

A b s t r a c t s

Christine Engel

Cultural memory and new discourses

Two Russian films about the wars in Chechnya

Two recent films have addressed the question of the war in Chechnya: S. Bodrov's *The Captive of the Caucasus* (1996) and A. Balabanov's *War* (2002). Both films owe a good deal to historical Russian discourses about the Caucasus and its inhabitants; these discourses were shaped by sentimentalism, romanticism, and realism, and the films take up the theme of the prisoner held captive in the Caucasus. The main way in which this motif is made relevant to the current situation is via shifts in the discourses and in the evaluations they contain. Bodrov, who to a large extent follows Leo Tolstoy's approach, seeks to contribute to the deescalation of the passions involved. Balabanov, on the other hand, emotionalizes the conflict by activating additional heroic myths derived from socialist realism and established stereotypes of cultural opposition between Russia and Western Europe.

Waltraud Bayer

Collecting for Armenia

Private art collections in Yerevan, 1920-1991

The Armenian SSR benefited, to a greater extent than any of the other republics of the USSR, from the activities of private art collectors both at home and abroad. Public collections came into being as a result of bequests and of transfers from the diaspora of nationalized cultural assets. The article describes the historical background and the roles of the most important collectors and founders of museums, and analyzes the relations between Armenia and Armenian communities in the USSR and abroad. There was a broad national consensus on questions of cultural policy. This made it possible to build up significant collections, and also provided conditions for a policy on art which ran contrary to directives issued from Moscow and which indirectly encouraged the development of independent, unofficial circles of artists and art-lovers.

Susanne Kraatz/Dorothee de Nève/Silvia von Steinsdorff

Research on Eastern Europe without women?

Official socialist propaganda celebrated the emancipated woman as part of a new society that had been liberated from capitalist exploitation. Before 1989, research on Eastern Europe frequently criticized state-directed emancipation and the continued exploitation of women. However, these two perspectives both seemed to treat women's political participation as a secondary issue. It is evident that research on post-socialist transformation has done very little to break with this traditional perspective.

Susanne Kraatz/Alina Žvinklienė

Between super-presidentialism and state feminism

Women in the parliaments of Russia and Lithuania

It would appear at first glance that in the field of gender politics Lithuania, a candidate for EU membership, has a better prospect of overcoming the joint legacy of the tsarist-Soviet eras than Russia, an endangered democracy. Nevertheless, the representation of women has developed in a strikingly similar way in the two cases. Both countries have seen a new start in gender politics at the level of civil society and of the state, but the effectiveness of this has been limited by extensive social problems, the discrediting of feminism, and the pressure on women members of parliament to conform. In addition, the party systems are only weakly institutionalized and the political spheres are becoming increasingly informalized. Short-term improvements in the situation have in each case been connected with the electoral success of a single party. This means that the prospects for and obstacles to women's political participation are in some respects very similar to, and in other respects very different from, those that can be observed in established western democracies. The decisive factors are the political institutions and the context in which they operate.

Dobrinka Kostova/Gabriella Ilonszki

Why less can be more for women in politics

The parliamentary representation of women in Bulgaria and Hungary

From the perspective of women's politics, Hungary is considered a comparatively successful example of domestic transformation. The Hungarian CP's successor party made it quite easy for women to enter politics. However, a comparison with Bulgaria reveals that there are at present more women members of parliament in the latter country. The main reason for this is to be found in the priorities of a new, surprisingly successful conservative-traditional party (and movement). Even so, the future prospects for women seem better in Hungary. Here the image of women is less firmly rooted in the traditional division of labour between the sexes, and a group of professional women parliamentarians that could become the core of a gender-aware politics has managed to establish itself within the stable Hungarian party system. In Bulgaria, on the other hand, the large number of women parliamentarians is combined with a high turnover of individuals, so most of them are politically inexperienced amateurs who have no power to take decisions.

Tanja Binder

Marriage and the Family

The parties' „postsocialist“ image of women

Since the end of the state socialist orders in Eastern Europe, the region has lost its unity. However, the prevailing image of women is one thing shared by such different countries as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. A renaissance of traditional values can be observed everywhere, for example in the programmes of the most successful parties in these countries. The question of „women“ and gender-based inequality are treated as minor or completely insignificant issues. There are some variations in the conceptions of women's roles embodied in the party programmes, but for the most part the dominant image is that of women as nurturers of the family; women are seen to have no place in the public sphere or in politics.

Katarína Mallok/Anne Tahirović

The long road to equal rights

Women's opportunities for participation in Slovakia and Bosnia

This article examines the participation opportunities open to women in political parties in Slovakia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the effects of the parties' policies on the advancement of women at the state level. Until recently, the question of women's participation played no more than a marginal role for the parties in both of these countries. Despite high levels of party membership on the part of women, there are still very few women in the most important party bodies. In recent years, however, the number of women occupying state posts has increased. This is the result of pressure from the media and from non-governmental organizations and, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, of the influence of international organizations. These organizations have raised the issue of the underrepresentation of women and have forced the parties to act.

Gesine Fuchs/Eva Maria Hinterhuber

Democracy from below?

Women's informal political participation in Poland and Russia

The collapse of the state socialist systems in Eastern Europe did not only lead to profound changes of political system and economic order; it also brought radical changes in gender relations. New opportunities for participation have arisen, but there have also been significant gender-specific changes in the spheres of political, social, and civil rights. In Poland and Russia, however, women's political participation has taken unconventional forms and has contributed to the reduction of the existing democratic deficit. Small women's movements have come into being; they are gradually formulating interests, legitimizing them by referring to existing law, popularizing new images of women, and at the same time providing new impulses to political institutions.

Astrid Lorenz

Compromise as an ideal

The structural context of women's informal political participation in Belarus

Even under the authoritarian Belarusian regime, new opportunities for action by women have become available since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and women are making use of these opportunities. Although women's political engagement is just as vigorous as that of men, the direct influence of women on state policy in Belarus is fairly weak. One reason for this is the authoritarian character of the regime and the existing mechanisms of gender-specific exclusion, and the second reason is the weakness of the organizations and a specific style of politics. Women prefer informal forms of participation and more pragmatic strategies which avoid conflict, and they frequently restrict their protests to criticism of the worsening of socio-economic conditions since independence. For this reason, women's activities tend to revolve around finding solutions to practical problems of everyday life; despite several attempts, no democratic women's movement has yet come into existence. Even so, it is possible within these limits to identify a trend towards moving beyond such traditional forms of behaviour. Women's interests are increasingly being represented in an organized form, and this now includes the formation of feminist groups.