of humanity. Binary narratives—civilized vs. primitive, rational vs. irrational, modern vs. traditional—have shaped the core of the European paradigm and its ontological and political power. These have functioned as tools for subordination, facilitating European colonialism, imperialism, and the assertion of cultural, moral, and political superiority over external others and marginalized internal communities. However, defining Europe by what it is not—through external contrasts with other cultures and internal exclusions—ultimately destabilizes any coherent sense of European identity.

The danger of defining an identity through binary logic relies on the false assumption of a static and coherent essence, which naturally leads to exclusion and violence. Moving beyond this limited view reveals that individual and cultural identities are fluid and interconnected structures, full of contradictions, and characterized by a fundamental noncoherence.

From Impasse to Openness

An endeavor to problematize Europe, confronting its inherent contradictions and the ambiguous legacy of its heritage, is evident in the



work of Jan Patočka. His meditations are marked by a unique detachment, shaped by external and internal marginalization in a region often seen as being on the periphery of Europe. Developing his reflections as a “heretical” philosopher and a dissident European against Soviet domination, Patočka tried to distance himself from a teleological understanding of European culture, particularly that articulated by Edmund Husserl, due to its Eurocentric undertone. Neither the supposed superiority of scientific rationality nor the imposed universalizing hegemony of European culture offers a solution to the crisis of meaning caused by technicization, as Husserl thought. Rather, these very claims constitute the root of the problem, the European spirit's curse upon itself and the world.

Throughout the 1960s, Patočka explored the deadlock of European identity in short philosophical fragments, which informed his broader philosophical theorization of the concept of Post-Europe. The seven fragments gathered under the title *Was Europa ist...* critique the limited scope of the European intellectual tradition, which confines its questioning of European rationality to its own insular circles, silencing the voices of other cultures. This narrow framework, Patočka argues,

sustains Europe's false sense of superiority. To truly detach ourselves from a Eurocentric perspective and to assess whether the concept of Europe still has meaning, we must disentangle its spirit from the systems of domination that have long defined it.

Patočka's extensive reflections on the complexities of Europe are paralleled by his critical engagement with the question of Czech national identity, most notably explored in his work *Was sind die Tschechen?* This unveils another vital dimension of the European conundrum: the tension between European and national identity. What connects these two threads is their shared challenge to the nature of collective identity, rejecting essentialist frameworks. Both inquiries also address the central tension in the discourse of European identity between its inherent multiplicity, coupled with internal dynamics of marginalization and exclusion, and the closely linked issue of nationalism.

In this essay, Patočka undertakes a historical-phenomenological analysis of the Czech national political character. With his characteristic heretical gaze, he examines the role of Czech culture in the European landscape, sharply criticizing its self-inflicted “smallness”

and its narrow, ethnolinguistically defined identity. Patočka delineates the risks inherent in this conception of national identity and advocates an alternative political interpretation of Czech, or more accurately, Bohemian identity. A few years later, this intellectual legacy informed the dissident discourse on critical patriotism and the renegotiation of national self-understanding.

While certain aspects of Patočka's work, especially his notion of universalism, remain susceptible to Eurocentric critique as certain passages hint at a uniqueness of European culture, his inquiry into Europe's identity raises important questions that resonate today. Among his most significant contributions is the concept of the “open soul.”

Drawing from the writings of John Amos Comenius and Henri Bergson's epistemology, the open soul is an alternative mode of individual and collective existence that appears throughout Patočka's work on Europe. He uses this concept to theorize a subjectivity that perceives otherness not as a threatening externality to be overcome but rather as an invitation to confront one's own finitude and free oneself from fixed, unilateral determinations. For the open soul, engaging with otherness becomes a polemical tension, a

process of decentering oneself rather than aspiring to constitute a universal criterion. In this way, it embodies a fluid, multifaceted identity always in the act of problematizing.

Moving Beyond a Core Identity

Patočka's idea of the open soul—which rejects mediation and domination, and relinquishes fixed determinations in its encounter with otherness—provides a model for individual and collective engagement in intercultural and intersectional dialogue. Furthermore, reflecting on national identity beyond the ethnolinguistic discourse and rethinking it on a civic-political basis could significantly help to create a practice of solidarity between individual and collective identities that resists capitalistic frameworks.

The act of problematizing Europe illuminates the political power embedded in the idea of a singular and definitive European identity, often wielded to assert European historical, cultural, and moral superiority. This monolithic narrative, particularly in its modern form that ties the label Europe with the European Union, erases the pluralities that exist within Europe and beyond. To truly understand Europe, we must acknowledge the reality of multiple Europes, recognizing the internal power dynamics and structural inequalities that sustain Eurocentrism.

Consequently, Europe's challenge is in whether it can move past its universalizing tendencies and embrace a genuine pluralism, in which the voices of diverse internal and external cultures are truly heard. This transformation requires a political and ethical commitment to recognizing multiplicity not as something to be synthesized into a homogeneous unity but as something to be embraced in its asymmetry, allowing for the formation of self-contradictory, multi-layered, and fluid identities. <

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Poland-Lithuania and the Idea of Europe in Early Modern Italy

BY KLAUDIA KUCHNO

While the term “Europe” was used in antiquity and the Middle Ages, it gained renewed prominence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Global exploration and expanding communication networks prompted people to rethink the structure of the world. How did evolving ways of producing, sharing, and consuming information influence discourses on Europe, and why does this perspective remain relevant today?

The cultural, scientific, and political transformations of the early modern period, together with a markedly changing information landscape, significantly reshaped how individuals understood the world and their place within it. Between 1450 and 1600, there was a notable increase in attempts to define and describe “Europe,” particularly through maps, treaties, and historical compendia. Italy, with its thriving print culture, offers a vivid example of this trend. Looking back at the published materials, it is clear that for Italians Europe was not a fixed or clearly delineated concept, consisting of uniform building blocks, but a fluid construct that could accommodate a wide variety of cultures and peoples. This becomes especially evident in the evolving portrayals of Poland-Lithuania in Italy—an example that points to the importance of changing information practices in forming early modern views of Europe.

The Early Modern Information Revolution

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries witnessed a profound change in how information was produced, disseminated, and consumed. The widespread availability of cheap paper, the invention of print, rising literacy rates, and the establishment of professional postal networks led to an extraordinary growth in the volume of information circulating and in the speed of communication. People, goods, and ideas moved across ever greater distances, creating a growing sense of interconnectedness. Early modern societies were flooded with information, so much so that, much like in today’s hyperconnected reality, contemporaries often remarked on the difficulty of keeping up. They commented on the sheer volume of materials, sensing its potential and its disorienting effects alike. This phenomenon has been labelled “the early modern information revolution,” a term meant not to describe a sudden or linear process but as a metaphor reflecting the deep quantita-

tive and qualitative changes in how information was generated, distributed, and processed.

Information flowed through vertical and horizontal channels—via diplomatic dispatches, private letters, books, and other printed materials such as newsletters and pamphlets. It passed from person to person in bustling taverns, harbors, and village squares, drawn by a growing thirst for news and intensified curiosity. The entire approach to information underwent a fundamental transformation: it was increasingly treated as a resource to be gathered, organized, and used. It became a tool of governance and trade as well as a commodity in its own right—one bought, sold, and manipulated, with the first news professions developing by the end of the sixteenth century. These developments created the conditions for wider intellectual exchange, including for reflections on Europe.

The Renaissance (Re)Discovery of Europe

The advances and practices of the early modern information revolution greatly facilitated the spread of knowledge about Europe. In the early fifteenth century, Italian humanists turned their attention to classical legacies, recovering long-forgotten texts. A key moment came in 1407, when Claudius Ptolemy’s *Geography*,

a second-century atlas of the Roman world paired with a treatise on mathematical mapping, was translated into Latin in Florence. Though known in the Arabic world, this was its first major reintroduction to a Latin-reading audience. *Geography* presented Europe as one of three known parts of the world, alongside Africa and Asia. While this reinforced Europe’s status as a distinct region, its boundaries and internal definition remained fluid. The text quickly gained popularity: by 1600, as well as nine Latin editions, eight Italian ones had been published in the Peninsula—a sign of growing efforts to reach broader audiences through vernacular versions. Many included updated and new maps incorporating information from recent voyages, including to the Americas. *Geography* became a key catalyst for early modern discussions about Europe and played a central role in the rise of printed cartography.

The revival of classical texts and access to more information also inspired new works. In 1458, Enea Silvio Piccolomini—later Pope Pius II—composed *De Europa*, a sweeping survey of the world, covering territories from the Iberian Peninsula to the Baltic, the Balkans to the British Isles, reaching deep into Central, Eastern, and Southern parts of the continent, including Hungary, Poland-Lithuania, Ruthenia, and the Ottoman lands. Piccolomini blend-

ed geographical description with political and historical commentary. He frequently and deliberately used the noun Europe and the adjective European: one of the earliest systematic efforts to embed these concepts in intellectual discourse. The interest in defining Europe continued into the sixteenth century as Italian humanists increasingly turned to contemporary sources to offer updated accounts of the known world. Publications like Paolo Giovio’s *Historiarum sui temporis* (1552) reflect a growing recognition of Europe’s diversity, grounded in new information circulating through merchants, travellers, diplomats, and students. Europe was no longer confined to the Latin West; it was seen as a dynamic, interconnected space stretching from the Atlantic to the Orthodox and Islamic worlds.

Disenchanting Poland-Lithuania

An example of how fluid perceptions of Europe’s regions were in early modern Italy can be found in the evolving depictions of Poland-Lithuania. In early Renaissance sources, this territory was often portrayed as a remote and vaguely defined place. Publications rooted in the Ptolemaic tradition placed the legendary Riphean and Hyperborean mountains—believed to be the source of all regional rivers and to be home to gryphons guarding fields of gold—within its

borders. Such mythical motifs persisted in the early sixteenth century, appearing in maps of Europe and Poland-Lithuania produced by Francesco Berlinghieri (1482) and Marco Beneventano (1507). Beyond the realm of legend, Piccolomini’s *De Europa* offered a description that reinforced a sense of uncharted frontier. He depicted Poland as flat, forested, and sparsely populated, with Kraków as its sole centre of learning and culture. Lithuania fared even worse, reduced to a swampy expanse of woods. Piccolomini’s portrayal guided Italian perceptions of Poland-Lithuania well into the first half of the sixteenth century.

As information flows expanded, the image of

Poland-Lithuania evolved. By the late 1500s, works such as Giovanni Botero’s *Relazioni universali* (1591) offered a far more detailed and critical account. The mythical landscapes and laconic descriptions of earlier sources gave way to nuanced portrayals of the cities, political structures, and diverse cultures in the Commonwealth. Botero emphasized the rich intellectual traditions of Poland-Lithuania, described major urban centres like Kraków, Lviv, and Vilnius, and underlined the multi-confessional nature of the polity. His narrative drew heavily on reports by Italian diplomats who had visited the Commonwealth and on compendia composed by local authors.

Empirical and increasingly systematic information flows contributed to repositioning the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Italian discourses, from a mythical periphery to a complex part of Europe’s political and cultural landscape. This historical example underscores the importance of cultivating diverse sources and acknowledging various knowledge centers. Rather than envisioning Europe as singular or fixed, we should recognize it as shaped through multiple voices and plural information flows. ◀

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“A Description of Europe” (Descrittione dell’Europa), a somewhat modernized composite map of Ptolemaic Europe, from the 4th edition of Girolamo Ruscelli’s Italian translation of Ptolemy’s *Geography* (*Geographia* di Claudio Tolomeo Alessandrino or *Geografia* di Tolomeo), edited by Giuseppe Rosaccio and published in Venice.

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Russlands Schwäche

VON STEFAN MEISTER

Russlands Angriffskrieg gegen die Ukraine ist auch das Ergebnis einer Legitimationskrise des Systems Putin sowie der fehlenden Handlungsbereitschaft von Moskaus Gegnern. Innere Schwäche ist der entscheidende Treiber für russische Aggressionen, nicht vermeintliche Stärke.

Der Schockmoment für Wladimir Putin liegt bereits einige Jahre zurück, hat aber fundamentale Auswirkungen auf die russische Innen- und Außenpolitik bis heute. Massendemonstrationen in großen russischen Städten gegen die Wiederwahl Putins für eine dritte Amtszeit als Präsident Ende 2011/Anfang 2012 sind ein entscheidender Treiber für die russischen Aggressionen nach innen und außen. Die Demonstrant:innen forderten nicht nur das Ende der Ära Putin, sondern auch politische Beteiligung mit einem echten Parteienwettbewerb bei freien Wahlen. Die Zustimmungsraten für Putin selbst und vor allem der Regierungspartei „Einiges Russland“ gingen weit unter die 50 Prozent-Marke, was für ein personalistisches, autoritäres System problematisch ist. Für Putin war das eine vom Westen, vor allem von den USA, organisierte „Farbenrevolution“. Die russische Führung hatte jedoch bereits seit der Finanzkrise 2008/09 den Gesellschaftsvertrag, der auf dem Tausch ständig wachsender Einkommen gegen politische Inaktivität der Bevölkerung beruhte, nicht mehr erfüllen können. Es wurde immer klarer, dass das System Putin eine neue Legitimationsressource brauchte, und der Konflikt mit dem Westen, allen voran den USA, sollte sie bieten.

Systematisch wurden der Repressions- und Kontrollapparat ausgebaut, die ausländische Finanzierung der organisierten Zivilgesellschaft und unabhängiger Medien gesetzlich immer weiter eingeschränkt. Gleichzeitig investierte die russische Führung in den Desinformations- und Propagandaapparat, erst im Inland und dann zunehmend im Ausland. Der „Westen“ und universelle Normen wurden diskreditiert, während das Regime seine eigene antiliberalen, reaktionären und imperialistischen Ideologie weiterentwickelte. Putin hatte erkannt, dass ein Wertewandel vor allem in jüngeren städtischen Teilen der Gesellschaft gefährlich werden könnte. Vermeintliche traditionelle Werte, Anti-LGBT Propaganda, das Narrativ einer Entfremdung von den eigenen Werten, von moralischem Verfall und der Schutz der russischen Minderheiten weltweit wurden zu zentralen Elementen dieser Ideologie. Die EU und die USA mussten in ihrer Handlungsfähigkeit weiter geschwächt und diskreditiert werden, damit sie für die russische Bevölkerung nicht mehr als Modell dienen konnten. Eine Demokratisierung der Ukraine, eines Schlüsselstaats in Russlands traditionellem Einflussraum, sollte mit allen Mitteln verhindert werden.

Doch erst die Annexion der Krim, gefolgt vom Krieg im Don-



Wladimir Putin auf dem Gipfel der Organisation des Vertrags über kollektive Sicherheit im Kreml, Moskau, am 19. Dezember 2012.

bass seit 2014, brachte einen Umschwung bei den Zustimmungsraten in der russischen Bevölkerung. Plötzlich konnten die Russ:innen trotz schlechter wirtschaftlicher Perspektiven wieder stolz auf ihr Land sein. Ihr Staat konnte sich einfach ein Stück Land eines anderen Staates mit Gewalt einverleiben, und der Westen war nicht dazu in der Lage bzw. willens, die russische Führung dafür tatsächlich zu sanktionieren. Die Begeisterung hielt jedoch nur bis 2018 an, als angesichts der demographischen und ökonomischen Krise, fehlender Arbeitskräfte und sehr niedrigen Wirtschaftswachstums, die russische Regierung eine Rentenreform beschloss, die das Renteneintrittsalter um fünf Jahre schrittweise an hob, für Frauen auf 60 und für Männer auf 65 Jahre. Es kam erneut zu massiven Demonstrationen, die Bevölkerung hatte das Gefühl, der Staat greife in den privaten Bereich ein, waren doch viele Familien aufgrund des fehlenden Sozialsystems auf die Frühverrentung der Großeltern angewiesen, damit diese sich um die Enkelkinder kümmern. Ferner kritisierten viele, dass sie vor dem Hintergrund der niedrigen Lebenserwartung mit einem höheren Eintrittsalter kaum etwas von der Rente haben würden. Auf diese Reaktionen folgte die nächste Welle von Repressionen gegen die organisierte Zivilgesellschaft.

Dabei hatte die Führung erkannt, dass Krieg als Mittel der Ablenkung und Mobilisierung funktionierte und gleichzeitig weder die USA noch die EU bereit waren, sich auf einen größeren Konflikt mit Russland einzulassen. Im Gegenteil, nachdem US-Präsident Obama trotz des Einsatzes von Giftgas gegen Rebellen 2013 durch das Assad-Regime in Syrien nicht militärisch reagiert hatte, beschloss Russland 2015, in den Konflikt zu intervenieren. In Kooperation mit dem Iran konnte Russland die syrische Führung unter Baschar al-Assad militärisch stabilisieren und somit einen internationalen Prestigeerfolg vorweisen. Während der Westen erneut nicht handlungsfähig war, war Putin bereit, Risiken in Kauf zu nehmen, um zu gewinnen. Die Anerkennung der russischen Forderungen bei den beiden Minsker Abkommen 2014/15 zum Krieg in der Ostukraine, in denen Russland nicht zur Kriegspartei erklärt wurde, sondern gleichberechtigt als „neutraler Akteur“ am Verhandlungstisch saß, zeigten dem Kreml erneut, dass er mit seinen Manipulationen Erfolg hat. Die Europäer kauften weiterhin russisches Gas, und selbst der Krieg im Osten der Ukraine führte zu keinen hohen Sanktionskosten für den russischen Staat.

Während das russische Regime keinerlei Ideen für die Zukunft Russlands hat, wurde es immer besser

darin, durch die Anwendung von militärischer Stärke, von inneren Entwicklungsdefiziten abzulenken. Die Ukraine wurde zum zentralen Element einer Machtdemonstration nach außen, und die russische Gesellschaft fand Gefallen an diesen Erfolgen. Der russische Angriffskrieg auf die Ukraine seit Februar 2022 muss deshalb auch als Teil einer nach innen gerichteten Legitimationsstrategie des Systems Putin gesehen werden. Die schnellen Erfolge in der Ukraine seit 2014 und in Syrien seit 2015 haben Putin ermutigt, seinen Krim-Coup mit einem Blitzkrieg viel größeren Ausmaßes zu wiederholen. Mit solch einer Machtdemonstration konnte er nicht nur eine weitere Demokratisierung und schleichende Annäherung der Ukraine an die EU und die NATO verhindern, sondern auch die vermeintliche Überlegenheit des russischen Modells unter Beweis stellen. Es war vor allem die Untätigkeit der USA und der europäischen Staaten angesichts seiner vorherigen Aggressionen, die ihm die Gewissheit verschafften, dass er erneut mit geringen Kosten aus einer Aggression kommen wird.

Dabei hatte Russland bereits nach Putins Wiederwahl 2012 dem Westen einen hybriden Krieg erklärt. Der russische Staat förderte mit Desinformationskampagnen Parteien und Akteure, die Gesellschaften in euro-

päischen Ländern und den USA polarisieren und demokratische Institutionen diskreditieren. Das Ziel war, den Gegner handlungs- und entscheidungsunfähig zu machen und dabei die Schwäche des Westens zu demonstrieren. Russische Akteure nutzten Unsicherheiten und Trends in demokratischen Gesellschaften, um Polarisierung weiter zu befördern. Dadurch sollten die eigenen Schwächen im Bereich wirtschaftliche Entwicklung, demographische Krise und schlechter Regierungsführung überdeckt werden. Auch hier handelte Putin aus einer Position der Schwäche heraus, da das Land nicht dazu in der Lage gewesen wäre, die NATO militärisch herauszufordern. Russland stand plötzlich sowohl nach innen als auch nach außen als starker Akteur da, an dem kein westlicher Staat vorbeizukommen schien. Das russische Regime konnte erneut den fehlenden Willen zu handeln und die Selbstzweifel europäischer Eliten unter dem wachsenden Druck von Rechtspopulisten nutzen, um Stärke zu demonstrieren. Russlands Macht speiste sich aus der falschen Kosten-Nutzen Kalkulation seiner Gegner, die der Illusion unterlagen, Nicht-handeln und Appeasement führen zu niedrigeren Kosten.

Nachdem die Ukraine als Staat und Gesellschaft einen viel größeren Widerstand leistet, als der Kreml erwartet hatte, und Europa und die USA unter der Führung von US-Präsident Biden massiv Sanktionen gegen Russland verhängt und die Ukraine mit Waffen ausgestattet haben, war es für das russische Regime umso wichtiger, die Handlungsfähigkeit des Westens zu schwächen. Das Schüren von Angst mit einem Nuklearkrieg und einer möglichen Eskalation fand Resonanz in den europäischen Gesellschaften, die sich zu großen Teilen aus Krieg und Konflikten heraushalten möchten. Der Umstand, dass Putin mit US-Präsident Biden und dem deutschen Bundeskanzler Scholz zwei risikoscheue Unterstützer der Ukraine gegenüber hatte, spielte ihm zusätzlich in die Hände. Jetzt ist es Donald Trump, der versucht den Krieg auf Kosten der Ukraine zu beenden, in einer Phase, wo die Unterstützung für den Krieg in Russland weiter zurückgeht, die wirtschaftliche Krise zunehmend in der Gesellschaft ankommt und die menschlichen Kosten für alle immer sichtbarer werden. Russlands Stärke könnte sich erneut aus der Schwäche seiner Gegner speisen. <

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Die neue russische Diaspora

VON KARL SCHLÖGEL

Was Leben im Exil bedeutet, ist den meisten, die sich mit der Geschichte der Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen aus dem von Hitler besetzten Europa beschäftigen, geläufig. Emigration und Exil sind aber auch eine Erfahrung der Gegenwart wie zuletzt die Flucht aus Putins Russland und die neue russische Diaspora in Europa und Übersee zeigen.

Mit dem Ende der Sowjetunion war, so schien es, auch die Geschichte der russischen Emigration zu einem Ende gekommen. Die Grenzen waren offen, die in Jahrzehnten entstandene Kultur des Exils kehrte in die Heimat, aus der sie verbannt worden war, zurück, prominente Gestalten des Exils wie Alexander Solschenizyn kehrten sogar nach Russland zurück. Alles deutete auf eine Normalisierung. Doch es kam anders. Eine neue Welle der Flucht hat spätestens seit Putins Repressionen im Innern und dem Krieg gegen die Ukraine eingesetzt. Alles sieht aus nach einem déjà vu jenes „Russlands jenseits der Grenzen“, das es vor mehr als einem Jahrhundert, nach Revolution und Bürgerkrieg, schon einmal gegeben hat.

Am Ende seiner eindrucksvollen Darstellung der russischen Diaspora zwischen 1919 und 1939, erschienen 1990, meinte Marc Raeff, dass dieses Kapitel abgeschlossen sei, es gebe „Russia Abroad“ nicht mehr. Er war mit seiner Einschätzung damals nicht allein. Jahrzehnte lang verbotene Autoren der Exil-Literatur erschienen in der Zeit von Perestroika und Glasnost in Riesenaufgaben, die Werke von als dekadent abgestempelten Künstlern des Silbernen Zeitalters oder der Avantgarde, wurden endlich in großen Ausstellungen gezeigt, russische Philosophen, die es wie Nikolai Berdjajew im Westen zu Weltruhm gebracht hatten, wurden endlich auch in Russland selbst rezipiert. Und nicht zuletzt: ein lebhaftes Hin und Her über die nun offene Grenze hinweg setzte ein, Shopping-Touren oder Kulturtourismus, Wiederaufnahme des Kontakts mit der Welt draußen. Es sind die Jahre, in denen mit einem Mal in europäischen Städten überall Russisch zu hören war, sich russischsprachige communities bildeten, mit allem, was dazugehörte: Netzwerken, Infrastrukturen, Zeitungen, Supermärkten, Kindergärten. Es war die Zeit, in der man von Charlottengrad und Londongrad sprach und russische Gemeinden auch in Bangkok und Goa antreffen konnte. Beginn einer grossen Wanderung, mit Übergängen zwischen Sightseeing und Brain-drain. Die Rede ist nicht nur von den „neuen Russen“, die Immobilien an der Côte d’Azur oder in Kensington erwarben, sondern von Abertausenden, die es sich leisten konnten, sich vorübergehend oder für immer im Ausland niederzulassen. Die Angaben zur Zahl derer, die allein in den 2000er Jahren das Land verlassen haben, sind unvollständig und schwanken zwischen ein bis zwei Millionen, besonders hoch ist der



Von der St. Petersburger Philosophischen Gesellschaft errichtete Gedenktafel an der Stelle, wo im Herbst 1922 russische Intellektuelle und Gelehrte auf dem Weg ins Zwangsexil den sog. „Philosophendampfer“ bestiegen (15. November 2003).

Anteil der gut ausgebildeten, modernisierungswilligen Angehörigen der Art Mittelklasse, die jederzeit auch jenseits der Grenzen einen Job hätten finden können oder auch fanden. Für das Land ein entsetzlicher Blutverlust, der an die Situation nach 1917 erinnerte.

Doch was mit Putins Krieg gegen die Ukraine begann, war nicht einfach die Fortsetzung von stiller (normaler) Migration und brain drain der IT-Spezialisten und anderer, die nicht auf bessere Zeiten warten wollten, sondern es war die Flucht all jener, die mit Verfolgung, Anklagen, harten Urteilen, Lagerstrafen und Gefahr für Leib und Leben rechnen mussten. Es war die Situation, in der von heute auf morgen Lebensentscheidungen zu treffen waren, in der es zu Kilometer langen Staus an den Grenzübergängen nach Georgien und Kasachstan kam, wo die Flüge nach Istanbul und Tel Aviv ausgebucht waren und sich Fragen stellten, auf die es kaum eine Antwort gab: Was geschieht mit der zurückgelassenen Wohnung, wer kümmert sich um die zurückgebliebenen alten oder kranken Eltern, wohin kann man überhaupt ausreisen? Von heute auf morgen mussten Probleme gelöst werden: Visa und Aufenthaltsgenehmigungen, die Beschaffung einer Wohnung, die Suche eines Arbeitsplatzes, der Zugang zu Bankkonten usf.

Ausdruck einer Panik war die Flucht von etwa 800.000 jungen wehrfähigen Männern, die sich vor der Mobilmachung im Herbst 2022 über die Grenzen absetzten, von denen aber viele später zurückkehrten – hier kam der Terminus von den „Relokanten“ statt der Emigranten auf. Anders erging es all jenen, die als Kriegsgegner unmittelbar bedroht waren und denen nichts blieb als sich bis auf Weiteres im Ausland in Sicherheit zu bringen. Dabei waren sie als Flüchtlinge, die aus dem Land des Aggressors kamen und die Mietpreise in Tiflis oder Jerewan in die Höhe trieben, nicht überall willkommen. So entstanden, abhängig von den jeweiligen Einreise- und Aufenthaltsbedingungen, von der Situation auf dem Arbeits- und Wohnungsmarkt, der sprachlichen und kulturellen Situation, mit der man fertig werden musste, neue Knotenpunkte, Zentren, Hubs: Istanbul, Belgrad, aber auch Taschkent und sogar Ulan Bator oder die aus Urlaubstagen vertraute Insel Bali. In vielem deckte sich die Topographie der neuen Diaspora mit der der ersten Welle nach Revolution und Bürgerkrieg: Paris, Prag, Berlin. Riga und Vilnius.

Und doch ist der Unterschied der jetzigen Welle zu den vorangegangenen Wellen gravierend: die erste umfasste das ganze Spektrum der vorrevolutionären, anti-bolschewistischen politischen und kulturellen

Elite, ein Russland im Wartestand, Schattenregierung und Armee eingeschlossen. Der zweite Schub nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg rekrutierte sich wesentlich aus den im Westen gebliebenen Ostarbeitern, Sowjetsoldaten und Displaced Persons, die nach Übersee weiterwanderten, und die dritte Welle ab den 1970er Jahren bestand wesentlich aus zum Teil zwangsexilierten prominenten Dissidenten und der großen Gruppe der sogenannten Russlanddeutschen und sowjetischen Juden. Die ins Exil gedrängte oder geflüchtete Schicht von heute stammt meines Erachtens in erster Linie aus den Reihen von Menschen- und Bürgerrechtlern, von verfolgten Minderheiten und Kriegsgegnern, all jenen also, die als Repräsentanten und „Agenten des feindlichen Auslandes“ diffamiert und verfolgt werden, als „Fünfte Kolonne des Westens“, Gegner der „traditionellen russischen Werte“, die angeblich vom Regime Putins und der orthodoxen Kirche verteidigt werden.

Während die Gegner der Putin-Diktatur als Agenten des Liberalismus und der westlichen Dekadenz für vogelfrei erklärt werden, hat Putin alles aus dem ideologischen Erbe der russischen Diaspora übernommen, was in das toxische Gemisch des Putinismus paßt. Seit seinem Machtantritt hat er in großangelegten „Welt-Kongressen der Landsleu-

te“ seine Idee der „russischen Welt“ propagiert, der all jene, die auch im Ausland in irgendeiner Weise der russischen Sprache und Kultur zugerechnet werden können, ganz besonders aber die Nachkommen russischer Aristokraten mit klingenden Namen. Die Heimholung der sterblichen Überreste des monarchistischen und NS-freundlichen Philosophen Iwan Iljin und des „weisen“ Generals Anton Denikin gehört zu dieser Strategie ebenso wie die Popularisierung der Lehre der Eurasi-er oder die Wiedervereinigung der Auslandskirche mit dem Moskauer Patriarchat. Zur Instrumentalisierung von „Russland jenseits der Grenzen“ gehört heute – wie schon in den 1920er Jahren – nicht nur der Kulturkampf, sondern auch die Unterwanderung durch den Geheimdienst. Es ist wichtig zu verstehen, dass es sich bei dem, was oft als „russische Emigration“ bezeichnet wird, in Wahrheit um eine russischsprachige Emigration handelt. Das zeigt sich heute besonders in der Spaltung der russischsprachigen communities, wenn es um die Haltung zum russisch-ukrainischen Krieg geht.

Wie jedes Exil lebt auch das heutige von der Hoffnung und Zuversicht, eines Tages in die Heimat zurückkehren zu können. Wann dies geschehen wird, kann niemand sagen – wie man an der Geschichte des russischen Exils im 20. Jahrhundert ablesen kann. Auf der russischen Opposition außerhalb Russlands liegt nicht nur die Pflicht, mit dem „anderen Russland“ in Verbindung zu bleiben und diesem eine Stimme zu geben, sondern eröffnet auch die Chance, das Exil als exterritorialen Ort der Reflexion, als privilegierten Ort des freien und furchtlosen Nachdenkens über Russlands Zukunft zu nutzen, das Archiv der russischen Freiheitsbewegung weiterzuführen und die Beziehung Russlands zur Welt, die Putin zerschneiden will, aufrecht zu erhalten. Es liegt aber auch an den Gastländern, die Bedingungen, unter denen dies möglich ist, so gut es geht, zu garantieren. <

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Curating Propaganda: How Russia Weaponizes Museums in Wartime

BY YEGOR MOSTOVSHIKOV

Amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian museums tiptoe and avoid politics at all costs. Meanwhile, the state is aggressively pushing propaganda into exhibitions, arresting artists, censoring work, and rewriting history. Museums in the occupied parts of Eastern Ukraine are also being incorporated into this campaign and used to rewire Ukrainian identity.

In April, the chairman of the Russian Investigative Committee—one of the pillars of President Vladimir Putin’s repressive machine—ordered the establishment of an internal cultural council. Its purpose is to “coordinate the dialogue” between law-enforcement bodies, public organizations, and cultural workers. According to the committee’s chair, Alexander Bastrykin, this is paramount for forming patriotism, civic engagement, and traditional moral values among youth. The proper framing of the Second World War and the war in Ukraine will be one of the main focuses.

This is one of the latest instances of the government tightening its grip on culture and weaponizing museums for wartime propaganda efforts.

In December 2021, three months before the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, GES-2 had a grand opening. This \$130 million pharaonic museum of contemporary art sits just across the Moskva River from the Kremlin. The celebrated Italian architect Renzo Piano, winner of the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize, and designer of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, led the ambitious reconstruction of the twentieth-century power plant in which the museum is. GES-2 attracted some of the best talents from Russia and abroad. It was meant to become a nexus of modern cultural leisure, with workshops, talks, high-end restaurants, a library, and fashion shows. Instead, it ended up as a self-censoring worrywart.

The mesmerizing, spacious building even has its own cinema, birch grove, and ice-skating rink, but lacked the most important part—a message. The art was cute, but hollow.

Before GES-2 opened to the public, its founder, the billionaire oligarch Leonid Mikhelson, who owns Russia’s largest non-state-owned natural-gas provider, hosted a private tour for Putin and Moscow’s mayor, Sergey Sobyanin. Some reports say both were not only unimpressed but also borderline furious with the highbrow hipster haven. GES-2 was never planned to be a political megaphone, but times were changing and even its toothless exhibits were deemed too much.

House of Culture “GES-2” in Moscow, August 2021.



Founding curator-director Teresa Mavica soon stepped down, and Mikhelson started interfering with the exhibit program and content. An artistic workshop on the history of Russian authority was cancelled at the last moment. Some works were removed for “being too provocative”. One performance’s name was changed from “God, Moscow” to “Unnamed”. Shouts and murmurs circulated throughout Moscow. Three days before the invasion, GES-2 announced it had hired a government-relations expert. Once the war started, the museum described itself as “a neutral and apolitical territory where there’s no space for emotional and rash declarations”.

Since February 2022, many of GES-2’s team have left. According to some reports, Mikhelson is constantly pressured by the Presidential Administration to host more patriotic events and tries to walk a tightrope. There were rumors that he was hoping to sell the whole thing. Meanwhile, the museum still stands, hosting several mediocre exhibits and workshops. The coffee is good, though.

The Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, owned by oligarch Roman Abramovich, was not as fortunate. It was shut down for two years after the war started, faced a series of raids by security forces, and endured a siege by pro-war activists.

As the country descended into wartime censorship, a wave of per-

sonnel reshuffling in all the key cultural institutions began.

In January 2023, the Ministry of Culture demanded that the State Tretyakov Gallery update its exhibitions to follow traditional Russian spiritual and moral values. According to a special decree signed by Putin, these values include human rights, patriotism, serving the homeland, family, and spiritual superiority over materialism. The demand came after a complaint from the public that it displayed artefacts of a destructive ideology, and that visits there felt left people feeling overwhelmingly pessimistic, hopeless, and hollow. Within a month, a new head was appointed.

Elena Pronicheva stepped into this role. Born in Melitopol in Ukraine (now occupied), she is an experienced museum administrator and the daughter of a prominent FSB general.

Mikhail Piotrovsky, the long-standing head of the State Hermitage Museum and a vocal Putin supporter, is one of the few firmly holding their ground. He and his son, Boris, who is vice-governor of Saint Petersburg, are heavily involved in cultural policy in Ukraine’s occupied territories.

More than forty Ukrainian museums are now controlled and actively integrated into Russia’s museum infrastructure. Some museum workers decided to collaborate, some were kidnapped and tortured, and most of the museums have new-

ly appointed directors. These are signing partnerships with various institutions across Russia, participating in events, receiving awards, and speaking on state TV.

Mariupol’s obliterated Museum of Local Lore now hosts some exhibits from the Russian National Guard. The Museum of Azov Everyday Life was turned into the Museum of Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin’s propaganda chief, who was a key figure in the Great Purge of the 1930s and was responsible for the repressive Soviet cultural police that terrorized Ukraine’s intelligentsia.

In June 2023, directors of museums in the occupied territories traveled to Tula and participated in talks and lectures to learn how museums in Russia function.

New museums are being established in the occupied territories, all with a single goal: promoting the proper ideology and crafting a new identity. These include museums of Russian Cossacks, the Museum of Russian Icon Painting, the museums of Donbas Labor Valor and of WWII Resistance, and the Museum of Film History. In the first year and a half of the occupation, more than fifty exhibitions were organized across the occupied territories.

The Ministry of Culture states that the proper framing of the war in Ukraine and its historical context are the focal points of its efforts, inside Russia and in the occupied territories.

An internal ministry document—“Methodological Recommendations for Creating Exhibitions Dedicated to the History of the Special Military Operation in Museums of the Russian Federation”—lays out straightforwardly the groundwork for historical and memory revisionism. According to it, Russia considers Donbas and southeastern Ukraine as historically Russian territories, with the 2014 Revolution of Dignity characterized as an illegal coup in Kyiv. The war is justified, the document states, as a means to protect the identity and rights of Russian-speaking Ukrainians.

It therefore comes as no surprise that museums presenting an alternative to the government’s version of history are facing sanctions.

Moscow’s infamous GULAG History State Museum, established in 2001, was shut down in November 2024. Officials claimed this was due to fire-safety violations, but the real reason is censorship. The director of the museum, Roman Romanov, was fired soon after. The story made headlines. Elizaveta Lihacheva, the head of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (one of the main repositories of European trophy art), who publicly defended the GULAG museum and Romanov, was herself fired two months later.

There are rumors that the GULAG museum will be reopened in 2026 under a new head. But it will have to be careful: historical and memory activities are subject to state assessment. The human rights organization Memorial is banned. The annual remembrance day for victims of the Great Purge is banned. Artists get arrested and imprisoned for calling the war a war.

Mikhail Piotrovsky in March issued a lengthy document stating that the mission of all Russian museums is to educate “feelings of loyalty and love for the Homeland through immersion in native culture and national history.” And the cultural council of the Investigative Committee will be there to make sure everyone is immersing themselves in it in the right way. <

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Poland's New Museums, Memory, and Politics

BY ROBERT KOSTRO

The museum boom has been one of the most interesting phenomena in Polish memory culture over past two decades. To some extent, it is an answer to questions in domestic debates. It should be also considered as an adaptation to the “memory boom” observed in Western countries from the 1980s. More recently, with the growing polarization in Poland, museums have tended to fall victim to political and memory disputes.

After the collapse of communism in Poland in 1989, memory politics seemed to be of last importance to consecutive governments. The first decade of democratic transformation was a time when urgent economic needs and political decisions to anchor the republic in the Western community caused interest in history to fade.

The situation changed in the early 2000s. International memory disputes and internal history debates led to the emergence of a new memory politics. In 2004, the conservative mayor of Warsaw, Lech Kaczyński, opened the Warsaw Rising Museum, 60 years after thousands of insurgents of the Home Army staged a tragic and failed attempt to liberate the capital. The new exhibition became an enormous success. It was the first museum of a new type in Poland, with modern exhibitions based on storytelling principles and using multimedia and scenography extensively. The museum also entered the field of culture and pop culture by organizing concerts and theatrical performances as well as attracting visual artists.

But, if one considers the launching of initiatives rather than opening dates, the first manifestation of this new thinking about museums concerned the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.

Shortly after the inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in the United States in 1993, one of the Jewish leaders in Poland, Grazyna Pawlak, promoted the idea that there was a need to create a museum of “Jewish life” in the country. Poland was for many centuries the religious and cultural center of the Ashkenazi Jews, and later a venue where modern Jewish national identity was formed. Meanwhile, in recent decades, many Jews from around the world had come to Poland and visited only Holocaust memory sites while having no idea about the flourishing Jewish life in past ages. An institution recalling the history of Polish Jews was also important for Poles, who often had poor awareness of their country’s multiethnic history and of the Jewish contribution to its culture.

The museum was an initiative of the Association Jewish Historical Institute. In 2004, it signed an agreement to finance the construction with Kaczyński and the minister of culture in the left-wing gov-

Building of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.



ernment, Waldemar Dąbrowski. The museum opened in 2014.

In 2005, the mayor of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz, launched an initiative to organize an exhibition presenting struggle for democracy in Poland and the story of the Solidarność trade union. The founding agreement in 2007 to set up the European Solidarity Centre (ESC) was signed by the representatives of the two main parties—Adamowicz for the liberal Civic Platform and Deputy Minister of Culture Jarosław Sellin for the conservative Law and Justice party—as well by Solidarność and the regional authorities. An architectural competition was launched and, in 2014, the ESC was opened in a new building on the grounds of the former Gdańsk shipyard.

In 2007, the historian Paweł Machcewicz put forward the concept for the Museum of the Second World War. He addressed the issue of the Polish-German memory conflict over forced relocations after the War. Machcewicz argued that the subject should not be discussed separately from German responsibility for unleashing the war and the numerous crimes committed in Poland by the Nazis. A proper way to deal with the past would be by establishing a museum with a grand exhibition to present the war’s complex story. The idea was approved by Prime Minister Donald Tusk and the museum, set up and financed by the Ministry of Culture, opened in Gdańsk in 2017.

Consensus and Disputes

The new museums that opened in the early 2000s were usually created with a broad political consen-

sus. In the cases of POLIN and the ESC, the national government and opposition-controlled local governments were involved. But, in the following years, many memory institutions became the subject of heavy controversy.

In the case of the Warsaw Rising Museum, a debate started after it had opened. The major issue was that the core exhibition presented an apologetic or even enthusiastic vision of the Warsaw Rising, though the memory of the event is divisive. While there is no difference over respect for the combatants, many Poles believe that the decision to start the rising without appropriate armament or support by the Allies was imprudent, and that the museum’s exhibition should present this position too. However, politicians did not intervene in the fierce arguments. The museums’ leadership was also open to discussion and ready to invite various critical intellectuals and artists.

A dispute over the POLIN broke out in 2018 around its Estranged: March ’68 and Its Aftermath exhibition on the antisemitic campaign launched by the communist regime in 1968. In an installation devoted to the language used by the official press at the time, the curators included sentences by some right-wing journalists in current debates that contained antisemitic clichés. The controversy was also fueled by disputes between Poland and Israel at the time. The debate over the exhibition largely contributed to the decision by the minister of culture in the conservative government in 2019 not to extend Dariusz Stola’s term as director of the museum.

In case of the Museum of the Second World War, right-wing pol-

iticians alleged the project presented the German point of view on history by taking the perspective of civilian victims, which did not differentiate between culprit and victim nations. According to critics, the narrative did not include important elements of the Polish experience in the war. After the Law and Justice party won the elections in 2017, the museum’s director, Paweł Machcewicz, was dismissed.

The controversies around the ESC reflected long-lasting memory controversies over the 1980 strikes with the centre and left-wing parties defending the leading role of Lech Wałęsa in that period, while the right-wing parties counterposed to him other strike leaders, especially Anna Walentynowicz. There were also accusations of political influence by Civic Platform on the ESC. Eventually, the conservative government cut state financial support for the institution and the Solidarność trade union demanded that the ESC not use its logo, which is an important symbol of the opposition to communism.

Memory, Museums, and Politics

In his 2000 article, “The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the ‘Memory Boom’ in Contemporary Historical Studies,” the American historian Jay Winter identified crucial elements behind the expansion of the interest for history in contemporary culture. These include the influence of the Holocaust debates, the growing importance of state-organized anniversaries and celebrations, and activities related to identity politics. The affluence of

Western societies after the Second World War was also an important part of the process because it created interest in the consumption of cultural goods, with memory commercialization as one response. The new historical storytelling museums that have developed in many countries since the late 1980s are also a part of that process.

All of the elements pointed out by Winter can be observed also in the museum boom in Poland. The phenomenon is connected with the Holocaust and identity debates as well as with growing affluence. But there is also a special Polish feature: settling accounts with the communist past and a response to and imitation of Western memory practices.

Memory has also become an area of political struggle in Poland and—like the media, foreign policy, and the justice system—it is now an important dividing line. Though memory was frequently used as a political tool in the first decade of this century, an elementary consensus and continuity still prevailed. The divide over memory issues grew under the conservative government in office in 2015–2023, and many hoped that things would change under the new centre-left coalition that came to power in 2023. But, unfortunately, with the dismissal of over 30 directors of museums and cultural institutions in 2024, in most cases respected professionals fired before the expiration of their contract, memory institutions look set to remain a field of political dispute for a long time. ◀

Robert Kostro is the former director of the Polish History Museum in Warsaw. He was a guest at the IWM in 2025.

Making CEE a Place To Go To

BY OGNYAN GEORGIEV

It may be time to revise our image of Central and Eastern Europe, a region that is undergoing considerable and sometimes unexpected change.

If it bleeds, it leads. This cut-throat logic has been the guiding principle of newsrooms across the globe in the past century. Walk into any editorial meeting anywhere and propose to lead with a good-news story, and this will be frowned upon. Those are reserved for the last minutes of any news digest or for the middle pages of a newspaper.

So to break the pattern: here is some unorthodox news about the young people in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). According to the annual *World Happiness Report*, the region (bar Ukraine) saw a massive increase in levels of happiness in 2021–2023 compared to 2006–2010. The 2024 edition has four CEE countries in the top five improving ones. Of these, Serbia had the largest increase, followed by Bulgaria, Latvia, and Romania. “Central and Eastern Europe had the largest increases, of the same size for all age groups,” says the report.

It is largely the young who are driving this change. While in countries like Canada and the United States the 50–60-year-olds are much “happier” than those under 30, in CEE the reverse is true. For those over 60 the gap between the two halves of Europe is about half of what it was in 2006–2010 but happiness levels are now equal for those under 30.

This is remarkable news. It basically means that the “black hole” of depression between the West and Russia, which was the driving force of brain drain and overall sadness is no more.

Yet have you seen this in the news? No.

One reason is that once again a much darker story from the region dominates the narrative. And it has to do, like in previous times, with Russian tanks and people dying in the mud. Moscow’s effort to subjugate Ukraine is also an exercise in owning the narrative for the whole region, as it had done for 45 years during the Cold War—to decide what image those lands project to the outside world. And it is not a positive narrative, to put it mildly.

But there is another way to look at CEE’s future, without the usual bleakness. Take for example another story that did not make the news. After three decades of consecutive loss of population—the longest in recent history for any region without a major war—the tide is starting to turn for the CEE countries. This happened in Romania and Latvia in 2022, when they registered their first population growth since the fall of communism, and in Croatia in 2023. Bulgaria will follow this year and Poland seems to be on the same path. This shows that long-term processes



Reflection of the Széki Palace on the glass façade of the Banca Transilvania headquarters in Cluj-Napoca.

in the region that perhaps had been overlooked are in a positive direction.

Part of that growth comes, of course, from Ukrainian refugees, and on the face of it it may seem that one country’s loss is the gain of others. But delve deeper and you will find that something bigger is afoot.

It started long before the war—with Brexit, which left many CEE immigrants feeling unwelcome in Britain and choosing to go back to their home country. Then came the Covid-19 pandemic, which also drove waves of immigrants homeward. CEE countries are also becoming rather attractive places where wages are going up, the quality of life has gotten visibly better, and low-cost airlines and trains have made it very easy to connect. And these countries are hungry for talent and labor given a decades-long brain drain. The wave of Ukrainians might have pushed the needle into growth but it was already moving.

Look at Bulgaria as an example. It has been losing population since 1985 and the demographic debate there has been largely pessimistic. So it must have come as a surprise that last year the loss was less than 1 percent. On the current trend, it will register growth this year.

One reason is newcomers—Bulgarian and foreign. The growth in their number started in 2020, mostly due to Bulgarians driven by the pandemic, resulting in a net migration gain of 30,000 people. By 2023, things

had shifted significantly. That year, foreign nationals made up over 70 percent, nearly one-fifth from European Union, in a net migration gain of over 41,000. Germans now rank fifth in among newly registered immigrants, behind those from Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, and Syria. Another reason is the increase in the total fertility rate (the average number of children per woman of childbearing age), which is now 1.8, the highest in the EU.

Why Is That Important?

Overall dissatisfaction with life and depopulation has gone hand in hand for quite some time in Central and Eastern Europe. They were so ingrained in the psyche that they became national stereotypes. “The inability to overcome a tragedy, a crisis, a depression makes you her constant hostage,” wrote Georgi Gospodinov, the most famous modern Bulgarian author. Gospodinov, who won the Booker Prize in 2022 for *Time Shelter*, turned the melancholy and the ephemeral feeling of loss into a career.

Imagine what difference it would make if both were to be changed. If CEE, instead of being a place where people come from, turns into a place people go to. I study places that managed to turn around their destiny and the biggest change they managed to achieve was to transform their image.

Cluj-Napoca, the second-largest city in Romania, is a good example. It was a closed-off space in the 1990s and early 2000s. It had a violently nationalistic mayor, who even denied the existence of a Hungarian minority (which makes up more than 20 percent of the population) and no foreign investments whatsoever. That changed from 2004 when a new mayor was elected. In collaboration with the universities and the local business community, they rolled their sleeves to transform the image of the city. And they did. Cluj attracted big names and developed a local IT scene—and it keeps going. It underwent such a rapid and deep transformation that young Romanians and expats from other places in Europe started coming, attracted by the laid-back, university-style startup myth Cluj built.

The capital of Transylvania turned the page, going from a place losing talent to one retaining and attracting it. In the latest European Quality of Life Survey, Cluj was in the top ten cities for residents’ satisfaction with living in their city and in the top three that underwent a positive change in the quality of life.

If you walk the streets of Cluj now, you find them much cleaner, safer, and better than they used to be, but the city of 500,000 has not suddenly turned into Hong Kong or Singapore. It is still the same mid-sized provincial Central European city. The difference is the myth: Cluj

now has a sense of purpose and newcomers have an idea what are they buying into.

Such new myths need a solid foundation of a growing economic well-being and improving quality of life. But money is never enough for a transformation without the will to use it better. What is most needed is a new vision, a reinvention of the city as a place and the political will to give it shape. It is these developments, signs of which are becoming increasingly apparent in CEE, that are crucial in making cities attractive places to live.

All of that is not to say that the troubles of a long-disturbed region are gone. Beyond the disastrous Ukraine war, there are many questions to be answered. How will places used to shrinking react when they start growing with new people? How will a region used to emigration react to immigration? Will everywhere benefit or just the most active and creative places? Is this sustainable or just a phase?

These questions are valid. Yet in an age in which people remain the most important and most precious resource, and determine the development opportunities of a place, having more of them is not a bad starting point for any discussion. ◀

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Political Struggle Is Subterranean and Orbital

BY JULIE KLINGER

Protests in the streets, policy(un)making, and radical changes in the relative freedom of movement of different groups of people are generally considered to be terrestrial affairs. Yet these are often directly and indirectly shaped by access to and power within space-based and space-linked technological systems.

The beating heart of geopolitical theory and strategy is territorial. Just about any territorial process you can imagine is fed by space technologies and the information they transmit. These rely on hardware on Earth or in space. Hardware is comprised of minerals, metals, and materials wrested from the Earth, transformed by human labor, and shuttled through intricate and transnational supply chains. You could say then that the minerals and information flows are arteries that feed the beating heart of geopolitical theory and practice. But most analyses do not take these into account, and a heart without arteries is just a lump of dead flesh. Similarly, I would argue that attempts at political theory and strategy that do not account for these animating mineral flows are likewise dead, deathly, or dying.

This matters immediately for struggles against authoritarianism, not least in meeting the need for political theorization that is equal to the moment, freed from the torpor of treating the present as an aberration. For better and for worse, what was unthinkable a few years or decades ago has come to constitute the normal. It is a normal of awe-inspiring scientific and social progress and possibility, but also a normal of expanding forms of brutality, precarity, and violence. This insight is not new. Michel Foucault's biopolitics and Achille Mbembe's necropolitics dealt with the circulation of values, people, and commodities under neoliberalism, analyzing in different historical moments how people are rendered not only disciplinable but disposable in service of maintaining the circulation of commodities—and, I would add, information. To put it slightly differently, these are supply-chain issues, concerned with the circulation of commodities, and there is seemingly no limit to the physical and ideological demands for their maintenance.

Similarly, struggles to defend and deepen democracy in all its forms coalesce around different manifestations of these issues: sometimes symbolic, sometimes material, sometimes place-based. What may prove helpful in these times is to focus on something concrete, where values and relations shed their immateriality and become something tangible and transformable. Satellites, as one example, epitomize the beautiful and terrible forces marking our



Protesters holding up their cell phones in front of the government headquarters in Hong Kong on September 29, 2014.

present moment because of the divergent interests that inform their development, launch, and use, from scientific cosmopolitanism to for-profit militarism. They vividly illustrate how democratic and anti-democratic visions can be realized through the same technology, an insight that extends through their constitutive supply chains that mobilize the materials essential to turn a blueprint into a functioning technology.

Even after a satellite is launched, its politics remain grounded. Protests in the streets, policy(un)making in offices, and radical changes in the relative freedom of movement of different groups of people all rely on satellite networks for communications, positioning, and intelligence, which embeds them in supply chains that can be traced through transnational labor and trade networks to, eventually, a mine. Neither the technological networks nor the decisions about where and under what conditions to open a mine are neutral matters. Rather, both are active terrains of struggle in which antidemocratic interests have made breathtaking strides. This is manifest in the proliferation of satellites for anti-cosmopolitan ends and the domination of orbital space by a few private firms and their mega-constellations, some consisting of hundreds or even thousands of satellites. All of which have, in specific times and places, favored antidemocratic interests. What hope is there for freedom of movement and commu-

nication—that lifeblood of democracy—if the channels and platforms are controlled by these interests?

It is no exaggeration to say that the defining struggles of our time hinge on access to and power within space-based systems. This parallels long-standing political theory centered on land: security of land tenure and sovereignty over a defined space underpin community power. Where a protected right to refuse what is done on one's land exists, democracy tends to thrive. Dispossession, then, is a loss not only of heritage but also of the legal and institutional vigor meant to guard against such theft.

In the same vein, we can think of the mass dispossession of the right to sovereignty and self-determination with respect to orbital space as another kind of political theft. Not only are we endlessly surrendering data about ourselves and our movements through our interactions with data-harvesting and tracking software built into the satellite-linked apps within digital devices with which the global majority interacts, we are also largely surrendering to the takeover of orbital space and the information and communication networks in it to ever more rapacious and ever less accountable interests, in breach of existing international treaties.

One example of how this manifests itself geopolitically occurred in March 2025, when the United States cut off its military and intel-

ligence support to Ukraine. A private satellite firm had been providing high-resolution real-time satellite imagery to Ukraine, paid for by a US government program. As a private firm, it arguably could have chosen not to comply with the sudden government directive, and chosen instead to continue to provide support while challenging the directive in court. Instead, within 12 hours, it had halted its service to Ukraine, which meant that the country's defense forces were suddenly "flying blind" for everything from drone strikes to long-range missile detection and urban warning systems. A week later, the US government lifted the restriction but did not restore funding for this imagery. The company, valued at approximately \$2 billion, chose to make its imagery available to Ukraine only on a paid basis. This did not change even after the United States and Ukraine signed a minerals agreement in April.

What this situation makes clear is that, even in a time of unprecedented surveillance of the surface of the Earth, and a well-established and decades-old global framework designed to maintain peace to prevent wars of aggression of the supposedly bygone imperial era, states and firms can collude to weaken the self-defense of a sovereign state under attack by an expansionist power. And in this case not even the act of the victim granting preferential access to its territory's geological en-

dowments led to the restoration of support for satellite services.

Restoring peace, democracy, and human rights on Earth cannot happen without attending to how power is exercised in and through subterranean and orbital spaces. Arguably, leaving these spaces outside of the mainline of liberal democratic concern has left them open as a playground for experiments with authoritarianism, violence, and enclosure. Viewed from a supply-chain perspective, these experiments have also been essential to moving materials and information that constituted the lifeblood of liberal globalization: another insight that is not new. But this means that subterranean and orbital spaces have been political arenas for a long time, and it has been a grave error for democratically minded theorists and strategists to consider them as either too far away or too irrelevant to the terrestrial struggles that bring people into the streets, (un)make policies, or involve attempts to redraw national borders.

Grabbing hold of that fact might make it possible to generate the new political concepts, tactics, and solidarities that are equal to the challenges of the moment. <

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Digital Innovation: Myth, Magic, Realities

BY HANS AKKERMANS AND ANNA BON

“We must make sure that we remain in control of technology, and that technology does not assume control over us.”

IWM Rector Misha Glenny spoke these words on the occasion of 40th anniversary of the institute in 2022. Since then, the call for and urgency of democratic control over technology has become even stronger, especially in view of the explosive growth of artificial intelligence (AI) and other areas of what is generally referred to as the “digital transition” or the “digital transformation”. Being able to keep or regain control over technological developments requires a better understanding of the nature of, and the processes and forces involved in, technological innovation.

Images of Innovation

Innovation is a central tenet of policies worldwide, for governments and businesses alike. The traditional view is that it results from a chain of invention-adoption-diffusion processes: the classical linear model of innovation. This portrays innovation, and more generally progress, as a relatively mechanistic, deterministic, and unidirectional phenomenon—a view clearly inspired by the world picture of classical physics. The initial condition, invention, is typically portrayed as due to an individual act of a brilliant man (preferably a genius)—there is a cottage industry of glorifying hagiographies and hero histories about the likes of Nikola Tesla, Albert Einstein, Tim Berners-Lee, or Steve Jobs. The emergence of new technologies is seen as a relatively autonomous driving force.

The same linear view on innovation and progress appeared in the field of global development in the influential book *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960) by Walt Rostow, adviser to US President John F. Kennedy. He postulated a uniform linear progression in five stages, from traditional society where most people live in rural areas as subsistence farmers, to industrialized advanced societies with high mass consumption. Interestingly, Rostow’s global development model claims descriptive and empirical scientific content as an economic theory, at the same time as it is explicitly and intentionally highly political: the subtitle of the book is *A Non-Communist Manifesto*, with the West and specifically the United States as the “hero”.

More recently, another model of innovation has made headway. In this, innovation is thought to result from an organizational ecosystem that produces it with the help of a “triple helix” supporting environment of companies, research and education institutions, and government.



AI / Prompt: Evangelos Keraguris

The guiding metaphor of this innovation model is not classical mechanics but biological evolutionary systems. In contrast to the classical linear model, the ecosystem one recognizes that innovation is not a linear process and that multiple actors play a role, simultaneously competing and collaborating. The innovation ecosystem notion is abundantly present in the research and innovation programs of the European Union, but it also figures in the language of digital Big Tech companies.

Predatory and Extractive Business Models

Around the turn of the century, there were high hopes regarding the liberating and democratizing potential of the Internet and the Web. The ideas and hopes about Internet freedom have been mercilessly criticized in, for example, Evgeny Morozov’s *The Net Delusion* (2011), but it is too easy to belittle them as naïve utopianism. The new capabilities of global information and communication have provided instruments to create many grassroots interactive shared-interest communities, often by techno-enthusiasts—and they still have an impact. Creative Commons, Linux, Mozilla, and Wikipedia are among the best-known initiatives of this kind.

What might be called naïve is the underlying assumption that there is something inherent in a technology that makes it liberating or dem-

ocratic, or not. This is an example of techno-solutionism, the idea that societal problems can be solved by purely technological means. Although quite common in technological innovation circles, techno-solutionism overlooks that technology is tightly embedded in an environment closely packed with all kinds of influencing social, economic, political, and cultural factors and forces. What is more, even if innovative technology has enabled steps forward in terms of democracy, freedom, human rights, or human flourishing, this does not necessarily imply that these are irreversible. Control over technology to some degree can change and shift, and it is subject to societal struggle.

This is what has happened with the advent of the platform and social-media Big Tech corporations. They have amassed monopolistic power, money, and control through business models that Shoshana Zuboff characterizes as surveillance capitalism.¹ Big Tech business policies are also well characterized as digital land grabbing, data mining, and value extraction. In an in-depth analysis of many Big Tech business models, Roel Wieringa shows how these companies exercise tight manipulative control not only over their customers but also over the surrounding ecosystem of companies, with extremely high built-in profit margins. (Read his illuminating insights at www.thevalueengineers.nl/insights) He makes the important point that regulation and con-

trol of technology should be not so much about technology itself, but about disabling predatory and extractive business models.

Technologies of Governance

The Internet and the Web have long been seen as part of the family of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Today, however, one may wonder whether, in view of their further development by Big Tech in social media and platforms, it is not more accurate to see them, including AI, as technologies of governance of people.

Virgílio Almeida, Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça, and Fernando Filgueiras argue that algorithms should be viewed as digital institutions governing and controlling people’s behavior.² These might do so the hard way (deny access; “Computer says No”) or the soft way (nudging social media users toward behaviors that algorithmically and opaquely optimize certain measures related to corporate profit). Jürgen Habermas similarly points out that a new structural change in the public sphere and deliberative politics is taking place.³ Recent political developments show that Big Tech’s economic market manipulation of consumers also enables new digital forms of political manipulation of citizens.

Despite its neutral technical imagery, innovation is prone to magical thinking. While recognizing the usefulness of certain parts of AI, Ar-

vind Narayanan and Sayash Kapoor undertake a debunking mission in their book *AI Snake Oil* (2024), which “uncovers rampant misleading claims about the capabilities of AI and describes the serious harms AI is already causing in how it’s being built, marketed, and used in areas such as education, medicine, hiring, banking, insurance, and criminal justice.” Magical thinking occurs in innovation everywhere, but the two computer scientists single out AI for its history and culture of hype and unwarranted promises.

Current AI offers very good examples of magical thinking and myth-making. AI leaders recently told US lawmakers that more energy is needed if the United States hopes to win the AI race. Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt said environmental considerations should not get in the way of winning the AI race, arguing that AI will solve the climate crisis once the United States beats China in developing superintelligence.⁴ A few years earlier, Schmidt led the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence that argued that the United States has a moral imperative to develop AI autonomous weapons.⁵ The parallels with the militarization of nuclear power and the Cold War arms race are striking. In their propagandistic talk on achieving AI general superintelligence, Big Tech leaders display very distorted views of what it is to be human.

Control over technology calls for continuing scrutiny and debunking of technology snake-oil claims, and for building up relentless pressure for democratic and humanistic values that must be central to any technological development and innovation. ◀

1) Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism. The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (London: Profile Books, 2019).

2) Virgílio Almeida, Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça, and Fernando Filgueiras, “Thinking of Algorithms as Institutions,” *Communications of the ACM*, January 2025.

3) Jürgen Habermas, *Ein neuer Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit und die deliberative Politik* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2022).

4) “AI Industry to Congress: ‘We Need Energy,’” *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2025.

5) “US has ‘moral imperative’ to develop AI weapons, says panel,” *The Guardian*, January 26, 2021.

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Digital Violence, Real Wounds

BY FRANCESCO STRIANO

If someone shares another's intimate images without their consent, publicly humiliates a woman, or threatens and stalks her online, can we really call it just "virtual abuse"? Digital violence has tangible effects: it destroys lives and reputations. And yet, we still struggle to recognize it as real violence. Why?

A man who threatens a woman in the street is considered an aggressor. If he does so online, is he merely a "troll"? Why is digital violence so often perceived as less serious than physical violence? This dichotomy remains deeply rooted in our culture.

Two overlapping assumptions help explain this view. On the one hand, violence is still commonly associated with physical contact—with visible wounds and bodily confrontation. On the other, we are shaped by an often-unexamined prejudice: the idea that the virtual is somehow less real, a shadowy simulation at best.

In my academic work, and more recently in my book *Violenza virtuale. Vita digitale e dolore reale* (Il Saggiatore, 2024), I explore how this second assumption reinforces the first. We continue to behave in digital spaces as though we were moving through a world causally detached from the one we inhabit offline. But what happens through screens and platforms produces harm that is measurable, lasting, and often traumatic.

Digital violence goes well beyond offensive language: it includes cyberstalking, doxxing, image-based abuse, and simulated sexual assault. The real challenge is naming these acts for what they are: concrete threats to dignity, autonomy, and safety, masked by their perceived intangibility.

A Philosophical Mistake

Despite years of digital entanglement, the distinction between "real life" and "virtual life" still shapes how we interpret our actions online. In common perception, the digital remains a separate place—a parallel realm with its own internal logic. Alessandro De Cesaris has called this the "two-worlds model": the idea that digitally mediated interactions belong to a different, somehow lesser order of reality.

This conceptual split has far-reaching consequences, especially in how we respond to violence. If the online world is seen as fictional or derivative, what happens there is easier to dismiss. Yet victims of digital harassment, cyberstalking, and image-based abuse report effects sometimes indistinguishable from those of in-person trauma: anxiety, depression, reputational damage, and, in severe cases, suicide.

What is striking is how disorienting these events still feel, even as they become more frequent. The shock we feel when violence unfolds on platforms—once imagined as free and playful—shows how poorly equipped we are conceptually and

culturally to confront harm in these settings. We continue to treat digital environments as if they were ethically exceptional.

This is the point from which my philosophical inquiry began: not with a theory, but with disorientation. A growing awareness that our conceptual tools no longer match our lived realities, that we are navigating new terrain with outdated maps. If violence now passes as readily through servers as through hands, we need better ways of understanding where we are and what is happening to us.

Beyond Physical Harm

Saying that violence today passes through servers does not mean that it somehow spills over into the real world. That would be to reaffirm the two-worlds model by adding a channel of leakage between them. The point is more radical: what happens online does not cross into the real; it already belongs to it. The distinction between virtual and real collapses not because one intrudes on the other, but because they are co-extensive. They describe different modes of access to the same world.

Still, we continue to treat physical harm as the primary, or even exclusive, marker of violence. This is a limited and ultimately distorting view. Violence operates across a spectrum: it can damage not just the body but also the self. It can isolate, humiliate, destabilize. A striking illustration of this is the 1993 Bungle Affair, which unfolded in the text-based online community LambdaMOO. There, a user programmed a digital object to simulate sexual assaults on other avatars. The interactions were purely textual. And yet the emotional and psychological impact on those involved was so severe that it sparked a community-wide debate on responsibility, consent, and harm.

What emerged from that debate remains crucial today: violence does not require physical contact to be real. It can manifest through code, through language, through presence. It can target subjectivity, erode autonomy, and destabilize one's sense of self. The fact that this can happen in digital space should not surprise us.

Why Is Digital Violence Still Downplayed?

If violence is defined by its effects, not by the medium through which it occurs, why do we continue to see digital forms of violence as somehow less serious?

One reason lies in how disembodied that violence appears. When



Photo: unsplash.com / @cpau

aggression takes the form of text or images, we lack the sensory cues that typically signal threat: a body, a hostile tone, or a physical gesture. This absence creates a perceptual gap—one that makes it easier to dismiss such acts as "just words," as though violence required physical contact to count.

And yet, as speech act theory reminds us, language is never inert: words can humiliate, intimidate, and exclude. When they strike at a person's dignity, identity, or sense of self, they cause harm. Verbal aggression—even in its most mediated, asynchronous forms—can be a form of violence.

The tendency to downplay digital harm has long been attributed to anonymity. But, while anonymity still plays a role, it no longer suffices as an explanation. In an age of hyper-visible digital selves, where users often act under their real name and face, the persistence of abuse points

to something more structural. What sustains it is a deeper moral distancing: the screen not only separates us from others but also disrupts the ethical feedback loops of responsibility, empathy, and response that normally shape human interaction.

Even when we reject the idea that the online and offline are separate worlds, digital space often feels detached from consequence. That, ultimately, is the power of what I call the "virtuality bias": the belief that only what leaves visible, physical scars can count as violence. But digital violence wounds too, even if we have not yet learned how to see those wounds clearly.

Beyond the Law, a Cultural Challenge

If digital violence produces "real" harm, then those who perpetrate it must be held to "real" standards of accountability. What happens on-

line is not a harmless simulation; it is a mode of interaction shaped by its own material conditions as well as by its own enabling and amplifying technological structures.

This is why moderation is necessary but never sufficient. We also need to rethink the cultural frameworks that have normalized violence in digital spaces, beginning with the idea that accountability is somehow suspended the moment we log in.

Law, too, must catch up. In many jurisdictions, such as the United States, the nonconsensual distribution of intimate images is still treated primarily as a privacy violation. In Italy legislation has taken a more serious stance, recognizing elements of threat. But even this may not be enough. What we need is a dedicated legal category for digital sexual violence—one that reflects not only the gravity of these acts but also their distinctive technology-driven dynamics.

Still, legal reform alone cannot dismantle the production of violence. That requires cultural work: confronting the patriarchal norms that continue to excuse or trivialize gender-based harm; questioning the economic logics that make platforms complicit; and building a civic media culture that fosters not just literacy but also responsibility, relationality, and care.

Only by addressing technology, law, and culture together can we hope to reduce the harm and challenge the power asymmetries at the heart of digital violence.

Conceptual Clarity

Recognizing digital sexual violence as real is just the beginning. And, while coordinated responses across the three dimensions mentioned above are needed, addressing it also demands conceptual clarity.

Digital abuse unsettles inherited assumptions about what violence is, how it works, and where it happens. In a world where interactions are increasingly mediated, we need new ways of thinking about action, harm, and responsibility.

This is where philosophy matters: not to retreat into abstraction but to create the tools we need to confront disorienting realities. Without the concepts to name what harms us, we remain defenceless. Naming, here, is not an academic exercise; it is the first gesture of resistance. ◀

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Martin Pollack: Leidenschaft für die Wahrheit

VON LUDGER HAGEDORN

Martin Pollack, der im Januar 2025 verstarb, war eine der großen, bestechenden Stimmen der österreichischen Publizistik und ein wahrer Freund des IWM. Im vergangenen Jahr noch hielt er auf Einladung des Instituts die Michalski-Memorial Lecture. Es war einer seiner letzten großen öffentlichen Auftritte und ein bewegendes Zeugnis seines Schaffens.

Martin Pollack hatte eine Leidenschaft für die Wahrheit. Es gab etwas Starkes, Unerbittliches in seiner Person, das danach drängte, weiter zu fragen, den Dingen nachzugehen, sich nicht zufrieden zu geben mit bloßen Behauptungen, erst recht nicht Lügen und Verfälschungen zu akzeptieren. Diese Leidenschaft muss manchmal schmerzhaft gewesen sein – für andere, vielleicht mehr noch für ihn selbst. Dennoch war sie sein Antrieb und das, was den Weg ebnete für seine journalistische Karriere (u.a. als Redakteur und Auslandskorrespondent für den *Spiegel*), aber auch für sein schriftstellerisches Werk. Sein Buch *Der Tote im Bunker. Bericht über meinen Vater* bescherte ihm im Jahr 2004 im Alter von 60 Jahren einen enormen, auch international viel beachteten Erfolg. Es war der Bericht über die wahre Geschichte seines Vaters, SS-Sturmbannführer Gerhard Bast, ebenso aber eine Geschichte über das Verschweigen und Vertuschen in den Familien wie auch in Österreichs öffentlichen Debatten nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg.

Viele Jahre lang war Pollack Mitglied der Jury für das vom IWM zusammen mit der S. Fischer-Stiftung vergebene Paul Celan-Fellowship, ein Übersetzungsprogramm von wichtigen Werken der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften aus/ in osteuropäische(-n) Sprachen. Seine besondere Expertise, ja seine Zuneigung galt allen Projekten, die mit Polen, Belarus und der Ukraine zu tun hatten. In Polen hatte er eine Zeit lang studiert, und seine emotionale Bindung an dieses Land (wie überhaupt seine Liebe zu Osteuropa) durfte man immer auch verstehen als eine späte und entschiedene Antwort auf seinen Vater, der gerade dort seine schlimmsten Verbrechen begangen hatte. Gleiches gilt für die Ukraine und für Belarus, deren Schicksal er besonders in den letzten Jahren – nach den Protesten in Belarus 2020/21 und dem russischen Überfall auf die Ukraine von 2022 – mit großem Interesse und einem bis zur Erschöpfung gehenden persönlichen Einsatz verfolgte. Sein Urteil, auch in der Jury, hatte Gewicht und wird schmerzhaft vermisst werden. Es war wie all sein Tun: unbestechlich und scharf, aber getragen von einem großen grundsätzlichen Wohlwollen.

Im Juni 2024 hielt Pollack die jährliche Krzysztof Michalski-Memorial Lecture am IWM. Sie war



Martin Pollack, Bundespräsident Alexander Van der Bellen und Bundespräsident a.D. Heinz Fischer, Präsident des IWM, auf der Michalski Memorial Lecture am 14. Juni 2024.

dem gewidmet, was über die Jahre zu seinem großen Thema geworden war: Österreichs teils nicht allzu unwillige, teils begeisterte Teilhabe am Aufstieg und an den Untaten des nationalsozialistischen Regimes sowie all das, was das Land nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg daraus gelernt oder eben nicht gelernt hatte. Es war dies auf gleichermaßen bedrückende wie beeindruckende Weise auch die Geschichte seiner eigenen Familie. Die Aufdeckung dieser Geschichte und all das, was daraus als Aufgabe für weitere Nachforschung sowie nicht zuletzt auch an Verpflichtung und Verantwortung für das Geschehene erwuchs, beschäftigten Martin auch ganz persönlich. Immer aber war sein Fragen dabei so systematisch, dass es wie selbstverständlich auch auf die gesellschaftlichen und geschichtlichen Zusammenhänge ausgriff.

Der abendliche Vortrag in der Bibliothek des IWM, vorgebracht mit der ihm eigenen Disziplin, gezeichnet von seiner Erkrankung, war ein großer und bewegender Moment. Für Martin bedeutete er eine Anstrengung, aber bot auch die gern ergriffene Gelegenheit, seine große Geschichte noch einmal zusammenfassend zu beschwören. „The Long Shadow of a Sinister Past. A Never-Ending Story“, so betitelte er schließlich diesen Vortrag, und die akuten Bezüge auf die Gegenwart waren natürlich mitgedacht. Er war

glücklich über die überwältigende Resonanz, glücklich auch, dass der *Guardian* den Vortrag sehr prominent und mit großem Erfolg in seiner Rubrik „The Long Read“ publizierte. „My family were all Nazis“, lautet der erste Satz dieses Artikels, ein Satz, der sich einbrennt.

Martin Pollack war scharf in seinen Urteilen, auch den Freunden gegenüber. Ebenso galt das für Nationen. Von seiner Liebe zu Polen war schon die Rede. Doch auch die hielt ihn nicht davon ab, die Entwicklungen im Lande seit der Regierungsübernahme der PiS im Jahre 2015 heftig zu kritisieren. Staatliche Institutionen erklärten daraufhin öffentlich, jede Zusammenarbeit mit ihm zu beenden. Ihn, den Botschafter der polnischen Kultur und Literatur, erzürnte das zurecht. Witzigerweise aber war er schon einmal in den 1980er Jahren von der damaligen kommunistischen Regierung in Polen wegen kritischer Äußerungen mit einem Einreiseverbot in das Land belegt worden, und die Erinnerung daran konnte ihm nur Bestätigung sein, wie treffend sein Urteil offenbar war und wie sich die autoritären Reaktionen jeder Couleur ähneln.

Unzweideutig war auch Martins Solidarität mit der Ukraine. Er tat, was immer er tun konnte, um die Debatte in Österreich aus ihrer russischen Schräglage zu befreien (wovon er übrigens nicht zufällig Paral-

lelen und Überlappungen mit dem Diskurs über den Nationalsozialismus sah), um die ukrainische Literatur bekannter zu machen (im März 2022 organisierten wir als IWM zusammen mit ihm und dem Wiener Volkstheater einen Abend mit Stimmen für die Ukraine) oder um ganz praktisch befreundeten Menschen in der Ukraine zu helfen, kulturelle und journalistische Initiativen zu unterstützen etc.

Martin Pollacks Aktivitäten und sein Engagement waren über die Maßen beeindruckend. Als Schriftsteller, literarischer Übersetzer, Journalist und viel gefragte Person des öffentlichen Lebens war er nicht nur Teilnehmer und Begleiter von politischen und kulturellen Entwicklungen, sondern hat diese über Jahre maßgeblich geprägt. Noch im Jahr 2024, als ihm die Krankheit zunehmend zu schaffen machte, war seine Tätigkeit ruhelos. So rief er in diesem Jahr auch zur Solidarisierung mit dem Protest der Künstler:innen und Schriftsteller:innen in der Slowakei auf. Dazu schrieb er unermüdlich Emails. Die politischen Entwicklungen schienen ihm ein Fanal, dem entschieden entgegenzutreten ist. Und ohnehin haderte er mit der üblichen Ignoranz der Wahrnehmung für die Ereignisse in Bratislava, wo doch die Stadt kaum eine Stunde von Wien entfernt ist. Noch etwas ganz Wichtiges geschah aber in diesem Jahr, und es hängt eben-

falls mit der Slowakei zusammen: Es entstand ein Dokumentarfilm, in dem er den Spuren des mörderischen Tuns seines Vaters in der Slowakei folgte. Zur Premiere des Films fuhr er im August 2024 in die Slowakei. Noch ganz unter dem Eindruck dieses Besuches schrieb er mir am 10. September 2024 die folgenden Zeilen. Sie sind, wie Martin war: klar in der Benennung, präzise bei Ort und Zeit (die journalistische Schulung), perfekt bis aufs Komma (auch in der persönlichen Kommunikation) und – so wie diese Zeilen dastehen – Ausdruck seines Charakters und Spiegel seines Lebenswerkes. Er schrieb:

Am 27./28. 8. war ich (...) in Banská Bystrica, wo im Museum des Slowakischen Aufstandes erstmals der Fernsehfilm „Martin Pollack – Blick in den Abgrund“ für geladene Gäste gezeigt wurde. Am 29. 8., dem Jahrestag des Ausbruchs des Slowakischen Aufstandes [im Jahre 1944], wurde er dann im Fernsehen gezeigt. Mit großem Erfolg, wie ich höre und sehe. Für mich war das einerseits schön, andererseits aber natürlich auch sehr anstrengend und fordernd, sowohl physisch als auch, mehr noch, psychisch. Bei der Vorführung im Museum war eine alte Dame dabei, die in der kleinen Ortschaft Bully (bei Donovaly) Zeugin wurde, wie mein Vater und seine Männer Juden und Partisanen erschossen haben. Sie war damals sechs Jahre alt – neben ihr stand ein jüdischer Junge, zwei Jahre älter als sie, der von ihren Eltern versteckt wurde, und die beiden mussten das mitansehen.

Wir haben einander umarmt und geküsst, sie hat geweint, ich habe geweint, es war wirklich beinahe kitschig, aber halt doch echt. Ach ja, mein Lieber, ich bin ja nun wirklich alt und einiges gewöhnt, doch an solche Szenen werde ich mich (Gott sei's gedankt) nie gewöhnen.

Als IWM und ganz persönlich auch als Freunde sind wir tief betrübt über den Verlust von Martin Pollack. Seine unüberhörbare und unbestechliche Stimme ist verstummt, doch wir dürfen uns glücklich schätzen, dass er dem Institut über so viele Jahre eng verbunden war. „Lange Schatten“ erheben sich bedrohlich aus der Vergangenheit, Martins Mut und Leidenschaft aber strahlen herüber und werden uns begleiten. ◀

Ludger Hagedorn ist Philosoph und Permanent Fellow am IWM.

Aussaat und Ernte in den Gärten Sarmatiens

VON ANTJE CONTIUS

Vor einem Jahr, am 23. Mai 2024, versammelten sich Freunde und Weggefährten zu Martin Pollacks 80. Geburtstag in der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Literatur.

Wir kamen zusammen, um ihm zu gratulieren, ihn zu feiern, um ihm zu danken und um mit ihm zu sein. Aus seinen Texten und Übersetzungen wurde gelesen, aus den vielfältigen und vielgestaltigen Zeugnissen seines Jahrzehnte langen Wirkens.

Ein Glück für uns, die wir in diesen hellen und heiteren Stunden dabei sein durften, und die er um sich haben mochte.

Ich lernte Martin Pollack 2004 kennen. Die gerade erst gegründete S. Fischer Stiftung hatte mit ihm verabredet, eine Anthologie mit Texten aus Belarus, Deutschland, Litauen, Polen und der Ukraine herauszugeben, die *Sarmatische Landschaften*. Martin Pollack lud 25 Autorinnen und Autoren ein, über ihr Sarmatien zu schreiben, über jene verschwundene Landschaft zwischen Weichsel und Wolga, Ostsee und Schwarzem Meer, über eine Weltengegend, die zum Mythos geworden ist – Sehnsuchtsraum und gleichsam Ort von Völkermord, Vertreibung und vergifteten Nachbarschaften.

Die Autorinnen und Autoren machten sich an die Arbeit, ihre Texte schlugen den Bogen aus der Vergangenheit in die Gegenwart, leuchten die sarmatischen Mythen aus, fragen nach Gemeinsamkeiten in diesem multiethnischen Gebiet –

und dies mit einer von Hoffnung und Genauigkeit getragenen Haltung.

Martin Pollack war in den Monaten, als die Anthologie Gestalt annahm, viel auf Reisen, recherchierte für ein neues Buch vor allem in Belarus. Von unterwegs schickte er mir Postkarten mit Motiven, die alle irgendwie um Sarmatien und seine postsowjetischen Realitäten kreisten. Auch später erhielt ich dann und wann Postkarten von

ihm, Grüße, Signale – wir sind in den 20 Jahren immer in Verbindung geblieben.

Und immer ging es im Miteinander mit ihm darum, das vermeintlich am Rande Liegende, das vermeintlich Abseitige (zurück) ins Zentrum zu holen. Unermüdlich bemühte er sich, verschwundene Welten wieder sichtbar zu machen, mindestens so wie Sarmatien galten ihm Galizien und Belarus, die Vielfalt der Ukrai-

ne und weitere Teile der polnischen Literatur als dringend auf die literarische und kulturgeschichtliche Tagesordnung Europas zu setzen. Dabei stellte er hohe Ansprüche an die erzählerische Qualität der Texte wie auch an die historisch-wissenschaftliche Genauigkeit. Das Politische allein reichte nicht aus, ging es ihm doch darum, falsche Mythen fundiert zu demaskieren und oktroyierte Tabus zu brechen.

Im Sommer 2020 begegnete ich Ludger Hagedorn. Martin Pollack meinte, wir sollten einander kennenlernen, da die Paul Celan Fellowships im IWM vielleicht ein gemeinsames Unterfangen von IWM und S. Fischer Stiftung werden könnten. Dies ist gelungen. Einige Jahre noch konnten wir gemeinsam mit ihm bei der Auswahl der Stipendiaten agieren, und wir sind entschlossen, dies auch weiterhin im gemeinsamen Sinne, wenn auch ohne ihn, zu tun.

Martin Pollack war ein passionierter Gärtner. Auf seinem Hof in Bocksdorf im Südburgenland gedieh vielerlei Gemüse (eine Freude, ihn über die Qualität der neu-alten Salatsorten schwärmen zu hören), große Streuobstwiesen umgaben seinen Rückzugsort und die Bibliothek. Zum guten Gärtnern gehört wohl zu wissen, wann der richtige Moment zur Aussaat ist, wann ein Setzling gedeihen kann, und in welcher Erde was überhaupt, es bedarf der Geduld, des Langmuts, und es birgt das Geschenk der Ernte.

Am 17. Januar dieses Jahres ist Martin Pollack in Wien gestorben – der große Übersetzer, Mittler, Ermöglicher, der leidenschaftliche Erzähler und unbestechliche Historiker, der unaufdringliche Freund und Gärtner. Wir vermissen ihn sehr und wollen versuchen, die ausgelegten Fäden aufzunehmen und weiter am verbindenden Gewebe zu spinnen.

Im Mai 2025.



Buchpräsentation mit Steve Sem-Sandberg und Martin Pollack: *Die Elenden von Łódź*, IWM Hauptbibliothek, 24. Oktober 2011.

Photo: IWM

Antje Contius ist Geschäftsführendes Vorstandsmitglied der S. Fischer Stiftung.

At heart as straight as the flight of an arrow: Martin Pollack

BY KRZYSZTOF CZYŻEWSKI

He had known for a long time that his cancer was incurable. “But it doesn’t matter,” he wrote in a letter. He continued to console me. “It’s possible to live with it, just not sure how long. I’m not particularly worried about it, but I can’t really plan a trip to you...”

“With me everything is the same as before, well, maybe a little worse... but that’s nothing.”

It was the first year of Borderland’s existence. Phone call. “My name is Martin Pollack. I am a correspondent for ‘Spiegel.’ I would like to come to Sejny, write about you...”

We have often talked about Mikhail Sebastians *Diary*. “How is it possible that intellectuals like Eliade allowed themselves to be seduced by fascism?” At the time, he didn’t yet know about the seduced within his

own family circle and that the question “how is it possible?” would not leave him for the rest of his life, that while searching for an answer to it he would write several books, including perhaps the best of them, *Death in the Bunker. The Story of My Father*.

“Let’s meet at Café Sperl.” In the early 1990s, Vienna became a stop for me on frequent trips to the former Yugoslavia. There was a war going on. Martin gave part of his apartment to refugees from Bosnia. At a table in a café he had his office. The waitress brought him not only fresh press from the world, but also private correspondence. The table was marble, so with a clatter *Melange*, a glass of water and *Apfelstrudel* appeared on it. After I finished the story of my trip with Tadeusz Mazowiecki to Tuzla and Mostar, Martin

opened the historical parenthesis for a moment: “At one of these tables sat General Hötendorf, Chief of the General Staff, who was the first to rush to war with Serbia after the assassination in Sarajevo in 1914. And before that, the founders of Viennese Art Nouveau had their table here. In this café, military men and artists did not disturb each other.” Martin had something of Sperl’s traditional elegance about him. However, he was wary as hell of Austrian crotchetyness (in Polish and some other Slavic languages *krotochwilność*), dangerous because it manifests itself—like bipolar disease—with perpetual relapses. “If you have succumbed to the charms of this café,” he once told me on my way out, “don’t forget that one of its owners was named Kratochwil.”

I visited him in Bocksdorf, a house wrapped in vines and an old garden, in the heart of Burgenland, near the border with Hungary. Throughout the night, he told me the story of the Nazi father he had just discovered. “Extremely fanatical, violent, ready for anything,”—he quoted from the files of police pursuing war criminals. “It’s good that you stopped by. It’s hard to bear this alone...” The voice of an extremely good-natured man reached me.

Not long ago, he sent me an appeal: “We want a Europe of freedom and peace. Instead, nationalism is coming to the fore. Intolerance spreading. Hatred is becoming louder, violence is entering everyday life. Fear of the other, the foreign, is stoked and turned into political capital. The cry for a strong hand resounds. Corruption is undermining the foundations

of societies. There is an erosion of the rule of law. Social achievements and hard-won rights are threatened. Freedom and peace are no longer taken for granted. The time is coming to send a signal!” “You know yourself whether to sign or not”—he added. When signing then, I was thinking of Europe. Today I’m thinking of Martin. He was like that appeal—at heart as straight as the flight of an arrow.

Your identity, Mr. Pollack?

Freedom.

Who do you stand for?

For solidarity.

How do you live?

In truth.

Martin...

Krzysztof Czyżewski is a Polish author and one of the initiators of the Borderland Foundation in Sejny.

Das Archiv des Instituts für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen

VON KLAUS NELLEN

Die Frage des Archivs „ist eine Frage von Zukunft, die Frage der Zukunft selbst, (...) eines Versprechens und einer Verantwortung für morgen.“ (Jacques Derrida, Dem Archiv verschrieben)

Schon länger angekündigt, macht das Archiv des Instituts für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in diesem Jahr seine Bestände zugänglich für Forschung und journalistische Recherche.

Es ist mittlerweile das dritte Archiv am Institut. Das erste wurde in den 1980er Jahren aufgebaut und versammelt die Werke des tschechischen Philosophen Jan Patočka (1907–1977). Das zweite wurde nach dem Tod des Institutsgründers Krzysztof Michalski (1948–2013) eingerichtet und enthält seine philosophischen Schriften; es wurde 2019 eröffnet. Beide werden von Ludger Hagedorn geleitet.

*

Lange Zeit bewahrte das IWM seine Akten im Keller des Institutsgebäudes auf, ohne dass über eine Katalogisierung dieses über die Jahre beträchtlich angewachsenen Bestandes nachgedacht worden wäre. Der Blick war in die Zukunft gerichtet.

Der frühe Tod des Institutsgründers 2013 war ein Anlass, innezuhalten und zurückzublicken auf die bis dahin geleistete Arbeit – ein Kapital, das es zu bewahren und einzusetzen galt.

Dafür sprach nicht zuletzt, dass das IWM 1989, wenige Jahre nach seiner Gründung, zu einem Ort nicht nur der Reflexion, sondern auch der Mitgestaltung der dramatischen Umbrüche wurde, die ganz Europa verändern sollten. Der Übergang zu Demokratie und Marktwirtschaft in Mitteleuropa, der schließlich in der Erweiterung der Europäischen Union mündete – dieser komplexe und schwierige Prozess wurde in den zahlreichen Projekten des IWM aus jener Zeit wie in einem Hohlspiegel reflektiert. Die Papiere des Instituts dokumentieren so nicht nur dessen Geschichte, sondern stellen selbst historische Dokumente dar.¹

Unter dem Rektorat von Shalini Randeria einigte sich das Kollegium des IWM schnell darauf, die Unterlagen des Instituts zu bewahren, zu ordnen und in ein Archiv zu überführen. Dieses sollte zum einen als institutionelles Gedächtnis dienen, zum andern sollten seine forschungsbezogenen Bestände für alle Interessierten öffentlich zugänglich gemacht werden.

Die Archivarbeiten wurden von Hanna Fischer, Bibliothekarin des IWM, begonnen und liegen seit 2018 in den Händen ihrer Nachfolgerin, Katharina Gratz. Die umfangrei-

chen Archivbestände des Instituts wurden in einer Tektonik gegliedert, die weitgehend der Struktur und Chronologie des IWM folgt. Dabei haben wir uns zunächst auf den Zeitraum 1982 (Gründung des Instituts) bis 2013 (Tod des Gründers) beschränkt.² Die Struktur war bis 2013 relativ einfach: die meisten Aktivitäten des Instituts lassen sich Forschungsschwerpunkten zuordnen, die jeweils von den Permanent Fellows betreut wurden. Die Chronologie kann sich auf ein dichtes Berichtswesen stützen, das bis 2015 praktisch alle Aktivitäten des IWM lückenlos dokumentiert (Jahresprogramme, IWM Newsletter und die Nachfolgerin IWMpost, Tätigkeitsberichte und IWM-Websites).

Im Mittelpunkt steht der die Forschung betreffende Teil des Archivs, der chronologisch nach Forschungsschwerpunkten gegliedert ist. Hinzu kommen u.a. die damit weitgehend korrespondierenden *Veranstaltungen* (Konferenzen, Workshops, Vorlesungsreihen, Vorträge, öffentliche Debatten, etc.) und die *Publikationen*.

Ein weiterer Teil des Archivs ist die *Korrespondenz*. Der umfangreiche Briefwechsel des Gründungsrektors wurde chronologisch und alphabetisch abgelegt und wird derzeit katalogisiert. Weitere Korrespondenz findet sich u.a. in den jeweiligen Projektordnern.

Nicht zuletzt verfügt das IWM über eine unter der Ägide von David Souček erstellte umfangreiche Veranstaltungs-Dokumentation in Gestalt eines Archivs von *Photographien*, die eingescannt und in einer Datenbank katalogisiert wurden, sowie eines Archivs von *Tonaufnahmen*, die digitalisiert und ebenfalls katalogisiert wurden. Die entsprechenden Digitalisate sind in einem online-Archiv gespeichert, das u.a. auch die oben genannten *Chroniken*, Dokumentationen sämtlicher *Websites des Instituts*, *Working Paper-Reihen* sowie andere Quellen enthält. Darüber hinaus wurden die 50 Nummern der von 1990 bis 2017 erschienenen Zeitschrift des Instituts, *Transit – Europäische Revue*, digitalisiert; sämtliche Artikel sind auf der IWM-Website zugänglich.³

Die Papier-Dokumente wurden in der Regel in Aktenordnern abgelegt und aufbewahrt. Diese Ordner wurden so, wie sie überliefert sind, den Kategorien der Tektonik zugeordnet und mit entsprechenden Si-

gnaturen versehen, auf die sich die künftige Forschungsarbeit am Archiv beziehen kann.

Das bisher Gesagte bezieht sich auf physisch überlieferte Dokumente. Ab den 1990er Jahren wurde ein wachsender Teil der Unterlagen nur noch elektronisch auf dem Server des IWM abgelegt. Hier wurde eine erste Sichtung vorgenommen. Die Erstellung eines *Archivs der digitalen Dokumente* bleibt der nächsten Phase der Archivarbeiten vorbehalten.

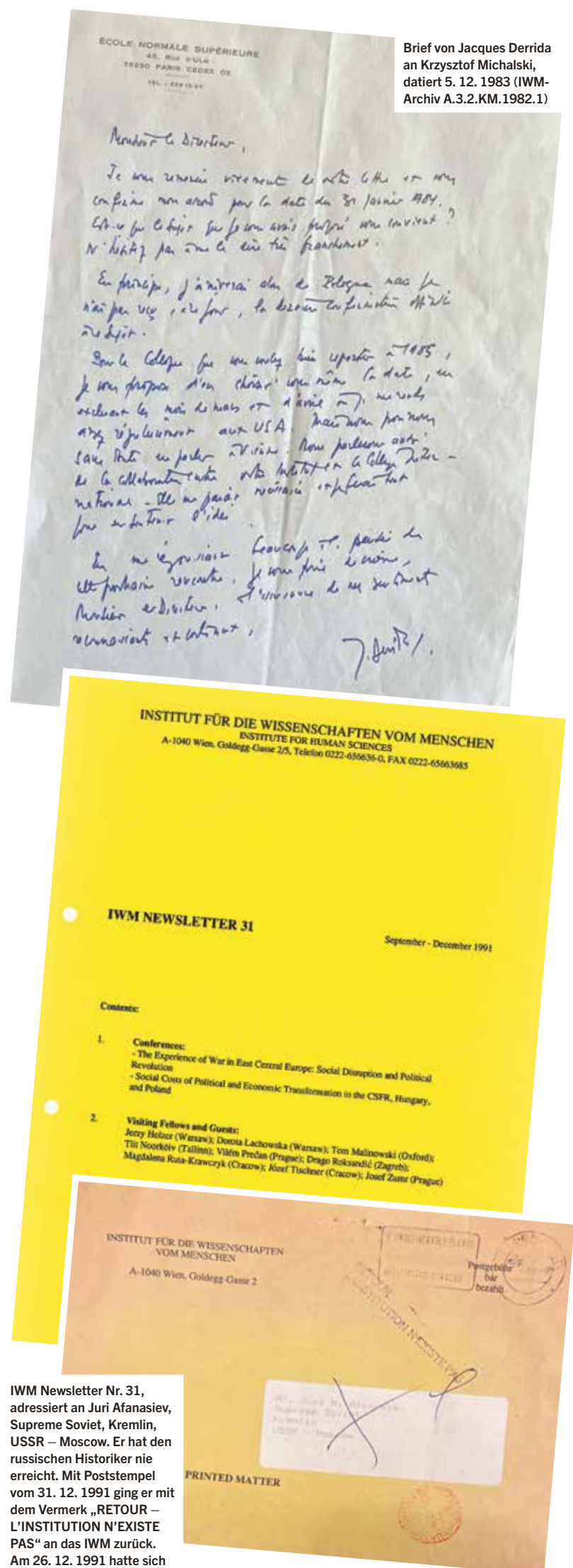
*

Seit einiger Zeit ist das Archiv aus seinem Schattendasein als verstaubter Ort des Vergessens getreten. Denker wie Foucault oder Derrida haben einen „archival turn“ eingeleitet, der unsere Wahrnehmung dieser Institution tiefgreifend verändert hat. Man kann es nicht besser sagen als Aleida Assmann, die vom Archiv als Labor des Neuen spricht.⁴

In diesem Geist sind die Archive am IWM konzipiert als Orte lebendiger Forschung. Kürzlich wurden Krzysztof Michalskis Reflexionen zu Nietzsche in deutscher Übersetzung publiziert,⁵ und letztes Jahr erschienen die Schriften Jan Patočkas zu Europa und Nach-Europa.⁶ Das Instituts-Archiv enthält einen reichen Fundus an Materialien, die noch der Erschließung harren. Und vielleicht wird eines Tages, gestützt auf diesen Bestand, eine intellektuelle Geschichte des Instituts für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen geschrieben. <

- 1) Exemplarisch wird dies durch eine Foto-Ausstellung illustriert, die Kate Younger und Ludger Hagedorn 2022 am IWM kuratierten. Sie zeigte Bilder und Diskussionsausschnitte einer vom IWM organisierten Konferenz, die 1990, kurz nach der Wende, unter dem Titel „Central Europe on the Way to Democracy“ stattfand und die neue Elite Mitteleuropas mit westlichen Politikern und Wissenschaftlern zusammenbrachte.
- 2) Projekte, die in diesem Zeitraum begonnen wurden, wurden bis zu ihrem Abschluss aufgenommen, auch wenn dieser später lag.
- 3) www.iwm.at/publications/list?category_id=40
- 4) www.festwochen.at/das-archiv-als-labor-des-neuen
- 5) Krzysztof Michalski, *Die Flamme der Ewigkeit. Eine existentielle Interpretation Nietzsches*, herausgegeben von Ludger Hagedorn, Piotr Kubasiak und Klaus Nellen, aus dem Polnischen von Thomas Weiler, Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2022.
- 6) Jan Patočka, *Europa und Nach-Europa*, herausgegeben von Ludger Hagedorn und Klaus Nellen, Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2024.

Klaus Nellen ist Mitbegründer und ehemaliger Permanent Fellow des IWM.



Brief von Jacques Derrida an Krzysztof Michalski, datiert 5. 12. 1983 (IWM-Archiv A.3.2.KM.1982.1)

IWM Newsletter Nr. 31, adressiert an Yuri Afanasiev, Supreme Soviet, Kremlin, USSR – Moscow. Er hat den russischen Historiker nie erreicht. Mit Poststempel vom 31. 12. 1991 ging er mit dem Vermerk „RETOUR – L'INSTITUTION N'EXISTE PAS“ an das IWM zurück. Am 26. 12. 1991 hatte sich die Sowjetunion aufgelöst...

Misha Glenny continued from page 3

Australian telecoms consultancy Idem Est, “Starlink’s global satellite coverage is deeply intertwined with geopolitics, highlighting the growing intersection between technology and international relations. Its expansive satellite network raises critical concerns about digital sovereignty, especially due to Elon Musk’s decisive control over its operations.”

Like all Musk’s companies, SpaceX and Starlink have benefited from massive direct and indirect state subsidies. The same is true of Thiel’s major contribution to Total Information Awareness: Palantir. The company manages and processes data for governments and corporations around the world, offering surveillance and digital control over systems and people. Its former employees and advisers have secured several key positions in the Trump administration,³ including the director of the White House information systems, Gregory Barbaccia.

The immense influence of Starlink and Palantir complements the domination of global network infrastructure by other American companies, including Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure, Google, and the world’s largest cybersecurity companies. They provide the digital infrastructure on which almost the entire economies of Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America depend—except for China, Iran, Russia and North Korea. As we saw with Trump’s decision to switch off US digital intelligence to Ukraine, these companies are prepared to follow instructions from the White House in an instant.

The influence of SpaceX and Palantir have led to much speculation about what Musk’s team of teenage hackers has really been doing with the data that DOGE has—in its own words—been investigating for compliance with Trump’s policies. A whistleblower at the National Labor Relations board has claimed that DOGE members started illegally exfiltrating data from the agency. These materials could contain highly sensitive information on “unions, ongoing legal cases and corporate secrets”.⁴

Private companies like the ones controlled by Musk and Thiel have never had such extraordinary access to classified information. The Thielverse has the ambition to outlast the Trump presidency. Striving to deploy Total Information Awareness around the world and infiltrating every nook and cranny of the United States’ national security infrastructure looks like its chosen path. <

1) Gil Duran, “Curtin Yarvin celebrated in San Francisco—and at ‘Harvard’”, *The Nerd Reich*, April 22, 2025, www.thenerdreich.com/curtis-yarvin-celebrated-in-san-francisco-and-at-harvard/
2) “Curtis Yarvis Says Democracy Is Done. Powerful Conservatives Are Listening”, *The New York Times*, January 18, 2025, www.nytimes.com/2025/01/18/magazine/curtis-yarvin-interview.html?searchResultPosition=1
3) Julien Devaureix, “The Architects of CHAOS: Peter Thiel, Master of the Game”, *LinkedIn*, February 26, 2025, www.linkedin.com/pulse/architects-chaos-peter-thiel-master-game-julien-devaureix-irf7f/
4) Jenna McLaughlin, “A Whistleblower’s Disclosure Details How DOGE May Have Taken Sensitive Labor Data”, *NPR* (April 15, 2025), www.npr.org/2025/04/15/nx-s1-5355896/doge-nlr-elon-musk-spacex-security

Misha Glenny is rector of the IWM

Publikationen des IWM

Maria Todorova
Der Balkan: Mission Possible
Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, April 2025, 328 S., aus dem Amerikanischen von Andreas Wirthensohn, herausgegeben am Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (IWM-Vorlesungen), ISBN 978-3-99136-092-6.



Mit ihrem Buch *Der Balkan: Mission Possible* zieht die Historikerin Maria Todorova nach jahrzehntelanger intensiver Beschäftigung mit dem Balkan Bilanz. Das Buch, das auf den IWM-Vorlesungen beruht, die die Autorin im Oktober 2024 in Wien gehalten hat, kann als Begleitband zu ihrem maßgebenden Werk *Die Erfindung des Balkans* gelesen werden. Es besteht aus drei Teilen, deren Titel, ähnlich dem Buchtitel, von der

Actionfilmreihe *Mission Impossible* inspiriert sind. Der erste Teil zeichnet die Anfänge und den Niedergang des Balkans sowie den *Fallout* dieser Entwicklung nach, und geht auf einige der Versäumnisse und erlangten Erkenntnisse der vergangenen Jahrzehnte ein. Todorova versteht den Balkan als vergängliches Gebilde, und spürt seiner wechselhaften Geschichte nach, von seinem Aufkommen über sein absehbares Ende als geopolitisches Konstrukt bis hin zu seinem Vermächtnis als Signifikant. Der zweite Teil beschreibt die verschiedenen Ansätze zur Erfassung dieses sich bewegenden Objekts (*Dead Reckoning*) und konzentriert sich insbesondere auf die Frage der Tauglichkeit von Post- und Dekolonialität als jüngsten Ergänzungen der Balkan-Epistemologie. Im dritten Teil (*Rogue Nation*) wird ein drastischer Perspektivwechsel vollzogen. Anhand von Kurzbiographien relativ unbekannter Personen aus Bulgarien mit unterschiedlichem sozialem Hintergrund werden die Macht und die Fallstricke des „Framing“ aufgezeigt.

Thomas Haigh
Jenseits der Genies: Geschichten aus der IT-Arbeit
Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, erscheint im Oktober 2025, ca. 96 S., aus dem Amerikanischen von Andreas Wirthensohn, herausgegeben am Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, ISBN 978-3-99136-108-4.

Wenn die Geschichte des Computers erzählt wird, geht es oft um große Vorbilder. Einige Männer – zunehmend auch Frauen – werden als geniale Pioniere des

digitalen Zeitalters stilisiert. Mit diesem kleinen Band hinterfragt der Historiker Thomas Haigh die Superhelden-Geschichten, die Büchern wie Walter Isaacsons *The Innovators* zugrunde liegen. Was er dem gegenüberstellt, sind vier tiefenscharfe Beobachtungen zur Computerarbeit der 1970er bis 1990er Jahre.



Ausgehend von der Diskussion klassischer Werke und Repräsentationen der Computerentwicklung liefert Haigh eine alternative Perspektive von Leben und Karrieren in der IT-Welt. Die digitale Revolution, so sein Argument, vollzog sich Schritt für Schritt, getragen vom Zusammenspiel vieler ganz gewöhnlicher Menschen.

Vienna Humanities Festival 2025 On Edge / Unbehagen

Individuals and societies alike are on edge as the world is changing in unexpected and deeply unsettling ways. What we witness today may very well be a Gramscian interregnum where the old order has collapsed but the new one still struggles to be born. The morbid symptoms of this crisis are becoming apparent at nearly every turn, leaving us anxious and confused.

Life-changing technological innovation is advancing at an often unpredictable pace. Liberalism is under sustained attack as is faith in basic scientific principles. Compassion seems to be going out fashion in favor of brutal transactional values. Can humanity remain human under such strenuous circumstances?

The political, economic and social changes have been so swift that there is a temptation to surrender to a complexity that is hard to untangle. Yet this emotional labyrinth also challenges us to find a way out: by facing uncomfortable realities, unpicking intricacies, and standing up for a better tomorrow.

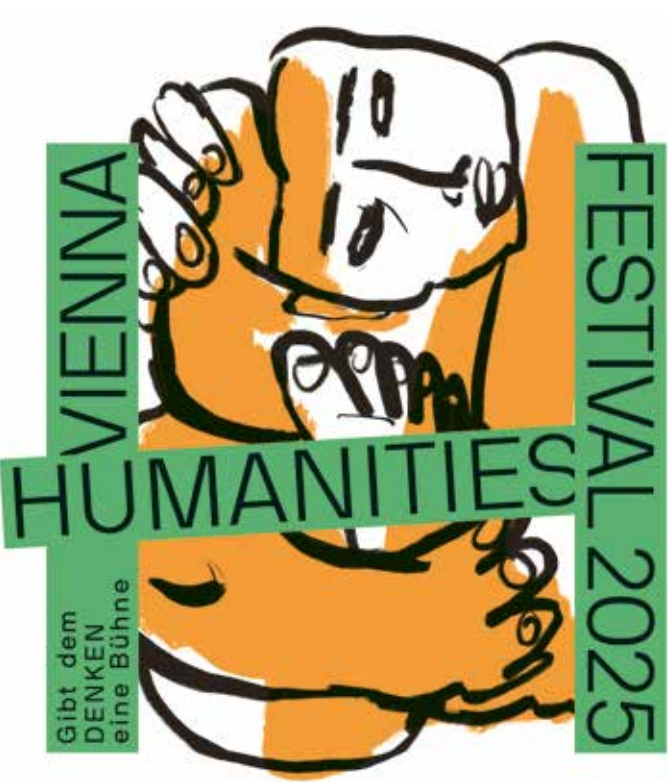
In a series of enlightening discussions with some of the greatest thinkers of our time, the Vienna Humanities Festival will explore the political, ecological, technological, economic and philosophical dilemmas that may appear overwhelming but perhaps contain the seeds of renewal and change.

The festival program consists of keynote speeches and weekend talks.

KEYNOTES

“The German Peasants’ War of 1525”
with **Lyndal Roper**
A lecture followed by a conversation with Misha Glenny
Wednesday 24. 9. 2025, 18:30
Wien Museum

“Love Troubles: How Love Drives Transformation” with **Federica Gregoratto**
A lecture followed by a conversation with Dessy Gavriloვა
Thursday 25. 9. 2025, 19:00
Wiener Vorlesung im Radiokulturhaus



© Das grafische Büro, Marcel Neundörfer / Illustration: Blagovesta Bakardjeva

“Central Europe and the Birth of Modern Sovereignty” with **Natasha Wheatley**
A lecture followed by a conversation with Matti Bunzl
Friday 26. 9. 2025, 18:30
Wien Museum

“Who Can Speak? Reflections on Social Movements and Their Limits”
with **Didier Eribon**
A lecture followed by a conversation with Ivan Krastev
Saturday 27. 9. 2025, 19:30
Volkstheater

WEEKEND TALKS

with **Naomi Alderman, Perry Anderson, Lydia Cacho, Julian Casanova, Tobias Haberl, Leonie Haiden, Michal Hvorecký, Catrin Misselhorn, Yascha Mounk, Esra**

Özyürek, Sergey Radchenko, Markus Reisner, Rob Riemen, Tomas Sedlacek, Kai Strittmatter, Andrea Tompa, Ayşe Zarakol, Hannah Zeavin, Jens Beckert, Victor Blüml
Saturday, 27. 9. 2025 and Sunday 28. 9. 2025
11:00–18:00
Akademie der bildenden Künste

The Vienna Humanities Festival will take place from Wednesday September 24 to Sunday September 28, 2025.
This festival is a cooperation between the Institute for Human Sciences and The European Network of Houses for Debate “Time to Talk”. More information and an schedule of events will be available on the Festival and IWM websites: www.humanitiesfestival.at and www.iwm.at

Books by Fellows

Mischa Gabowitsch / Mykola Homanyuk
Monuments and Territory: War Memorials in Russian-Occupied Ukraine
Vienna, Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2025, 238 p., Memory, Heritage and Public History in Central and Eastern Europe, ISBN 9789633868225.



From the very first weeks of Russia’s large-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022, Russian soldiers, politicians, and proxy administrators expended considerable effort interacting with monuments on newly occupied territory. Why did the invaders care enough about war memorials to divert scarce resources to destroying, maintaining, or building them amid a massive war? Why did they remove some memorials and spare others? What was the point of commemorating past victories and defeats while bombing Ukrainian cities, and how did commemorative ceremonies in the occupied territories change over the first year of the war? What was the broader impact of monument-related practices beyond the local settings in which they occurred? And what does the Ukrainian case teach us more generally about how memorials to past wars can be used to justify new conquests? These are some of the questions this book explores, based on fieldwork in occupied Ukraine and online research.

Saa Dittoh, Anna Bon, Hans Akkermans (eds.)
Integrating Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge for Sustainable Food Systems in Africa—The Plug-In Principle.
Cham: Springer Nature, April 2025, Sustainable Development Goals Series, 211 p., eBook-ISBN: 978-3-031-85512-2, Open Access: link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-85512-2.



This open access book presents a novel approach to food security research (SDG-2 Zero Hunger) by integrating indigenous and scientific knowledge. Through extensive field-based research in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, and South Africa, it explores the impact of merging traditional practices and local knowledge with scientific methods.

Through field studies, the book shows the value of local knowledge and community-led innovations in combating hunger, achieving food security, and enhancing nutrition sustainably and food sovereignty. Drawing on decades of research in rural Africa, the authors introduce the “Plug-In Principle”—a theory for integrating indigenous and modern knowledge systems to foster sustainable agricultural practices and enriched food ecosystems in Africa.

The Plug-In Principle advocates that advancements in science and technology should enhance rather than replace existing indigenous knowledge. This principle emerged from the failures of many development interventions where attempts at replacement often led to challenges and failures. In agriculture, for instance, interventions in mechanization, soil amendments, seed and breed improvements, and extension services have seldom succeeded due to a lack of integration with existing practices.

The Plug-In Principle emphasizes that effective knowledge integration hinges on a deep understanding and appreciation of prevailing systems. By designing interventions that seamlessly “plug-in” to existing technologies, we can ensure the co-creation of effective solutions to the challenges we face. This book is a testament to the potential of collaborative innovation in fostering sustainable development.

Migration und Demokratie

VON LEA YPI

Am 15. Mai hielt Lea Ypi auf dem Wiener Judenplatz die diesjährige Rede an Europa. Die Politikwissenschaftlerin beschwor den kosmopolitischen Geist der Aufklärung und forderte, dass Demokratie nicht auf kulturelle Zugehörigkeit reduziert wird.

Seit langem versagen liberale Gesellschaften an vielen Fronten. Lassen Sie mich nur drei nennen. Erstens, das Versagen demokratischer Politik: eine immer größer werdende Kluft zwischen Repräsentierenden und den Repräsentierten; ein Parteiensystem, das zunehmend wie ein Wirtschaftskartell funktioniert; eine Beziehung zwischen Politiker:innen und Bürger:innen, die dem Verhältnis eines Unternehmens zu seinen Konsumenten ähnelt.

Zweitens, ein Versagen in Sachen sozialer Gerechtigkeit: ein Wirtschaftssystem, das nicht dazu in der Lage ist, die Bedürfnisse der Schwächsten (Staatsbürger:innen und solche, die es nicht sind) zu erfüllen, das Funktionieren dieser Wirtschaft im Sinne aller zu gewährleisten und Mechanismen zu entwickeln, mit denen den organisierten Interessen von Oligarchen, Großkapital, wohlhabenden Gönnern, digitalen Unternehmensplattformen – kurzum, allen, die mit ihrem Geld politischen Einfluss erkaufen – entgegengetreten werden kann.

Drittens, ein Versagen der internationalen Solidarität; die Unfähigkeit, eine alternative Vision für eine Weltordnung zu entwerfen, inklusive einer Reform internationaler Organisationen, die tatsächlich die Interessen von schwachen Menschen wie Staaten repräsentieren; eine Weltordnung, die auf Kooperation und nicht auf Gegnerschaft beruht.

Die globalen Ungleichheiten, die zu asymmetrischer Migration führen, ergeben sich aus diesem komplexen Bild der Welt.

Das Problem besteht darin, dass wir ein Gesellschaftsmodell gewählt haben, das menschliche Beziehungen den Marktzwängen unterordnet. Eine politische Gemeinschaft, die diejenigen, die nicht zu ihr gehören und Zugehörigkeit nicht für sich einfordern können, für ihr Versagen verantwortlich macht, vermeidet es, sich ihrer Verantwortung zu stellen: Sie kann weiterhin den Schwächsten die Schuld geben und so tun, als habe sie Lösungen parat, sobald „das Andere“ keine Bedrohung mehr darstellt.

Das Versprechen der Rechten lautet: Sobald die Frage der Zugehörigkeit beantwortet worden ist, werden sich sämtliche Konflikte unserer Zeit in Wohlgefallen auflösen.

Migration ist jedoch nicht die Quelle des Problems, sondern lediglich das Symptom einer Krise. Und darin liegt das Versagen der Alternativen. Politischer Fortschritt ist zu einer Frage über die Regulierung der Bedingungen politischer Zugehörigkeit verkommen. Migration wird deshalb als Problem wahrgenommen, weil politische Zugehörigkeit



Photo: GEORG HOCHMUTH / APA, picturedesk.com

als Lösung gesehen wird. Der Krieg der Kulturen ist deshalb so bedeutsam, weil es dabei um die Überwachung der Grenzen einer sozialen Gruppe geht, inklusive der Frage, wer in ihrem Namen sprechen darf. Wenn wir keinen Weg finden, anders über dieses Problem nachzudenken; wenn wir es nicht schaffen, die Rolle der Kultur und ihre Verbindung zur Demokratie und das Schicksal der Demokratie im Kapitalismus neu zu denken, ist es nur schwer vorstellbar, dass wir es schaffen eine Lösung zu entwickeln, die der Rechten nicht in die Hände spielt.

Und dennoch ist es nicht schwer, den Migrationsdiskurs der Rechten zu dekonstruieren. Grenzen als solche sind kein Problem, denn Grenzen waren schon immer (und werden es immer sein) für einige offen und für andere geschlossen.

Um dies deutlich zu machen, schauen wir uns zwei vorherrschende Tendenzen der jüngsten Zeit an. Der erste Trend betrifft die Ärmsten der Armen. Abgesehen von den aktuellen Bestrebungen, internationale Normen verletzend, abgelehnte Asylsuchende in Drittstaaten auszuweisen, ist der Weg zur Staatsbürgerschaft selbst für reguläre Migrant:innen nicht mehr gerade unkompliziert. Von Mindesteinkommensanforderungen für die Erlangung der Aufenthaltsgenehmigung bis hin zu Sprach- und Integrationsprüfungen bei der Beantragung der Staatsbürgerschaft können sich diese scheinbar harmlosen Maßnahmen in schier unüberwindbare Hindernisse verwandeln, die Neuankömmlinge

dazu verdammen, in ihren Aufnahmegesellschaften dauerhaft Mitglieder zweiter Klasse zu sein. In dieser Hinsicht ist Migration nichts anderes als ein Krieg gegen die Schwächsten. Menschen, die kein politisches Mitspracherecht haben, lassen sich viel einfacher ausbeuten.

Der zweite Trend betrifft die sehr Wohlhabenden. Für sie sind Grenzen heute offener denn je, tatsächlich ist es immer einfacher geworden, eine Staatsbürgerschaft zu erwerben, indem man sie schlicht kauft. Zeitgleich mit der Veröffentlichung von Videos durch das Weiße Haus, in denen irreguläre Einwanderer beim Besteigen von Abschiebeflügen buchstäblich in Ketten gelegt wurden, kündigte Donald Trump an, reichen Personen, die Golden Green Cards beantragen, den Aufenthalt in den USA und einen Weg zur Staatsbürgerschaft für 5 Millionen Dollar verkaufen zu wollen. Das ist kein Einzelfall. Weltweit steht Finanzinvestoren, Immobilienentwicklern und Individuen, die bereit sind, sich gegen eine erhebliche Gebühr einen anderen Reisepass zu erkaufen, ein beschleunigtes und betreutes Verfahren zur Erlangung der Staatsbürgerschaft offen.

Beide Trends verweisen auf eine radikale Kehrtwende hinsichtlich unseres Verständnisses von Identität und Zugehörigkeit. Die Hoffnung der Sozialdemokratie im frühen 20. Jahrhundert bestand darin, dass die Demokratie zu einer Abschaffung von Klassen-, Geschlechter-, „Rassen“- und anderen Unterschieden führen würde. In den Worten des

Gründungsvaters der Sozialdemokratie, Eduard Bernstein: „In der Demokratie lernen die Parteien und die hinter ihnen stehenden Klassen bald die Grenzen ihrer Macht kennen (...)“. Das Wahlrecht machte Bürger:innen zu Mitstreiter:innen in dem kollektiven Unterfangen, das Wohl der politischen Gemeinschaft als Ganzes zu fördern. Es war der Beginn eines Zeitalters, in dem Schranken in Bezug auf Eigentum, Alphabetisierung und Fachwissen infolge der politischen Mobilisierung für eine Ausweitung des Wahlrechts beseitigt wurden.

Im goldenen Zeitalter der Ausweitung des Zugangs zur Staatsbürgerschaft versprach Demokratie, die politische Gemeinschaft von den potenziell destruktiven Auswirkungen des Klassenkonflikts zu heilen; im Zeitalter der Einschränkung des Zugangs zur Staatsbürgerschaft kann dieser Kampf nicht länger von Institutionen mediert, er kann nicht länger über die herkömmlichen Kanäle der politischen Teilhabe eingeleitet werden. Wenn die Staatsbürgerschaft einigen wenigen vorbehalten bleibt und zu einer Ware wird, die gekauft, veräußert und getauscht werden kann, wird Demokratie zu einer Form der Oligarchie. Dann wird die Staatsbürgerschaft von einem Instrument der politischen Emanzipation zu einem Instrument der Unterdrückung.

Weder in den offiziellen Grundsatzpapieren der Sozialdemokratie noch in den Wahlprogrammen der Linksparteien scheint es darum zu gehen, Maßnahmen zu entwickeln,

die diesem aktuellen Trend entgegenwirken und Abhilfe schaffen könnten. Die Degradierung der Demokratiepolitik zu einer Ethnopolitik und die Reduzierung von dem universellen, progressiven Ideal der Staatsbürgerschaft auf ein partikularistisches, konservatives Konzept schreitet weitgehend ungehindert voran.

Was ist nötig, um eine wirkliche Alternative zu entwickeln? Man darf nicht mitspielen. Man darf nicht zulassen, dass Demokratie auf Zugehörigkeit und der politische Konflikt auf einen kulturellen reduziert wird. Man muss die Frage der Migration im Kontext umfassender sozialer Ungerechtigkeit sehen, als hervorgebracht vom Niedergang des Wohlfahrtsstaates, gefolgt von der ungestraften Profitgier von Arbeitgebern, die die Armen (ob Einheimische oder Einwanderer) gegeneinander ausspielen. Es ist eine Diskussion darüber erforderlich, inwieweit die Krise der Sozialdemokratie mit einer über Jahrzehnte verfolgten Sozial- und Wirtschaftspolitik im In- und Ausland zusammenhängt, die darauf ausgerichtet ist, das organisierte Kapital zu stärken und die Schwachen zu entmündigen, und nicht mit der Zunahme kultureller Konflikte.

Das Problem besteht nicht einfach in der Existenz von mehr oder weniger offenen Grenzen, wie manche das Migrationsdilemma gerne darstellen. Das Problem ist, dass Exklusionsmechanismen innerhalb von Staaten wie zwischen Staaten einander dabei stützen, einer im Kern unhinterfragten Wirtschaftsordnung zu dienen und sie weiter zu stärken. Die Praxis, die Staatsbürgerschaft an die Reichen zu verkaufen und den Zugang zu ihr für diejenigen zu beschränken, die über geringe materielle Mittel, Bildung oder Bürgerkompetenzen verfügen, verrät viel über das Verhältnis zwischen dem Kapitalismus und dem vorgeblich demokratischen Staat. Wenn wir die Art und Weise, wie wir diese Beziehung begreifen, nicht ändern, werden wir auf eine schiefe Bahn geraten, wobei zuerst die irregulären Migrant:innen dran sein werden, dann die ansässigen Nicht-Staatsbürger:innen und schließlich die Bürger, die Mohamed und Abdallah heißen, genauso wie früher die Goldschmidts und die Levis. Ist es so schwer vorstellbar, dass das geschehen könnte? Können wir sagen, dass wir so etwas noch nie erlebt hätten? <

Der vorliegende Text ist ein Ausschnitt aus Lea Ypis Rede an Europa. Aus dem Englischen von Katharina Hasewend.

Lea Ypi ist Professorin für Politische Theorie an der London School of Economics. 2024 war sie Gast am IWM.