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politischen Tätigkeit

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Sehr geehrte Leserin, sehr geehrter Leser,

„Ich war und bleibe Politiker, manch einer nennt mich schmeichlerisch einen Staatsmann, vor allem aber war ich, bin ich und bleibe ich – Mensch.“ So endet der Rückblick von Stjepan Mesić auf sein Lebenswerk, der den Auftakt zu diesem Heft der Südosteuropa Mitteilungen bildet. Der Präsident der Republik Kroatien war der Einladung der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft zu deren Jahresversammlung am 13. Februar 2010 nach Berlin gefolgt. Bei seiner letzten Auslandsreise in diesem Amt, nur fünf Tage vor Ende seiner zweiten und letzten Amtsperiode, gab Mesić in seiner Festrede Rechenschaft über Beweggründe, Überzeugungen und Irrtümer im Laufe eines langen und ereignisreichen politischen Lebens. Ein unbedingt lesenswertes Manifest einer Persönlichkeit von hohem historischem Rang und beeindruckender menschlicher Integrität.

Festhalten an Überzeugungen und Werten, Toleranz und Solidarität – so lautet das Credo von Stjepan Mesić. Weit entfernt von solch hehren Idealen ist das Leben vieler Menschen in der Balkanregion in Zeiten des Umbruchs von tiefer Desorientierung und Werteverlust geprägt. Wo weder traditionelle noch westliche Werte Halt geben, entstehen völlig neue kulturelle Entwürfe als Identitätsstifter und Orientierungsmuster. Dies beschreibt Katerina Gehl sehr eindrucksvoll am Beispiel der bulgarischen Čalga-Kultur. Aus einem Musikstil der Unterschichten entstand in Bulgarien ein kultureller Gesamtkomplex mit eigenen Verhaltenskodices und einer in unseren Augen vulgären Ästhetik, der inzwischen von den Eliten adaptiert wurde. „Der Aufstieg eines kulturellen Randphänomens zu einem der wichtigsten, Gemeinschaft begründenden, integrierenden und stabilisierenden sozialen Faktoren (...) stellt eine einzigartige Entwicklung dar“, so die Autorin.

Die tiefen Friktionen in der modernen bulgarischen Gesellschaft zeigt auch Klaus Roth in seiner Analyse zur kontroversen Rezeption der künstlerischen Installation „Entropa“, zu sehen 2009 in der Eingangshalle der Brüsseler EU-Kommission. Die Darstellung Bulgariens – als ein System durch Röhren verbundener „türkischer Toiletten“ – führte in Bulgarien zu einem handfesten politischen Skandal. Die dortige Rezeption hat, so der Autor, die neuralgischen Punkte in der bulgarischen Gesellschaft offen gelegt, wie etwa die Fragilität der nationalen Identität und der Selbstwahrnehmung der Gesellschaft.

Mit diesen und weiteren Analysen zur Türkei (Gülistan Gürbey), Moldova (Martin Renner) und Albanien (Daniel Göler) wünschen wir unseren Leserinnen und Lesern eine anregende Lektüre,

Ihr Redaktionsteam

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Stjepan Mesić

Milestones of a Political Career

Five days before termination of his ten-year term in office, on the occasion of the Southeast Europe Association's General Assembly on 13 February 2010 in Berlin, the President of Croatia gave an overview of his life and political career.

He highlighted his commitment to anti-fascism and tolerance, his loyalty to people with whom he shares the same convictions. President Mesić also declared his readiness to bring war criminals to international justice – irrespective of their nationality. With a considerable degree of self-criticism, he admitted that after Croatia had gained independence he did not always sufficiently oppose the trend of national homogenization based on a biased perception of Croatia's role in World War II.

Speaking about the most important achievements during the ten years of his presidency, Mesić mentioned Croatia's stepping out of international isolation, joining NATO, drawing closer to the European Union, and becoming a supporter of regional cooperation and an active factor in international politics.

Gülistan Gürbey

Changes in Turkish Foreign Policy under AKP Government? Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's Concept of „Strategic Depth“

The Turkish foreign policy under AKP government is guided by the concept of "strategic depth" developed by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. Its aim is to turn Turkey into a leading regional power via an active and multidimensional foreign policy.

In spite of controversial discussions at home and abroad this foreign policy actually doesn't represent innovation or substantial reorientation. It lives up Turkey's external activism after 1990 under the Özal era and refines it. The activism regarding foreign policy in a regional environment is complementary to the traditional alliances with the USA and NATO. It doesn't question the full membership in the European Union in principle, even if the aim of accession to the EU has obtained a minor political priority and is now one aim among many others.

Martin Renner

Moldova at the Crossroads – Political Struggle in 2009 and EU-Perspectives

The Republic of Moldova experienced particularly enthralling events in 2009. After the parliamentary elections in April 2009, the country was – or rather still is – caught somewhere between democratic changes and political as well as economic chaos. The paper aims to analyse the events of the year 2009 that witnessed two parliamentary elections with a special focus on the current situation of democracy and the rule of law in Moldova against the background of its ambitions to gain an EU accession perspective. Beginning with a short outline of the legal basis of the EU-Moldovan relationship, the situation of rule of law and democratic procedures in the country at the end of nine years of communist government are examined, arguing that the rule of law principle and democratic competition have been largely removed in favour of the consolidation of power by the communist government.

The events following the second general elections in July 2009 indicate, however, that the new Moldovan liberal government might restore rule of law principles. The paper assesses the policies of the new administration since the end of 2009 and shows further steps to be taken in order to gain an EU accession perspective for Moldova.

Katerina Gehl

Čalga-Culture a Bulgarian Elite Culture?

The National Importance of a Popular Phenomenon in Contemporary Bulgaria

Since the end of the 1990s the so-called Čalga-culture has dominated the public and private sector in Bulgaria. After the fall of communism, Čalga emerged from a popular music style, at that time without any presence in the media and typical of the lower classes.

This has changed dramatically: Nowadays Čalga is a whole cultural complex with its own behavioral patterns, values, attitudes, attributes and aesthetics. The praised “Balkan way of life” enabled a broad public to compensate disorientation, lack of values and lacking national self-confidence. Within just a few years, mainly since 2000, Čalga has become an identity-generating phenomenon with the status of an “authentic” Bulgarian culture rooted to the soil. Gradually it matured to a culture even of the power elite, who legitimizes itself in society by promoting and exposing Čalga in the public sphere. This strategy is leading Bulgaria further and further away from the proclaimed internalization of “European” values and standards.

Klaus Roth
Of Toilets and Other Symbols – The Installation “Entropa” and Its Reception in Bulgaria

On 12 January 2009, with the beginning of the EU presidency of the Czech government, the large installation “Entropa” by the Czech artist David Cherny was unveiled in the huge entrance hall of the building of the EU Commission in Brussels. It depicted the 27 EU member states in an ironic symbolic form in order to find out if the EU countries were capable of laughing about their prejudices.

Bulgaria was represented by “Turkish toilets” interconnected with pipes. It was the most negative sculpture and provoked a major political scandal.

The article analyses the press reports and above all the diverse and controversial reactions in several Bulgarian Internet forums to the sculpture and its meanings as well as the reactions of the government. The commentators discuss the “Turkish toilets” on three levels: as real material objects, as symbols and as political objects, and they thereby reveal deep-seated feelings and attitudes as well as frictions and controversies in the present Bulgarian society.

Daniel Göler
“Tools for Tirana” – Notes on the Internationalisation of Retail Trade in Albania

Since the collapse of the communist regime Albania has undergone major political and socio-economic changes. One of these changes is the transition from an almost isolated [planned economy](#) of the socialist period into a rather dynamic market economy. As part of the general tertiarisation of the Albanian economy the service sector has experienced different stages and dramatic interruptions of development until today.

After several years of the expansion of a very small-scale retail trade the main process of retail development during the first decade of the 21st century has been focused on the construction of large-scale, mostly suburban shopping centers mainly in the country’s capital Tirana. The latest facet of this development is the opening of a big “do-it-yourself store“ run by a well-known German retail firm. This can be regarded as a current trend of the internationalisation of Albania’s retail sector as well as the emergence of new retail formats in Albania.