

A b s t r a c t s

Ulrich Schmid Clearer than the Noise of History Obituary for Czesław Miłosz

The Nobel prize winner in literature Czesław Miłosz died on August 14, 2004 in Krakow. His entire works can be understood as an attempt to continuously interpret the precarious course of history, the modern ideologies and his biography. A peculiar autobiographism characterizes Miłosz's essays and poems, in which at times the I directly appears as the subject of the narrative. More often, though, it is only intimated through multiple fractions and reflections as a narrative vanishing point. As young author he briefly endorsed an elitist concept of poetry, but already dismissed it in the mid-1930s. After the Second World War he offered his services to the communist regime. In 1951, at the apogee of Polish Stalinism, he defected to the West. After a passing enthusiasm for esoteric concepts in the 1970s he turned to conservative Catholicism during the last years of his life.

Werner Benecke The Warsaw Uprising 1944

The Warsaw uprising of late summer 1944 marks the most tragic event in the Polish capital's history of the 20th century. It began as a risky attempt of the underground home army to single-handedly free the city from the hated German occupation in a surprise attack before the approaching Red Army arrived. Isolated from all effective help, the city fought a desperate and bloody war until October 1944. Militarily, this war was directed against the German occupation; politically, however, it was fought against the Soviet Union. After the uprising had been defeated, the city was systematically depopulated and levelled.

Jutta Scherrer Ideology, identity, and memory: a new *Russian Idea*?

"The Russian Idea" is a hackneyed slogan, but it is enjoying a boom in contemporary Russia. The term is being interpreted in the most diverse ways imaginable, in contexts ranging from philosophical treatises to everyday political jargon. However, it is not the purpose of this article to draw up an inventory of these usages. Instead, the article shows that the resort to the Russian Idea is part of the post-Soviet construction of identity and the associated search for norms and moral concepts. Se-

lected examples are examined in order to answer the question of whether the Russian Idea is serving the goals of the search for identity or of a state-patriotic ideological construct, and of whether, thanks to the historical "meaning" mediated by the Russian Idea, these two aspects might be very closely associated with one another.

Heinrich Vogel

Detour or Relapse?

Russia's Policies are not a PR Problem

Russia's political development increasingly elicits a feeling of déjà-vu in many seasoned international observers. The opaqueness of decisions, the executive powers untrammelled by parliamentary control, the dismantlement of the freedom of the press, and the Yukos case leave hardly any reason for doubt: Russia is falling into the trap of a renewed authoritarianism. Putin's shining image and well-choreographed diplomatic events should not disguise the severe structural problems in the economy and society, or deflect the view from the consequences of this renaissance of centralized bureaucratic rule. Those who decline to criticize the new Russian authoritarianism underestimate its foreign policy implications.

Aleksandr Proskuryakov

The mediatization of the war in Chechnya: a stage of escalation in an asymmetrical war

The war in Chechnya continues. The rebels, who are the weaker side, are fighting a guerilla campaign and using asymmetrical forms of combat. These include both the most up-to-date military knowhow and suicide bombings. The aim of this strategy is to impose a war of attrition on the enemy. Asymmetrical warfare is escalating on both sides. One can observe the mediatization of the conflict. The result of this is that public opinion has become accustomed to the war, and on the ground the war is becoming increasingly brutal and being prolonged even further.

Claudia-Yvette Matthes

Reform of pensions in East-Central Europe: blockade or breaking through?

Pension reforms in East-Central Europe are being carried out in the context of a worldwide paradigm shift towards forms of individual provision in pension schemes. Despite the common features of the efforts being made to reform pension systems, there are variations in the extent to which different countries are seeking to increase private involvement. This can be explained in part as a result of the resistance of interest groups involved in the process of political decision-making, but it is also a reflection of the governments' limited capacity to think and act strategically.

Robert Brier

Difference as opportunity: the advantages and disadvantages of the concept of “Eastern Europe”

The “end of history” prediction has turned out to be mistaken, and the legacies of socialism have not led to a uniform development in Eastern Europe. Instead, the region is characterized by heterogeneous paths of development. In view of this fractured situation, we can pose the question of the advantages and disadvantages of the idea of “Eastern Europe” as a heuristic conception of space. The concept is useful to the extent that it draws attention to difference and makes it possible to test research concepts developed in Western Europe or the USA to see whether they are applicable. The disadvantage of the concept is that it involves focusing historical and social-scientific research in a one-sided way on one difference among many.

Sören Urbansky

Stalin’s forgotten victims? Victims’ associations in Lithuania and (East) Germany

Associations of victims of Stalinist repression are a well-established part of post-socialist societies. Because these organizations have different images of history and of the nation, and also vary in size, their political significance varies from case to case. A comparison between Lithuania and the East German Länder serves to bring out these differences.

Karlheinz Kasper

Crop failure: no literary prizes for the most important Russian novels of 2003

Last year, three novels were particularly well received by Russian readers and critics. Dmitrii Bykov’s *Ortografiya* was read as an indirect, polemical intervention in the debate about the intelligentsia and the empire; Viktor Pelevin’s *Chisla* was understood as a “Homeric tragedy-farce” and satirical treatment of post-Soviet Russian society; and Andrei Volos’s *Moskovskaya Mekka* was interpreted as an anti-utopian, satirical phantasmagoria. When the major literary prizes were awarded, however, none of these novels was successful. This was a further victory for those who have sought to ensure the rejection of “ideological” novels which, by turning to historical analogies or using irony and satire, address politically explosive topics that are full of contradictions and so undermine societal taboos.