

TRUTH AND LOVE



CENTRAL EUROPEAN)(FORUM
BRATISLAVA 15 – 18 NOVEMBER 2012
DIVADLO ASTORKA / KORZO '90

)(THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN FORUM 2012 BULLETIN IS PUBLISHED BY
PROJEKT FORUM. SALON.EU.SK
EDITOR [ANDREA PUKOVÁ](#))(TRANSLATION [JULIA SHERWOOD](#))(DESIGN
[RÓBERT CSERE](#))(TYPESETTING [MARTIN HODÁL](#))(PRINTED BY BINDPRINT,
SPOL S R.O.)(COVER PHOTO [PETER ŽUPNÍK](#)
)(CONTACT CEEFORUM.EU
)(BRATISLAVA 2012)(NOT TO BE SOLD

CENTRAL EUROPEAN FORUM 2012 PROGRAMME

(TRUTH AND LOVE)

15 - 18 NOVEMBER 2012 BRATISLAVA

From 15 to 18th November 2012 the Slovak non-profit organisation Projekt Fórum, in conjunction with a number of other Slovak and international institutions, is organizing the fourth Central European Forum, a three-day series of discussions in Bratislava open to the public and featuring an international cast of panellists.

Václav Havel's conviction that truth and love will prevail over lies and hatred, that we must remain faithful to our own values as well as believe in love that upholds the truth of others, are the two key principles without which a pluralist world cannot, in the long run, exist. Central European Forum 2012 will focus on these issues, which seem particularly relevant to Central Europe in the present day and the future in 2012, the year of ominous prophecies.

Under the overall heading of 'Truth and Love' Central European Forum 2012 will discuss the many and varied forms and causes of lies and hatred. Lies become untenable at a time of crisis, as evidenced by the current debt and economic crisis and the crisis in European coherence it has engendered. This is a time when instances of fraud are being uncovered and lies exposed. It is also a time of hatred unleashed by the lies that have been exposed. It seems that the fiercest opponents of lies are further lies, generating more hatred. We will be discussing possible ways of breaking this vicious circle at the Astorka/Korzo '90 Theatre (Nám. SNP 33, Bratislava).

THURSDAY) (15 NOVEMBER 5:00 PM) (OPENING

Vladimír Černý, director of the Astorka/Korzo '90 Theatre
Jáchym Topol, programme director of the Václav Havel Library

5:30 PM) (PANEL I: LIES

It is a commonplace that behind the official public institutions of our societies there are other institutions – private, confidential and often top secret: mafias, brotherhoods, mutual back-scratching alliances. Why do they thrive in our part of the world? How do they operate? In what ways do they overlap with official institutions? How do they weaken democracy?

Oksana Zabuzhko (Ukraine), Giacomo di Girolamo (Italy), Tomáš Němeček (Czech Republic), Ilija Trojanow (Germany)
Chair: Martin M. Šimečka (Slovakia)

FRIDAY) (16 NOVEMBER 5:00 PM) (PANEL II: HATRED

How is it possible for people living in a civilized country to succumb to sudden bouts of hatred? Is a predisposition to intolerance something shared by countries in this part of Europe? What, if anything, can we learn from the Western experience of multiculturalism and integration of immigrants?

Vladimír Arsenijević (Serbia), Jens-Martin Eriksen (Denmark), Andrzej Stasiuk (Poland)
Chair: Chris Keulemans (Netherlands)

6:15 PM) (PANEL III: STUPIDITY

On the one hand, ideologies in the 21st century have managed to turn entire nations

into mindless cattle, while on the other people now enjoy unprecedented access to information. The digital era is changing the way we think in profound ways. Where will this change lead us?

David Auerbach (USA), Miklós Haraszti (Hungary), Ivan M. Havel (Czech Republic), Drago Jančar (Slovenia)

Chair: Thierry Chervel (Germany)

**SATURDAY)(17 NOVEMBER
2:30 – 5:30 PM)(PANEL IV: CHANGE**

What was behind the mass civic protests and demonstrations of the past two years in the East and the West? What were their goals and what have they achieved?

Zygmunt Bauman (United Kingdom/Poland), Juraj Buzalka (Slovakia), Leonidas Donskis (Lithuania), Aitor Tinoco i Girona (Spain), Peter Pomerantsev (United Kingdom/Russia)

Chair: Eszter Babarczy (Hungary)

8:30 PM)(PANEL V: EXPERTS

We made the mistake of placing our trust in economists and ceding to them some of our intellectual and political responsibility, Václav Havel said in Bratislava in 2009, in reference to the legacy of the Velvet Revolution. What does it mean to “cede the world to economic experts”? Was there any alternative and do we have an alternative today?

Lajos Bokros (Hungary), Pascal Bruckner (France), Adam Michnik (Poland)

Chair: Ulrike Ackermann (Germany)

**SUNDAY)(18 NOVEMBER
2:30 PM PANEL VI: FEAR**

Leftist and rightist ideologies in their classic forms no longer work even in Central Europe, where they traditionally wielded immense power. Instead, their new hybrids and aggressive mutations are beginning to hold sway. What words does power use to speak to us?

Radka Denemarková (Czech Republic), György Konrád (Hungary), Robert Menasse (Austria)

Chair: Jana Cviková (Slovakia)

4:00 PM)(PANEL VII: LOVE

Why do the old feel disrespected by society? What wisdom does old age bring? And how can we overcome our fear of growing old?

Jiřina Šiklová (Czech Republic)

Chair: Svetlana Žuchová (Slovakia)

5:00 PM)(PANEL VIII: PROTEST

Pussy Riot, their appearance in an Orthodox church, the punishment handed down to them, and the unexpected worldwide outrage have revived the broader question of what qualifies as art and what does not. Where does art’s political power lie? And what makes art attractive to politics?

Milena Bartlová (Czech Republic), Anna Daučíková (Slovakia), Anna Jermolaewa (Russia), Alison Klayman (USA), Bertrand Ogilvie (France)

Chair: Michal Hvorecký (Slovakia)

Any changes to the programme will be announced

FRINGE EVENTS

THURSDAY)(15 NOVEMBER 10:30 AM)(THE WORLD INSIDE US

Lobby of the Slovak Republic Ministry of Culture (Nám. SNP 33)

Opening of an exhibition of art produced by residents of the Ohel David Jewish Senior home in Bratislava, introduced by ethnographer Peter Salner, Chairman of the Bratislava Jewish community and artist Júlia Kunovská. With Bratislava conservatoire student Marek Juráň on violin

4:45 PM)(VÁCLAV HAVEL. A TRIBUTE

Astorka / Korzo'90 Theatre

Opening of an exhibition of Peter Župník's photographs of 1980s Prague

FRIDAY)(16 NOVEMBER 8:30 PM)(CONCERT BY THE ETHNO-FUSION BAND AFTER PHURIKANE

The Mirror Hall, Primates' Palace (Primaciálne nám.1, Bratislava)

A joint project involving musicians from a Roma settlement, cellist Jozef Lupták, accordionist Boris Lenko and African musician Thierry

9:30 PM)(RECEPTION

The Mirror Hall, Primates' Palace (Primaciálne nám. 1, Bratislava by invitation only)

SATURDAY)(17 NOVEMBER 11:00 AM)(JUST THE WIND

Kino Mladost' (Hviezdoslavovo nám. 14, Bratislava)

Screening of the 2012 Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear winning film, dir. Benedek Fliegauf, followed by a discussion

SUNDAY)(18 NOVEMBER 11:00 AM)(AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY

Kino Mladost' (Hviezdoslavovo nám. 14, Bratislava)

Screening of Alison Klayman's award winning documentary, followed by a discussion with the film's director and producer

MONDAY)(19 NOVEMBER 10:30 AM)(TRUTH

Ohel David Senior Home

Discussion with former Prime Minister Iveta Radičová on Václav Havel's legacy in politics (By invitation only)

EVENTS ORGANISED BY CENTRAL EUROPEAN FORUM PARTNERS

SATURDAY)(17 NOVEMBER 4:00 PM)(REMEMBER NOVEMBER

KC Dunaj (Nedbalova 3, Bratislava, 4th floor)

A Milan Šimečka Foundation event marking the anniversary of The Velvet Revolution of 1989



ULRIKE ACKERMANN) is a German author and professor of political science, based in Heidelberg. Her research has primarily focused on freedom, a leitmotif of her intellectual career. She has studied social sciences, political science, German language and literature as well as psychology and since 2008 has taught political science at the SRH University Heidelberg, chairing the John Stuart Mill Institute for the Research of Freedom that she founded. In the 1970s she was a frequent visitor to Czechoslovakia and a supporter of Charter 77, the Polish KOR and Solidarity and other civic initiatives that sprung up in Central and Eastern Europe at that time. In 2002 she initiated European Forum, a conference at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences; she has chaired discussions on several German public radio and TV stations and is a regular contributor to the monthly Merkur as well as various German dailies. Her books include *Freiheit in der Krise. Der Wert der wirtschaftlichen, politischen und individuellen Freiheit* (Freedom in Crisis. The value of economic, political and individual freedom) and *Welche Freiheit. Plädoyer für eine offene Gesellschaft* (What Freedom. In defence of open society). “What concerns me is that nowadays secondary school students are not able to articulate the difference between democracy and dictatorship. Present-day Germany prioritizes security concerns over freedom. People in Germany are increasingly forgetting that freedom is our most valuable asset, the key engine of Western civilization ever since the polis until to this day. Instead, a fear of freedom prevails. The triumph of democracy over communism 20 years ago was, naturally, a triumph of freedom. However, the joy didn’t last very long. On the contrary, since 1989 freedom and personal responsibility have steadily come to be regarded as less valuable.”



VLADIMIR ARSENIJEVIĆ (is a Serbian writer, translator, editor and columnist. He was born in Pula and lives in Belgrade. His debut novel *U potpalublju* (In the Hold) received the 1995 NIN award and has been translated into twenty languages. He played in the punk band *Urbana Gerila* and the post-punk band *Berliner Strasse* and lived for several years in London and in Mexico. His columns have appeared in the dailies *Politika*, *Press* and most recently, *Jutarnji list*. He has worked for and helped to found several publishing ventures. „The people [in former Yugoslavia] used the phrase ‘the further south, the darker’ to describe the hierarchy of a specifically Yugoslav racism that has always been directed against those who were geographically directly ‘underneath’ them. And today? What do you expect of a generation that was raised on war and destruction and was breastfed the politics of open hatred? One that will never see other, freer countries without a visa? Alas, you can’t expect much. These days our young people again feel free to hate without inhibitions, easily and with pleasure. Surveys of school children make your hair stand on end. Over 30 percent of Serbian secondary school children believe we ought not to make friends with Albanians or visit their homes. Nearly a third of our youth believes that the Chinese, the only relatively sizeable group of foreigners in our country, ought to lose their residency even if they obey the law. Every second young person explicitly rejects homosexuals and people infected with AIDS. It is terrifying to think how morbidly successful contemporary Serbian society has been in distorting the thinking and emotions of young people.”



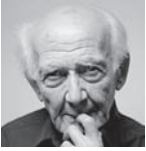
DAVID AUERBACH is a US software engineer based in New York. He has written for the Times Literary Supplement, n+1, Bookforum, Triple Canopy, and elsewhere. He lives in New York. He has worked at Google and Microsoft. He writes at <http://waggish.org>. “As computers become increasingly ubiquitous, they more and more tell us who we are. You become the person that Google, Facebook, the government, companies, credit agencies, and other institutions see you as. In the past, institutions had very little data on each person, but now information can be stored about everything and everyone, thanks to the continuing geometric increase in computing power. At least in the first world, you will become your data. Stupidity will consist of not questioning how we are understood and classified by the machines and people around us: not looking for the harm it may be causing. Stupidity and terror existed before the internet. It was just easier to ignore most of it. Robert Musil wrote ‘On Stupidity’ in 1937 but the forms of stupidity do not seem to have changed so much since then, even with the internet. Technology and the internet has made information far more accessible. It is now so much easier to discover new writers and new ideas and communicate with entirely different cultures halfway around the planet (like I am doing right now). Many people will not do this, but at least it is possible. Ignorance should no longer be an acceptable excuse. There are many problems, but they are problems of humanity, not of technology per se. Criticism of technology is essential, but it should not be made from a position of ignorance or close-mindedness. The exact same goes for praise of technology. To quote Hans Blumenberg, ‘Nachdenklichkeit heißt: Es bleibt nicht alles so selbstverständlich, wie es war.’”



ESZTER BABARCZY is a Hungarian journalist and historian, based in Budapest. She has worked for several periodicals, *Beszélő* and *Nappali ház*, where she was editor-in-chief. She has published a number of books and participated in research projects focusing on new media. She is the founder of the internet association *bom.hu* for 'young talent' in Hungary. "Can anyone imagine that honest but unemployed people might be able to send their children to study at a *gimnázium*? Those who can imagine that have probably never seen a Roma family. Everything apart from things that are donated and all kinds of do-it-yourself things – such as petrol, school materials, tutoring – is inaccessible to them. No matter how hard young Roma might try at school, they see no prospect of achieving their goal: they can't leave their settlement because the family can't afford boarding schools, train fares or textbooks. The first step for ensuring equal opportunities for black people in the US was to build schools that black children from the poorest districts could attend, thanks to grants. America's First Lady Michelle Obama attended a school of this kind. Unlike most sociologists I don't find the idea of placing Roma children in boarding schools scandalous. If we don't do something now to help children between the ages of ten to twelve to assimilate, we – middle class Hungarians and our indifference and lack of responsibility – will be to blame for further tensions. Just as we have been for the past twenty years, preferring to avert our gaze and hide our total incompetence behind politically correct discourse that doesn't cost anything."



MILENA BARTLOVÁ is a Czech art historian, specialist in medieval art and culture, the methodology of art history, and museum and visual studies. She is a professor at the Department of Art Theory and History of the Prague University of Applied Arts. She has contributed to the collection of essays *Krize, nebo konec kapitalismu?* (Crisis Or the End of Capitalism?, ed. Jirí Pehe) and published the monograph *Skutečná přítomnost: středověký obraz mezi ikonou a virtuální realitou* (Real Presence: Medieval Painting Between Icon and Virtual Reality). Her latest book, *Obrazy a události* (Images and Events), features a selection of essays written for the Artalk.cz website where she is a regular contributor: “The majesty of death generates a powerful moment. It reminds us to live a real, not a virtual life. Even if it comes at the wrong time, it demands our presence. It is unavoidable even if we dislike mass events and displays of emotion. It can achieve what otherwise does not make sense in everyday politics, its symbolic power uniting individuals who live separate lives but share a community and a country. Václav Havel was a Czechoslovak man of letters, a thinker and a politician; a president who resigned in protest against the splitting of the common state [of Czechs and Slovaks] agreed by prime ministers Klaus and Mečiar. For hundreds of thousands of those who mourned him with lit candles he symbolized the hope that one could live in a country flourishing under good governance; he was the epitome of the resilient spirit in the face of brutal oppression; the epitome of inner freedom that can assert itself even when outnumbered.”



ZYGMUNT BAUMAN) is a Polish sociologist and philosopher. Professor at Warsaw University until he was expelled during the anti-Semitic purge of 1968; he emigrated to Israel and taught at universities in Tel Aviv and Haifa. In 1971 he was invited to chair the Social Sciences Department at Leeds University in the UK. He is based in Leeds, since 1990 as emeritus professor). Zygmunt Bauman is best known for his analyses of the links between modernity and the Holocaust, and of postmodern consumerism. He has published over 50 books including *Modernity and the Holocaust*; *Postmodernity and its Discontents*; *Liquid Modernity*; *Liquid Times*; *The Individualized Society*; *Europe: an Unfinished Adventure*; *Morality in an Unstable World*; and *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* “Revolutions are not staple products of social inequality; but minefields are. Minefields are areas filled with randomly scattered explosives: one can be pretty sure that some of them, some time, will explode but one can’t say with any degree of certainty which ones and when. Social revolutions being focused and targeted affairs, one can possibly do something to locate them and defuse in time. Not the minefield-type explosions, though. In case of the minefields laid out by soldiers of one army you can send other soldiers, from another army, to dig mines out and disarm; a dangerous job, if there ever was one – as the old soldiery wisdom keeps reminding: ‘the sapper errs only once’. But in the case of minefields laid out by social inequality even such remedy, however treacherous, is unavailable: putting the mines in and digging them up needs to be done by the same army which neither can stop adding new mines to the old nor avoid stepping on them – over and over again. Laying mines and falling victims of their explosions come in a package deal.”



LAJOS ANDRÁS BOKROS) is a Hungarian economist and Member of the European Parliament. He holds a PhD from the Budapest University of Economics. He was director of the State Property Agency of Hungary (1990–1991); chairman and CEO of the Budapest Bank (1991–1995); he is a full professor and former CO of the Central European University. Bokros, who served as Hungary's Minister of Finance from 1995 to 1996, is best known for the so-called „Bokros package“, a string of austerity measures implemented during his term. Since 2009 he has a seat in the European Parliament. In the 2010 election he was the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) candidate for the post of Prime Minister. He lives in Budapest. In an interview with ATV on the 8 September 2012, Lajos Bokros commented on the Hungarian government's economic policy and its negotiations with the IMF: „The Hungarian government has demonized the IMF and has deliberately formulated [these] demands – which were not formulated by the IMF – in order that, should the discussions after all be successful, and very few of them have to be complied with, then a triumphant statement can be made to the Hungarian people. So it is quite obvious that this „peacock dance“ of lying and falsification is part of a communication stratagem. The competitiveness of the Hungarian economy is declining and this is reflected in the fact that we are unable to achieve even the kind of stagnation we find in more fortunate countries like Germany, or even emerging ones like Poland. We are in recession and this is a direct result of the decline in our competitiveness. The behaviour of our government has made us a laughing stock; it is a tragicomedy.“



PASCAL BRUCKNER is a French philosopher based in Paris. He is the author of bestselling novels, including *Lunes de fiel* (*Evil Angels*, made by Roman Polanski into a film, *Bitter Moon*, in 1992); *Parias* and *Le divin enfant* (*The Divine Child*), and essays critical of the hackneyed clichés of solidarity with the Third World and of „triumphant democracy“, „dictatorship of the economy“, „tyranny of guilt“ as well as the „art of loving“, as expressed in the manifesto *The New Love Disorder*, written jointly with Alain Finkielkraut. Pascal Bruckner was born in Paris and after a childhood in Austria he studied at the prestigious Lycée Henri-IV, the Sorbonne and the *École pratique des hautes études*. He has taught at the State University of San Diego (California) and currently teaches at New York University and the *Institut d'Études Politiques* in Paris. „We need a lighthouse to guide us through the current storm. More than ever before it is the values of the Enlightenment that can serve as this lighthouse: reason, education, free spirit, compassion with the weak, loathing of fanaticism, poverty and slavery. This is the only compass that can help the Old World out of its coma. If Europe collapses after 27 years, abandoning its weakest nations to anarchy and civil war, we will have to start from scratch: by joining two, then five, then eight nations together while trying to avoid old mistakes. The decline is not fatal: we have always bet on the greatness of mankind, on its ability to overcome danger. No difficulty is insurmountable provided we don't lose our sense of proportion. In a certain respect this test is the best thing that could have happened to us. We have the choice between success and failure.“



JURAJ BUZALKA) is a Slovak social anthropologist based in Bratislava. His research at the Institute of Social Anthropology in the Social and Economic Department of the Comenius University focuses on political and economic anthropology, social movements and transformations, nationalism and populism. He graduated in political science and journalism from the Comenius University in Bratislava and social anthropology at the University of Sussex. Following graduate research at the Max Planck Institute in Halle he gained a PhD from the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg; his PhD thesis was published in 2007 as *Nation and Religion: The Politics of Commemoration in South-East Poland*. His essays on the anthropology of politics, *Slovenská ideológia a kríza (Slovak Ideology and Crisis)*, were published by Kalligram. „Modern society differs from the pre-modern in that it is subject to impersonal market forces. For example, we buy coffee not knowing where it comes from, under what conditions it was produced and shipped and whether a fair price has been paid for its cultivation and harvesting. Buying in the mass market has released us from the obligation of personal contract. We know almost nothing about the social origin of commodities and services. The production consumption chain is now longer than ever before. Is anyone shopping at the Eurovea [a new shopping centre in Bratislava] interested in the labour conditions in garment factories of southeast Asia where designer clothes are being produced? Since we all live on the same planet and it is getting increasingly smaller, the consequences of this global chain hold up a mirror to our alleged freedom and rational consumer calculation. For the problems in the poorer parts of the world concern us more and the growing migration is just an external manifestation of global inequality.“



THIERRY CHERVEL is a German journalist with Franco-German roots based in Berlin. After studying music theory, he worked as staff writer for the German daily taz and later as the Süddeutsche Zeitung's arts correspondent in Paris. In 2002 he co-founded Perlentaucher (www.perlentaucher.de), followed by its English version Signandsight.com – online surveys of the most exciting essays from European and international press – which are among the most respected media of this kind in Europe. “On 1 March 2005 at eleven a.m. we went live with www.signandsight.com. I wanted to launch it with the manifesto entitled Let's Talk European! ‘Un ange passe’, is what the French say when silence suddenly falls in the midst of commotion. The angel's name is Europe. Does Europe exist outside of milk quotas? Apparently it does only as an angel passing by, a pause in a conversation and a silent point in communication. Jürgen Habermas proposed the notion of a ‘core Europe’ but there has been no response. How many people outside Holland had known of Theo van Gogh before he was murdered? And in 2002, as the 60th anniversary of the liberation was marked in Paris, nobody mentioned what had happened in Warsaw on the same date.”



JANA CVIKOVÁ (is a Slovak editor, writer, journalist and translator from the German, and co-founder of the feminist cultural magazine *Aspekt* as well as its publishing and educational arm. She is based in Bratislava. Since the early 1990s she has been in charge of *Aspekt* book publishing, jointly with Jana Juráňová. They have edited and published several books, including *Feminizmy pre začiatočníčky. Aspekty zrodu rodového diskurzu na Slovensku* (Feminism for Beginners. Aspects of the early gender discourse in Slovakia, 2009). Jana Cviková has written extensively on gender issues, culture and literature. Currently she also works at the Institute of World Literature of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava. “In striving to prevent sexualized violence we ought to talk more about the fact that this kind of violence has nothing to do with sexuality but everything to do with the abuse of an existing power imbalance. The best form of prevention, therefore, is to restore balance in these relations, to strive for women and men to be perceived by society primarily as human beings and not as epitomes of ‘correct’ stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. And in the short run it is crucial for all of us to learn that ‘no’ means ‘no’. Women’s behaviour should send a signal that they are not victims; male behaviour, on the other hand ought to signal not only that they are not perpetrators but also that they dissociate themselves from the perpetrators. For example, by making it clear that that sexualized violence is not a sporting achievement or a suitable topic for bragging in a pub.”



ANNA DAUČÍKOVÁ is a Slovak visual artist based in Prague and Bratislava. In the 1980s, after graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava, she moved to Moscow, where she created a black-and-white series of photographs documenting her Moscow and Soviet period. On her return to Bratislava in 1991 she helped found *Aspekt*, Slovakia's first feminist journal. In 1994 she abandoned painting for installations and video art and since 1999 has pioneered new teaching methods at her alma mater, where she heads the multimedia studio. Since 2011 she has also been teaching at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts. "Up until the last third of the 1990s Slovak art scene has defied, and quite strongly at that, any feminist reflection in the visual arts. It did so by ignoring the so-called second wave feminist art, and if it acknowledged its existence at all (usually only orally), it did so only in terms of amateur art. Art critics and art historians simply did not know how to deal with feminism. And yet, the term post-feminism occurs in the *Lexicon of Slovak Art* published at the end of the 1990s. As if we had simply skipped over feminism, jumping straight into post-feminism, a label now applied to all female artists who reflect these issues in any way. I believe the term post-feminism in visual arts should only be applied to the analysis and critique of second-wave feminist positions and solely to work produced by female artists. In addition, post-feminism has introduced new themes, such as cyber-feminism. However, whether we profess to be postmodernist or modernist, I believe we can't escape feminism."



RADKA DENEMARKOVÁ (is a Czech writer, dramaturge, translator of German fiction and literary historian. She lives in Prague. After studying German and Czech language and literature at the Charles University in Prague she worked at the Institute for Czech Literature of the Czech Academy of Sciences as well as a dramaturge at the Theatre on the Balustrade. She has published a monograph on the theatre and film director Evald Schorm as well as several novels, including *A já pořád kdo to tluče* (Who's That Knocking, 2005). She is a multiple recipient of the most prestigious Czech literary prize, Magnesia Litera and her most recent novel, *Kobold* (2011) has been nominated for the Czech Book Award. „Czech society is sick. And what's worse, it is refusing treatment. We exist in a falsified history of the 20th and the first tenth of the 21st century. We won't be free unless this mess is cleared up. We live in a tragic country where people want to forget and contemporary art is helping them to forget. Those who have lived under the communist regime, in an occupied country as a Russian vassal, don't seem to be able to live in another world. Everything political parties say about the arts nowadays is a lie. They are only interested in supporting commercial art, i.e. art of the most conformist type. They keep trying to destroy everything and everyone who points out that the emperor has no clothes. Such is the despair the Czech people have been driven to by the past century. The Czech version of capitalism brings back the law of the jungle: the strong dominate the weak. Yet the law of human society ought to read: the strong should protect the weak.”



LEONIDAS DONSKIS) is a Lithuanian philosopher, political theorist, historian of ideas and political commentator. He lives in Vilnius and in Brussels, where he serves as a member of the European Parliament, belonging to the right-of-centre Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, while in Lithuania he is known as a staunch defender of human rights and civil liberties. In 2004 the European Commission named him the Ambassador in Lithuania for Tolerance and Diversity. After studying at the Lithuanian Conservatory he went on to study philosophy at Vilnius University, gaining his second PhD in social and moral philosophy at Helsinki University. A wandering scholar, he has researched and lectured in the US, Great Britain and Europe. Until June 2009, Leonidas Donskis was Professor of Political Science at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas; from 2005 to 2009 he also served as Professor and Dean at Kaunas University's Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy. "Freedom is unthinkable without civil rights, civil liberties, and human rights as a form of our responsibility for humanity and also for the public domain. If we withdraw from the area of our direct responsibility for humanity, the public domain will be taken over by technocrats. And the story will be over. We have to realize that we can lose freedom and democracy at any time if we will start taking it for granted and withdrawing from the realm of critical questioning of ourselves, and the world around us. What is behind the idea of human rights is the superiority of human individuality and dignity over anonymous collectivities and decisions that supposedly speak on behalf of public good but, in reality, instrumentalize the human world and treat human beings as a means to build a power structure and to increase social and political control beyond our reach and imagination."



JENS-MARTIN ERIKSEN) is a Danish writer and recipient of numerous awards including the Danish Arts Foundation Lifetime Grant, the Adam Oehlenschläger Prize for Literature, and the Jeanne and Henri Nathansen Memorial Grant. He is based in Copenhagen. His many publications include *Winter at Dawn*; *The Crime of Jonatan Svidt*; *The Author Disappears into His Novel*; *The Bridge of the Hours*; and, together with Frederik Stjernfelt, *The Anatomy of Hate* and *The Scenography of War*, about Bosnia and Serbia, and, in 2008, *The Politics of Segregation. Multiculturalism – Ideology and Reality*. “Breivik’s sinister ideology allows us to distinguish, quite clearly, his attack on multiculturalism from the Enlightenment criticism of undemocratic multiculturalism. Breivik attacks its „multi“, Enlightenment attacks its ‘culturalism’. Breivik sets up monoculturalism against multiculturalism. He wants to pitch Christian values against Muslim values in a violent crusade. But the Enlightenment critique of multiculturalism realizes that both multiculturalism and Breivik’s monoculturalism are but variants of culturalism. They both believe individuals are determined by their culture - that they have no free will to influence their options and the course of their lives. So universal humanism will not give special rights to any culture or religion; it will claim instead that it should be not cultures and religions that enjoy rights, but individuals. It will claim that the space of all religions in a democracy must be contained by basic principles of human rights - no matter which gods those religions favour. The Enlightenment critique of multiculturalism claims that no culture or religion deserves special group privileges which violate human rights.”



GIACOMO DI GIROLAMO) is an Italian journalist, based in Sicily. He is the director of Radio Rmc 101 and author of the book *Matteo Messina Denaro. L'invisibile*, on a Sicilian Mafioso who is regarded as the new Cosa Nostra Godfather and is among the ten most wanted criminals in the world. "Since the age of 14 I have been working as a journalist in western Sicily. For some time now I have been observing the escalation of violence in the responses to articles I publish or read on radio. Threats, warnings, complaints. It is always the same: messages, phone calls, increasingly unambiguous warnings or messages sent via a third person. Or the carabinieri who visit you at home or summon you to the police station for a simple but prolonged interrogation – three questions, two hours. The fear of a registered letter that contains a court summons. And then you have to prepare your defence again even though it's embarrassing to have to defend a just cause. You just have to take a deep breath and pretend you're fine, call your lawyer friend to whom you no longer say thank you. All this poisons your blood. Suddenly you catch yourself being cross-eyed keeping one eye on the complaints coming from above, from those in power; the ones that are meant to intimidate you, if nothing else. And you have to keep your other eye on what's happening below, on the road. In the past few months my brothers and friends (for my brothers and friends are the people who work with me) have received death threats. We laugh these threats off. But ever since my blood has been running a little colder."



MIKLÓS HARASZTI (is a Hungarian writer, journalist, human rights advocate and university professor. He served the maximum two terms as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media from 2004 to 2010. Currently he is Adjunct Professor at the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia Law School, New York. Haraszti studied philosophy and literature at Budapest University. In 1976 he co-founded the Hungarian democratic opposition movement and in 1980 became editor of the samizdat periodical *Beszélő*. In 1989 Haraszti participated in the Roundtable negotiations on transition to free elections. He was a member of the Hungarian Parliament from 1990 to 1994, and then moved on to lecture on democratization and media politics at numerous universities. Haraszti's books include *A Worker in a Worker's State* and *The Velvet Prison*, both of which have been translated into several languages. "I am a born optimist and believe that journalism has a future, otherwise there would be no future for democracy because, if the kind of representative parliament of public opinion that journalism is supposed to be – collecting difficult opinions and forcing a national discussion in society – is not performed, we are in trouble. The future of journalism is digital, it's the convergence of media, it is online: in the future all media will be online and therefore there must be online journalism as opposed to just networking, as opposed to just total connectivity, just self-expression, self-perpetuation, just a mixture of facts, opinion, emotions and fiction. And that has to be done by journalists. Governments must keep their hands off, but on the other hand governments can help by legislating about freedom, even regarding the Internet."



IVAN M. HAVEL) is a Czech philosopher and academic, based in Prague. In 1989, he was one of the founders of the Civic Forum during the Velvet Revolution with his brother Václav Havel. He studied at the Technical University in Prague and holds a PhD from UCLA Berkeley. He has worked as a researcher at the Czechoslovak Academy of Science in Prague, focusing on cybernetics, artificial intelligence, cognitive science and its overlap with philosophy. He currently teaches at Charles University in Prague and works at the Centre for Theoretical Studies, an interdisciplinary institute, which he directed until March 2008. Since 1990 he has been the editor-in-chief of the natural science journal *Vesmír* (Space) and has written numerous studies and several books, including a collection of his *Vesmír* editorials and correspondence with fiction writer Michal Ajvaz. “The Czechs have one quality I’m a big fan of. It’s their sense of humour. Those in the know will understand that I don’t mean humour of the crude, primitive and sarcastic kind but rather an intelligent, witty and ingenious kind of humour. This kind of humour undoubtedly helps create bonds between people. Part of the reason is that creating a good joke is as much fun as understanding one. The best kind of humour, to my mind, is making jokes at one’s own expense. I don’t really know why, perhaps because this presupposes intelligence without vanity. Perhaps because self-irony is inconceivable without self-reflection. It encourages healthy, adequate confidence while also being enabled by it. And I hope you understand that when I talk of self-irony, self-reflection and confidence I’m not just talking about individuals but of society as a whole.”



MICHAL HVORECKÝ (is a Slovak writer based in Bratislava. He studied aesthetics at Nitra University and creative writing at the University of Iowa. He has published the short story collections *A Strong Sense of Cleanliness*, *Hunters and Gatherers* and, most recently, *Naum*, as well as the novels *Plush*, *Escort* and *Danube in America*. His works have been translated into German, Polish, Italian and Czech; *Plush* was staged by the Arena Theatre in Bratislava and *Danube in America* has reached the German bestseller list. He writes regular columns for Slovak and German newspapers and blogs on www.hvorecky.sk. “Re-reading my favourite Polish philosopher, Leszek Kołakowski, inspired me to scribble down a few notes under the heading *What A Democratic Republic Is Not*. It is not a country where swindlers fare better than honest people. Where a small group of oligarchs makes a hundred or a thousand times more than most citizens. Where former secret police agents, who had enslaved people, enjoy the respect of the country’s leaders. Where racists and murderers walk free. Where huge numbers of dilettantes and plagiarizers pretend to be teachers and real teachers are paid less than cleaning ladies. Where corporations pay less in taxes than scholars and artists, assuming they pay any taxes at all. Where poverty is regarded as a mistake and a failure. Where the citizens feel their vote has no weight. Where social status is determined by a person’s bank account rather than their skills and knowledge. Where the greatest punishment for embezzling billions is a discreet golden handshake. Where many talented and hard-working people live and work but hardly anyone is aware of them. Where historic buildings are torn down with official permission and worthless buildings are erected without any.”



DRAGO JANČAR) is a Slovenian writer, playwright and essayist based in Ljubljana. In the mid-1970s, in the relatively liberal Yugoslavia, he was imprisoned on a charge of hostile propaganda, for bringing from Austria and lending to some friends a booklet about a wartime massacre perpetrated by Tito's troops in 1945. He was released after three months and called up for military service in Serbia. In 1987-1991 he was the Chair of the Slovenian PEN Centre. Jančar has received a number of literary awards, including the Prešeren Award, Slovenia's most prestigious arts award in 1993. His books in English translation include *Mocking Desire* (1998), *The Prophecy and Other Stories* (2008); *Northern Lights* (2011); *the Galley Slave* (2011). "For we, ordinary mortals, uninitiated into the bank and stock exchange oracles, no longer understand anything. Financial transactions, financial markets, stock market fluctuations, rating agencies, this entire conglomerate of financial sums and flows, invisible and inexplicable for the eyes of those who fail to understand, for those of us who used to speak of European culture it has become an abstraction not even Karl Marx or Slavoj Žižek could explain to us nowadays. Once we knew there were capital owners, i.e. capitalists, it was possible to reach an agreement when negotiating with the Krupp family, but how does one negotiate with financial flows that no longer have an owner? That was something we could just about understand, while these days we shudder at hearing the warning: Should the euro break up, Europe will break up."



ANNA JERMOLAWEA) is a photo and video artist based in Vienna and Karlsruhe. She grew up in Leningrad but left the Soviet Union in 1989, after being persecuted for her involvement with the dissident movement (she worked on the journal Democratic Opposition). She holds a degree in the history of art from Vienna University, is a graduate of the Vienna Academy of Arts, and has been teaching at the Media Art department of the Karlsruhe Arts and Design University since 2005. She focuses on exposing mechanisms of political power, her mostly documentary films reflecting everyday, seemingly stable aspects of reality and revealing their ambiguous, absurd and often scurrilous side. She has received numerous awards, including the City of Vienna Prize and has held solo exhibitions all around Europe. At this year's Styrian Autumn festival in Graz (21.9 -14.10) Anna Jermolaewa showed her latest film on methods of social resistance as illustrated by present-day Russia, featuring "... artists, politicians, people who have gone into the streets, ordinary protesters. The film also features Pussy Riot. Over the past few months I have spent a lot of time in Russia, I have flown over to take part in rallies, to show my support but also to film. Lately the situation has deteriorated seriously, new legislation has come into force, now it's basically enough for three people to be out in the street, and you can get a huge fine since it can be regarded as a rally. People are constantly prepared to be detained, they carry a spare shirt in their bag, in case one is taken away, they carry their medication and everything they need, because they know they could be arrested at any time."



CHRIS KEULEMANS is a writer and journalist based in Amsterdam. He grew up in Baghdad, Iraq. In 1984 he founded the literary bookshop Perdu; later he worked at De Balie, the Centre for culture and politics, first as a curator, later as director and is currently the artistic director of the Tolhuistuin, a newly-established free space for arts & culture in Amsterdam. He has published plays, books, both fiction and nonfiction, and numerous articles on art, social movements, migration, music, cinema and war. He has travelled extensively to study art after a crisis, visiting Beirut, Jakarta, Algiers, Prishtina, Sarajevo, Tirana, New York, New Orleans and Ramallah. “How important, within the crippled societies of the Western Balkans, are the arts? While Western Balkan countries are attempting to recover from war, nationalism, corruption, and economic and political crisis, a new generation of artists and arts initiatives are producing imaginative work, creating new spaces for the arts and finding new ways to collaborate with the people around them, with their governments, and with artistic partners in the region. During the late eighties and early nineties, artists and intellectuals of an earlier generation provided the rhetoric, the symbols and the excuses, which fuelled nationalism and war. Travelling throughout the Western Balkans over the past decade, I have seen how new artists are reinventing their work, their identity and their environment. Coming from Western Europe, I was constantly impressed by these artists and cultural workers who regard their social responsibility as a given, who are forever changing the faces of their dilapidated but vibrant cities, who are deft at communicating with puzzled internationals and who still manage to produce innovative art.”



ALISON KLAYMAN is a freelance journalist and documentary filmmaker based in New York. She speaks Mandarin Chinese and Hebrew, and after graduating from Brown University she lived in China from 2006 to 2010, producing radio and television feature stories for NPR's "All Things Considered," AP Television, Voice of America, Current TV, and CBC. She recently reported the story „Who's Afraid of Ai Weiwei?“ for PBS Frontline. Her first feature documentary film *AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY*, was released in 2011 and won the special jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival. “Ai Weiwei’s interplay with authorities can be seen as a bellwether of how much China has changed, and how far it has to go, in terms of freedom of expression. Weiwei is certainly not immune to government persecution. When I first started filming, his blog was still running, with minor government interference; he’d never been put under house arrest or injured by police; none of his buildings had ever been demolished; and he was never barred from leaving the country. Magazine publisher and popular Chinese-language blogger Hung Huang told me, ‘China isn’t China until it’s China.’ She explained that the relative freedom of daily life, and people’s recent ability to acquire the commodities and luxuries they want and to live without government interference, doesn’t prepare you for that moment when the authorities do descend. Sometimes China can feel like the Wild West, the kind of place where you can show up at a police station with cameras rolling and get away with it for an hour. Until they stop you. This means, essentially, that Weiwei is not in jail until he is in jail.”



GYÖRGY KONRÁD is a distinguished Hungarian novelist and essayist based in Budapest. He was a dissident under the communist regime and one of the earliest to be published in samizdat and also in the English-speaking world. In 1977 he and a colleague, Iván Szelényi, were detained for writing *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. In 1988 he founded the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), and stood in the first free elections of 1990; 2009 he left the party with several founding members. In 1990 he was elected president of International PEN serving until 1993, and in 1997 he was the first non-German to become president of the Arts Academy in Berlin. His novels include *The Case Worker*, *The City-Builder* and *A Feast in the Garden*. “I am myself no devotee of Right or Left, but cast my lot with a democracy that allows everyone to speak, so we can see what kind of people are trying to lead us. Democracy’s main benefit is its protection, guaranteed by law, of the human dignity of its citizens from humiliation at the hands of their leaders. It protects the weak from overweening power, and gives them the tools to protect themselves if need be. What gives any society or its leader absolute authority over us? In Hungary right now, it is the fact that two-thirds of MPs give an automatic nod to the wishes of their little leader at every vote, and this anti-European EU member state – a five-legged calf – puts its own sovereignty ahead of its European affiliation, affixing the label ‘national’ to everything, including the sovereignty of its administration. To its own autocracy, in other words.”



ROBERT MENASSE) is an Austrian writer, literary critic, political commentator and translator. After studying in Vienna, Salzburg and Messina he spent eight years in Brazil, teaching Austrian literature and literary theory at the University of São Paulo. Since 1988 he has lived in Vienna, writing novels, essays, but also children's books, as well as opinion pieces on political and cultural developments in Austria. His works include the trilogy *Wings of Stone*, *Meaningful Certainty*, and *Reverse Thrust*, the novels *Expulsion from Hell* and *Don Juan de la Mancha*. His latest book is a non-fiction account of the European Union, *Der europäische Landbote, Die Wut der Bürger und der Friede Europas* (*The European Country Envoy, Citizens' Fury and Europe's Peace*, 2012). Robert Menasse is the recipient of this year's Danube Non-Fiction Book Prize. "People see that their national governments cannot resolve certain problems. At the same time, they are not sufficiently well informed about the complexity of the problems. So they are ready to consume easy solutions. And that's the hour of the right-wing nationalists. But it is even more complicated. For example, in the Netherlands, it is the Socialist Party that is regressing into nationalism now. And on the other hand, in Austria it was the big conservative bourgeois party, which is economically interested in Europe, politically, it regresses into nationalism. The leader of the conservative party says, 'We have to throw Greece out of the Union.' Why does he say this? He says this because he reads the results of opinion polls, and he wants to save his political life by being populist. It is dangerous."



ADAM MICHNIK is a Polish journalist and writer based in Warsaw, and visiting professor at Princeton University. He is the founder and editor of the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*. His publications in English include *Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives*; *The Church and the Left*; and *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*. “From the Polish point of view Czechoslovakia has always been a kind of a miracle. The personality of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk left an indelible mark on the pre-war Czechoslovak Republic, giving it its democratic and tolerant character. Building on this, Václav Havel turned a small country into a key global player. Prague has always been a multinational city, the city of Kafka and Hašek. Bratislava used to be multilingual, too. It was this atmosphere that inspired the greatest works of Czech and Slovak culture, which is imbued with two features I have the greatest respect for: the spirit of freedom and a self-irony, which served as a powerful weapon against the totalitarian regime. Two names in particular come to mind in this context: those of Karel Čapek and Jan Patočka. Čapek’s essay *A Place for Jonathan* is one of the most fascinating analyses of the position of an intellectual facing the threat of totalitarianism. And I regard Patočka’s *Essays of a Heretic* as one of the most important books on the state of humanity in the past century. This atmosphere has left an imprint on the specific spiritual culture of the Czechs and Slovaks, which we have come to love. It was in this atmosphere that Václav Havel and Milan Kundera, Dominik Tatarka and Milan Šimečka wrote their works and Miloš Forman and Jirí Menzel, Juraj Jakubisko and Martin Šulík’s have made the films we so admire. Central Europe would be much the poorer without them.”



TOMÁŠ NĚMEČEK) is a Czech journalist based in Prague. He studied journalism and law at the Charles University in Prague. Before graduating he worked for the weekly Mladý svět; in 1995 he joined the weekly Respekt, becoming its editor-in-chief in January 2003. In April 2005 he became the chief columnist for the daily Hospodářské noviny and in August 2009 he started editing Orientace, a supplement to the daily Lidové noviny. In 2004 he was awarded the prestigious Ferdinand Peroutka Prize; he is also the recipient of the Citibank Excellence in Journalism Award for the best 1999 article on the economy; in 2001 he received the Open Society Fund Journalism Award for an interview with Václav Havel. “The classic writer of sci-fi Isaac Asimov summarised the three laws of robotics as follows: 1. A robot must not hurt a human being. 2. A robot must obey a human being. 3. A robot has to protect itself from damage. With a slight modification the same applies to company board members: 1. A board member must not hurt ‘his’ company. 2. A board member is loyal to the shareholder who has elected him. 3. A board member has to weigh his actions since he answers for any damage with his own fortune. Ministers are now trying to figure out, rather clumsily, how to appoint government representatives in companies controlled by the state. That, too, follows from the same rules: they should be people with integrity, loyal to their country and with good judgment (which they also ought to apply to their own remuneration). Besides, the Dutch and the Germans adhere to the principle whereby at least one board member must understand the business the company is in, at least one must understand the law, and one financial matters. That’s it. It hardly requires new legislation.”



BERTRAND OGILVIE) (is a French philosopher based in Paris. He graduated in philosophy and classics from the Sorbonne, writing his PhD on Hegel as the foreigner. Ogilvie is the author of a book on Lacan; his latest book is *La Second Nature du Politique: essai d'anthropologie négative* (The Second Nature of Politics: An Attempt at a Negative Anthropology). He teaches political philosophy and psychoanalysis at Paris X – Nanterre University. “Ever since I started studying philosophy I have felt like I was a point of intersection, an original point, a meeting place between two force fields. On the one hand it is a web of modifications, of the evolution of scientific discourse, or, roughly speaking, an aggregate of everything that discourse can generate in our civilization of manipulating nature – in the technical sciences, if you like, the ones that develop quite autonomously. Philosophers have nothing to say on this subject, they lack the competence to comment, although they are constantly confronted with it. Then there is the other web – the web of the forces of politics, the web of words, imperatives, the regulations that govern human interaction as well as the distribution of property relations. Since antiquity, ever since the earliest days of philosophy, we have been asking the same question: ‘How far can we go?’; how far will we go starting from what the Greeks called *logos*? To what extent can it be applied to the world? Philosophy has always been a place for discussing the question of ‘how far’. At times the discussion has been quite heated. Democritus answered it by saying ‘Till the very end.’ Plato, on the other hand, preferred philosophy to stop earlier: mathematics is no use in the realm of politics, which is controlled by tradition. This contradiction dates back to antiquity.”



PETER POMERANTSEV) (is a journalist and TV producer based in London. Born in the Soviet Union, he grew up in the UK and has lived in Munich, Edinburgh, Berlin, New York, Prague and Moscow. He is a regular contributor to the London Review of Books and Newsweek. “Since Putin’s reelection, a parade of priests have been loudly denouncing forces aligned against the president. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, took to TV to say that ‘liberalism will lead to legal collapse and then the Apocalypse.’ And Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov has warned in a media interview that one needs to remember that the first revolutionary was Satan.’ The recent Pussy Riot trial [...] has been a godsend for the Kremlin as it seeks to whip up nationalist fervor. The church’s ‘Third Rome’ legacy – reinforced by Soviet personality cults and a pervasive prison culture that celebrates strong leadership – underpins the concept of the ideal Russian leader as a divinely chosen autocrat. Thus Putin simply couldn’t afford a second-round runoff in the presidential elections. From a democratic point of view, a runoff – even if staged – would have helped confer legitimacy by introducing an element of competition. But any sort of challenge would have been a blow against Putin’s quasi-monarchical aura. [...] For all the sometimes frightening and often shrill rhetoric of Putin’s Orthodox supporters, the new incarnation of Putin’s rule resembles less a thought-out program than a carnival where spooks dress up in cassocks and thugs adorn themselves with crucifixes, shouting snatches of medieval theology, Soviet conspiracy theories, and folk-metal choruses.”



JIŘINA ŠIKLOVÁ (is a Czech sociologist and writer, author of many research articles and books. She lives in Prague. Following the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 she was blacklisted and had to make a living as a cleaner and social worker at a Prague hospital. Her interest in gerontology, the main focus of her present-day work, dates back to her time at the hospital. In 1981 she was convicted of subversive activities and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. After the fall of communism she returned to the Charles University in Prague, helping to set up the Department of Social Work and founding the Centre for Gender Studies. Her books include *Deník staré paní* (The Diary of an Old Lady, 2003), and *Matky po e-mailu* (Mothers by e-mail, 2009). "An unprecedented system of corruption has spread across the country from the communal, regional to national level. These days anyone can survive any scandal, since in a few days it will be overlaid by another. The head of our state is so absorbed in his own vanity and by fighting the threat of European integration that he does not deem corruption worthy of the slightest word. Whereas under communism we had to overcome fear, the greatest obstacle now is laziness. Our national cynicism takes delight in this awful state of affairs and we ourselves don't do anything apart from making jokes about it all. We will pay a heavy price for our lack of interest and indifference to public affairs. Power always corrupts. And absolute power corrupts absolutely. Some of us may once have asked our parents and grandparents: 'Why didn't you do anything about it?' We should start preparing an answer for our own children."



MARTIN M. ŠIMEČKA (is a Slovak writer. Before 1989, he could publish only in samizdat. After 1989 he co-founded the Archa Publishing House and later became the editor of the critical weekly Domino-Fórum. From 1997 to 2006 he worked for the daily SME, seven years as its Editor-in-Chief. His books include fiction *Džin* (The Genie) and *Záujem* (Interest), as well as a collection of his father's letters from prison with his comments, *Světelná znamení* (Light Signals), and a book of essays, *Hľadanie obáv* (Looking for Concerns). From November 2006 until January 2009 he was the Editor-in-Chief of the cultural and political weekly *Respekt* in Prague; currently he is its editor based in Bratislava. "For corruption in post-communist countries is a new mutation of this ancient disease. It has blossomed in the fertile soil of fermenting freedom under the hothouse protection of totalitarian habits. It has become so powerful that it has mutated into a separate system, which is invisible but all-pervasive, its existence clandestine just like that of the StB [State Security] used to be. So how is it possible that another system based on a lie and corruption is such a system has been able to come to life and flourish despite the fact that it has been mentioned publicly not just once indeed, it has recently been on everyone's lips more or less constantly? The only explanation I have is that our society has been so profoundly marked by our post-communist experience that we are reluctant to give it up."



ANDREJ STASIUK (is a Polish novelist, travel writer and essayist. In the 1980s he joined the pacifist movement and after deserting from the army spent a year and a half in a communist prison. In 1987 he left the capital Warsaw and settled in the Beskid Mountains near the Polish-Slovak border, where he founded Czarne, a leading publishing house featuring contemporary Polish as well as Central European authors. His works of fiction in English translation include the novels *Nine* and *White Raven*, and the collection of short stories *Tales from Galicia*. His travel writing includes *Fado* and *On the Road to Badabag*. His most recent books, not yet translated into English, are *Taksim* and *Dziennik pisany później* (*A Diary Written in Retrospect*). “Perhaps life has really become so empty, shallow and insubstantial we need television to fill it out for us. Yet life used to consist of something more real: love, hatred, struggle for survival, faith or lack thereof. The way things are these days, however, it is possible to fill everything with TV images. And what’s going on right now, I guess it’s called an election campaign, is not too different from other kinds of show, *Dancing on Ice*, for example, except it’s the [parties] Civic Platform and Justice and Law [political that are dancing. It’s natural that they’re trying to convince us that it’s extremely important and that, should ‘that one’ win we will sink into hell, whereas if ‘this one’ wins we’ll fly up to heaven. But this is all fiction and lies. We create our country by behaving like decent human beings. If we all behave decently, the swine will not get our votes and power. End of story.”



AITOR TINOCO I GIRONA is a Spanish social activist based in Barcelona. He has worked as a political adviser to international organisations, including the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and World Health Organisation (WHO). He has been active in the student movement and is currently involved in ¡Democracia Real YA! (Real Democracy NOW!), a grassroots civic organisation that started in Spain in March 2011. In its manifesto it defines itself as a broad social movement, dedicated to nonviolent protest and maintaining no affiliation with any political party or labour union. It has not appointed any single leader and is unwilling to join any of the existing political bodies. “What we witness today is the depredation and expropriation of common goods, of wealth, and of rights. However, we are witnessing not only a systemic financial and banking crisis – one that has been transformed into a public debt crisis with specific consequences in different countries – but also a crisis of European governance that has changed power relations and led to a loss of national sovereignty, and a decline of democracy. This crisis is a crisis of politics, as it affects representation – and thus one of the foundations of the modern nation state. This is what protest movements address, for example the Spanish 15-M movement with its slogan „nobody represents us!“ or the Occupy movement in the US with the slogan “this is how democracy looks like!” Once the context, the power relations, strategies, and methods have been analysed, we are able to set out on a common process towards a social citizen’s Europe.”



JÁCHYM TOPOL) is a Czech poet, novelist and journalist based in Prague. He was one of the founders of the samizdat literary journal *Revolver revue*, worked on the weekly *Respekt* and later the daily *Lidové noviny*. He is currently the programme director of the Václav Havel library. His novels include *City*, *Sister*, *Silver* and *Gargling Tar*, which have been translated into English. Speaking about Václav Havel in an interview he has said: “Václav Havel was extremely important for me because of his ability not only to plan and organise but also to stand up for what he believed in. It didn’t affect us too much that some of our friends – those who were ten years older than us, artists who used to go to pubs and generally lived it up – ended up in prison. However, the fact that Václav Havel, a celebrated playwright of world renown, was not afraid to go to prison and spend four years there, sent a clear signal that there are certain things – let me put it in a rather theatrical way – that are worth suffering for. He won people over not by just what he said and through his plays but by his personal courage, and that’s a big thing that tends to get forgotten today, since a lot of time has passed. He still enjoys a very high moral credit because he wasn’t afraid to take risks. What made him interesting for young people in those days was, I think, also the simple fact that he was fun to be with. He was never a preacher or a moralist, he was a guy you could have a beer and a laugh with, and that’s really important.”



ILIJJA TROJANOW) is a Bulgarian-German writer, translator and publisher. Born in Sofia, he left Bulgaria with his parents in 1971 and obtained political asylum in Germany. Ilija Trojanow grew up in Kenya, returning to study law and ethnology at Munich University. He is currently based in Vienna and Cape Town. He is the author of several novels and reportages on Bulgaria and India, where he lived for several years, many of which appeared in major German-speaking newspapers. Trojanow is the recipient of many literary awards. His books have been translated into Spanish, Russian, Czech, Bulgarian, Dutch and English, and extracts have also appeared in French, Polish and Arabic. His books, translated into English, include *Custodians of the Sun*, *The Collector of Worlds*, *Along the Ganges* and *Mumbai Mecca* have appeared in English. “Although there are some Germans who are overdoing the cultural relativism, they are just a tiny minority compared to those who cultivate their bigotry in the streets and in shops, behind closed doors and in full beer tents. Every migrant could sing you a sad song about the insults he’s been exposed to (‘When will you go back home?’). The mantra of an excessive tolerance that has spread in Germany is a colossal lie. What are we really talking about here if a man with such a horrendous style and such crude ideas as Thilo Sarrazin has been elevated to the status of house author by people who used to belong to educated middle classes? The demagoguery of panic-mongers is not directed only against Islam but against the diversity of the world: its screaming tries to resurrect a blinkered, parochial, narrow-minded Germany. For the exact opposite of diversity is stupidity.”



OKSANA ZABUZHKO) (is a free-lance Ukrainian poet, writer and critic based in Kyiv. She made her poetry debut at the age of 12 but because her parents had been blacklisted during the Soviet purges of the 1970s, it was not until perestroika that her first book was published. She graduated from Kyiv Shevchenko University, obtained her PhD in the philosophy of art, and has spent time in the USA as Writer-in-Residence at several US universities. She has been a Research Associate at the Philosophical Institute of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences and is Vice-President of the Ukrainian PEN. She has published 17 books of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, which have been translated into fifteen languages; in 2006 her novel *Field Work in Ukrainian Sex* (1996) was named „the most influential Ukrainian book of the 15 years of independence”. Her numerous acknowledgments include the Global Commitment Foundation Poetry Prize (1997), MacArthur Grant (2002) and the Ukrainian National Award. “Being a ‘famous writer’ is not exactly about being a writer - it is about being famous. Of all the journalists calling me for a political comment, the public activists knocking on my door for my signature in support of their actions, the glossy magazine editors asking for my picture for the country’s ‘top 10 women’, ‘top 100 VIPs’, or some other ‘top’ list which they happen to feature, few, I am aware, have made it through more than one of my books. (I am notorious for my complex language, and am usually regarded as an author for the eggheads.) Most people buy the book because I am ‘famous’, which, according to the critics, stands for ‘scandalous’, ‘provocative’, ‘controversial’, or even ‘a witch’, characteristics that seem to have the most potency to win a woman writer the reputation of a contemporary classic. Being ‘a brand name’ means that, above all, you are selling your personality. If you are lucky, through this you can build a framework, a showcase in which your work becomes visible.”



SVETLANA ŽUCHOVÁ (is a Slovak writer, translator and psychiatrist based in Prague. She studied medicine in Bratislava and psychology in Vienna, and currently works in Psychiatric Ward No. 1 of the Charles University School of Medicine, focusing on research into the cognitive functions of patients with eating disorders. She has translated books from English and German and has published three books of her own: *Dulce de Leche*, a collection of short stories, *Yesim*, a novella, and a novel, *Zlodeji a svedkovia* (Thieves and Witnesses). „I would like to live in a world where I can ask questions. If I don't know something, I should be able to ask. And the people I ask would answer my question. And since they won't necessarily know the answers to all questions, sometimes they would admit they don't know. They would say sorry, we don't have the answer to your question. Admittedly, it would be up to me to decide if their answer is right. Everyone is fallible. I would ask the questions and receive answers that may or may not be correct. However, in the world I live in now I don't have to distinguish just right answers from wrong ones, which is quite difficult as it is. In addition, I have to be constantly prepared for someone deliberately cheating me. People cheat for various reasons but usually because they want to rip me off. It is not surprising that in this kind of world conspiracy theories are thick on the ground. In a world where we're constantly warned to beware of crooks, to read the proverbial fine print, you might easily end up believing there's a conspiracy behind every innocent event. Why should parents believe paediatricians who praise the benefits of inoculation when on the very same day they find they can't believe a bank manager of a respected bank who tells them they won't have to pay fees for opening an account. Why should one believe anything anymore?“



PETER ŽUPNÍK) (is a Slovak art photographer based in Paris. Along with other graduates of the Prague film academy FAMU he is considered part of the new wave of Slovak photography. His photographs feature in a number of public collections, including the Maison Européenne de Photographie, the Centre Georges Pompidou and Le Fond national d'art contemporain in Paris and the Elysee Museum in Lausanne as well as in several private collections. His publications include the monograph Peter Župník by Václav Macek and Praha, paměti noci (Prague, Memoirs of a Night) and, most recently, Torst Books in Prague has published the monograph entitled Peter Župník. „Prague, early 1980s. I am a new student at the FAMU Film Academy, fresh from the easternmost part of Czechoslovakia. Prague is new to me and everything about it fascinates me. I stroll around the city, my eyes devouring every nook and cranny that speaks to me. Prague is black-and-white, beautifully grey, sad, dilapidated. Amazing. Everything is grand and mysterious to me. I am entranced, the stolid normalisation period is beginning to loosen its grip; from my FAMU friends I learn of Charter 77 activities, of the 9&9 exhibition at Plassy that Anna Fárová put together with ‘her’ photographers in 1981, I go to concerts, some official, some underground, and then, on 1 May 1988, my first rally involving the police, the people’s militia and secret police deployment. Then things gather momentum August, October, the 1989 Palach Week, the manifesto A Handful of Sentences; another August and October, culminating in 17 November at Albertov. I remember feeling I had to go because I had to see it and capture it. Václav Havel? A dramaturge and an interpreter of the real and the absurd in one. And a president we can be proud of.”