

A b s t r a c t s

Stefan Auer

The European Union and the Origins of Free Europe German-French Reconciliation and the Legacy of 1989

The European Union puts a great deal of effort into encouraging a European identity among its citizens. To this end, it draws on the means and methods of nation-states. But this identity policy has its limits, for Europe is not a nation, and the EU is not a nation-state. Above all, the different historical experiences can hardly be reduced to a single story line. Since eastern enlargement, German-French reconciliation has lost its bonding force as the legitimacy-creating, historical core of European integration. How the quest for freedom in East Central Europe before 1989 is handled is decisive. Those who try to instrumentalise the legacy of 1989 can end up damaging the credibility of the EU instead of boosting its legitimacy.

Margareta Mommsen

Oligarchy and Autocracy Russia's Hybrid Political System

The political system that has come into being in Russia over the past ten years is a mixture of oligarchy and autocracy. Economics and politics are fused. How political decisions are made remains extremely opaque. Thus corruption is flourishing. The forms of political communication are archaic; a true aggregation and articulation of interests does not take place. Instead of a democratic decision-making process, a few companies exert influence on politics. A national pride produced by the media and a dazzling stage-managing of power are supposed to provide legitimacy. But the economic crisis shows: The system is dysfunctional and thus unstable. If the rulers really want to modernise Russia, a new Perestroika is needed.

Kurt Scharr, Ernst Steinicke

Trouble in Paradise

The 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi

The vacation spot Sochi on Russia's Black Sea coast has been a swimming resort since 1915 and enjoyed great popularity in the Soviet era. With the break up of the Soviet Union and the decline of the Socialist form of tourism, the region plunged into a crisis, from which it has been freeing itself only slowly. The planned holding of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi offers the opportunity for an urgently needed upgrade of infrastructure. But there is a risk of excessive demands. Because of the limits on freedom of the press in Russia, problematic aspects, such as opaque decision making or environmental strains, are hardly discussed in public.

Oľga Gyárfášová

Signal for Moderation

The 2010 Parliamentary Election in Slovakia

In the first half of 2010, the politics of East Central Europe changed track. After the Hungarians and the Czechs, the Slovaks also elected a new parliament in mid-June. In these difficult times, Slovak voters have given a clear signal for moderation. The nationalist SNS suffered clear losses, their Hungarian counterpart, the SMK, failed to clear the 5-percent hurdle necessary to enter parliament. The leftwing-populist Smer party did indeed achieve a good result, but it lacks a coalition partner. The winners are the centre-right parties and the moderate representatives of the Hungarian minority. Together, they are betting on budget consolidation and a de-escalation of the conflict with neighbouring Hungary.

Barbara Christophe

Remembering Heroes and Tears

Socialism and the Present in the Lithuanian School Book

Remembrance research is booming. The memory of life under Socialism is full of contradictions. This is seen in an analysis of Lithuanian textbooks. Textbooks are a rich source. Like "national autobiogra-

phies,” they reveal how the contradictory experiences under Socialism are balanced out and presented against the hopes of 1989, as well as the social and political disappointments of the present.

Maya Razmadze

The Depths of the Golden Age

The Soviet Past in Georgia’s Textbooks

The memory of Socialism in Georgia is a contradictory one. Some romanticise it as a golden age of stability, others construe it as foreign rule. Assessments of Stalin are also subject to controversy. At the moment, Georgia’s leadership is stressing the repressive traits of the Soviet system. That allows the current leadership to set itself apart from the old elite. An important instrument for the socialisation of youth and for conveying a homogenous national view of history is the textbook. It is the link between politics, pedagogy, and history. But in Georgian textbooks, more pluralism reigns in the presentation of history than in the discourse of the elite. How the past is construed is in flux.

Alvydas Nikžentaitis

Identity and Instrument

History and Foreign Policy in Eastern Europe

The politics of history is interest politics. Asserting one’s own views of the past is a central instrument of international relations. But insistence on recognition of one’s own form of remembrance does not always have to be deployed in a confrontational way. Examples from East Central and Eastern Europe show that the politics of history can just as easily contribute to the intensification of interstate conflicts as form the basis of regional cooperation. If two states exclude the sore spots of history, they can improve their relations, but the past will catch up to them. It can also come to unexpected disruptions, if the remembrance cultures of two societies reach back into the past to differing extents.