

"Hello Melancholy ..."

"Writing for Central- and Eastern Europe 2005"

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One Europe!



Two years have now passed since the face of Europe radically changed following the accession of ten new Member States to the European Union. This change without doubt pushed the continent in the right direction: a united Europe offers a unique opportunity to break down the barriers erected over many decades and to continue a joint history that has evolved over centuries. One of the most effective means of dismantling these barriers, prejudices and perhaps even fears is free and comprehensive information and communication.

This is one of the reasons why three years ago Bank Austria Creditanstalt together with Austria's national news agency, Austria Presseagentur, created the journalism prize "Writing for Central and Eastern Europe". We also consider this project to be a manifestation of the long-standing traditions of both companies in this part of Europe. The then Creditanstalt, one of the predecessor institutions of Bank Austria Creditanstalt, opened its first branches in the Czech Republic and Hungary immediately after it was founded in 1855. Today, Bank Austria Creditanstalt is a member of the new UniCredit Group and is responsible for the markets of Central and Eastern Europe.

After the initial prizes in 2004 went to journalists from the Czech Republic and Germany, this time round I am delighted to be able to congratulate a Bulgarian journalist, Diana Ivanova, on winning the 2005 award. Through her work she has given us all very specific and personal insight into relations between the East and the West. However, at the same time she stands for a Europe that is continuously growing. As a Bulgarian, she represents a country that will be one of the next nations to be accepted into the European Union family.

I do hope that you will enjoy reading this collection of excellent articles we have put together from journalists right across Europe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hampel', written in a cursive style.

Erich Hampel
Chairman of the Managing Board of Bank Austria Creditanstalt

APA as CEE Agency



Writing for CEE. Writing for Central and Eastern Europe. The motto of the journalism prize awarded annually by APA – Austria Presse Agentur and Bank Austria Creditanstalt (BA-CA) is indeed programmatic for the journalistic work of the Austrian news agency. We cover not only Austria, the European Union, and the world. In addition to covering international and Austrian events in the areas politics, economy, local history, culture and sport, which is the major part of our work, we have increasingly been focusing on the states of Central and Eastern Europe and Southeast Europe for years.

Based on an idea of our jury member Ambros Kindel a network of correspondents was built in the course of the nineties, covering countries like the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. Later this network was extended to include Poland, Scandinavia and the Baltic Nations of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. In 2007 Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine will be included.

In doing this APA developed its own approach. We do not send staff to these countries and – with the exception of the EU office in Brussels – we do not maintain correspondents' offices either. We hire qualified journalists from the target countries, who cover their respective country for APA comprehensively and authentically. In the Vienna headquarters we have colleagues who specialise in these states and speak their languages. Our APA team includes colleagues who are able to work in the languages Czech, Slovakian, Hungarian, Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, Polish und also Russian.

The journalist award "Writing for CEE" is in a way the continuation of APA's years of endeavours towards coverage from this area. The annual award forms a harmonious whole with an important part of our daily work. APA sees itself – also – as CEE agency.

As in the preceding year the high quality of the works chosen by jury was impressive in 2005 again. The winner of the award – the prize money is 5,000 euros – is the Bulgarian journalist Diana Ivanova, who presented very personal notes on the East-West relationship. In 2004 Lubos Palata, head of foreign affairs at the Prague paper "Lidove Noviny", won the award; the German journalist Stefan Jacobs was awarded a recognition prize of the jury.

Journalists from the countries of Central and Southeast Europe will be invited to compete for the "Writing for CEE" award in the future, too. The goal of the award is to encourage the journalistic discussion of questions of European integration.

The jury has chosen not only the winner but also an interesting selection from the texts submitted. The collection of editorial works presented in this brochure is a demonstration of a highly topical and profound journalism which impresses and sets us thinking.

Enjoy yourself reading.

Michael Lang
Chief Editor

“Hello Melancholy”

The name of the winner of the journalism award “Writing for CEE 2005” is Diana Ivanova. Born in Montana, Bulgaria in 1968, she studied journalism and mass communication as well as cultural anthropology and art management. She worked as radio and TV journalist and was awarded a Bulgarian prize for best TV short presentation in 1993.

Diana Ivanova did a lot of travelling in Central and Eastern Europe. She spent one year of studies in Vienna. Her astonishment at the fact that many Viennese frankly admit that they never visited the neighbouring city of Bratislava dates back to that time.

“Mrs. Bulgarian”

The international jury thought the series “Hello Melancholy” Diana Ivanova had filed for the journalism award was marvellous. One of the texts is about a woman from Bulgaria who lives in Vienna, a waitress who seems to have no name but is called simply “Mrs. Bulgarian” by everyone. People who come to the West from the East of Europe not only lose their names, writes the prize winner, but any right to nostalgia as well. In the post-Communist home country there just isn’t enough one might remember nostalgically. What remains is melancholy...

Against the “Obliteration of Individuality”

In her work Diana Ivanova depicts sensitive images of man. It is a subjective view of the world between the East and the West.

At the presentation of the award, which is organised by APA – Austria Presse Agentur and sponsored by Bank Austria Creditanstalt (BA-CA), in November last year, Diana Ivanova convinced the audience not only by the quality of her journalistic work from a language point of view but also by theoretical reflections. Her remark that the subjective view of mankind was the focus of her attention because Marxism-Leninism had abused the term objectivity to “obliterate individuality” won her the audience’s spontaneous applause.

Remnants of the Wall

The guest of honour at the presentation of the award (which includes prize money of 5000 euros) was Milan Kucan, the former president of Slovenia, who praised the prize-winning article as a “text full of emotions”. Mr. Kucan said that the winner had captured the public mood after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe through very personal narrations, and that her writing left nobody cold who lived in Eastern Europe in those times. He said that Diana Ivanova also made us feel “the remnants of the Berlin Wall which still exist today”.

In a keynote address the former president of Slovenia pointed out the importance of European integration and protested against “attempts at dividing up Europe into old and a new Europe”. Mr. Kucan said that the history of Europe showed “that we share a common destiny, that we are interdependent and responsible for each other”. If we had not realized this, the Central European identity could not have been re-established so quickly after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

80 Texts by 60 Authors

In 2005 the prize “Writing for Central and Eastern Europe” was awarded for the second time. More than 80 texts were filed by 60 authors from twelve countries.

In 2004 Lubos Palata, head of the foreign policy department of the Prague paper “Lidove Noviny”, had received the award. The German journalist Stefan Jacobs (“Der Tagesspiegel”, Berlin) had received a recognition award of the jury.

In 2005 the members of the jury were the adviser of the former Czech president Vaclav Havel, Jiri Pehe, the Slovak journalist and documentary film-maker Milan Cernak, the Slovenian writer Joze Hudecek, the Polish journalist Igor Janke, the Hungarian radio journalist Julia Varadi, the international spokeswoman of BA-CA, Ildiko Füredi-Kolarik, and Ambros Kindel, the head of the APA foreign policy department.

“Writing for CEE” in 2006

The prize will be awarded again in 2006. Journalists from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are warmly invited to participate in the contest.

Frau Bulgarin, Ivan Milev and Gustav Klimt

Die Vergangenheit war noch nie so schön wie heute.

From a poster in the Vienna Cafe das möbel.

By Diana Ivanova

The first story I hear from anyone in Vienna is about a woman without a name – she was simply Frau Bulgarin, Mrs. Bulgarian. Suzanne tells me the story while we are having lunch at the Institute for Human Sciences. Her voice is full of loving nostalgia: "Many years ago there was a Bulgarian restaurant at the Guertel roundabout near the Gumpendorfstrasse metro station in the 15th Bezirk. Rila, it was called. This woman [Frau Bulgarin] was the spirit of the restaurant. I never knew her name. She was always in haste, never quite happy with her customers' orders and she dropped the plates on the tables with a bang ... She always wore an apron, to wipe her hands in it. The place was grim and old-fashioned but we all went there because of this grumpy woman – she served the best food in the world at the lowest prices ... But the pub is no longer there ..."

The West – Us and Them

When I travel in Western European countries I see that the *us* and *them* division really exists. I always know when I am in Western Europe – the feeling of nostalgia is not forbidden there.

I have my own theory of a successful Bulgarian expat – it is how good you are at translating your nostalgia for your forbidden past to *them*, the people in the West. You are successful, if you are using these forbidden feelings to your advantage. You are not, if you shut them in and become their victim.

A year ago I met Kinga, a Hungarian from Budapest, at a seminar in Austria. She told me: "It's just great that I don't have to explain everything to you – communism, democracy – there is no end to it, I use so much energy in explanations. You and I can simply talk without these explanations and you know exactly what I mean ..."

I am no longer surprised when I meet West Europeans who know nothing about Bulgaria. It's happened so many times that it's no longer a problem. I don't even have a desire to explain anymore. I simply accept reality, just like Kinga.

But what surprised me in Vienna is that there are plenty of people who know nothing about Slovakia and have not once been to the capital, Bratislava, forty minutes away on the train.

Elizabeth is in her late twenties, a web designer at a software company in Mariahilferstrasse. Wolfgang is 37, an architect, born in Bodensee, Germany. He has lived in Vienna for 12 years. Neither of them has been to Bratislava. At the Institute for Human Sciences I meet other people who have been to Slovakia just once in the last 15 years.

Austria and Slovakia are divided by the Danube but have a common future now – both are members of the European Union. What many people in either country have yet to discover is that there is more than the river that divides them – their memories, their pasts are different. Could it be that these memories can also be points of unification? This question comes to me after I talk with two more people who have rarely or never been to Eastern Europe.

Michail Staudigal and Astrid Svenson know little about Bulgaria. Instead of trying to fill in the gaps in person, I give them the address of a website which I have recently put together with a group of colleagues in Bulgaria. The website, www.spomeniteni.org, is a growing collection of personal stories about Bulgaria's communist period posted by people of different age and background.

Michail is a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Vienna and a post-doctoral student at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The effect of our website on him surpasses my expectations. After reading some of the stories Michail tells me that for the first time he has a feeling that he understands something about his

neighbors, the Slovaks (read the interview with him). “Our knowledge [about Slovakia] was very general. We know that [during the communist period] there was the intelligentsia and the common people. We used to walk along the Danube and Morava and what we saw of Slovakia was a poor wasteland. There were no ordinary people in sight, just soldiers. And factories. This was our image of the country. We never had any details. But it is exactly the details that make all the difference. There was a sense of fear because these soldiers were only 50 meters across the river from us ...”

Astrid Svenson is German, a Ph.D. student in history at Cambridge University. The Bulgarian website stories bring back memories from her childhood. She was born in 1977 in Cologne. Her family has successively lived in the Netherlands, France and Belgium. Eastern Europe for her was ‘as far away as Asia’. She was 12 when the Berlin Wall fell (“I remember a long summer evening in France. My parents were discussing Gorbachev, *perestroika*, *glasnost* with friends who were over for dinner, while I was destroying a bowl of chocolate teddy bears. My father explained to me that this was not a polite thing to do in front of our guests.”) “At school communism was simply absent from our textbooks – with the exception of the communist manifesto, the movement from the 1930s and the Weimar Republic – all heroic images. It wasn’t until later that I realized that the history books and the discussions at home had made me internalize a great contradiction: communism in the 1930s was a good thing but communism after 1945 was a bad thing.” There was little on post-war Germany in Astrid’s history books. “I had a great history teacher but even she had a strange explanation about it: ‘The two parts of Germany have now reunited so there is no more need to discuss their history.’” At the time Astrid accepted this statement but when she went to the university and met with students from Eastern Europe, she realized how influenced her thinking was by Cold War rhetoric. She became more and more interested in recent European history and in the place of her own memories in it. Astrid saw herself in one of the Bulgarian stories on www.spomeniteni.org – the story of a Bulgarian guy who went on a trip to Western Europe and discovered how provincial and isolated his own country was. “This is how I feel when I go back home to Cologne,” Astrid continues. “I’ve had the privilege to be able to travel ever since I was a child. And I always feel the same way when I go back to my parents’ home in a middle-class suburb outside Cologne. There is no excitement whatsoever; life has no pulse in Cologne. I had the same feeling when I returned to my university in Mainz after two years in France. Berlin is the only place that’s different in Germany.”

When we part, Astrid is grateful for the stories ‘you’ve given me’. They’ve reminded her of long-forgotten words, images and smells, and she has shown her feelings to me. I am grateful too.

The Alchemy of Nostalgia

It seems to me that Europe has a trap for Eastern Europeans. If they stay in Eastern Europe, they feel nostalgic for their communist past. If they move to Western Europe, they deny themselves the right of memory and this opens the door to melancholy. It’s painful and there is no easy way around it – I’ve spoken to many Eastern Europeans who feel the same way. The key is perhaps in the words of Eva Hoffman (author of the novel *Lost in Translation*) who wrote after she immigrated to the United States: “To a certain extent you need to rewrite your past to be able to understand it ... If you’ve been cut away from certain parts of it, you tend to see it either through the veil of nostalgia – which is an ineffective relationship with your past, or through the veil of alienation – which is an ineffective relationship with your present ...”

Havelka Café

I keep thinking while I am in Vienna that if you don’t have your own kind of nostalgia, you need to invent it. I am surprised to see layers of nostalgia in the *Havelka Café*.

Any Viennese will be willing to show it to you. The place is barely lit, the chairs squeak, the upholstery is old. But *Havelka* is full of people. Mr. Havelka is at the door showing his guests in. Mrs. Havelka died a few months ago, so you can no longer order her home-made sausages and pastries. People come here to talk to each other. There is no music in the old Viennese cafés and all you can hear are the conversations.

Havelka brings back to my mind the story of Frau Bulgarin, the grumpy woman with the stained apron. It's the most authentic story about a Bulgarian immigrant anybody ever told me in Vienna. The questions keep coming: why have we buried these stories, why are we running away from our past?

Havelka is about nostalgia, you can savor all its nuances here. Nostalgia is made up of nostos – return, and algia – pain. There must be two types of nostalgia. One insists on nostos, on return. It is the dangerous type, the one that makes you oblivious of the present. The other, the curative type insists on algia – on reconnecting with pain and accepting it as an existential inevitability. It was St. Luke who said: "Pain is a story that exists in the whole world."

Ivan Milev, Adriana Czernin and Gustav Klimt

In Vienna I also meet with Adriana Czernin, a successful Bulgarian artist who has lived in the Austrian capital since 1990. Adriana is another person who makes me think that the 'translation' from 'our' language into 'their' language is yet to happen. That East and West are still divided.

I come across Adriana's works at the prestigious Albertina Museum, as part of the exhibition *Seven Women – Contemporary Austrian Art (October 2004 – April 2005)*. I look at her paintings and I think I recognize that she, like me, is also trying to reconnect to an elusive, nebulous past. Her work reminds me of my own fears: that I have no common 'Balkan' memories with the Serbs (see Prague: Hermelin and Depression), that my memories of communism are different from those of the Czechs and the Slovaks, that my nostalgia for the past has nothing in common even with the feelings of my own fellow countrywomen (see Lyutenitsa, Rholik and Vaclav Havel). I fear that I've been left alone with my own memories and that I will be able to make sense of them only if I go through them one by one. Only then will I be able to connect to other people.

I really enjoy talking with Adriana Czernin after seeing the show. She was born in 1969, just a year younger than I am, and I find we have a lot in common. She also tells me a story I am not sure what to think about. Here it is.

Many of the critical reviews of her work compare it to the Jugendstil and personally to Gustav Klimt. I ask her if this is intentional.

"Not really. But there is an interesting story behind it. Someone who has had a great influence on my style is the Bulgarian painter Ivan Milev. He is completely unknown here but he created his own, very personal version of Jugendstil in Bulgaria 10–15 years after the style was introduced in Vienna. I really admire his work. I used to have a book with reproductions of his paintings which at the time I studied with great attention. I was fascinated by the decorative elements, the interplay between foreground and background which confuses you and makes it impossible to tell which is which. Years later when I saw Klimt's works in Vienna I thought that Ivan Milev had more force, more tragic energy than Klimt and that Klimt's paintings are somehow more decorative. So if there is a connection of my works to Klimt, it is through Ivan Milev. ... Curiously, when I started painting in this style in Vienna no one thought to compare them to Klimt. But someone made this comment in the United States, where I took part in an exhibition of contemporary Austrian artists at Mass MOCA, Massachusetts. And the Austrian media picked up ..."

I ask her, if she has told anybody – the journalists, the critics – in Austria anything about Ivan Milev. "Not really." "No one is interested?" "I don't know ..." she replies.

This is what confuses me – Ivan Milev has been replaced by Gustav Klimt and this affected no one, absolutely no one. Why?

Polish Sauna

By Diana Ivanova

Vienna-Katowice-Wrocław

The moment you enter Poland everything changes abruptly as though a silent order has been issued – the whole train is filled with people, lots of them, who look hard for a vacant space in the compartments and the corridors, I can feel their clothes against my body, a smell of rain, woolen vests, bread. All the seats in my compartment have been taken, we are sizing up each other, a woman is knitting, an elderly couple is taking sandwiches wrapped in newspaper from a plastic bag, I am trying to read a book in German which arouses curiosity and some of my neighbors try to see the title. A little before Wrocław the woman sitting next to the woman with the knitting asks whether I will be sitting for an examination in German because she is one of the examiners. I smile and shake my head: no, I won't be. The Vienna-Katowice-Wrocław train is almost an exact copy of the Sofia-Vratsa-Vidin train – the "fat train" as it was called – which I often used as a student, a train of 'No Distances between People'. I smile because I can feel familiar things coming.

18 and 1989

How does it feel to be born and live in Wrocław, to have been 18 in 1989 when communism collapsed, to belong to the "generation of winners", as it is called? It feels very, very lonely, says Kamilla who was born in the 70s and has just completed a dozen interviews with people from this category. Kamilla does not suspect that her answer comes as no surprise to me. I myself belong to the same group even though my geography is different. But of course, I am curious, I want to know more. Kamilla is a sociologist and is working on her doctoral thesis on "post-communism as an experiential category and the viewpoint of today's 30-year-old Poles" – the Poles who were 18 in 1989. Why did she choose them? "I wanted to talk to people who grew up during the socialist period and whose system of values was shaped in the 1980s. Besides, these people are said to be the 'generation of the winners'. When they started their careers and adult lives at the beginning of the 90s there was an urgent need for highly educated specialists on the labor market. It is said that they had opportunities like no other generation, before or after them. Personally I think that this is something of a modern myth, so it was interesting to see whether they consider themselves fortunate. And I have to tell you, after all these interviews, that they feel very lonely. They are different from the elderly and different from those who were born in the 80s because they no longer remember anything from the socialist past – the queues for everything, the food rations and the endemic shortages in the shops. Interestingly, no one mentions the censorship, the limited liberties, what they all talk about is the queues ..."

"The helpers" and "the managers"

The people that Kamilla talked to are all from Wrocław. She divides them into two groups – the "managers" who run a business, and "the helpers" – those who help other people (homeless, tramps, beggars, refugees, orphans, etc.). Most of them started out as volunteers and then moved on to a full-time job. When they talk about Poland, the "managers" use the singular "I" and never the plural "We". With the "helpers" it is the other way round.

"The helpers" in Poland are a very large group, as I was able to see for myself during my stay. All my friends and acquaintances were at some point in their lives volunteers. They all talk about Ukraine, the Orange Revolution and about the need to help Ukraine become a member of the European Union. Poland is the country which sent the largest number of foreign volunteers and observers during the elections in the Ukraine, and most of them were very young. This prompted many media to start talking about the rise of a new active civil population which continues the positive tradition of Solidarity in a new direction and with a different style.

“Solidarity”, the soul, vodka, Chopin

“Solidarity” is a controversial word in Poland, especially after the failed government by the movement’s political wing in 1997–2001, but it is a name familiar to all. Solidarity is a story told and re-told. There is, for example, an interesting story about the new logo of the country.

Shortly before its accession to the European Union, Poland acquired a new logo designed to reflect the new image and rebirth of Poles. The logo is a merry kite and the name “Polska” in the typical and unmistakable characters of Solidarity. In the process of looking for images, one of the big advertising companies in Poland asked expatriates in Poland to list the words with which they associate Poland. The result was: Solidarity, Chopin, grey and cold, poor, vodka, kielbasa, Catholics, Walesa, conservative, reform, anti-Semitism, Auschwitz, pollution, soul, romantic.

It emerged that apart from Solidarity and the idea of freedom, Poland has practically no recognizable symbols in the outside world. This is why the new logo reflects the style of something familiar and adds to it something new – the kite as a symbol of individual freedom, romanticism, openness, the soul.

My visit to Poland was shortly before the 25th anniversary of Solidarity, the first independent trade union in the Eastern bloc – it was due to be celebrated in August. I remember that back then this was the first time I had felt genuine excitement around me in Bulgaria. There was a joke in the 80s: a woman in a crowded tram asks, “Are there no men here to offer me a seat?” Answer: “All the men are in Poland”. I realize too that this story never ceased to exist, that if you want to live today there is no way you can ignore it, and that your only chance, given at this moment, is to understand its relevance for you.

The positive things

Kamilla showed her interviewees 8 photographs from the 80s and 90s (an empty shop from the 80s, the Pope during his second visit to Poland, the Round Table, Lech Walesa, martial law, Kwasniewski) and let them talk. She thinks she can detect similarities in the way young Poles talk: they refuse to talk about the Pope, refrain from insulting Walesa, confuse their personal memories with the collective ones (for example, many people say they saw tanks on the streets, even though in most cases they are reporting the words of other people). An important point: they feel the need to remember positive things and even insist on them. One of her interviewees even accused her of sensationalism and refusing to see “the good things about socialism – the glass of milk that was served in schools, the subsidized holidays, the summer camps ...” But I’ve been thinking about this too, Kamilla says, “when I look at the pictures from that time, my life during the 80s and my parents, what do I see? Is this socialism? When I look at pictures taken today what I see is not democracy but the grubby streets, the shabby people, my country.”

I ask her whether her interviews changed in any way her own views of socialism, of life then and today. She does not hesitate: “yes, now I know that socialism is not over yet. We are not citizens yet. We take too many things for granted. Socialism remains deeply entrenched in the way we think and explain reality – we see the social sphere in terms of ‘us’ (society) and ‘they’ (the politicians, the government), and have no sense that we could make a difference, that we have a responsibility to our community. We live in grubby, ugly cities because we don’t care. We refuse to understand that there isn’t anybody else but ourselves.”

Tea with jam and God

The only taste that stays with me from Wrocław is that of tea with jam served in a small glass bowl- “*konfitura porzeczkowa*” ... in the cosy cafe K2 on *Kietbasniczka* Street. As we walked through the city with the canals – my friends said that only Venice and Amsterdam have more canals – I saw a restaurant called “Czech Film” and I asked what that meant. My friends laughed, “When we want to say that something is totally obscure, we call it a Czech film”.

More tea with jam (this time it is *konfitura pomerancova*) and we talk about religion, God, Catholicism. I remember this: "I would go and confess very often, for me the Church was everything until the day when the priest interrupted my confession and said, 'young lady, why don't you find yourself a shrink?'"

Wrocław/Breslaw/Krzymowa/Kreisau

I am trying to imagine what it is like to live in a place where everything has two names and two histories. I am not sure I am succeeding. It seems to me that this kind of thing creates an invisible sensitivity to history which is characteristic of the Poles for whom every narrative has a natural historical twist. There is no need to steer the conversation in that direction, it takes that turn naturally. I am not surprised that Wrocław has preserved a tradition which disappeared in Prague a long time ago and, according to one of my Polish hosts, Irek, is one of the best things about the city – every evening a man on a bicycle lights up the street gas lanterns in the old town.

It seems to me, however, that I am beginning to understand the change of city names as a painful process which is more likely to alienate than befriend you and that to avoid this, you must promise the city to tell it both stories. I now see the change of names of so many Bulgarian cities after 1989, including my home town Mihailovgrad-Montana, in a totally different way: as an alchemical process seeking more to invite you to commiserate with them in their pain than to forget the pain, to embrace rather than reject it.

Sauna in Krzymowa

In the small village of Krzymowa on the outskirts of Wrocław I discover the Kreisau Circle/Der Kreisauer Kreis/ – a group of intellectuals during the Nazi period who had the intellectual courage to stand up to the regime because it was obvious to them that what was happening in Germany was "devastating not only for the cities, but in an even more horrible way for people's hearts and minds". The group tried to find the spiritual routes to help after the evil had struck and met in the mansion of Helmut James von Molke in the village which was then called Kreisau. Most of them were killed in 1944/1945. After the Second World War Kreisau became Polish Krzymowa and in the place of the mansion a socialist farm was built. The end of communism in 1989 gave rise to a joint Polish-German initiative to restore the place as a Foundation for European Understanding where young people from different European countries meet. See www.krzymowa.org.pol.

So I go there invited by my friend Agnieszka who started work there a few months before. One of the first things we did was to visit the sauna at night and then take a walk in the cold outside when everybody was asleep and the only sound came from the flock of crows. Then we took a tour of the Kapelenberg Cemetery, the Molke castle with its veranda for conversations, the permanent exhibition of the history of opposition against all totalitarian regimes in Europe in the 20th century – national socialism and communism. Needless to say, Bulgaria does not feature in this exposition. This is not surprising but it makes me see something else: Bulgaria is absent not only from the minds of western Europeans (as Michael and Astrid tell me in Vienna – see "Frau Bulgarin", Issue 21 of Capital Weekly) but from the map of Eastern Europe's history of freedom. None of my friends associates Bulgaria with "freedom" but more with pleasant things such as the lapping of the sea and delicious food. We are not on the map of freedom but on the map of smells. Irek remembers his parents saying after a visit to the Black Sea coast that Bulgarians have a higher standard of living than the Poles but he cannot unearth a single fact about Bulgaria's recent history from his head. He finds his ignorance interesting and starts questioning me. We had a long midnight conversation about this. We realized that we had both taken it too much for granted that just because our systems were the same, everything else was too. In fact it is not. Both Irek and Agnieszka are very much interested in finding out how things actually were and what legacy we have received. We are chatting away about all this as though we have known each other for years.

Wrocław and Krzymowa may be cold and grey but I leave feeling warm and for the first time I am ready to subscribe to the cliché of the Slavic soul.

Prague: Hermelin and Depression

By Diana Ivanova

"How are you?" I ask. "Mam depku", Karolina replies and reminds me of one of the most common expressions in the Czech Republic. It means 'I have a small depression'.

"Mam depku" is one of the sweetest Czech expressions. It's a friendly wink at depression.

"Mam depku" is a good test for foreigners and expats in Prague. They are on a journey to find a world without pain and they are surprised to hear all this talk about depression in the middle of Golden Prague.

The Czechs have their questions too. Why all the talk about a 'transition period', if "Mam depku" is still one of the most common expressions? Why should everyone be subjected to the change from communism, to post-communism, to democracy, if no one can be any more sure of their place in this process than before?

In the 1970s in one of his famous open letters to Czechoslovakia's then-president Gustav Husak dissident Vaclav Havel wrote: "Little by little we are losing our sense of time. We are beginning to forget and to confuse the chronology of events. We feel that it's all the same after all. This feeling is suffocating us."

In 1989 a more optimistic Havel said: "Time has re-emerged. It's as if we are back in history."

But 15 years later it doesn't take to be an intellectual to know that for Eastern Europe there is no such thing as being going back to a 'clean' history. History is *your* history and *mine*. Or to put it more directly – Prague, Bratislava, Brussels and Sofia have different histories and remember different things.

Isn't that a good enough reason for depression?

In 1997, I loved touring the expensive new restaurants opening up across Prague – French, Scandinavian, Thai and Arab. I loved going to *Doli Bel*, the pub owned by Kusturitsa's friend Vesso Jorem, where my friends and I drank Montenegrin wine for long, noisy hours. We used to laugh at the Czech who went to the cheap and smelly Zizkov and Holesovice pubs where draft beer and hermelin (Czech fungus cheese) were the items *de luxe*. We liked to pontificate that no one can escape the damage of communism. We lived in a Prague of our own – golden, elitist, coldly post-communist. The good-hearted but smelly part of town was dangerous, too full of reasons for nostalgia. Then Vesso Jorem sold *Doli Bel*, opened a new pub – Gitanes, and grew more and more nostalgic ("Yugoslavian socialism was the best kind, it was the greatest time in history"). It was about then when I started to realize that our Balkan memories were not the same, and nostalgia means different things for each of us. It made me fearful in a strange atavistic way.

The 'transition period' is propaganda

"The 'transition period' is propaganda." This statement was made by SAMISEBE, one of the most unconventional sociological projects in Central Europe.

"SAMISEBE is a revolt against mainstream sociology", says Rudolf Schmidt, a photographer in his early 50s who works in the field of 'visual sociology' and has, among other things, photographed scarecrows for the past ten years.

In 1991, eight sociologists born between 1924 and 1963 founded the SAMISEBE (Our Own Selves) association and began researching and recording their own life histories from the socialist period. They decided to turn their biographies into databases and reflect on them together. "The [official] history was full of inadequate concepts and schemes which had nothing to do with our own life experiences", says Zdenek Konopasek, now editor of *Biograph* Magazine.

For five years the eight sociologists subjected themselves to a permanent workshop in which they recorded numerous autobiographical stories. They used different themes. One such theme were the various homes

they had lived in during the period and the circumstances that had brought them to live there ("Every Sunday my husband and I would go to his parents' place for Sunday lunch, to make ends meet. At the time I didn't like that and it's only now that I see that MY PARENTS-IN-LAW were pleased to be making a contribution to our life and that it made them feel they were needed."). Another theme was everyone's life between 7 and 9 in the morning ("My sister and I used to let the dog come to our bed in the morning. I vaguely remember that one day my parents found that the quilt was torn to pieces. They were not pleased."). Stories were also collected about the meaning of the communist party for each of the authors ("When I was shouting 'Glory to the Party' and 'Long Live the Party' at demonstrations, I had no idea the pioneers' organization [of which I was a member as a child] was related to the communist party.")

The message of this Czech experiment is that our past and present are interrelated, that post-communism is rooted in communism and that

the definitive farewell to our communist past is simply not happening.

"You would think that the 'transition period' is a way of connecting the past and the present, of transforming communism into post-communism. But in practice, the ideology of our time isolates the present from the past and distorts the relationship.

Our autobiographical approach makes up for this. It draws the attention to apparently insignificant details [of our past]. The more fragile and intangible they are, the more important they are to us.

We don't think the definitive farewell to our communist past in the name of the great transformation of Eastern Europe is happening.

We have every reason to believe that the people, words and things in our 'societies in transformation' should be traced to a variety of ages, genres and styles."

Ruhla Watches

Ruda, as Rudolf Schmidt is known among friends, is a wonderful cook and likes to tell stories about scarecrows. The first thing he remembers when we start talking about socialism is *Ruhla* watches, formerly made in the German Democratic Republic. He remembers the humiliating customs checks performed by the Czech authorities on the Czech-German border – the watches were illegal imports in Czechoslovakia, as were *Salamander* shoes. I, too, have a story with *Salamander* shoes. In 1984, upon return from my first German language camp in Schmalkalden, I triumphantly brought no less than three *Salamander* pairs to Bulgaria. Different stories, different genres and styles.

A "Reflective" Revolution?

The SAMISEBE project was a harbinger of a true 'reflective' revolution which is sweeping through the Czech Republic. The revolutionary media are film, the Internet and oral history. I discuss Jan Hřebejk's recent films with Vesselin Vachkov, Editor-in-Chief of *Lidové Noviny*. He says Hřebejk's films make use of "therapeutic nostalgia": "These are the most successful [Czech] films of our time. They are set in the 1960s and the 1980s – Pelický, Pupendo ... The Czechs call them *laskava komedie*, loving satires – there is a sense in them that our lives were sad, absurd and unbearable but they are also worth a laugh."

Another clear sign of 'revolutionary' upheaval comes from the book publishing world. In 2004 "In the Labyrinth of the Revolution" by political historian Jiri Suk received the prestigious Magnezia Litera Award and became the talk of the whole country. Suk, born in 1966, was surprised by his book's success and by the fact that there were no heated discussions of his main arguments, i.e. that the so called Velvet Revolution of 1989 was completely chaotic and that no one was ready for it (best prepared were the members of the communist elite, least were the dissidents). These arguments are not new but Suk has substantiated them with numerous facts and documents and this is what makes his work ground-breaking.

These arguments are also supported by the work of the five-year-old Centre for Oral History in Prague. The Centre has recently funded two large-scale research projects – one of them, called “A hundred Student Revolutions”, studied the student demonstrations of 1989; the other recorded the family histories of Czech dissidents and communist party functionaries. “The truth is that Czech society never had communist and dissident ghettos as many people now believe. There were numerous small islands of freedom where people lived as best they could. These people were not heroes, they did not listen to Radio Free Europe, but they didn’t collaborate with the regime either. It is also true that Czech dissidents did not find an appropriate language to speak to these [ordinary] people”, says Miroslav Vanek, Director of the Centre.

Why do we need new interpretations of the past?

Paradoxically or not, the current president of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus is also part of this new wave of post-communist reflection. “I absolutely don’t agree with the idea that communist society was made of two distinct ingredients: a small group of heroic rebels and the rest of the people – the collaborators”, he says in an interview in *Hospodarske Noviny* in November 2004. “It simply wasn’t like that. We need to be looking not just at the intentions of the communist party but at the reality of the system. The two were diametrically different. I spent 48 years of my life during socialism and I was actively observing the political process throughout most of them. I don’t share this view of communist society. Communism was a social system with a life of its own. It wasn’t an asteroid which came from the skies and brought about unseen, unexpected changes. Although we did not have any modern analytical literature to help us in the process, we studied various dictatorial regimes of the past and tried to make sense of our own system through them ... We were greatly inspired by the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset and his book *The Revolt of the Masses*, written before the time of communism and fascism. When I read it, I thought it gave a fair description of the foundations of our system.”

Of course, there are those who are suspicious of the motifs behind this view: “Klaus is saying this to counterbalance the gravitational field that Havel still generates despite his withdrawal from active politics. Klaus also made a few small concessions to the communists during his presidential campaign which helped him win the presidency. But the fact that he is *talking* about the socialist period, the very fact of this discussion is good”, says Vesselin Vachkov.

The demons we share

Martin Smok is a documentary film maker. He is my age, 37. I met him at a party in a friend’s apartment in Vinohradi. He worked as a senior consultant at Steven Spielberg’s Visual History Foundation in Los Angeles for two years before returning to the Czech Republic. “I came back because I had work here but also because I did not understand the way people live in L.A. I thought I was on Mars, I simply didn’t know what was going on around me. My time in L.A. changed the way I view myself and I realized I needed to live in Prague. I understand the people here. People in the West don’t have the kind of memories and experiences that I have and it’s difficult for me to get along with them 100 %. [For example] here in the Czech Republic we all grew up playing with just five types of toys – there just weren’t more ... in this stupid socialist country. And these are the things we all share, these memories. We share the demons of our common past, the same hang-ups.”

What are the demons of *my* past and who shares them with me? Do we, Bulgarians, share our own unique demons? Unexpectedly, these questions seem to acquire an exceptional importance. In search of answers I came across more surprises in Prague ...

Fight for survival – The European way to Islam

By Fatmir Alispahic

The spirit of a united Europe should build its cohesion on the furthest points of its identities. European Muslims are undoubtedly one of these extreme points, not by themselves, but certainly portrayed by the media in this way. Europe needs direct contact with European Muslims in order to stop the misleading impressions introduced by intellectual smugglers. Only in this way Europe can recognize that, in relation to the imperatives of a European future, there is no difference between them and us.

Is it possible that an Islamic youth magazine from Sarajevo, which was accused of being “radical”, can speak in the name of a United Europe? Is it possible that a secular author who was judged as a “leader of an Islamic revolution” can say that Muslims, who have been living in the Balkans for centuries, have no other way than living in tolerance with their Christian neighbors. We can be passionate advocates of European ideas, but we are Muslims in Europe and “the role of mujahedin has been reserved for us” in the spectacle after September 11.

Bosnian Muslims want a dialogue with Europe. But, there is no dialogue. Instead, Europe is trying to sell us its monologue. Muslims are Europeans by right, but Europe has its prejudices about that. Financial predominance determines the media and the intellectual obstacles to developing a dialogue. European Muslims’ thoughts are not able to reach Europe. From a global perspective, Bosnians, just like other small nations, are an object rather than a subject of their own destiny.

Even if there is a way to reach critical European minds, that road is covered by “trade bushes” and prejudices, whose removal would really disclose thoughts that Europe may not like to hear.

Europe in a ghetto

Introducing trade and globalization logic into intellectual freedom resulted in the formation of archetypal discourses, such as: Europe is a cradle of Christianity and Muslims are subtenants, temporarily paying rent, and Muslims are black, dangerous, irrational; we determine who they are, they do not determine who we are; we are invited to cultivate them, democratize, teach them the culture of dialog, even though we talk and they listen; they do not have prejudices about us, and we do not have prejudices about them, because we travel by planes and they ride on camels ...

What should we do about scientific facts? Bosnian Muslims are Southern Slavs who have been living on European soil for more than thousand years. They have a light skin tone, blue eyes and blond hair that is almost Germanic. They have European social habits. They are deeply imbued by their surroundings and they imbue their surroundings.

Bosnians have been adherents of Islam for 600 years and they have no intention of abandoning their religion or leaving their homeland. Should this be a problem at all?

However, Bosnians are the only Europeans living in an unofficial ghetto. Serbs and Croats living in Bosnia and Herzegovina have obtained dual citizenship and passports from neighboring countries and they are European citizens. Bosnians have only got a B&H passport and, due to the visa regime, they prefer to stay in a ghetto than spend hours waiting in front of European embassies in Sarajevo for every single “trip to Europe”.

The feeling of living in a ghetto during this period has created a conviction among Bosnians that Europe sees them as a foreign body. Even though they are aboriginal Europeans, they feel like victims of a “hierarchy of race and civilization”, in the way colonialism was defined by Gil Arman in 1910.

Post colonial practice is not applicable in Bosnia, since: neither can Europe colonize itself, nor can Bosnians de-colonize themselves from their homeland. However, Europe exercises similar precaution towards Bosnians as to other nations of the Third World.

The parallels between the Warsaw ghetto for Jews, reservations for Native Indians in America and this ghetto consisting of 24 % of B&H territory inhabited by Bosnians are very suitable for comparison. In all three cases colonial discourses had determined the destiny of the oppressed nation. And we are still talking here about a dialog, which cannot exist without the participants being equal. We talk about the spirit of a United Europe, which would not exist without its unity of differences in a time of intercultural intertwining and redefinition of identities. We talk about tolerance that cannot exist without destroying prejudices. How can Bosnians get involved in a dialogue with their surroundings, while involuntarily being kept in a physical and spiritual ghetto? And, how do European institutions intend to promote the principles of unification, freedom and equality towards the only nation in Europe put inside a ghetto?

Trade textually

There is always an awkward situation when ugly reality impinges on an elegant proclamation. Therefore elegant proclamations need to be spoken about elegantly. That's why united Europe finances different projects for embellishing proclamations. It is likely that those proclamations would suffer when faced with a critical evaluation. This is wrong, totalitarian politics. Pointing out realities that have been overlooked can only strengthen proclamations.

There are many democratic idlers in Bosnia raised by Europe. Only ideologically suitable media, projects and intellectuals have been receiving funding and support. Profit has become part of the democratic field, and freedom, which has been developed according to ideological marketing, is not freedom. There is a race to achieve European criteria and affinities. It suffices that democratic idlers in Bosnia find that introducing so called "Islamic terrorism" could be profitable and they start the marketing "game". Nobody is interested in the fact that Bosnians have not had any contacts with so called Islamic terrorism and that those fictional events actually never took place or harmed anyone in Bosnia. According to the theory of post-structuralism – it is only words – thus this marketing textuality remains as truth.

The spirit of united Europe, at least when Bosnia is concerned, is facing a serious problem: the European institutions have invested money in embellishing proclamations, but in reality they have created a market of totalitarian lies and illusions. Democratic idlers are contriving problems in order to secure money for "projects of damage control". Since Europe is listening only to itself and intellectual smugglers not critically financed by them, the textuality remains one-dimensional.

European Funds become a totalitarian shape, so it is hard to believe that critical judgment would be of interest to anybody. There is no money for critical judgment because of lack of interest for free intellectualism to gain ground.

Europe needs a touched-up self-portrait: this may not be happening intentionally, but it certainly is happening as a result of administrative inertia. Therefore, we know that anything anti-European is being fought against, but we do not care if these ideas have been fabricated in the first place.

Even more so, as long as anti-European ideas exist, the fight for a united European spirit has a *raison d'être*. Every version of communism, from Stalin and Mao Tse Tung to Saddam and Bush, is based on this very same idea.

Post September 11, Islam is seen as the most typical anti-European behavior. Bosnians, as the only Muslim country in Europe, also provide a typical motive for marketing trade democracy. On the other hand, Bosnians as a politically traumatized nation, are not resisting the strategy of being demonized, but still believe that the truth is what is in their minds. Bosnians want to live in coexistence, peace and tolerance with understanding, but nobody else sees that, because this can not be sold in the marketplace of democracy. Simply, there is no buyer.

Waiting for dialog

If we had asked any craftsman, mason, shoemaker or tailor, he would have told us that the process of re-joining torn or divided parts should begin from their furthest points. This would mean that the spirit of united Europe should base its cohesion on the furthest points of its identities. European Muslims are undoubtedly one of these extremes, not by themselves, but certainly presented through media as such.

If our goal is to contribute to the quality of internal European dialogue, then we have to speak critically and be open-minded. European institutions should make an effort to establish dialogue with European Muslims, instead of financing intellectual profiteers to portray for them who and what Muslims are.

In particular, Europe is financing tens of NGO-s and media from Sarajevo that broadcast a negative and false image of Bosnians. Europe is not financing any Muslim institution or any Islamic print media from Sarajevo. And that is not all! Europe is not at all interested in establishing a dialogue with any Islamic institution from Sarajevo. What are the consequences?

The Islamic youth magazine "SAFF" has a good, not to mention existential, intention, to establish an ongoing dialogue with bodies within a united Europe, in order to shape and clarify a constructive role for European Muslims.

In order to avoid prejudice and misconceptions, which are the result of phobias being generated by intellectuals available for hire, it is crucial to establish direct channels of communication between the European Union and Islamic institutions.

Furthermore, European institutions could provide financial support for such a magazine and, in that way, incorporate themselves into one of the extreme endpoints of European identity, instead of primarily financing magazines that result in the European monologue metastasizing, leaving European Muslims under a colonial bell-glass, similar to test animals in a scientific laboratory.

The anomalies described above have, according to marketing logic, generated slanderous accusations that "SAFF" magazine is "radical" and close to "extreme Islamic institutions", and this secular author of even being "the leader of an Islamic revolution in Bosnia". Regardless of being portrayed as so "dangerous, rough and un-European" – we are welcoming European institutions so that we can tell them – over a cup of coffee – that in relation to the imperatives of a European future, there are no differences between them and us.

As far as the goals shared by the spirit of a united Europe are concerned – we share them, too.

We are waiting. Just as in Becket's drama.

“If you come from Burgenland, you must be Croatian”

By Wolfgang Bahr

Since 1923, a Croatian pilgrimage to Mariazell has taken place every year. On the last weekend of August, pilgrims from Burgenland, but also from communities beyond the Austrian border, make the trek to the Styrian shrine.

“The Hungarian Croats are also commemorated here, that is, the Hungarian Croats from Burgenland ...”: One senses that the commentator is struggling a bit, as the camera pans to the plaque in the basilica which commemorates the first pilgrimage to Mariazell by the Croats from the Burgenland in 1923. It is to the ORF's credit that the introductory programme about the “Pilgrimage of the Peoples” also dealt knowledgeably with this interesting ethnic group, one that helped to finance the church bells destined for Bosnia, now rung for the first time during the service.

And the reference to Hungary is really justified, since the Austrian Federal Province of Burgenland belonged to Hungary until 1921. Thereafter the Croatian ethnic group was separated by arbitrary borders and has only gradually come together again since 1989. At no fewer than six border crossing-points, the traveller passes villages with a Croat population on at least one side of the border: near Klingenbach and Schachendorf on the Austrian side, near Deutschkreutz and Eberau on the Hungarian side, in Marchegg on the Slovakian side, and near Kittsee on both sides of the Austrian-Slovak border. When the Schengen Agreement comes fully into force and new road-building is extended beyond the relentless laying down of motorways, several Croatian villages will again become closely connected, restoring a seamless community as of old.

European Union

I am told by Peter Tyran, who, as the Editor-in-Chief of the periodical *Hrvatske novine*, did much to intensify contacts between communities stranded on different sides of borders before 1989, that his impression of the celebrations for the EU enlargement, held in the traditionally multilingual Kittsee on May 1, 2004, was that the Croats greeted the event even more enthusiastically than the majority of the population. Tyran's weekly magazine was founded in 1910 in the bishop's see of Győr (Hungary), and later transferred to Vienna. This was when the majority of the Croats living in the area came to Austria, following the annexation of parts of four western Hungarian counties, the new regional entity being given the name of the Federal Province of Burgenland. However about a quarter of the Croatian diaspora in this area, which had originated with the resettlement of deserted German villages in the 16th century, remained in Hungary, while a small number of Croats were absorbed into Czechoslovakia through an exchange with Hungarian villages in 1947. On the evidence of recent polls (the official census distorts the numbers, because of the way the questions are formulated) Tyran estimates that the number of Croats currently in Burgenland is 35,000, and in Hungary is 10,000, with 4,000 to 5,000 in Slovakia, and fewer than 1,000 in the Czech Republic. In addition there are 10,000 to 15,000 Burgenland Croats living in Vienna.

The Czech Republic

The Croats of Southern Moravia, concentrated in a few villages on the River Dyje (Thaya) to the North-East of Laa, have suffered more than most from historical change. After World War Two they were settled in other parts of Moravia, the families being dispersed to separate villages, with the result that marriages within the ethnic group seldom took place. The youngest member of the Croatian Club in the Czech Republic is forty-five years old, and the annual Croatian fair in Jevišovka is now merely an exercise in nostalgia.

Slovakia

Scarcely more hopeful is the situation of the Croats in the Slovakian village of Devínska Nová Ves (in Croat, "Devinsko Novo Selo"), where the Communists have surrounded the village centre with drab prefabricated social housing and the similarity of the Slavic languages encourages rapid assimilation. A hard core of Croatian intellectuals nurtures its identity, however, and still holds an annual folklore festival, despite losing the generous subsidies previously on offer. Many fellow-Croats come from Austria and Hungary to participate, or just to visit. A partnership has also been established with the Croat community of the Burgenland village of Neudorf near Parndorf.

A more favourable situation characterizes the other three villages which, like Devínska Nová Ves, are incorporated into the Borough of Bratislava. These are Jarovce (Hrvatski Jandrof), which is not far from Kittsee, and two villages downstream on the Danube, Rusovce and Čunovo. Having suffered less from the building works of the 1970s and 1980s than other villages, they profit from the greater degree of autonomy of their administrative districts, and from their vicinity to Croatian communities in Austria and Hungary. They may well find they have a powerful advocate in Ivan Gašparovič, who recently became President of the Slovak Republic, and whose grandparents emigrated from Croatia shortly before World War One.

Hungary

Until recently, the Croats in Slovakia could only dream of having their children attend lessons held in Croat, as happens in Austria or Hungary, while they also suffered more severely from the persecution of the church than did the Croats in more liberal Hungary. The latter were able to take advantage of the fact that the Croats from Burgenland frequently succeeded in smuggling missals and prayer-books written in the Burgenland form of the Croat language across the border. As a result, Hungarian Croats could adapt to results of the Second Vatican Council and could also experience how the language of the ethnic group developed (Burgenland-Croatian is an independent literary and liturgical language). Nevertheless the Croats in Hungary were restricted by a kind of *cordon sanitaire*: they were not only separated from Austria by the Iron Curtain, but for a long time also from the rest of Hungary by a demarcation line controlling the totalitarian border.

Moreover, there were other negative consequences for the Croats in Hungary due to the fact that they were bundled together by the Communists with the Serbs in a "Democratic Club of the Southern Slavs", something which has left traces in the Croat language, as well as in the folklore tradition. "It is as if a Tyrolean suddenly began speaking in Carinthian dialect" observes Peter Tyran. He reports a constantly growing number of subscribers to *Hrvatske novine* in Hungary. In addition, the Croatian church magazine *Glasnik*, published in Eisenstadt and edited by the General Secretary of the Austrian Conference of Bishops, Ägydius Zsifkovics (Egidiije Živković), can easily be obtained in Hungary today; at the same time, in Bishop Paul Iby's efforts to build relationships with the neighbouring dioceses the Croats in Hungary play a major role, since most of them speak German as well.

Burgenland

When performers of the renowned ensemble “Kolo Slavuj” from Central Burgenland go to Vienna for their rehearsals, they choose the shorter route via Hungarian Sopron and take their colleagues from Kópháza (Kolnjev) with them. For many years, the Croats in Hungary and in Slovakia have used the term “*Burgenländisch*” for themselves (Peter Tyran stresses that this is an ethnic, and not a geographical expression and therefore must be written in capitals). The use of the term dovetails with the rationale behind the name of the last Federal Province of Austria to be established, which was chosen to recall the four West Hungarian counties of Pressburg (Pozsony/Bratislava), Wieselburg (Moson), Ödenburg (Sopron), and Eisenburg (Vasvár), from parts of which the new province was formed. Of course Germans had lived here for generations, and naturally also Croats.

This year as every year, at the end of the August pilgrimage to Mariazell, the copy of the Mariazell icon of the Virgin, which rotates annually between the Croatian communities, will be handed on from Vienna to Slovakian Čunovo. This symbolic moment may serve to remind us that communities which always belonged together are now growing closer to each other in reality, as well as in spirit.

Hard life for migrant women workers in rich West

By Julia Damianova

Tatiana was not allowed out of the house in Belgium for three months. For about 10 euros a day, she worked around the clock – cleaning, cooking for her employer's family and looking after two small children.

While the family was out during the day – to work or school – they would lock her in the house with only a small window open in the toilet as an emergency escape in case of fire.

Tatiana, a cheerful 60-year-old from a small town in the south of Bulgaria, is one of a large but hard to count number of women from poor countries who head to the rich West for low-paid illegal jobs which are more lucrative than work at home.

"I had the feeling my employers were always anxious that I did not have enough work to do. They were constantly inventing new tasks so as not to leave me without work even for a minute," said Tatiana, who asked that her family name not be used.

Women like Tatiana come from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia to work in private homes as cleaners, baby-sitters or nursemaids to the elderly or sick for just a few euros per day.

International organisations which track the problem say there are millions of women like Tatiana, some held in outright slavery while others are pushed by poverty to volunteer.

"Although some manage to secure good jobs, millions unsuspectingly enter lives of servitude characterised by abuse, exploitation, violence, and physical and mental torture," said the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations.

"Many work between 10 to 15 hours a day with no or very limited time off for little or no pay," it said in its monthly online journal.

An Austrian study for the European Union, carried out last year, said the problem is hard to combat because poor women desperately need the money and will stay despite harsh working conditions.

"The chance to provide for the basic needs of their families living either here (in Austria) or in their home country is a decisive motive for many household workers – despite all the problems – to want to remain in Austria," the study by the migrant aid group MAIZ said.

Overlooked

The problem is also often overlooked as international institutions, aid groups and governments focus on the trafficking of women and children for prostitution.

"This is a blind corner," said Christian Hardy from the Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit of the Vienna-based Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the pan-European rights and security watchdog.

Very little information is available on the number of women working illegally in households, many of them in Western Europe, due to its proximity to much poorer countries in the former Soviet bloc.

Nobody seems to be willing to make an estimate. "IOM doesn't (have any figures) and I don't know any other sources," said Helen Nilsson from the Counter-Trafficking Services of the International Organisation for Migration.

Some of the women find their jobs through local employment agencies, and sometimes Westerners themselves place ads in local newspapers.

That is how Tatiana found her job. The woman she worked for in Belgium had often been to Bulgaria on business and even spoke some Bulgarian.

Tatiana went for three months. Her employer paid for a roundtrip bus ticket from Bulgaria to Belgium and promised her 300 euros a month.

"It all seems so rosy at first but then everything turns out to be quite different from what one has expected," Tatiana said.

Humiliation

She was given a small room with just enough space for a bed and a little window looking into the room of the two children, aged three and six, whom she had to look after.

Tatiana was forbidden to enter the living room, except when cleaning it, and was not allowed to use the phone. Tatiana could not call her family in Bulgaria and they could phone her only at specific times.

Once, an electrician came to fix something in the house. Tatiana's employer came back from work to let him in and locked the housemaid in her room in order to keep her illegal employment a secret.

Tatiana said the amount of work was exhausting but she said the worst part was feeling so humiliated – she was often shouted at and constantly criticised.

"I felt offended," Tatiana said. Tatiana is a university-trained school teacher and had worked all her life in Bulgarian nurseries and kindergartens before retiring.

But her pension of less than 70 euros a month was not enough to pay her bills in a one-room apartment, where she lived alone after divorcing her alcoholic husband years ago. Her two grown-up children could not help her as they themselves were struggling financially.

Despite her ordeal, half a year after her first stay in Belgium, Tatiana returned to work for the same family to pay her bills at home one more time. "In the end, it is we who decide to sell our labour so cheaply," she said.

Curtain up!

By Bernhard Ecker

*A suburb of Bratislava? A few sleepy **Lower Austrian border communities** are facing a new role. Only the protagonists don't know yet whether they should be afraid or happy.*

As he trudges up each of the 120 steps to the observation platform on the Königswarte mountain, to Georg Hartl the imbalance below becomes ever clearer. "That's where the future lies", says the Mayor of the border community of Berg, pointing towards the east where the concrete giants of the suburb of Petrzalka rise up like huge dominoes. From the barely 23-metre high tower on Austria's easternmost mountain you can also see with the naked eye the many cranes in Bratislava – silent witnesses to a frantic construction boom in the Slovakian capital.

To the left and right of it, on the Austrian side, stretch fields and vineyards – as well as small villages and towns: Kittsee in the Burgenland, the Lower Austrian communities of Berg, Wolfsthal, Hainburg. They seem minute compared to the colossus of Bratislava with its 450,000 inhabitants which has expanded rapidly to the state boundary. Whereas to the north of the Danube wide, green conservation areas brace themselves against any expansionist desires, Berg & Co. are gazing directly into the face of a hungry, up-and-coming city.

Over here, too, there's a hive of building activity. Not new roads or factory premises though, but neat detached family homes – Slovakian lawyers, VW Bratislava managers or property professionals have discovered the Austrian districts in the surrounding countryside as restful residential areas with comparatively cheap building land. "I could sell every square metre of Berg to investors right now" says the Mayor, commenting that it's still he who makes the decisions regarding the re-designation of building land. In his estimation, opening things up too rapidly would actually threaten the village with its population of 670 main-home and almost as many second-home residents. "Would we still retain our village identity?", Hartl wonders.

The inhabitants of the border communities had quite enough reasons for suffering identity crises in the last century. During the Austro-Hungarian Empire period, Hartl's grandmother still travelled with her wheelbarrow to the market in Pressburg, as Bratislava was called until 1919. Then Czechoslovakia made the break with Austria-Hungary and, after the Second World War, the Iron Curtain finally descended – crossing the border was unintentional or an adventure, but no longer an everyday event. In this border location young people had no prospects and many moved away to Vienna.

Years of furtive waiting followed the fall of Communism in 1989.

There have been no customs borders since 1 May 2004, the date of Slovakia's accession to the EU, and it is now only a matter of a few years until passports too will no longer be required. Prospects are good that villages on the border which have been marginalised for decades will now begin to flourish again.

"If the opening of the border hadn't occurred our position would be difficult", feels Michaela Gansterer. She is a Minister of State and landlady in the Golden Anchor in Hainburg, right next to the Danube landing stage. In recent years she has had the pleasure of booking into her inn the growing number of cycling and city tourists from Vienna as well as business people from Bratislava. In the Golden Anchor, Slovakian waiters and Hungarian cooks long ago replaced the Turkish staff.

However, when you ask Gansterer what kind of profile Hainburg and the neighbouring communities ought to have in a few years' time, you hear little in the way of specifics: there's talk of a shopping centre, possible hotels, of the idea of being a recreational area and also of somehow wanting to be successful with wine. A Grinzing for Bratislava – this slogan, supposed to suggest "new wine bliss" and harmonious association with the city, is heard remarkably often in the area.

With his clear ideas for the future, Christian Eybel, a businessman in the field of metal construction from Wolfsthal, is more the exception: the area of the Federal Army barracks in Hainburg, due to close, could for instance be developed to provide new homes, he says. "There would be room for 10,000 inhabitants" – enormous growth for the town with a population of 5,000. In any event, a targeted settlement of young businessmen should repopulate the businesses that now stand empty.

With his company Eybel is already practising in advance how to get it right. The company, which specialises in the production of external building components and is one of the larger employers on the Austrian side with 70 staff, has been installing components in Slovakia for five years. 30 employees work for him "on the other side", 20 of his 70 employees in Wolfsthal are Slovakian cross-border commuters. Through the construction boom in Bratislava Eybel also took up a completely new line of business: he handles property development projects jointly with a Slovakian partner. He has just begun a 3,000-square metre office building. This year his firm's turnover will double compared with the previous year to around 15 million euros. He is convinced this is how the whole region could fare. "There are huge possibilities", dreams Eybel, sighing softly. Because not everyone sees the new role allocation at the border with Bratislava as an opportunity.

The reservations remain enormous. What the metal construction entrepreneur tells you about the absorption of the Slovaks into his business is in line with what Gansterer as a politician is finding in the population of Hainburg and Georg Hartl sees in the citizens of Berg: deep-seated scepticism, fear indeed. Bratislava – for many people it's still predominantly associated with stolen cars and grim communism. These prejudices have built up over decades and will disappear a lot more slowly than political barriers.

Across the private and the organisational level convergence is succeeding, at least in some areas. The mayors of Hainburg and Wolfsthal have married Slovakian women and the Wolfsthal band plays under the baton of an incomer from over the border. Silvia Fischer, a Slovakian woman who fled shortly before the opening of the border to Austria, sits on the Berg District Council, gives courses in Slovakian for elementary school pupils and adults and last year even took some inhabitants of Berg on the first excursion to Bratislava – admittedly 15 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The committed Austro-Slovakian Fischer draws on hope when she says "It's gradually beginning to dawn on some people that their children will also have better prospects in the Slovakian labour market if they speak Slovakian".

When it comes to the question of how people should treat the new immigrants, however, the regional politicians are not yet in agreement. The joint goal is to maintain local infrastructures on a selective basis – the playgroups and elementary school classes are now full again. Any remaining places are being opened for children from Bratislava who are brought in by their parents each day. However, while Hartl backs controlled immigration, his Wolfsthal colleague Gerhard Schödinger is quicker to open up to the new prosperous class from Bratislava: "They're a financially powerful section of society, they're valuable to us".

Against this background regional planner Walter Pozarek, who has just worked on a project with the region, articulates the key question for the communities in the surrounding countryside: "Should the city over there keep spilling over – or do the communities want to keep their own identity?" The fact that rich Slovaks are settling in Austrian localities is difficult enough to get used to. There, the thought of becoming a type of residential appendage of Bratislava, in which people sleep but don't spend any money, is really frightening.

"These communities can't keep pace with the economic activities of Bratislava – an influx of businesses will make things worse", notes Pozarek: "They must turn around and stop focussing on Vienna, then there will be big opportunities, for instance as a recreational area". For this to happen it would require solidarity between the municipalities, a co-ordinated building land policy and sensible traffic solutions, especially regarding the Danube.

The sooner the better: if wages in Western Slovakia continue to rise as steeply as they are now, commuting to Bratislava will just as soon be as common as the influx of additional workers from the East to Austria when the EU transition periods end (in 2011 at the latest).

To date, though, nothing more than cycleway plans and occasional ideas about health spa hotels or cultural centres have been formulated. "We're a region that isn't a region as such, we must first create a profile", says Mayor Hartl thoughtfully, letting his gaze wander once more from the observation tower to the Königswarte. Adding, as an afterthought: "There's still a lot of parochial thinking around".

Heads in the sand

A report by Palo Fejer

Presenter

Slovakia has become a crossroads for two transit routes – the Balkan and the Russian-Ukrainian. At the same time we have become the country with the highest number of requests for asylum in central Europe. Our people are afraid of refugees, afraid of exotic diseases, afraid of criminality. And this is how Palo Fejér sees the problem.

Narrator

A few days ago it was almost as if a bomb had gone off in Horne Orechove. The Trenčín Regional Authorities were negotiating the establishment of a halfway house for asylum seekers within the community. The occupants of the halfway house were to be displaced persons, or more precisely – children, who were on the run alone, without their parents. The locals were vehemently against such a move. The community was panic-stricken about the danger that these children represented.

Marta Škundová (a local resident)

We are afraid of those children – those children from those war torn countries. Even if a Chinaman, or the devil – Satan himself turned up, I wouldn't worry about that, because I would give him some bread, but he wouldn't come after me intent on taking my bread.

Narrator

A wave of fear of terrorism is sweeping around Europe, and has not left Slovakia untouched – in a sadly extreme form.

Marta Škundová

Somebody is financing them there so that they, those fourteen year old kids, can get here. Because those fourteen year olds don't have anywhere to earn money if there is a war going on there. So don't let anyone tell me that those kids are not bad. It goes beyond bad. Those kids are sent here to do evil, so that they can do evil in other countries too.

Narrator

What is unbelievable about the above comments is that they are referring to child refugees fleeing from war. Fear is by nature all-enveloping and xenophobia even more so.

Marta Škundová

They are those suicide bombers. And that's what I'm worried about, those suicide bombers coming here. And it's already being said publicly – to scare us – that something like that is going to occur here.

Narrator

These people have a social problem and nobody has consulted them or been consulted on their behalf as to the origin of the dangerous asylum halfway house, for this reason a petition was put together.

Ing. Branislav Horník, Director of the Trenčín Office for work social affairs and family

We held a meeting with the petition committee of course. We attempted to explain things, the meeting lasted for maybe an hour and a half, maybe an hour and three quarters, and we tried to explain the reasons behind our selecting that particular location, and why we had recommended the Trenčín locality. They tried to understand the arguments that we put forward to a very small extent.

Narrator

The issue therefore is not a lack of communication, but the plain and simple disapproval that has made its way into the space left for it.

Reporter

If they were to invite you to the place and if you had the opportunity actually to voice your opinion, would anything change as to whether or not you would agree or disagree with the camp being located here?

Marta Škundová

Well, we wouldn't agree to it, me, myself – absolutely not. No, there is no way I would ever agree to it.

Narrator

The approach by those locals affected is only one of many examples of our people's attitude. Displaced persons do indeed need help, wherever they may be in the world. We therefore also have an obligation to help them here. And it is not only the European conventions that we pledged to observe upon joining the European Union that should bind us.

László Nagy, Slovak Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights

To help people whose lives or basic human values are under threat is, in my opinion, the responsibility of every single democratic regime and each and every individual.

Narrator

Commemorators and actors in the comrades' international aid movement do not, however, regard the issue as international nowadays.

Ivan Hopta, Slovak Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights (Slovak Communist Party)

I would say first and foremost, that it's the situations that force refugees to flee that need to be resolved. In other words, international policy, the global powers should first of all contemplate such a move. I am against taking care of foreigners to the detriment of our own citizens.

Narrator

If the global powers are able to erase displaced persons from the map of our conscience, then we also will be able to help them. And references to dozens of displaced persons milking the state budget would indeed become only a seed of deep populism

Pierfrancesco Maria Natta, Director of the UNHCR Representative Office

Over the past three years the number of displaced persons in Slovakia has increased. Put simply, 30,000 people have entered the country. But the number of those who have been recognised as asylum seekers has subsequently reached an all time low. In the very same three years, asylum was granted to less than thirty individuals.

Narrator

Slovakia is no more than a transit country for thousands of displaced persons. If they are held at the borders by the police, there are only two options open to them; to be expelled or to seek asylum. Therefore thousands prefer to apply for asylum, but at the first given opportunity – they make a run for the west. Only a few choose to remain in Slovakia.

Amal M. Hadid

Initially I didn't want to stay here in Slovakia. I was held here while escaping from one of the former Soviet Union countries, I don't know which one. My target country was America, Great Britain or Sweden or another safe place where I could secure a livelihood and then later bring my kids.

Narrator

Amal Hadid fled from northern Iraq. To many Iraqis she seemed a little too American. She left her six children in neighbouring Jordan. She is now awaiting the results from her asylum proceedings.

Reporter

Why did you flee from Senegal?

Mamadou Ba

I had to leave Senegal due to the fact that my father was a businessman and he was shot dead by some people, as was anyone who didn't agree with the ruling regime. It was a racist organisation.

Narrator

Mamadou Ba fled along with her brother to escape sharing the same fate as her father. She will most probably be judged to be an economic immigrant. Those categorized as such may not receive asylum in Slovakia.

Aset S. Temirbulat

I want to provide security for myself, my children and my family. I wouldn't have left if it were not for the fact that mines were exploding everywhere. Even if there had been nothing there, I would have been happy but there is unrest there. There is uncertainty. I used to go to bed not knowing whether there was a plane flying overhead, whether they would bomb us or not – none of us knew that.

Narrator

Chechen Aset Temirbulat fled with her two children to escape the war. Her third was born in Slovakia. According to the Human Rights Agreement, displaced persons originating from regions of conflict have the right to asylum. Aset Temirbulat however did not receive this form of protection in Slovakia. She, like all the mothers who have gone before her, is going to have to go back home.

Reporter

How do we see Chechens?

Ing. Bernard Prieceľ, Director of the Slovak Immigration Office

We see Chechens in the same way as any other individuals entering the asylum procedure. In this respect, we do not discriminate. Individuals come to us who have been truly persecuted and such individuals receive or are granted asylum.

Narrator

Displaced persons from war-torn areas therefore must be persecuted, if not – then something is amiss.

JUDr Marta Szabóová, the Slovak Helsinki Committee

In the majority of cases, as far as asylum seekers from let's say Chechnya – where there is currently an armed conflict, a civil war are concerned, the emigration office in the second part of its arbitration states that these people do not meet the criteria required to be able to be granted exile and therefore these people may be expelled or sent back to their country of origin.

Narrator

Immigration policy provides for an institute providing asylum on humanitarian grounds, however, in spite of the fact that many displaced persons originate directly from war-torn regions, such humanitarian asylum fails to be granted.

Pierfrancesco Maria Natta, Director of the UNHCR Representative Office

This is an indicator that the system that is here simply does not work. If we look at the situation in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic or Austria, the figures are completely different. Therefore it's obvious that the system needs to be totally revised.

Ing. Bernard Priel, Director of the Slovak Immigration Office

Slovak asylum policy is absolutely comparable to European Union Policy. If Slovakia had not had an asylum policy of this kind, the country would not have been able to become a member of the European Union.

Narrator

The refusal to grant asylum to Chechens is backed by senior politicians.

JUDr. Marta Szabóová, the Slovak Helsinki Committee

I don't know if it's simply a question of diplomacy, a question of the relationship between Slovakia and the Russian Federation and diplomatic relations. I don't know what influences such things, but in Slovakia there is a tendency not to grant asylum or any other form of protection to asylum seekers.

Narrator

The Slovak side cautiously sticks its head in the sand. It would otherwise risk waking the oversized Russian bear from its mighty sleep. It's tough luck for the Chechens.

Aset S. Temirbulat

I don't know. I have applied for asylum. Of course I would like to be granted it, but it didn't work out. I am happy with my children here. Nowadays I know that tonight as I lay down to sleep and tomorrow when I awake, nothing will have happened to my children. And over there, when I send my children to school, I never know whether or not they are going to return from school healthy. Because danger lurks in every corner over there.

The “Erased People” of Slovenia

By Barbara Gruber

Coming up next on the program, we continue our series, At Home in Europe where we take a look minority groups across the continent. Today we head to the country which has long been seen as the shining star of the new EU accession countries: Slovenia. The former Yugoslav Republic has long benefited from prosperous trade connections, solid infrastructure and tourism. Today, Slovenians enjoy the highest living standards of the former Communist countries that entered the European Union in May. But not everyone has benefited from these high living standards: In this tiny country of two million people a small minority has been marginalized into second-class citizens. Known as the IZBRISANI or the “erased people,” the Izbrisani were removed from the administrative registers after Slovenia declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.

MUSIC – Balkan/Roma/Esma Redzepova

Jemail Shatani

“The collapse of Yugoslavia and the administrative chaos here in Slovenia have put us in a situation where we have died, but are still alive. We are the living dead. ... Our fate is worse than that of cats and dogs. We don’t have any identity. ... My wife, my kids and I are stateless. We are not citizens of any country in this world.”

MUSIC – Balkan/Roma

Jemail Shatani has a story that sounds indicative of the Balkans.

Originally from Kosovo, this 38-year old gypsy or Roma settled in Slovenia 20 years ago. He married Sanja, also from Kosovo and found a permanent job in Maribor, Slovenia’s second largest town, working for the city’s waste management and water supply company.

MUSIC

But in 1992 Jemail’s life took a tragic turn. He discovered, by chance, that he no longer officially existed. Having failed to apply for Slovenian citizenship after the country became independent in 1991 the authorities had deleted his name from the registers.

Jemail Shatani had been erased.

Jemail

“I was told that in Slovenia I was now a foreigner and that if I wanted to get a passport I should do so in another country. The authorities told me to get my passport in Kosovo. ...

My employer also said you’re a foreigner now, your personal documents are not valid any longer and without documents you can’t get a work permit. And that was it. I was fired, even though I had a permanent job.”

Jemail tried to get new papers in Kosovo, but he and his wife were not listed in the state registers there either. He also sought legal help and then pursued the matter through the courts – without any immediate success.

Today, 13 years later, he has managed to get his permanent Slovenian residency back, but not full citizenship, nor his work permit nor passports for his family.

Wife crying

Jemail's wife, Sanja, hasn't seen her mother and her brother for 15 years now. Her four kids always ask her: "Why don't we have a grandmother?" It's awful, she says in tears, without passports you cannot go anywhere.

Introducing the kids

The four kids – Ferdin, Dziva, Jackson and Archem – have squeezed into the tiny living room that transforms into their bedroom at night. Aged from 7 to 11, they were all born in Slovenia. Their father, Jemail, says they suffer the most from being erased.

Jemail

"The exclusion is terrible for them. They speak Slovenian, they go to Slovenian schools, but they cannot tell their schoolmates what is going on. My children are offended – and sad. Of course without passports they can not travel with the other kids, when they go abroad for soccer games for example. They have to stay at home. Their school mates obviously know that something is very wrong, but they don't know why and my kids feel excluded."

Albanian Music on TV (fade out)

For the Shatani family the television is the only window to the outside world. In Slovenia, Jemail says, there is no future for his family. If they ever get passports, they will immediately leave the country. Anywhere, he adds, would be better than Slovenia.

Albanian Music on TV (fade up)

But the erasure of Jemail and his family is not an isolated case.

When Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, 130,000 or so non-Slovene residents were given six months to apply for citizenship. Most completed the necessary paperwork and became Slovenian citizens. But at least 18,000 did not register. Many were not well informed and didn't know about the new legislation. Others were afraid of political persecution: after all, ethnic wars were raging in neighboring Bosnia and Croatia, and nobody knew what the future would hold. And even for those who did want Slovenian citizenship, it was difficult, if not impossible to get the necessary papers, because of these ongoing conflicts. Was it reasonable to expect a Bosnian Muslim to risk death by returning to his Serb occupied home – just to pick up a birth certificate? The bureaucratic demands of the Slovene authorities were at odds with the realities of wartime Yugoslavia.

Even so, on the 26th of February 1992 those 18,000 people were simply erased from the registers. Many of the erased people, like Jemail, didn't find out about their illegal status till months, even years, later.

The Ministry of the Interior was responsible for the erasure. Today, Alenka Mesojedec is the head of the Citizenship and Naturalization Section at this Ministry. She's cautious – and defensive – when confronted with this allegation.

Alenka Mesojedec

"Yes. No. No. It's not correct. They all remained in the register, but they were not entitled to the rights of Slovenian citizens. No one was erased physically, but legally they were not entitled to the rights accruing to citizens."

Many of these people had lived in Slovenia for 10, 20, sometimes even 30 years. From one day to the next they lost everything: their social security, their health care, their driving license, their passport – basically, their identity.

Matevz Krivic is a former Constitutional Judge and now a legal representative for some of the erased people.

Krivic

"People lost jobs, people lost pensions, people lost medical care, some of them died. The case of Franjo Herrman, who died from cancer because he was refused an operation in hospital because he couldn't pay, is a very well-known case here in Ljubljana. There are some horrible cases"

Some were deported and at least seven people are known to have committed suicide. However Neva Predan goes further:

Neva Miklavcic Predan

"It is genocide. It is a very efficient administrative tool of ethnic cleansing and this is a specialty of Slovenian authorities and it shows genocidal tendencies ..."

Predan heads the Helsinki Monitor in Slovenia, a human rights organization that has been fighting for the rights of the erased for the past 10 years.

Neva Miklavcic Predan

"We have been pleading with the authorities, writing and begging them to do something about the situation for ten years now. And the Ministry of the Interior is reluctant to solve this problem. ... Slovenia is still leading an under the table war based on race against these non-Slovene citizens."

Film/Music

Alexander Todorovic, the founder of the Association of the Erased, is watching a documentary that has just been finished on the plight of the erased. This bearded ethnic Serb settled in the small town of Ptuj 20 years ago after marrying a Slovenian. In 1993 when he went to register the birth of their daughter he was told he did not exist. The authorities destroyed his documents before his very eyes.

Alexander Todorovic

"You're completely paralyzed, you cannot do anything without papers: you cannot work, you cannot go out because you're afraid of the police. You cannot drive your car; you cannot do the most basic things in life."

ME: Were you afraid of being deported?

Alexander Todorovic

"Of course I was afraid of deportation and when I went for a walk I usually took my young son with me because I thought this was not so suspicious for the police. If someone asks me about my documents I have this little child with me and this is not suspicious."

Alexander says although he wasn't physically deported, he was mentally.

Alexander Todorovic

"This is a crime, this is genocide, this is ethnic cleansing. People just don't realize it yet."

Five other erased people live in Alexander's street, but for many years they didn't know about each other. They were all by themselves. Afraid. Afraid of being deported. Afraid to admit what was going on.

Visiting his neighbor Mirjana – welcome at door & talking

Mirjana lives a few doors down the street: she was born in Slovenia and her mother was Slovenian but her father was Serbian. She always thought she was Slovenian and didn't need to apply for Slovenian citizenship. When her son was born, though, in 1992 she found out the hard way. She had been erased.

Mirjana

"My husband and his whole family, they all told me that it was my fault; that I should have applied earlier. I argued and quarreled with everyone. This completely destroyed my family. Everyone was blaming me for this situation. They were all against me."

Mirjana fell into a deep depression and wasn't able to leave her apartment for more than a year. In 1994, however, she did manage to get a Croatian passport with the help of friends. In 2000, she received permanent residency in Slovenia and three years later, Slovenian citizenship. But it's too late, she says. She lost ten years of her life: for ten years she didn't work, for ten years she didn't pay into the pension fund.

Mirjana

"I could have bought my apartment – as public property was turned into private property with Slovenian independence. But because I was erased all of that was impossible. I was not old at that time. Now, I'm older and things are different. Now, I have nothing. I won't have any kind of pension or anything. Maybe only social benefits, but that's not even 200 euros a month."

Alexander & Mirjana talking in the kitchen

Alexander also got an attorney. He fought for his rights all the way up to the Supreme Court, where he won his case. In 1997 he got his permanent residency back. But the damage is irreversible, he says:

Alexander Todorovic

"For me it's too late because after 10 years nobody will hire me. And also because I have such a high profile I'm seen as a problem in the work place. Slovenian nationalists hate me."

MUSIC

Twice – in 1999 and in 2003 – Slovenia's highest court has ordered the government to restore the rights of the erased. But little action seems to have been taken. The government works on a case by case basis, and progress is painfully slow.

Erwan Fouéré, the EU Ambassador to Slovenia, remains optimistic that the issue will eventually be resolved. But did Brussels even raise the issue of the erased during Slovenia's EU accession talks?

Erwan Fouéré

"It never featured in the actual negotiations, but of course in the reports that we submitted to Brussels and also in the reports which were regularly issued by Brussels on the state of negotiations, there was always a reference to issues such as the erased and I think this highlighted the fact that we were aware of the problem and we felt it was important that the legal limbo facing these people had to be addressed as speedily as possible."

Gregory Garras, head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Slovenia, remains concerned about the erased, but says it's not easy for the authorities.

Gregory Garras

"The government sought advice from lawyers. You know you could line up 20 lawyers and ask them an opinion and you would get 20 different opinions. They chose a certain course of action and that was to propose two separate laws to the parliament. That created a massive political brouhaha and there was a lot of debate going on. The tone of some of that debate was very alarming and that was when there was attempt by some politicians here to kind of characterize the entire erased caseload as enemies of the state and people who took up arms against Slovenia somehow."

And indeed, right-wing parties, who have now gained power in the fall elections, have whipped up anti-foreigner sentiments with allegations that the erased are war criminals or other unpatriotic types.

Alexander Todorovic is often confronted with such prejudices which he says are widely held by the Slovenian public:

Alexander Todorovic

"I've been accused of opposing Slovenian independence, of carrying weapons. I was accused of being a military person, although I've never been a member of the Yugoslav army."

Milan Orozen is a member of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) which recently won the general elections. He claims that erased people who've left the country now want to come back to take advantage of any benefits that EU membership might offer – and that annoys him.

Milan Orozen

"We do not want citizenship to be given to someone who left the country in the early 1990s and now claims to be a citizen of Slovenia when we join the EU. That's unfair. He should be here; he should share with us all the good and the bad and not come back because of money-related reasons. ... That's why we are utterly committed to all cases being examined in detail and we are very much opposed to the citizenship being granted just like that."

Earlier this year his party, along with other nationalist groups, pushed for a public referendum on the rights of the erased. The referendum was held in April and drew about one-third of the electorate. More than 94 % voted against returning full legal rights to Slovenia's erased people.

Many are worried that the erased will claim damages – some say as much as 3 billion euros, the country's annual budget. Milan R again.

Milan Orozen

"Some people claim big money. So that's a serious problem of course. But you know what happened in the 1990s? The pensions here in Ljubljana and in Belgrade for example were about the same. But now they are ten times, maybe 15 times bigger here than they are there."

The erased people would of course like to be able to claim reparations, or at least for the Slovenian government to admit what happened. But like most of the erased, Alexander Todorovic is not optimistic:

Alexander Todorovic

"The only way in which we can get reparations is to prove genocide, which is not really an easy thing to do. And with all the other claims, time limits have passed. 13 years have passed already. It's just too late. We didn't know what to do and we weren't organized."

And why did it take so long? Why did it take more than ten years for this issue to become public?

TADEVS KRIVIC

"The great majority of these people are poor people, ignorant, at the bottom of the social heap. People are afraid. It's not a homogenous group living together. They are dispersed throughout the country. They were put into an illegal position illegally and if you live in illegal position naturally that you are afraid and you hide and so on. And that's why it lasted so long."

living room with daughter

Afraid, hiding, illegal. That sums up the last decade of Dragiza Lukic's life. A Bosnian Croat by birth, being erased has meant huge personal sacrifices. She was unable to attend the funeral of her brother 6 years ago and hasn't seen her parents for a decade. Worse still, it's meant a 7 year separation from her elder daughter.

Dragiza Lukic

"My older daughter is the most affected by all of this because she lives in Bosnia and we can't get any kind of papers for her. She lives with relatives. Here in Slovenia she couldn't go to school, so we had to send her back, because if you don't have any papers you're illegal. I want the government to admit what happened. I only want my basic human rights. But I think it will take very long and I'm afraid that I probably won't live to see it."

MUSIC (fade out)

On the 26th of February 1992 18,000 people were erased from Slovenia's public registers. 18,000 – that's the official figure given by the Ministry of the Interior. Calculating these numbers is obviously very difficult and many say they are much higher.

However, more important than the numbers, is the fact that it happened, say many of the erased, and that to this day there has not been an official apology, let alone any reparations.

MUSIC (fade up and out)

Under a joint flag

By Alexis Johann

The businesses of the **south-west Styrian** municipality of Eibiswald and the **Slovenian** town of Radlje could actually be rivals. But they aren't. They co-operate so well that other border regions will be following their example.

Franz Schilcher, a 37-year old manager from Eibiswald, is driving his Audi A6 at breakneck speed along the narrow, blind road up to the 670-metre high Radl pass. Schilcher doesn't hesitate for a moment in carrying out a risky overtaking manoeuvre when the driver of the truck waves him by on a steep winding section. "We all stick together here", he explains to his visitors from Vienna, who catch their breath. "That's the way business works with us. But just make that clear to someone who comes from Graz or Vienna".

The Radl pass divides an area that formed a political unit for 640 years. On one side lies the municipality of Eibiswald with 1,478 inhabitants in the south-west Styrian region of Deutschlandsberg. On the other side live 6,148 Slovenians in the town of Radlje on the Drau. The Slovenians call this area Koroska, i.e. Carinthia. In the east it borders on Stajerska, Slovenian Styria, in the west on Austrian Carinthia. The political division of the regions in 1918 could not divide the people from one another. Many Styrians and Slovenians have relatives who live on the other side of the border. The people meet each other at fire brigade balls, fairs and in the wine bars. In the schools, Slovenian and German are taught on both sides.

In the Radl pass, though, great events of history occur only rarely – the last time on 1 May 2004, the day of EU enlargement. That was the day helicopters brought the leading political lights of both countries to the hill. They signed co-operation and friendship documents, tapped the inhabitants encouragingly on the shoulder and drank a few glasses of south Styrian wine. Two hours later the politicians went away, the people stayed. They danced, drank and discussed what could be accomplished together in the future. The high-level visit had shown that interpersonal friendship – seen from a distance – is something special. Something that one day could become very valuable.

There is a technical college specialising in mechatronics in Eibiswald and a metal processing college in the Slovenian village of Ravne, a few kilometers from Radlje. There, specialist workers are trained for the companies in the region. It was agreed that in future the teachers from Eibiswald would provide further education for the teachers from Ravne. In return, the students from Eibiswald could use the modern plant in Ravne.

To the north and south of the state border, companies have been producing similar steel products for decades. The businesses from Eibiswald and Radlje would have what it takes to poach customers from each other.

But on 1 May 2004 they agreed to construct their economic future together. Franz Schilcher was selected to put the idea of co-operation into action. For good reason: "It would be my dream", says Schilcher, "for us to collaborate much more closely than before. Perhaps we'll even manage to develop new products jointly and to produce them jointly in the region".

A few months ago, therefore, the "Wirtschaftsregion Eibiswald – Radlje ob Dravi" Society ["Eibiswald/Radjelje-on-Drau Economic Region" Society] was set up. It belongs to four Styrian municipalities in the region of Deutschlandsberg, to the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and to businessmen from both countries. The municipalities promised each other that they would allow future municipal tax receipts to be placed in the communal pot to boost the economy. "Despite all the friendship in south Styria", reports Schilcher, "this agreement compelling one municipality to transfer money to the other was not easy to set up".

The fact that Manfred Kainz promised to give his full commitment to the project helped.

Kainz is a dark-haired, stocky businessman from Deutschlandsberg and a kind of idol of the Styrian business community. The south-west Styrians know that he can give any vague idea support and impetus. His perfect career vouches for that. Kainz was an actor and animal feed salesman before he took over a Graz tool trading company in 1986. In a few years he transformed the small family business into a global supply group for the car industry. Under the name "TCM International Tool Consulting & Management" Kainz supplies the large car makers with tools. His 350 employees are responsible for the testing, maintenance and servicing of the tools and guarantee that no waiting times occur on the assembly lines.

Kainz returned with his firm from Graz to south-west Styria. With him he brought jobs, optimism, contacts and lucrative customers for anyone who wants to come on board.

In his capacity as a tool supplier, Kainz promised businessmen from Eibiswald and Radlje that he would help them in linking up with Magna, Opel and Volkswagen. No small trader would manage that single-handedly, but together they could achieve a lot.

Meanwhile Schilcher, a confidant of Manfred Kainz, has arrived in Radlje, on the other side of the Radl pass. He is visiting Ervin Pusnik, managing director of the metal processing company CNC Pusnik. Hanging resplendent in the Slovenian's study is a photo in which he is being embraced by Bavaria's former state president Franz Josef Strauß. Pusnik is really a politician and a committed Christian Democrat. This facilitates contacts with the North. Pusnik is somewhat like the Manfred Kainz of the Koroska Region.

"We always work with a will here", says Pusnik. The sounds flow from his mouth in such a drawl that they remind you of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Otto Baric. Pusnik is familiar with this questioning look: "I spoke only German until I was eight". Before the end of the Second World War there were still a number of German-speaking families in Radlje. Then came Tito's troops, taking revenge for the atrocities of the German occupying forces with equal violence and imposing a ban on the German language. This revenge cost Pusnik's father his life.

In 1968 Pusnik began to mill steel. He supplied his products to Gorenje, the Slovenian kitchen appliance manufacturer, and later to the Serbian car industry. Following the disintegration of Yugoslavia he lost his sales market. In 1987 Pusnik still had 25 workers but no longer any work. Then he was contacted by a company called Binder-Kendrion, a large supplier to the car industry, from nearby Eibiswald. Binder-Kendrion was looking for milled steel parts and so provided Pusnik with consultants, quality controllers and machines. From this resulted the first daily lorry traffic over the Radl pass.

Today Pusnik supplies 95 per cent of his parts to Austria and Germany. "In Germany virtually nothing's happening at the moment, but Styria's going incredibly well". He is a paying member of the Styrian auto-cluster and has made a financial contribution to the "Eibiswald/Radjlje Economic Region" project. Schilcher has promised him a logistics centre in Eibiswald. There, businessmen in the region, whether Austrians or Slovenians, will handle ordering, storage, delivery and quality assurance on a joint basis.

However, Schilcher has even more ideas lined up. An Engineering Centre is to be created on the Kendrion-Binder site in Eibiswald. The intention is for small businesses to buy additional research and development services from other firms in the region, to rent the expensive measuring instruments by the hour and to be able to conduct research jointly.

With its 240 staff in Eibiswald, Kendrion-Binder manufactures electromagnetic components, e.g. for car light and locking systems. The parent group Kendrion N.V. from the Netherlands owns 32 similar production sites in Europe, Asia and the USA. A struggle is being waged between the branches for future large-scale orders. "Now we are being provided with an Engineering Centre in Eibiswald, without having to make

advance payments for it. In the competition between sites that can be decisive", says Hannes Kloos, managing director of Kendrion-Binder, delightedly. In fact: at the beginning of June an important decision was made at Kendrion N.V.: the development of a new product group is being transferred to Eibiswald. The regional network and the "free" Engineering Centre had impressed the Dutch Group bosses.

Even more impressive, though, was the fact that Kendrion-Binder from Eibiswald had been able to reduce unit costs in recent years.

Günther Velikonja, the boss of VEGU, a manufacturer of precision turned parts from Eibiswald, knows precisely how Kendrion was able to perform the cost miracle. For 17 years Velikonja was the foreman of the Kendrion turning shop. Three years ago company management made it clear to him that his department was to be sold off. He was told that he could run it in future as an independent company. For start-up aid there would be a purchase guarantee over one year, no more.

Velikonja bore his ex-employer no ill-will, set it up as recommended and passed the test. Meanwhile he found new customers and increased the number of his employees from eight to 22. Velikonja is a practised networker: if other companies lack steel, personnel or machines, Velikonja organises assistance quickly and without fuss. If he gets orders he can't cope with himself he passes them on to CNC Pusnik. "I prefer it if the people over the mountain have work rather than in Scandinavia or Asia. Without co-operation we won't get the larger orders".

The VEGU example is now set to become the accepted model. Franz Schilcher has planned a start-up centre designed to attract small businesses from the Styrian auto-cluster.

Now even regional politicians have become aware of the favourable climate. On 1 July Styrian Regional Minister of Commerce Gerald Schöpfer visited Eibiswald, grabbed a brand-new spade and promised the projects of the cross-border economic region one million euros from regional funds. "We have not forgotten the border country", he said, praising his own work, and promised 112 new jobs. Eibiswald-Radlje is set to become part of the Graz-Maribor technology axis.

Schöpfer has deliberately incorporated Eibiswald into the prestigious axis extending 50 kilometres further east. The fact remains that between Graz and Maribor there is little new life otherwise. "Many projects are still at the experimental stage", says Harald Lang, manager of the "Euregio Styria-Slovenia" Association. "People still know each other too little. So Eibiswald-Radlje is certainly a model for how communities can co-operate in the future".

Anti-Semitic Semantics in Hungary's Kossuth Rádió

By Magdalena Marsovszky

In Hungary, anti-Semitism is usually paraphrased with the anti-Semitic term “the Jewish question”, even in the public media, for example. This term reflects the Hungarian population's prevailing view that anti-Semitism is actually the problem of a “minority” (i.e. the Jews). Although the term “anti-Semitism” is not unproblematic either – it was invented by the representatives of this doctrine towards the end of the 19th century – a consensus about its use has developed among researchers in recent years. Thus the beginnings, where anti-Semitism is identifiable intellectually and structurally, can only be exposed if it is interpreted as an extended anthropological concept, e.g. as “cultural code” (S. Volkov) or as “Weltanschauung” (K. Holz). What exactly does this mean?

As a result of the anthropological shift from anti-Judaism to anti-Semitism in the course of the radical secularization of the Enlightenment and the impact of Herder as well as the notion of nation and national character, Jews were no longer disliked because of their religion – an approach based on theology – but because of their allegedly different ethnic character – an approach based on anthropology. At the same time the ancient negative stereotypes which are aimed at a specific, identifiable group broke free and were also applied to people or groups that had nothing to do with the Jewish religion. In Hungary, too, anti-Semitism was not only directed against Jews or supposed Jews but against all those who personify cosmopolitanism, urbanity and intellectuality as opposed to the ‘blood and soil’ myth. The Hungarian version of anti-Semitism can thus be defined as a “cultural outlook” and is associated firstly with its cultural nationalism.

Hungary's cultural and educational policy is based on a more or less – depending on the respective government's attitude – nationalist concept of culture based on the Romantic ideal of nation and the idea of an ethnic people. This cultural nationalism is based on the thesis of the national and cultural area, according to which the territories separated by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 were still part of Hungary culturally, and the Hungarian minorities still living there (symbolized by the St. Stephan's “Holy Crown” from the 10th century) would be united as “Magyars”. The nationalist/racial thinking which also emerged in Hungary under the influence of the nationalist/racial movement in the era of the Emperor William II at the end of the 19th century and which survived 45 years of real socialism – where it continued, albeit in a reduced form –, reached new heights after 1989/90. With this revival the tradition of anti-Semitism that had been a feature of Hungary's nationalist-conservative environment but which had been latent during the period of real socialism also reemerged.

The first democratically elected, national-conservative government (1990–1994) fought for “authentic values” and “cultural purity” based on an ethnically defined “Magyar culture”. In the era of the second national-conservative Orbán government (1998–2002) the attempt at cultural homogenization was intensified: Never before had such great importance been attached to political marketing in the country's transformation process, and never before had the media, especially the public media, been so directly misused as instruments for the government's communications.

For the internal communication of Kossuth Rádió, the program with the largest audience among the three public programs of the national radio station Magyar Rádió which are broadcast nationwide (and also beyond national borders) this meant pursuing a principle which had been established by the government in 1993 and had become a slogan since then: “More-young-editors-with-healthy-rural-minds-in-broadcasting!” One concrete impact was the introduction of “neo-Nazis into the key positions of the public media, from which any Jews had been carefully removed” (G.M. Tamás in an article published in the liberal daily Magyar Hírlap) as early as in 1999. A minority of dissenting editors and editorial offices have been put under permanent pressure since then.

The socialist-liberal coalitions ruling in the interim period (1994–1998) and since 2002 have been unable to do anything about it. Firstly, they are unable to offer an alternative (democratic) concept of culture. Secondly, they obviously fear that any – even a democratically oriented – intervention could give rise to claims of censorship and thus possible links with the former real socialist dictatorship. Thirdly, they refrain from the use of cultural and educational and media policies as a developmental factor. Since cultural and educational policy was responsible for the “education of socialist mankind” in the era of real socialism, it is not a subject for progressive local political discourses. Therefore the socialist-liberal coalitions mostly relinquish the public media to the pressure of ratings and of the market. The national conservative right in cooperation with the directress of Magyar Rádió on the front line has been pursuing a cultural and educational and media policy which is consistently aimed at “protecting Magyar culture”. Since there are very few non-commercial local radio stations in Hungary and most of the country receives only the program of the public broadcasting authority (and TV), this program has a considerable impact in Hungary, a socio-psychologically divided country. Although ratings have declined in recent years, Kossuth Rádió is still Hungary’s radio station with the largest audience.

For about 15 years, this radio station’s overall communication has been based on the cultural nationalism mentioned above, which in turn is part of the attempt to homogenize Hungarian national culture ethnocentrically according to (imaginary) ethnic and/or national/racial aspects. This is reflected in many programs on Kossuth Rádió, which sees itself by and large as representative of “the (political) right” and the “true Magyars” and which is separated by a deep mental gulf from “the left”, the “Hungarophobic enemies of the people”, the “non-Hungarian traitors to the country”.

This becomes especially apparent in the “Sunday magazine”, the most widely listened-to feature program. Its unusual broadcasting time (starting at 6 a.m.) goes back to the beginnings of the reform of communism in 1987, when it was actually pushed onto the sidelines as an opposition program. Any editorial concept of the program has been denied, but it contributes considerably to the nationalist/racist movement in Hungary, in which “Magyar” organizations try to connect Hungarian-speaking minorities living in the neighboring states to the mother country culturally. Therefore the program consistently revolves around the national myth of St. Stephen’s Crown, the symbol of a “Christian Great Hungary”. However, the fundamental function of national myths and also of a homogenous understanding of culture is to “include” and to “exclude”. Thus “enemies” of the allegedly culturally and ethnically homogenous community are identified in the country. Liberalism and the cosmopolitan, international and urban world, capitalism, socialism and universalism appear as “inner” enemies of “Magyar culture”, through which authentic culture becomes westernized and exposed to foreign influences. Therefore, the rootless “stranger”, the destroyer of the national culture who has no identity must be excluded.

The creation of an ethnic group of “Magyar culture” and the exclusion of “strangers” has a clearly ethnic-racist touch as biologicistic and racist elements have appeared in the program. For example, the socialists have been referred to as “international people”, “destroyers of the Magyar culture and of the nation” and “vassals of globalization”, who are “degenerate”. The “true Magyars”, by contrast, have been referred to as superior “human species” and “race”, and the “economic Lebensraum in the Carpathian basin” (Viktor Orbán on January 27, 2002) has been held up as a positive vision. In short the goal of this permanent “Magyarization campaign” and mobilization is: “Saving Magyar culture”. In the first place it means a rescue in cultural terms, because many take the view that after the integration into the EU the country’s cultural characteristics of the country will be assimilated by a cultural “hotchpotch”. In the second place the rescue is seen as protection of the “true Magyars”, who also define themselves as “true Christians”, against the “nation’s enemies” in their own country, the latter being the complete Hungarian political left. The terms “national socialism” and “present-day Hungarian genocide” have been used, but the other way round,

meaning the exclusion of the Magyars from their own culture by “cosmopolitans”. A straight continuum is established from the Stalinist dictatorship to the social liberalism of the current government, the “post-Communists”, as they are called, permanently insinuating that Hungary is occupied by its own government.

Last but not least conspiracy theories are also flourishing. Thus the anti-Semitic discourse is intensified by a “post-colonial” anti-EU discourse; the two meet e.g. in the term “Euro-Zionism”, which stands for an alleged Jewish international conspiracy with the EU. Since anything which deviates from the national-conservative discourse is seen as an existential threat, the self-defense, which is naturally seen as justified, always turns into a metaphysical battle between good and evil, and the traditional ethno-nationalism becomes a kind of ethno-religion. This is the source of strength of the cultural-nationalist “civil rights movements”.

The Hungarian version of anti-Semitism can be defined as an identity problem for the majority of society. It focuses on the “worry” about its own “people”, on the basis of which they deny that “strangers” are capable of being part of the national and cultural structure, claiming that these strangers are culturally, socially, religiously and morally inferior, and detecting a threat to national and ethnical structures in their work. The thinking of such a “structural anti-Semitism” is directed against anyone who is suspected of being outside the prevailing norms, and therefore also against Roma and homosexuals. This “national defense attitude” for the stabilization of the “national self-assurance” also led to the “concept of patriotic culture” of Kossuth Rádió and its belligerent psychosis.

Research has shown that the causes of present-day anti-Semitism in Hungary have a lot to do with the EU integration process, which concentrated mainly on economic aspects and much less on stabilization of the new democracies. Therefore the development of reactive strategies is unthinkable on a single-handed basis. What would be very welcome is the development of the main features and an environment of democratic cultural and educational and media policies in a politico-cultural dialog between the “East” and the “West”; if the concept of culture continues to be undemocratic, the exclusion by the politico-cultural strategies and operative measures for which it serves as a basis are automated and reproduced again and again.

Magdalena Marsovszky is an art historian and cultural manager and lives in Munich. As freelance journalist she is primarily interested in Hungary's cultural and educational and media policies and anti-Semitism as cultural outlook.

Moldova – Left Behind

By Katinka Nowotny

0:07

It is 6 in the morning in Zirnestri, a small village in the South of Moldova, close to the Romanian border.

0:12 SOUND

0:17

Just as he does every other day, Anton cooks the breakfast for his younger brothers and sisters. Since his mother left 5 years ago to work in Turkey, he is now the head of the family.

0:32

The four children have had to raise themselves. Their father is an alcoholic and is rarely at home. And the last time they saw their mother was 2 years ago.

0:50

Anton Niculita, 16 years

ANTON "I remember how beautiful my mother was. I miss her so much. All the children who have a mother don't know how lucky they are."

Nicoleta Niculita, 9 years

Nicoleta: "I last saw my mummy on the 20 December five years ago. My younger brother and I were crying, but our older brothers made fun of us."

1:10

"She packed her things and went across the field. That was the last time I saw her. She just went away."

1:25 SOUND

1:27

Anton and his siblings are not an isolated case. According to Moldova's ministry of education, 30,000 children have been left without parents, who have left – often illegally – to seek work abroad. These so called "social orphans" live with relatives, in orphanages and sometimes even alone.

1:42

They are emigration's forgotten victims.

1:47

The children have to take care of the animals on their little farm before they head off to school. They named their calf "Marius". No one needs to tell them what their daily chores are. They know them well enough already.

2:05

Andre Niculita, 13 years

Andre: "No we don't cut school. Sometimes I have to get wood then I can't go, but otherwise I always go to school."

2:14 SOUND

2:21

Everyone in the village knows the hard-working children. They are a role-model for children who grow up without parents.

2:32

Their daily journey to school isn't far.

2:35

Here, too, the poverty is palpable. The school has no heating

2:42

The toilets are shabby outside huts

2:45

And there's certainly no such thing as a school gym kit.

2:53

In Anton's class the children are learning about the recent EU expansion.

3:02

On being asked how many children have parents working abroad, almost one third of the class gets up.

3:14

3 children in school:

Boy: Sandu Crafil

"My mother left 2 years ago to work in Turkey."

Girl: Alina Caranfil

"My mother left 3 years ago and is taking care of elderly people."

Girl: Natalia Ezanu

"My mother worked as a waitress in Romania."

3:23

The same is true in Anton's brother Costa's class. For these children, left behind in poverty stricken Moldova, childhood is all too fleeting.

3:33

Maria Girnet, 15 years

"My father has been working in Greece on a construction site for the past 3 years. He calls regularly, but I miss him very much."

3:45 SOUND

3:50

Nadejda Dobanda Teacher

"On the outside Anton looks like an average child, but inside he is already a grown-up. He has so much responsibility. He has to take care of his younger brothers and sisters, and sometimes he does not have enough time to do his homework. In the past 5 years he's become very serious and solemn."

4:09 SOUND

4:12

Moldova was once a prosperous country which supplied the Soviet Union with many of its goods. But these glory days are long gone: the economy is in a state of shambles, the factories are closed, and there are no jobs. To the east there is a volatile conflict over the secessionist region of Transnistria, which has frightened off Western investors. The only way out is to flee abroad.

4:34

Heidi Burkhart, Hilfswerk, Austria

"About 20–25 % of the population have left the country, especially from the rural areas. That means that the fields are lying fallow, and the children stay behind. A quarter of the population! – you can imagine what economic effect that has on a country."

5:00

This is already the poorest country in Europe, and here in Southern Moldova, the poverty is extreme. In the small town of Zirnesti one half of the inhabitants live beneath the official poverty line of a dollar a day.

5:15

Where parents are missing, grandparents often have to step in to fill the gap. Five of Anica's seven children work abroad. At 86, she hadn't planned on being a mother again. But she has no choice. Now she prays she'll stay healthy long enough to keep on looking after her grandchildren.

5:32

Anica Miron, Grandmother

"the mother of these children, my daughter, is a doctor. But despite the good education she still had to go and work abroad. The government does nothing to help us. Even if you are highly qualified, that doesn't mean that you will find a job that enables you to feed your children. I see no future for my children."

5:54

There are just old people and kids in Zirnestri now. And the few people of working age left are scrabbling for their chance to leave the misery and squalor behind.

6:07

Taisa Lucinschi, Accountant

"You need 2,500 dollars to cross the borders illegally and work in Europe. If I had the money I'd be gone already. In this village alone half the population has already left."

6:23

The abandoned children have to make the best out of their situation.

6:32

Their chores are evenly divided.

They clean the house, cook and wash their clothes. Their biggest pride is a well that they built themselves.

Anton Niculita, 16 years

"I built this well with my brothers. (PAUSE)

We dug for one week. It's 7 metres deep. We also made these rings ourselves. But we need concrete for 10 more rings, then we'll be finished."

7:15

Their income comes from the little money they earn from their green houses. Here they plant tomatoes and peppers. Everyone lends a helping hand. The revenues are small.

7:28

Depending on the harvest they earn between 150 and 350 dollars per year. The money has to pay their bills: the food for the animals, clothes for themselves, and supplies for the school.

But they have each other, their friends and the community.

7:43

Other children are less fortunate. They end up in an orphanage, like this one run by UNICEF. Our visit had been announced and the kids were all dressed up for the occasion.

7:54

There we meet Kolya. His mother became a victim of human trafficking.

8:02

Kolya Nicolae, 10 years

"My mother froze to death because she wanted to cross the border, to work illegally in Italy. She gave her bag to the smuggler, so that he could take it across the river. But he never came back. My mother froze to death in her clothes."

8:22

The children on our farm have got used to their hard life.

MUSIC

8:39

Andre

"I wish mother would come back. She said she would come for Easter, then for Christmas, but she never came."

8:50

Life is tough for these kids, but they are modest and hardworking. Even the gift of a soccer ball is like manna from heaven. Imagine if they got their parents back...

END: 9:07

AKM: CD 02-30033
Music by Michael Lorenc film music "Bastard" 1997 Boje Buck Production
Coloseum Schallplatten GmbH
2) Elena's dance
5) Elena's theme on Dulcimer
21) In Elena's tunnel
23) Elena's dance

The Horrors from the East

By Wojciech Orlinski

Visiting a bank in Vienna, I noticed a multi-lingual message with lots of flags of the Central and Eastern European states. Among them, there was a flag of my own country, which was a nice welcoming surprise. It was accompanied by a message in Polish saying, "The safety vault is automatic and alarmed. Our employees cannot open it." It was a rather clear message about what sort of guests from our region this bank is expecting.

As early as the 18th century, the West imagined Eastern Europe as inhabited by savage people, wild beasts, and supernatural monsters. There is for example Count Dracula, located in Transylvania by the imagination of the Irish writer Bram Stoker in 1897. But the horrors from the East are also prominent in popular culture created locally. Victor Bocan, the Czech designer of the video game Operation Flashpoint, portraying the Russian invasion of a small fictitious country (called Republic of Nogova and strongly resembling the Czech Republic), said in one interview: "Obviously, Operation Flashpoint: Resistance is a realistic game; so forget zombies, ghouls or giants, although I have to admit that some Russian officers are really evil."

Metropolis Software, the Polish developers of another computer game set in Poland – "Gorky 17" – went a bit further in terms of the Eastern horror. The storyline is set in 2009, shortly after the admission of Poland to NATO and the EU (it is quite ironic that when the game was being designed in the late 1990s, both seemed to be matters of the distant future; the game was actually released the same year Poland joined the NATO). A special task force of NATO troops is sent to investigate a secret Russian military facility near the Polish city of Lublin, known under the codename Gorky 17, only to discover that Russian experiments on genetics and mind control have bred monsters of various kinds. "Gorky 17" was successful enough on the international market to justify the release of two sequels. From my point of view, it is interesting that Polish and Czech game designers aiming for the global market consciously (and maybe to some extent cynically) take advantage of the stereotypes of the East to win international recognition.

One of the wittiest examples of the "fear of the East" is the fake tourist guide *Molvania. A Land Untouched by Modern Dentistry*, written by a trio of Australian TV comedy producers. The guide looks very much like a real tourist guide, with maps, photographs, and suggestions of where to eat or stay. However, the fictitious Central European state of Molvania turns out to be a real house of horrors. Most of the jokes included in this book revolve around the same scheme: having described something that actually might be a genuine tourist attraction, the authors finally turn it into a grisly joke. For example, when describing the beauty of the "Vzinghta Gorge," the authors mention a "spectacular cable-car" that "sadly no longer operates," but you can still admire a "memorial plaque dedicated to the service's last 23 passengers."

The authors' immense imagination saves this scheme from becoming monotonous after a few repetitions. But the story always remains the same: in a nice restaurant, guests are reminded to tip their waiters generously as they carry concealed weapons. An interesting ski trail leads through a minefield. The country capital is worth seeing via bicycle – and an English language brochure on this subject is readily available at the casualty ward of the local hospital.

Partially, this usage of the "Eastern horror" comes from the fact that this book is actually a two-layered joke. It is not just a parody of Central and Eastern Europe, but also a parody of a certain style of tourist guide, in which the hardships of travel are presented as an attraction in themselves. Nevertheless, it is very interesting that the authors of "Molvania" have chosen Central and Eastern Europe, in particular, as a background for this parody on how to make your travel unnecessarily tough and dangerous. Tom Glaser, one of the trio of authors, explains it this way: "We trace the origins of 'Molvania' to a trip that the three of us made over a decade ago to Portugal. It might just have been a coincidence but every monument or tourist attraction we visited seemed

to be closed for repairs. At one point, we started making up fake guidebook descriptions. (...) When we eventually got around to writing the book, we decided to place our fictional country in Eastern Europe because we figured no one was too sure of the exact geographical boundaries in that part of the world."

It turns out that the real inspiration for Molvania was actually Portugal – a country located as far to the west of Europe as is geographically possible. In fact, experienced travelers can see that many of the book's photographs were actually taken in southern Italy or on the Iberian Peninsula. But the Australian authors are right to talk about geographical ambiguity "in that part of the world". One can safely assume that no other part is so densely inhabited by countries that are solely a figment of the imagination.

Apart from the fictitious states already mentioned in this paper, there are also Slaka, invented by British writer Malcolm Bradbury; Orsinia, created by the American science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin; and Vulgaria, where the British writers Ian Fleming and Roald Dahl located some parts of their book for children, "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang." Video game designers also seem to enjoy locating their fictitious states on this part of the globe – apart from the games that we have mentioned already, there is for example "Republic: The Revolution", designed by Elixir; a game that simulates leading the democratic opposition in the "post-soviet Republic of Novistrana"; or Volgia as the setting of a dark political thriller videogame, "In Cold Blood" by Revolution Software.

Comic book fans will certainly know the Central European states of Syldavia and Borduria as the settings of popular albums from the Tintin series by the Belgian author Hergé. And one should not forget Krakozhia, home of Victor Navarski, the main protagonist of a recent movie by Steven Spielberg, "The Terminal." And last but not least the kingdom of Ruritania, first mentioned by Anthony Hope in his novel *The Prisoner of Zenda*, but then used by various authors whenever they needed an imaginary country for their narrative (including economists from the Austrian School).

These imaginary states are usually created by people of the West and frequently, while they are ostensibly located somewhere to the East, they are actually used by the West to depict the West in disguise – just as Molvania is really Portugal. The same happens with countries that do exist in reality. One of the best examples is Bram Stoker's Transylvania. Needless to say, Stoker had never been to Transylvania nor had he any particular interest in that region. As we know today, he originally considered the Austrian province of Styria to be the birthplace of his famous blood-thirsty count, whose name was supposed to be simply "Count Wampyr". However, he accidentally found a mention of "Voivod Dracula", with the explanation that Dracula means "devil" in the local language of the "Wallachians" – thus Count Wampyr changed his name and moved with his coffin about a thousand kilometers to the East.

While Vlad Dracula was indeed a historical medieval ruler, he has no visible connection with Bram Stoker's Dracula, just as Bram Stoker's Transylvania has little to do with the real region, now a part of modern Romania. In Stoker's novel, the young solicitor Jonathan Haker travels east to Transylvania hoping to strike a good deal on real estate with the mysterious Count. As a result, he finds himself imprisoned and haunted by female vampires. He bravely manages to escape their charms, but Count Dracula arrives in England. Lots of horror and carnage on English soil follow, but it all ends well when Jonathan, acting under the firm guidance of good old professor Van Helsing, manages to chase Dracula back into his castle and finally kill him for good.

Sexual innuendo throughout the book makes it obvious, that the story is not about Eastern Europe, but about the subconscious fears and desires of Victorian society. Thus, the stereotypical portrayal of the Eastern horror is not about Eastern Europe, it is about the West looking for skeletons in its own closet. This is even more obvious in the case of the book's unofficial movie adaptation, "Nosferatu," shot by F.W. Murnau in 1922. As was aptly demonstrated by Siegfried Kracauer in his book *From Caligari To Hitler*, German expressionist horror movies were portraying the fears of the German middle-class in the Weimar Republic, fears that culminated in putting blind trust in Hitler as a sort of alleged Van Helsing who promised to chase the dreadful eastern monsters back to their homelands. It is even striking to what extent the visual language used to create horror in Murnau's "Nosferatu" resembles the language of Nazi propaganda.

Stoker's "Dracula" and Murnau's "Nosferatu" present the stereotype of the Eastern horror in its purest form. It can be described as: 1. A young and naive Westerner invites someone from the East or accepts an invitation and travel eastwards (or both); 2. Something terrible happens because of this mistake and he suffers greatly; 3. Other Westerners also suffer or their lives are in jeopardy; 4. Luckily, under the guidance of an experienced and wise representative of the Western civilization, the young and naive Westerner is able to repair all the damage he has caused.

During the Cold War, this scheme was often repeated in James Bond spy thrillers, where agent 007 was playing the role of the experienced and wise representative of the Western civilization, whereas democratic Western governments were cast for the "young and naive" role, as they foolishly allowed refugees from the East – such as Max Zorin or Auric Goldfinger – to settle in the West and run their profitable businesses, while it's all too obvious that these businesses are nothing but a cover for their real activity in Soviet intelligence. Finally, some kind of Van Helsing must arrive and save the day – Western civilization prevails in the end.

This scheme makes it easy to understand why the authors of the guide to "Molvania" have chosen this particular region. If you want to make a macabre joke about a young and naive Western tourist who went somewhere to see great vistas and subsequently died in a cable-car accident, it's natural – and stereotypical – to make him travel to Eastern Europe. In reality it could also happen in – say – Italy, but it wouldn't be as funny, as there would be no appeal to the stereotypes we all have in mind.

By saying "we", I mean also those who live in Central and Eastern Europe. We get the joke and we laugh at it, because – to quote Mayakovsky – we think it's "not about us, it's about our neighbors." Poles will think that Molvania is actually Belarus, Czechs will locate it perhaps in Slovakia, and Hungarians most probably will say it's very much like Romania. We all know the "fear of the East" as it is something deeply rooted in our own popular culture. And in fact, it is something significantly older than popular culture itself; its origins can be traced to the ancient times and the period of the barbaric invasions from the East.

This stereotype unfortunately has visible political implications for the contemporary European Union. After all, the idea of enlarging the boundaries of the Union is all too similar to the first part of the "eastern horror" stereotype, when the naive Westerner invites someone from the East. Economists and politicians say that it was a rational thing to do – but the subconscious fear of those raised on spy thrillers and vampire tales also takes its toll.

To quote *The London Times* from March 24, 2005: "France heaved a sigh of relief yesterday after it emerged from the European Union summit in Brussels that President Chirac had won his battle against the monster that has been terrorizing his country. The creature's name is Bolkestein's directive (...) Frits Bolkestein, a Dutch member of the last Commission, merely sought to implement a 45-year-old commitment to open European frontiers for the service industries that now account for 70 per cent of its economy (...) Left-wing opponents have succeeded in demonizing the directive as the harbinger of the hell of 'social dumping'. In the popular view, this means invasion by cut-price Polish plumbers, Estonian electricians and Slovenian surgeons, who will push French professionals out of business."

Anyone who has ever tried to find a good plumber in Warsaw must at least giggle trying to imagine something like a horde of Polish plumbers invading France, especially when you consider that all of them would have to speak French fluently enough to apply for a job in this language, while in fact finding one that would speak proper Polish might be difficult enough. The fear of francophone Polish plumbers is no more rational than fearing Nosferatu or James Bond villains. However, it is not just the French who are haunted by these nightmares after 2004 – nightmares of monsters likely to come from the East. Since in reality we cannot hope to be saved by Professor Van Helsing or Commander Bond, the least we can do is to inform these monsters in their native language that the safety vault is automatic and alarmed.

When a Separation Makes Both Parties Happy ...

By Petra Stuiber

In 1993, the Czech Republic and Slovakia separated peacefully and without much fanfare. Since then, the relationship between the two neighbors has improved – and the ties are closer than ever.

Next Saturday there will be another encounter: During the Ice Hockey World Championship, which opens that day in Vienna, Czechs and Slovaks will meet up as two rival nations. However the games end, one thing is certain: they will not be making any allowances for each other. It will be a duel of two confident ice hockey giants, both of whom have been world champions before. When the Czechs came home with “Zlato” (gold) in 1998, this country, still shaken from the transformation, heaved a collective optimistic sigh of relief. They had shown that they were somebody, that they could stand their ground not only against Europe but against the entire world; they had shown that they belonged to the community of achievers. When the Slovaks became world champions two years later, it wasn’t just the fans in the stadium who cried tears of joy. That victory was a symbol of several great feats that had been achieved by the young republic. First the separation from the Czech Republic in 1993, then the dark era of Vladimir Meciar, in 1998 the mass demonstrations forcing Meciar to resign, and finally truly democratic conditions and economic reform – and now the world championship, the final proof that the Slovaks could be great even without the Czechs.

However, this competitive patriotism moves Czechs and Slovaks only when the World Championship is on. In normal times, their relationship is not dominated by rivalry, but by friendship, cooperation, and exchange. A third of the students of the Department of Medicine in Prague are Slovaks, as are almost half of the students in the Department of Mathematics at the Karl University. In Prague cafés one hears Slovak pop songs, and many of the most successful managers in the Czech Republic come from Slovakia. Conversely, many Czechs work in the Slovak media. “Pravda” is led by the former editor-in-chief of “Mlada Fronta Dnes”, and the Slovak private channel TA3, a sort of mini-CNN, was founded by two top Czech journalists. “If the separation has brought anything, then above all it is that the Czechs don’t look down on the Slovaks anymore, and the Slovaks no longer have an inferiority complex toward the Czechs”, says the Czech senator prince Karl Schwarzenberg to “BAZ”. Earlier, the Czechs had been under the impression that a disproportionate amount of their tax money was flowing into the poorly developed regions of Slovakia – for their part, the Slovaks complained about the arrogance of the Czechs and the bloated administration in Prague. Still, one can hardly find anybody who finds fault with the separation, especially from today’s vantage point. Still, some intellectuals and politicians on both sides disapprove of the process: “This was undemocratic, the citizens were not asked, this was a decision by Klaus and Meciar”, says Martin Simecka, editor-in-chief of the Slovak Newspaper SME. Simecka believes that the separation has been beneficial to the Slovaks in the sense that “now, for the first time, we don’t have the excuse that others are to blame for our fate – we had to finally learn to bear responsibility.” However: “I am a supporter of the federalist way of thinking. I like it better than anything nationalist.” Schwarzenberg, too, says: “It is a fact that two small countries carry less weight than a medium-size country.”

“This is not entirely correct”, contradicts a Prague political scientist who has dealt closely with the separation of the two states at the Institute for International Relations: “Had we remained Czechoslovakia, we would have about the same votes within the EU as the Netherlands. As two sovereign countries, we now have more votes in the council.” It is also true that the weight of a country’s foreign policy has much to do with the stable performance of its government. The Slovakian centre-right government under Mikulas Dzurinda succeeded in overcoming a coalition crisis at the beginning of 2004 without major damage and in making a good impression on the European stage. In particular, it is the young finance minister Ivan Miklos with his radical reforms – above all with the “flat tax” – who has excited economists; with growth rates of more than 4 percent, Slovakia at times was even considered “Europe’s Tatra Tiger”. Of course the Slovaks

also react with equanimity to the fact that products have become more expensive and that the eastern section of the country has remained relatively untouched by progress.

It is different in the Czech Republic: the country has shed its role as a “model pupil”, which it still had at the beginning of the entry process (into the EU?). Pension reform, privatization, and administrative reform have proceeded too slowly. Also, during the past eight months, the social democratic government coalition has had to deal with the financial affairs of the recently retired prime minister Stanislav Gross. “Such an affair would not occur in Slovakia”, says editor-in-chief Simecka. But the Dzurinda government also has its financial scandals, he points out: SME reported that an as yet unknown company paid off 22 million crowns’ worth of debt for Dzurinda’s party SDKU. Dzurinda has yet to inform the public of the identity of the company. “This is all within Slovakian law”, says lawyer Jan Carnogursky, former vice premier of the first democratic Czechoslovak government in the early 1990s, “but from a historic perspective the question is, what is essential?” At the beginning of the separation, Slovaks were the “bad guys” and the Czechs were “the good guys” in the opinion of Europeans, he says. “It seems as if the roles were reversed now.”

But Senator Schwarzenberg does not want to hear about democratic deficits in the Czech Republic: “On the contrary, the Czech Republic is a consistently egalitarian society. It only suffers once in a while from a lack of morals.” This is true for both countries, according to Schwarzenberg – and corresponds to an attitude which ensured that many Czechoslovaks survived during the times of the Communist regime: “If you don’t steal from the state, you steal from your own family” Schwarzenberg concedes: “To change that will take some time.”

The idea of the Czech Republic and Slovakia coming closer again is not supported by people in both countries. At the commemoration of the founding of Czechoslovakia on October 28 in Bratislava, only 150 people attended – and rumor has it that not many more attended in Prague either.

God, All-Inclusive Modern Pilgrims on Hassidic Routes

By Jan Zappner

(Translation Michael Nardone)

Lezajsk, Poland, 2004

Pebbles crunch beneath the feet of Chaim Weisfish at each step as he quickly ascends the hill towards the tomb. It is the 21st of Adar I, and Mr Weisfish, a pilgrim from Jerusalem, has come to Lezajsk to honour the anniversary of the death of Zaddik Elemenech Weissblum, who died here in 1787. He was one of the most popular Hassidic leaders in western Galicia.



The tour leader told Mr Weisfish and his group from Jerusalem they have just two hours to see the tomb. On his way up the hill, Mr. Weisfish offers donations to Jewish communities from the United States and Israel, until he enters the tomb alongside his fellow pilgrims. He stands between men whose black tendrils sway back and forth over their ears as they pray. Beneath a neon light's blue glimmer, Mr. Weisfish finds a space and stands silent and liberated among the group's communal prayer. Now and then there is the faint sound of a cell phone's dial tone coming through the crescendo of prayers and a voice shouts: 'Yes, I am here. It is fantastic!'

The Hassidim believe that the souls of the dead come back to the place they are buried on the anniversary of their death. Since 1787, people have been coming to Lezajsk to share their worries in a spiritual dialogue with Zaddik Elemenech. His soul is a medium between the faithful and God. "Only a zaddik is sufficiently worthy to speak to God," explains Ben Stern from New York. "That is why it is important to pray here on this day." Once they have prayed, people stand before the grave and throw a *kvitel*, a paper with individual wishes listed upon it. This *kvitel* is the tangible form of the many wishes for the health, prosperity and safety of their families.

The birth of Hassidism began with a disaster. In 1648, during the war for the independence of Poland, Cossack gangs brutally murdered 300,000 Jews in Galicia. Synagogues, *Jeshivas* (Jewish schools) and libraries were razed to the ground, thereby destroying the central aspects of spiritual and cultural life. The chance to become closer to God through study of the Torah and the Talmud, as decreed by Rabbinism, had now become impossible for the impoverished communities.



This spiritual vacuum was filled by the founding father of Hassidism, Baal Shem Tov (1689–1760), who declared that God was omnipresent and that religious experience could be achieved through common prayer, hymns and dancing. This teacher entered the hearts of the uneducated and impoverished Jews of Galicia, who then rediscovered their religion and culture. It was not long before followers of the charismatic zaddik came together. By the end of the 18th century, the Hassidim had firmly established themselves in Galicia.

Before the war, Lezajsk was a typical Galician *shtetl* numbering 3,000 Jews among a total population of 5,000. Greg Stein, of Antwerp, has come to Lezajsk to celebrate the life of Zaddik Weissblum and to find the houses once owned by his family. He has come here to see with his own eyes the town described in his grandfather's memories. Mr. Stein's grandfather has not returned to Lezajsk since just after the war. Like many survivors of the Shoa, he does not have the will to return and face the memories of his *shtetl* which are now buried in the soil. Yet there is a new generation who comes to Lezajsk and to many of the former *shtetls*

throughout Poland. With only ten thousand left of the former three million Jews that once lived here, waves of outsiders are coming to Poland and reviving the nation's spiritual heritage. First generation men and women, born in the land their parents emigrated to with their own parents, now come to these destinations



in order to have a deeper understanding of their parents' and grandparents' former lives, to witness the roots of their own ancestry. 'Here', says Stein, his foot crunching down on the scattered plots of snow outside the tomb, 'is where the young, enquiring sons and daughters of Judaism meet their spiritual past.' His programme today includes some more Jewish sites. He will visit them not only to show his presence but mainly because this time he himself wants to be the one who tells stories from Galicia to his grandfather.

Meanwhile, hundreds of pilgrims gather near the grave. Passengers from another tour bus enter the chamber and press out the remaining cold air. The room is so crowded that people lay their prayer books on the back in front of them. The new arrivals lumber through the dense congregation so that they might stand before the glimmering latticework surrounding the zaddik's grave. If a space opens to let one body through, it is quickly filled by another. Those who aren't physically strong enough to pass, relay their *kvitel* to the chain of hands that carry it forward. Chaim stands absorbed in prayer at the edge of the scene. His fingers move through his thick beard. The contrast between his calm disposition and the swarm about him makes the crowd seem louder, near-riotous. Many questions were going through his mind, Chaim explains later. "The prayer cleans your thoughts. After two minutes you feel empty, but after two hours, filled with faith and hope." With shining eyes and a slight grin, he says he feels capable of anything. He can't explain why this place is so special. It is indescribable, something one must perceive for oneself.

There is a white building beside the graveyard that was constructed with the help of the Nissenbaum Foundation of Warsaw. This building serves as a synagogue on these grounds. Men gather here for the evening meal in a simply-furnished room on the second floor. Before the black velvet of a prayer shrine, a table is set with plastic utensils and paper plates. Rabbi Mi Lelov sits hunched over the head-table. There is a steady line of people waiting to kiss the rabbi's hand and to receive his blessing. Even today, rabbis remain the central figure of each Hassidic community. There is dancing after the dinner and in this act of celebration Rabbi Mi Lelov appears jubilant, lively. The room clears and the pilgrims leave behind an array of fish bones and half-consumed bowls of soup.



Downstairs from the synagogue a group has spent a week in the kitchen preparing kosher food for the pilgrims. Two women sit on wooden stools for hours scrutinising tiny, white beans, discarding any with a single black spot, and placing the clear ones into plastic bowls. Beside their feet are several stacks of beans that have passed inspection. "No pilgrim shall leave Lezajsk with an empty stomach," says one of the women, in an exhausted, yet proud tone.



Weisfish relishes the product of the women's work in a makeshift dining room setup in an old garage. The room is filled with babbling voices in several languages. Next to Chaim's group from Israel sit Orthodox Jews from Belgium, and behind the sound of rolling r's exposes a Spanish-speaking group from Chile. In the left corner several Americans talk leisurely among themselves and beside the doorway is a Hungarian party preparing to leave. Chaim's tour guide stands before the Israelis, and says reproachfully, "I've been looking all over for you." He is out of breath from searching the entire grounds. "Two hours, I told you. The rest of the group is already in the bus. And the plane won't wait." After this two-hour stay in Lezajsk, Chaim will fly directly from

Warsaw back to Jerusalem. For this day, entire Jewish communities book all-inclusive tours with the help of travel agencies. Some tours offer special tours not only to Lezajsk, but also to important nearby sights and cities, such as Auschwitz, Majdanek, Lublin or Krakow. These all-inclusive tours of Jewish sights have become a prosperous business for travel agents since the fall of Communism in Poland.

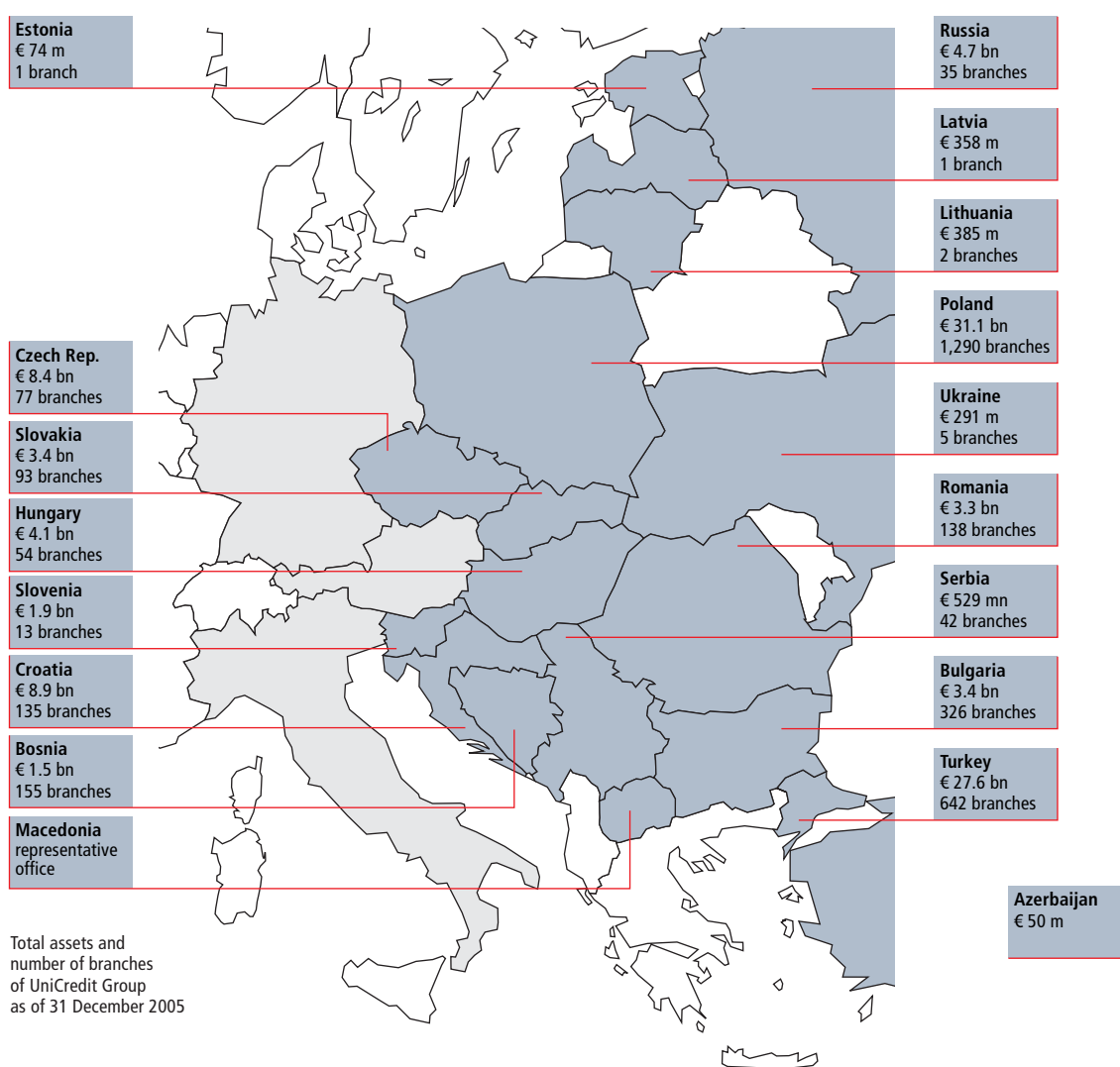
Now Chaim moves with heavy steps along the asphalt of the street. He passes Polish onlookers as he moves towards the bus. For a moment he stands still and returns his gaze to the hill. He promises to himself that in one year's time he shall return to Lezajsk and pray to the soul of Zaddik Elemenech.

Bank Austria Creditanstalt in Central and Eastern Europe

Bank Austria Creditanstalt (BA-CA) was the first Western bank to start business activities in a former COMECON country. Since 1975, when BA-CA opened a representative office in Budapest, and especially since the political and economic changes in 1989/90, the bank has pursued a targeted expansion strategy in Central and Eastern Europe. Since November 2005, BA-CA is a member of UniCredit Group. BA-CA functions as CEE holding of UniCredit Group and manages the business in this region. UniCredit Group operates the largest international banking network in CEE with about 3,000 offices in 18 countries and 17 million customers.

For further information please visit our website at www.ba-ca.com

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