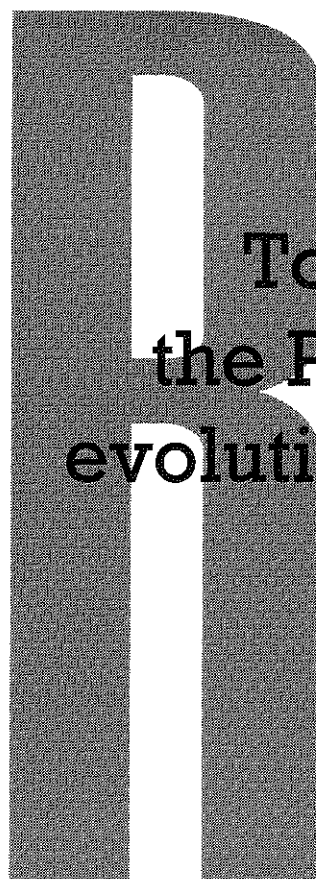


This is, in many ways, an unusual issue. The central articles are not about Eastern Europe, but about us looking into that imaginary world that had long been part of our consciousness. Leo Panitch, Dick Hebdige and Ioan Davies were, more-or-less, there as things fell apart (the pieces were written at different intervals: Hebdige in late 1989, Panitch in June 1990, Davies in January 1991). Tolstaya was interviewed in Toronto in October 1989, and Todorov wrote his piece in the summer of 1990. Thus none of the pieces are up-to-date: how could they be, as the walls came down and up in a brief period of 18 months? Thus we are engaged in an exercise of staccato recollections, of instant archival reconstruction, of political and intellectual voyeurism.

Why do it? Apart from the normal Canadian reasons that this is a multi-cultural project (and that is not necessarily a bad reason: it keeps our antennae tuned to the rest of the world), the most serious project is that the Soviet Union and Central Europe are a landscape of cultures in flux (as they always have been, but now perhaps more than ever) and that unless we try to understand that fluctuation, rather than impose on it our Western definitions, we will neither understand them nor us. And, a hidden agenda, of course, is that as tourists of that *other* revolution, we are not beholden to it, but want to make sense in a real, everyday, practical way of how everyone copes.

The articles that follow are therefore, and obviously, impressionistic. Todorov, from Bulgaria, provides a semiological reading of the central (physical and political) space of Russian culture; Hebdige (as a linguistically-impooverished East London non-Jew) takes a plunge into the heart of all our darkneses; Tolstaya, drawing on her aristocratic heritage, her own privileged status, and her writing experience, damns feminism in the West and agit-prop in the East. Panitch and Davies are our tourists of the post-revolution, employing such theory and observation as seems to be useful, but finding people — there — struggling to make sense of a confusing situation. Both of their pieces are excerpted from much longer articles: Panitch's from a study of work conditions in Moscow, Togliatti and Yaroslavl, and Davies' from a study of cultural organization in the Soviet Union and Central Europe. None of the writing is "typical" of Eastern Europe — as if such a thing could exist — but perhaps it provides clues to understanding an extremely complex area of the world.

There have been several important documents to have come out of the upheavals in Eastern Europe, which might be used alongside the material published here. Throughout 1990 both *Granta* (notably #30) and the *Eastern European Reporter* have published pieces of importance that provide a more thorough reading than that which is available in the daily press or on much of TV. The *New Left Review* (issues #179-184) has carried im-



Tourists of the Post- evolution

portant articles on a range of topics: Soviet feminism, separatist movements inside the Soviet Union, Western economic pressures on Central Europe, the "socialism" of Gorbachev. In its last issue *The Idler* (Jan-Feb 1991) published an article by the Polish author Kostas Gebert which analyzes the Polish scene, and *This Magazine* (February 1991) included an impressionistic piece by Rick Salutin of a trip to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The *Moscow Literary Gazette* is now publishing an English fortnightly (available in Canada), which invariably contains querulous articles on the state of Soviet culture. *Index on Censorship*, while keeping a global watch on terrorism against writers of all kinds, has been extremely vigilant in monitoring events in Eastern Europe. While all of these journals are partisan to their own causes, none of their angles are those of the dominant media in Canada. What is more, their copy reads well and does not depend on either *The Globe and Mail's* or the *Toronto Star's* "Manual of Style" to get their points across. In trying to understand what is happening in the rest of the world, it is important to know that there are other sources of information which do not depend on a multinational corporate sense of the median audience or the self-serving ideology of the (obvious?) monetarist economy. The fate of Eastern Europe and of ourselves is too serious to be left in that arena of wind-bag rhetoric. ♦

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