Dimensions of the political

Travel and interpretation

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Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *Ach Europa!* (1987) is difficult to classify by literary genre. It is neither an essay on Europe as a cultural concept, like Edgar Morin's *Penser l'Europe* (1987), nor a journalistic report on current events like Timothy Garton Ash's *The Uses of Adversity* (1989) and *We The People* (1990). Nor is it a handbook for political tourists, and it is least of all a textbook on 'European political systems'. In this chapter I use it to illustrate a strategy for 'reading the political' in terms of its own (Palonen 1993a).

Enzensberger (b. 1929) is a West German writer and publicist, and the former editor of *Kursbuch*, a journal that played a key role for left intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s. In an interview before the 1987 Bundestag elections, Enzensberger appealed for a replacement of the centralistic, governmental paradigm of politics and instead proposed a consideration of politics as a self-organised array of diverse ideas and interests (1988: 230). Enzensberger adopts the nominalist view that politics is not fixed on some objects and absent from others, but is always a question of interpretation. The perspective of self-organised individuals enables him to read 'the political' in seemingly trivial phenomena.

Read in the perspective of conceptual history, Enzensberger's view of politics can be seen as an expression of the pro-political sub-current among twentieth-century German literati. The word *Politisierung* was coined by Karl Lamprecht in 1907, and it was later given different interpretations, especially by the Expressionists Kurt Hiller (1973) and Ludwig Rubiner (cf. Palonen 1989). Since then the word has been adopted into other languages, and the idea of reinterpreting some phenomenon as political, as something to which alternative and conflicting standpoints can be attached, has become almost a commonplace (Palonen 1993a). Among mainstream political scientists politicisation is still suspect. They tend to

see it as a marginal phenomenon in comparison with the 'polity' or the 'political system' in their conception of politics.

Enzensberger belongs to the literati who believe that every polity is based on politicisation, not the other way round. He has no problem with detecting aspects and dimensions of 'the political' in questions outside the terms of conventional political science. It also allows him to doubt, as Kurt Hiller had done already in 1911, whether governments, parliaments, parties and politicians are acting politically at all (1988: 230). I intend to reconstruct the way that 'the political' is read in *Ach Europa!*. My special concerns are language, space and time as constitutive dimensions of 'the political', as well as a methodology of research-by-travelling.

TRAVELLING: CENTRES AND PERIPHERIES

By 1972 Enzensberger had published an essay, 'Revolutionstourismus', parodying the tendency of many left-wing intellectuals to accept a fellow-traveller role as 'delegation tourists', who were not allowed to walk about unaccompanied in the city they were visiting (quoting Susan Sontag's words after a visit to Hanoi – Enzensberger 1973: 162). 'Delegation tourists' still tended to claim the status of 'expert' after visits of only some weeks (quoting a poem by Herberto Padilla – Enzensberger 1973: 131). One notable aspect of *Ach Europa!* is the author's tacit opposition to delegation tourism.

Another essay by Enzensberger that is important for understanding *Ach Europa!* is 'Resozismus' (1982). The title is an abridgement of a self-parodying name for the Soviet sphere during the Brezhnev era. It refers to the 'highest stage of underdevelopment', especially to the fact that East European countries were not allowed to do better than the Soviet Union. When visiting Hungary and Poland in the early or mid-1980s, Enzensberger did not have the illusions held by many Western leftists concerning the inherent potential of these systems. However, it is this disillusionment that also gave him a chance to regard East European countries outside the cold war framework.

Like Morin and Garton Ash, Enzensberger comes from a political centre in Europe. He visits only peripheral countries – Sweden, Italy, Hungary, Portugal, Norway, Poland and Spain – but compares them not only with each other but also with the central countries, thus relativising the opposition between centre and periphery (1989b), saying, for instance, that students in Tromsø in Norway

have in many respects better conditions for studying than their colleagues in the major centres, such as Paris or Munich (1987: 233).

Unlike Garton Ash, Enzensberger does not attempt to manifest himself wherever 'something is happening'; on the contrary he travels where 'nothing happens' (1987: 335; 1989a: 193). His references also mention things that are absent, that which is 'not Europe' – 'Bhopal, Luanda, La Paz' (1987: 162; 1989a: 120), as well as that which 'is Europe' – 'Zagreb, Brno, Budapest, Wien, Kraków, Trieste, Berlin' (1987: 344; 1989a: 200).

The plurality of eccentric viewpoints is a central dimension in Enzensberger's use of travelling as a method. But unlike quotations or interviews in the political travel literature, these curiosities do not serve to illustrate aspects of the country or current events there. They rather give the author an opportunity to distance himself further from what he observes. A Portuguese monsignore, speaking of 'time islands', gives Enzensberger the hint for the model of a time machine, allowing him to present the final chapter of the book as a report in the *New Yorker* of 26 February 2006, written (supposedly) by Timothy Taylor (1987: 182–3; 1989a: 135–6). Enzensberger's collage bears some resemblance to *Utopia* by Thomas More (1516), a classical model for a work mixing the genres of quotation and authorial commentary.

TRAVELLING IN THE HORIZON OF NAMES

A linguistic turn renders travel stories into travels between names. What is encountered and noteworthy consists of names of cities, persons, events, streets, sometimes used as symbols or metonymies for events, etc. The horizon of names in a book tracks the intellectual horizon of the author. Another characteristic in travel stories is wondering about strange names, which become independent of their reference. *Ach Europa!* cannot be understood without attending to wordplay.

Unfortunately, there is no index of names in *Ach Europa!* I have made lists of the names of persons, cities and streets. For persons and cities I have noticed only contextual references, concerning names outside the subject matter of the chapters. Street names, however, are more directly linked to subject matter and should be considered carefully. Well-known names are at the head of the list:

- Hitler: 251, 318, 330, 331, 345, 396, 399, 473
- Marx: 38, 139, 255, 305, 313, 417, 465

- Lenin: 137 ff, 157, 160, 326, 430
- Engels: 121, 417, 465
- Stalin: 372, 408, 491.

All five names have cast shadows on post-war Europe. Indeed, Lenin is the only person in *Ach Europa!* who is also mentioned in the lists of cities and streets (Lenin-Ring [Lenin-körút] in Budapest). Persons other than these five appear in the book only sporadically, e.g. Reagan as a symbol for evil in Spain, while the names Kohl, Thatcher, Mitterrand or even Brezhnev and Gorbachev are absent. The governments of today represent for Enzensberger only paper tigers (cf. 1988: 229), for whom there is no need of canonisation or demonisation. Enzensberger's name horizon is literary and academic. No sportsman/woman and only one pop star (Nina Hagen, 158) is mentioned.

The head of the list for city names is as follows:

- Paris: 109, 153, 200, 215, 283, 293, 302, 320, 333, 393, 425, 462, 489
- Moscow: 122, 144, 170, 197, 252, 366, 383, 407
- New York: 89, 178, 183, 290, 383, 459, 489, 497
- Berlin: 9, 106, 325, 344, 427, 454, 492
- Frankfurt: 9, 91, 104, 106, 108, 134
- Stockholm: 81, 103, 109, 258, 277, 392 (outside the chapter on Sweden)
- Copenhagen: 104, 255, 456, 465
- London: 103, 246, 459, 462
- Brussels: 103f, 479ff
- Bonn: 33, 102, 425
- Jerusalem: 317, 344, 434
- Vienna: 326, 344, 488.

As the paradigm for a centred conception of Europe *à la* Morin, Paris appears as the leading reference, even for Enzensberger's travels in Europe's peripheries. Moscow, New York and Berlin are other centres, to which it is easy to compare cities and lives in the periphery. London appears only as a sub-centre, like Stockholm or Copenhagen. Absent from the whole story are sub-centres in countries not visited by Enzensberger, e.g. Riga, Marseille, Århus, Graz or Glasgow, while Bucharest, Prague and Helsinki are mentioned only as places visited in the final chapter by 'Taylor'.

Enzensberger's style of establishing reference by listing cities is also remarkable. Some of them are less cities than metonymies:

Yalta, Bhopal, The Klondyke. But Rugby does not refer to the game, and neither does Bad Godesberg refer to the SPD party platform of 1959. He also uses two Paris street names metonymically: Champs-Elysées (1987: 227) and Quai d'Orsay (1987: 252), the latter, of course, as a double metonymy, referring to the site of the French foreign ministry.

In *Ach Europa!* the use of street names, as opposed to city names, is less significant. In chapters on Sweden and Italy, street names only serve the purpose of localising events or rendering them familiar to other visitors. Enzensberger does not thematise 'the political' in common Western street names (cf. Azaryahu 1990; Palonen 1993b), but tends rather to regard changes of name as reflections of regime changes, like the triad Saxony Square/Adolf Hitler Square/Victory Square in Warsaw (1987: 330; 1989a: 189; cf. also changes in the names of Polish provinces, 1987: 339; 1989a: 196). The result of these changes appears to him often paradoxical: calling a business centre in Budapest Karl Marx Square is an insult to Marx (1987: 138–9; 1989a: 101). In Lódz the rhetoric of names depends more on the audience than on authoritative decisions directed at them:

> the Street of the Siege of Stalingrad, only no one calls it that. Its old patriotic name, Street of the Eleventh of November, has withstood every rebaptism
>
> (1989a: 223).

As opposed to the name changes engineered from above in Eastern Europe – many of them, like Lenin-Ring in Budapest, rebaptised again after 1989 – there is the use of anachronistic names that have lost their original reference. For example, the old 'monarchical' names in Western cities are so evident that even a visitor does not usually pay attention to them, even if they dominate the whole city text, as in Munich. Enzensberger's favourite anachronisms concern Norwegian newspapers:

> The best side of Norwegian newspapers are their touching, quaint, and bizarre titles. In Kristiansand one reads the *Friend of the Fatherland* and the *Challenge of the Times*, in Lillehammer the *Spectator*, in Tromsø the *Northern Light*, in Oslo the *Course of the World*, in Asker the *Messenger's Walking Stick* and in Horten the *Returner*.
>
> (1987: 286–7)

Attention to anachronisms of this kind is an obvious advantage that accrues to the method of travelling: to a Norwegian, *Verdens Gang* refers only to the paper, not to what's happening in the world. Taking such references at face value gives Enzensberger a further indicator of the curious rhythm of time in Norway.

Another typical case of paradoxes in the presentation and use of names comes from Budapest letterboxes. A whole set of politically relevant situations can be read from them.

> Then the names on the innumerable letter boxes: names crossed out, illegible, smeared in felt-tip, faded, machine-punched, written with a flourish in brown ink. They reveal more than any statistic: there are not enough apartments in Budapest, here every square yard must be conquered with fantastic schemes and defended with dogged skill. The proliferating nameplates speak of exchanges, of allocations, of corruption, of inheritances, dividing walls, divorces, of odysseys of flight from the land and of emigration, of illegal business deals and laborious repairs, of unconquerable desire and of this city's inventive chaos.
>
> (1989a: 103)

Running counter to anachronism there are also attempts to adapt 'to the requirements of the time' in order to improve one's own position against competitors. This is the case with the names of Swedish bourgeois parties, which are unwittingly colourless and defensive:

> The Conservatives call themselves the Moderate Union Party, as if they were ashamed of being Conservatives. The Liberals clearly find their own Liberalism suspect, so they've settled on a folksier name, while the old Farmer's Party hides behind a title so neutral that it hardly means anything at all.
>
> (1989a: 6)

However, Enzensberger's argument presupposes a priority of realities over names. Changing party names can also be judged as attempts to break with nineteenth-century 'isms' as a necessary condition for restructuring the whole political spectrum in a manner that would no longer support the Social Democratic hegemony. One hint of this hegemony is the substantialisation and subjectivisation of the concept 'society' (*samhället*) in Swedish political language. Enzensberger's remarks on this rhetorical figure in the language of political parties, bureaucrats and trade unions in Sweden give good examples of nominalistic, 'deconstructive' rhetoric:

> They believe they are able to speak and act not only in the name of their own organisations but of society as a whole. Certain characteristic phrases recur in their statements: 'Society must intervene here.' 'Society cannot allow this.' 'Society must concern itself with this.' Reading the sentences more carefully, one soon realises that the word *samhället* (society) is synonymous with 'the institution I represent'.
>
> (1989a: 15)

According to Enzensberger, the hegemony of the Swedish Social Democrats remains fragile because of the absence of the symbolic dimension. 'Society' as a symbol is too abstract in order to be effective. In this respect, Enzensberger is in line with theorists of the specificity of 'the political' – like Max Weber, Hannah Arendt, Jean-Paul Sartre and Michael Oakeshott – theorists who refuse to subordinate politics to the idea of 'society'. The language of 'the political' rejects the subordination of human actions to the depoliticising language of processes, functions, etc.

The way that names in *Ach Europa!* are thematised politically can certainly be criticised from a nominalist point of view. Even the most trivial street names appear as political, as results of decisions which could have been otherwise, and thus at any time a potential source of conflict (Palonen 1993b). Naming is a political act *par excellence* in so far as it creates new realities through definitions (Benjamin 1983: 643–54). The Budapest letterboxes can be read as an example of the presence of 'the political' in giving, using and changing names. Playing with names, both as a politicisation of a situation and as politicking within an already politicised horizon, has been explored, for example, in feminist politics (Pusch 1990).

GRAFFITI AS A LANGUAGE OF THE POLITICAL SPACE

Naming is perhaps the most obvious aspect of the linguistic dimension of the political, but there are others that immediately attract the traveller's attention. The plurality of natural languages and the struggles between them are an inalienable part of Enzensberger's concept of Europe: 'Taylor' wonders, for instance, why the notes of the European Community are printed in twelve languages (1987: 455; 1989a: 287). Enzensberger himself admires the Norwegian practice of using two languages, even when they are close to each other: the result of the language struggle is that everything must be

expressed in two languages, including 'the translation of the Odyssey and the telex formula' (1987: 248).

Enzensberger understands the tendency to create new languages for each region in post-Franco Spain. His doubts begin when he finds that this can lead to 'linguistic civil wars', to a 'tower of Babel' in Spanish territory. For the individual the plurality of available languages tends to vanish again when regional linguistic monopolies appear:

> It is also entirely reasonable for the inhabitants of Barcelona to demand that the city have street signs not only in Spanish but in the language of the country, too. Yet hardly has this goal been attained than the local language guerillas set to work obliterating every single Spanish word.
>
> (1989a: 275)

Spray-painting also gets close attention in *Ach Europa!* Graffiti as expression and means of politicking is a further aspect of the linguistic dimension of politics that Enzensberger discusses, especially in the Iberian peninsula. In the Basque country, graffiti are simple expressions of a separatist politics of protest, without any aestheticisation of politics:

> Here, unlike in Madrid, painting graffiti is no sport for outsiders: it is not an outlet for sectarians, not an alibi for students from the lower middle class, but a collective obsession. The writing on the wall only expresses what everyone thinks, and, whatever the signature, the words – which I can understand, though I don't speak a word of Basque – always say the same thing. 'Clear out forever! Out!' The addressee, the Spanish state and its representatives, is nowhere to be seen.
>
> (1989a: 267)

As opposed to an instrumental view of 'politics by graffiti', the Portuguese revolution for Enzensberger expresses something quite different. To Enzensberger's retrospective judgement the revolution appeared as an opportunity to express oneself politically by means of graffiti:

> And best of all, the walls of the city were covered with coloured signs and pictures overnight. Everyone painted and wrote what he wanted – painted dreams sprang up, utopias ran wild across the façades as far as hands could reach. It was political intoxication, bright, tropical, psychedelic, uninhibited. Not a monologue

> but a babble of voices, a delirious abundance of desires: and for everyone, justice for all, the test pattern of a better world projected onto the crumbling plasterwork of an old city.
>
> (1989a: 149)

The revolution was an extraordinary situation, giving an opportunity for everyone to express publicly their own opinions. The public space was re-created and coloured by the simple means of graffiti. For the interpreter, the graffiti, still more or less present years after the end of the revolution, give the only hints left about the plurality and individuality of the views expressed in the revolutionary situation, but hardly noticed by the conventional struggle of parties and groupings later in the revolutionary era. Enzensberger also comments on the ambiguous end of this euphoria:

> I don't know if gangs of cleaners turned up one day with pails and brushes to remove this total art work, but I doubt it. No such thorough, systematic administration exists in Portugal. I believe the sea of pictures disappeared of its own accord. Indifference, rain, disappointment effaced the writing, washed away the traces.
>
> (1989a: 149)

For Enzensberger the remnants of the revolutionary graffiti are ambivalent. They refer to the fact that no repression was actually needed to end the revolution, rather fatigue was enough. Simultaneously they refer to the reality of creative expression, which, as faded fragments, still gives an opportunity to rethink the political chances represented in the Portuguese revolution. Politicisation cannot be ended intentionally, and depoliticisation consists in its exhaustion and disappearance.

For readers of Enzensberger, the politicisation of space by means of graffiti implicitly refers to the biggest *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the world, to the western side of the Berlin Wall. The transformation of the Wall into a monumental 'mural journal' is a manifest expression of the contingency of history, something that no politician either in the East or in the West could have imagined in 1961. The fate of the Wall after 1989 – its fall was 'predicted' by Enzensberger in 1987 – is a sign of the dominance of old-style politicians over individual agents politicking and politicising by means of graffiti. Why was the opportunity for this kind of politics not granted on the eastern side of the Wall?

'Timothy Taylor' visits Berlin in 2006, after the fall of the Wall.

In Enzensberger's imagination nobody wanted to destroy the Wall. But an intensive struggle was going on between the partisans of a 'biotope' and of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. 'Taylor's' tourist guide from the 'biotope' party describes the situation thus:

> The art historians are the worst. They regard the Wall as a work of art because of the graffiti, which are, however, only to be found on the western side. The Senator responsible for the arts would like to make a twenty-mile long open-air museum out of the 'biotope'.
>
> (1989a: 299)

The linguistic dimension of politics has in general been understood better by writers and literati than by professional political scientists or philosophers. But the quasi-Machiavellian approach, also advocated by Enzensberger in his 'realist' moods, separates words and deeds, language and reality from each other. This hardly appears plausible today. Now we understand better than ever the thesis from the philosopher J.L. Austin (1990) that words are deeds. Every use of words has potentially political aspects, and graffiti as a means of expression deserve the attention of political scientists, too.

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST IN POLITICAL SPACE

Spatial metaphors have dominated established politics, and in a metonymic manner politics is often linked with activities taking place in definite spaces, in parliaments, electoral meetings, etc. The ritualisation of conventional politics has sometimes resulted in curious depoliticisations of paradigmatic political spaces. In *Ach Europa!* this is exemplified by the priority of tourism over legislation in the Hungarian Parliament House:

> There is no sign of work here. There aren't any offices for the MPs. . . . But the representatives of the people meet only four weeks a year, for two whole days at a time. For fifty-one weeks out of fifty-two the chamber serves the tourist trade.
>
> (1989a: 108)

Today we might also ask again whether the 'democratic' parliament in Hungary is mainly a tourist attraction. Elsewhere spaces have been politicised by historical events, like the small Spanish town Marinaleda. After repeated land occupations, it has become a 'rhetorical village' for the left (1987: 419; 1989a: 259).

Both the ancient polis and medieval autonomous cities had an

inherent political dimension, and politics was understood as something specific to European cities (Weber 1980). For Enzensberger graffiti in contemporary cities appear as one form of politicking, rendering politics visible for the many, as opposed to the closed world of cabinet-style politics. It is no wonder that attitude towards graffiti has become a subtle watershed in European municipal politics.

The opposition between 'political' cities in Europe and depoliticised 'car-cities' in America is another spatial aspect of politics, emphasised by Enzensberger in his judgements. This is one of the main reasons for his preference for Oslo over Stockholm:

> The Oslo I like is time-warped, dirty, untidy, chaotic; a town that knows how to take care of itself. Here, modern city planning has suffered one humiliation after another. The vandalism of the planners that succeeded in erasing Stockholm's city centre failed miserably here because of Oslo's dynamic sloth, its stubborn mix-ups. Here, the technocratic obsession with the 'car-friendly' city never stood a chance.
>
> (1987: 258)

Here space is connected with the presence of history, a reference to past times. Enzensberger's other favourite among European cities is Lisbon, where pre-modern contingency in the division of space as against 'social apartheid' among modern buildings is still visible (1987: 187; 1989a: 139–40). The division into rich and poor, however, is not a sufficient reason to depoliticise the city. In the old Warsaw suburb of Praga, history is present as a reminder of 'pre-war time with its older vitality and misery' (1987: 323; 1989a: 183).

Ach Europa!, of course, is overshadowed by global divisions of the world in the post-war era. The reference to Yalta cannot be overestimated. The thesis from the *Resozismus* essay is used in his chapters on Hungary and Poland in order to make manifest the traces of the Third World within Europe. Enzensberger quotes the well-known Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski:

> I come from a remote little hole in White Russia. I always feel ill at ease in Paris or London. I am the Third World. My work depends on it. I understand what's happening in San Salvador, in Iran, or Ethiopia, because I'm a Pole.
>
> (1989a: 209)

Before 1989 Eastern Europe, as Enzensberger sees it, was not a homogeneous political space – the division into First and Third

World went right through it. This was partly due to historical links to Western political culture, as the contrast between the cities Katowice and Kraców makes clear: 'Katowice (Kattowitz) is a Prussian industrial hell – Duisburg is idyllic by comparison; Kraków, humiliatingly neglected but still glorious, is, by contrast, an ancient Central European city: Polish Renaissance, Austrian Baroque, Viennese nineteenth-century' (1989a: 215).

The relativity of centres to peripheries is one of the main topics of *Ach Europa!*. The example of Tromsø University makes reference to the fact that in the present world distances need not be absolute obstacles any more, and, in some cases, a peripheral position even offers advantages for modernisation in practical matters. The former president of the European Community, Erkki Rintala, can retire (fictionally) in 2006 to 'Rääkkylänmäki' in the Finnish periphery without a hamburger bar (1987: 477; 1989a: 304). He does not retire from politics but gains an opportunity to rethink matters. The direction of modernisation appears as an open question – the possibility to reject fashion is an obvious advantage in the periphery. Again, it is Norway that gives the paradigm:

> Living in Norway never required one to be chic and à jour as is the case with the poor Parisians. . . . Very successfully, the country managed to distance itself from the silly customs and conventions of the middle class whose cultural hegemony in all other industrialized countries is a matter of fact. It did so even though the predominant part of the Norwegian population works in the so-called tertiary sector and, accordingly, should be regarded as petit bourgois.
>
> (1987: 302)

Political space cannot be measured – it is mediated through experiences. This idea is expressed most clearly with respect to another favourite country of Enzensberger's, Portugal. The relativity of both space and time is the thesis of a Portuguese monsignore, who views his country as an island, like Ireland, a remnant of the mythical continent Atlantis:

> Everything that Portugal needs, from peanuts to the brand-new chemical plant, is imported by ship or plane, as is to be expected on an island. . . . The continent is far away, as far away as Brazil or India. . . . Emigration is an old curse of the country, and for most people Europe is a place of exile.
>
> (1989a: 134)

The experience of discontinuity at the border between Spain and Portugal appears more important than the continuity on the map. This figure is radicalised in the final passage of the 'Taylor' story when Enzensberger inserts a reference to a poem by Ingeborg Bachmann, *Böhmen am Meer*, into the experience of a Prague taxi driver:

> —— I study in the taxi while I'm waiting. I'm an Austrian but I've been living in Prague for ten years. I'm prone to asthma and the sea air suits me.
> —— The sea air?
> —— Yes, don't you remember? The seacoast of Bohemia.
> (1989a: 321)

The political significance of the relativity of space is also manifested in a preference for plurality over similarity, for difference over unity. Using Erkki Rintala as his spokesman, Enzensberger finds the European unity a chimera: 'The idea originated at a time when the whole world still believed in technological progress, growth and rationalization' (1989a: 307).

Rintala rises up against power monopolies, unity by force, homogenisation, and stands up for diversity and difference. He strives for 'European unity without unity' (1987: 482; 1989a: 308). Expressed in the language of politics, this becomes: Europe does not form a single polity but a specific space for politicking with different forms of power sharing in the Weberian sense (Weber 1994: 36).

TRAVELLING AS A TIME MACHINE

In *Vergangene Zukunft* Reinhart Koselleck (1979) uses a spatial analogy and divides time into a horizon of expectations and a space of experiences. This dualism is also inherent in the time experience of the traveller: horizon of expectation is directed towards something new and subjective, but is mediated through the space of experiences. According to Koselleck, the gap between past experiences and expectations about the future has grown since the Enlightenment, so the traveller's politics of time is different.

Enzensberger opposes the utopian pictures of the future dreamed up by planners and ideologists and speaks instead about how the future demonstrates the failure of all plans (cf. the Budapest letterboxes). Even the description of 'past futures', like the graffiti of the Portuguese revolution, is distancing in tone. The

only horizon of expectation present in the book is the fictive one. In Lódz Enzensberger provokes a debate about the results of 'free elections' if they were to be held next day (1987: 376; 1989a: 227). The 'Taylor' essay can be read as a fiction about the future past.

Of course, for a traveller the history of cities visited is of special interest. One important reason for Enzensberger's striking preference for Norway over Sweden, and for Portugal over Spain, lies in differing attitudes towards the past. Besides destroying the character of their cities, a capital failure of the Swedish Social Democrats lies in neglecting the history of their own country. Enzensberger wonders whether it is better for Swedish schoolchildren to 'know more about repression and exploitation in the Third World than they do about Sweden's own period as a great power' (1987: 39; 1989a: 27). The Social Democratic pathos of the future and the omnipresence of *samhället* is transmitted to the schools through the replacement of history by 'social studies'.

> L., a seventeen-year-old from Västerås, is passionately interested in the history of her country. She wants to be an historian. Two years before her graduation from school, one of her teachers explains to her that she is on the wrong track altogether. 'What's the point of all this worn-out rubbish? Do you think it means anything? You'd be much better off worrying about the future. History isn't a proper subject at all. Look at our curriculum. Social studies and more social studies, that's what we have to concentrate on.'
>
> (1989a: 25–6)

Enzensberger quotes a Norwegian historian, who considers it fatal to forget the past ahead of the coming crisis (1987: 39; 1989a: 27). That the Swedes still believe in the idea of history as a success story is perhaps not so strange. It is strange, however, that the same idea is also presented in Spain, as if the Spanish Social Democrats could simply follow the Swedes on the path of modernisation and progress. The rhetoric of progress appears as a movement without events, like the Civil War. Enzensberger quotes a writer from Gijon:

> Dynamics without change, lethargic recklessness, nothing is digested. Before a problem is solved, it's already out of date. The result is a very specific form of amnesia. Take the Civil War, for example! Of course, in reality it's anything but forgotten. But the

> memory has been put in deep freeze. All the difficult problems are shelved.
>
> (1989a: 247)

In Poland, Hungary and even in Norway, on the contrary, nearly everyone is an amateur historian (1987: 171, 272, 331). In Norway, this is relatively harmless, an expression of the Norwegian way of living a rhythm different from that of people on the continent:

> Norway's clocks have always shown a different time. This country is the kingdom of temporal disjuncture, as perceptive observers noticed early on. Ernst Sars, the famous historian, coined a term for this failure to march in time: 'den norske utakt'.
>
> (1987: 310)

The Hungarians are proud of their long history, but they have 'too many skeletons in the closet' (1987: 171; 1989a: 128). In Poland the remembrance of things past is a real obsession. Taking his tourist guide Jadwiga as an example, Enzensberger describes this:

> My head was reeling with places, names, and dates: 1768, 1941, 1830, 1981, 1794, 1863, 1944. But months and day are charged with significance as well as the years: the 1st of August and November 11th, the 3rd of May and December 13th . . . and the 24th of March. A calendar shot through with red-letter days, full of echoes, intimations, analogies. . . . most Poles have mastered this patriotic cabalistic lore. They are professionals when it comes to remembering.
>
> (1989a: 190)

If in Norway and in Hungary history is a factor in the present, in Poland politicking consists largely of remembrances of the past. Even the Nazis did not find a remedy against it – they could not 'kill the dead' (1987: 333–4; 1989a: 190). The paradigm for this sort of politicking with memory is Warsaw's Old Town, remade after 1945, despite the poverty and lack of everything – 'the largest but also the most marvellous forgery in the world' (1987: 321–2; 1989a: 182).

Enzensberger's remarks on the way that time stops are very interesting politically. In them there is an implicit reference to Walter Benjamin's idea of the *Jetztzeit*, 'now-time', which stops the time from elapsing. It signifies a politicising extension of the present as well as an actualisation of some aspect of the past by means of a

'tiger jump' (1980: theses XVI, XVII). Benjamin's 'now-time' means a 'movement in standstill'. The stopping of time in Salazar's Portugal, for instance, signified a political embalming, sheltering a past world against change from outside:

> A whole country enbalmed like a mummy for forty years! That was Salazar's achievement. Time stood still. All the deposed kings of the world found a safe heaven here, behind the walls of the regime. It was teeming with servants: pianists were flown in from all over the world for the bourgeoisie's parties. A paradise for parasites, social coma for everyone else. In his own way Salazar was a utopian, too. He wanted a world in which nothing moved, total hypnosis.
>
> (1989a: 151)

With his sensitivity to anachronism Enzensberger is not without an admiration for this project. But in Madrid's Army Museum, stopping time has led to total simultaneity, to an eternity without history (cf. Maier 1987 on the fascist concept of time as eternity):

> History has been abolished in this palace on the Calle de Méndez Núnez. Everything is synchronous – the Middle Ages and the Civil War, Pizarro and Napoleon, the Berbers and the Indios. An ossified eternity rules in this glorious panopticon. . . . War is a single, total work of art.
>
> (1989a: 242–3)

The Portuguese and Spanish ways of stopping time are parodies of Benjamin's project. Enzensberger's critique of Swedish historiography is also much in Benjamin's spirit, with his proposal to reactualise a neglected period, 'the time of freedom', with its party strife, but also with 'intellectual fresh air and political "chaos"' (1987: 39; 1989a: 27), which is seldom discussed today.

The title of a book *Back to the Year 1960* by some left-wing Norwegians (1987: 281) hardly signifies a 'tiger jump' in Benjamin's sense. It corresponds rather to Ernst Bloch's idea of non-simultaneity (1970), which forms the ground for Enzensberger's fascination with Norway, at the same time a museum and a laboratory for the future.

> What I find puzzling about this small, peripheral society is the unconscious feat it managed to perform time and time again over the last 170 years: it lags behind its time and yet succeeds in being ahead of it. On the one hand, it is fond of anachronisms

> and tenaciously holds on to pre-modern modes of thought and ways of life. On the other hand, it leans towards an unscrupulous anticipation of the future. Such conditions do not allow for a homogeneous and even development. All this sheds some light on the dual character of the inhabitants of this country which foreign observers have noted time and again: they are both parochial and cosmopolitan at the same time. Today, Norway is Europe's largest folkloristic museum and also a vast laboratory of the future.
>
> (1987: 310–11)

Following the quotation, this dual temporality also corresponds to a dual relation between centres and peripheries. Although archaism dominates in Portugal, it also offers a resource for resistance against technocratic modernisation:

> Because what the Portuguese set against capitalist rationality is not simply incompetence but resistance. It's certainly difficult to tell one from the other. In any case, the result is a kind of silent sabotage that is not practiced out of anger, conviction, resentment, ideology, or defiance, as it is elsewhere. They don't attack capitalist efficiency, they avoid it, spontaneously, 'just like that', because it's not self-evident to the Portuguese, because the virtues it demands are not theirs.
>
> (1989a: 176)

However old-fashioned this resistance may be, Enzensberger looks to it for a model for an alternative form of politics. It is a politics of defending stubbornly certain hopes which cannot be taken away. If they are allowed to play a role in politics, Portugal would be a great European power, envied by its neighbours (1987: 232; 1989a: 176–7).

Enzensberger's admiration for Portugal is connected with travelling in time, a central topic of the book. A Portuguese monsignore tells Enzensberger that travels into the past are free in Portugal: unlike New York, a firm called 'Second Childhood' is not needed. The Monsignore presents a 'topography of time' in terms of transcending time zones measured by 'isochrones'.

> I have often asked myself what a topography of time would look like. . . . Let us assume that we are really living in 1986 – a bold assumption! – and we visited a small town in Mecklenburg. It might perhaps appear to us that the date there was 1958. A settlement in the Amazon could be dated 1935 and a monastery in Nepal assigned to the Napoleonic period. On such a map, and

this is really my point, large parts of Portugal would appear as time-islands.

(1989a: 135–6)

The temporalisation of space is a central rhetorical figure in *Ach Europa!* It renders time and space commensurable with each other. Norwegian non-simultaneity is characterised, in opposition to the Portuguese version, by the presence of a long past, by the possibility of going both towards the past and towards the future.

For Enzensberger the analogies between space and time are based not only on the inspiration of the Portuguese clergyman but are rather closely linked to the experience of travelling. Travelling transcends the quasi-natural, measurable objectivities of both space and time, so reliable in 'normal' situations. For Enzensberger travelling has become a way of life, an insurance against falling back into normalcy, a move back to the circular time or 'labour' in the Arendtian sense, or to the linear time of the ideologies of progress (Arendt 1958).

For a traveller 'progress' is absurd. To relate a journey as a linear progression does not make sense. To seek the latest expressions of progress by travelling would render the comparison between experiences of the encountered world and the lived-in world impossible. If the travel report were confined to a story about which country or city at the present moment is 'in', i.e. leads the competition in progress, it would be extremely boring. If the idea of travel were to search only for progress, nobody would travel any longer.

THE ART OF TRAVELLING AS A POLITICAL CHOICE

As a final theme I will take up the activity of travelling itself, the political dimension in choice between means of travelling. Enzensberger does not say much about it – he starts always from the country visited. Still, the details in *Ach Europa!* contain valuable hints about politicking through choice between means of transport.

By using a topography of time Enzensberger thematises the means of travelling in his final chapter concerning 'Europe 2006'. A movement back and forth in both time and space appears to him as something specifically European, as opposed to American, as Americans live in the linear time of 'modernity'. 'Taylor' can hardly bear the fact that in Europe cars belong to the past and he is obliged to take the train:

> Free movement in this country was impossible. Compulsory travel by train contributed to the feeling. The train to Kaiserslautern was good, even luxurious, but I would rather have gone by car, and the bureaucratic limitations on road travel exasperated me. I prepared myself for a boring journey. My fellow travellers brought out their books. That, too, was a European fad.
>
> (1989a: 287)

The utopian aspect, the liberation of European cities from cars, is described in The Hague:

> There are still a couple of taxis at the station, but they only go to the suburbs. As in most European cities, the center of town is blocked off. After a week I already have a corn on my foot.
>
> (1989a: 289)

In Finland, the car-party still dominates: the geographical distances are so great that 'railroad mania never took hold here' (1987: 476; 1989a: 303). 'Taylor' can rent a car for his improvised visit to Erkki Rintala in Rääkkylänmäki. But although Rintala shows him a car, he also presents it as a souvenir from the era of modernity – beautiful but useless (1987: 485; 1989a: 310).

About his preferences concerning the means of transportation Enzensberger is explicit. In the chapter on Hungary he writes – against the habit of not going anywhere impossible to reach by car – 'Then we'll go on foot' (1987: 155; 1989a: 115). The pro-train position is also manifested by his use of railway hours as a time–space measuring unit (1987: 155, 488; 1989a: 115, 313). Railway stations are a key topic: their history, architecture and aesthetics are discussed in Budapest (1987: 138; 1989: 111), in a small Portuguese town called Beja – 'The lonely railway station, built in 1940, looks as if it dated from 1912' (1987: 215; 1989a: 163) – and in Lódz, where the name of the railway station is Fabryczyna (1987: 370; 1989a: 222). The political dimension of railway station architecture is most obvious in Enzensberger's favourite city, Oslo, where the opposition between the old and new railway stations is striking:

> Oslo also has its bulldozer fantasies. Its latest triumph is the construction of a new railway station, a deep red box equipped with escalators that reminds one of airports in some Latin American capitals. But here, too, the indestructible, laid-back Oslo emerged victorious: the planners did manage to desolate a wide area, but the old east wing of the station with its dignified front, its cast-

> iron columns and its classical construction of steel and glass had to be left untouched.
>
> (1987: 261)

These comments on railway stations are not mere nostalgia praising older forms of architecture. They refer, in a paradigmatic manner, to the very heart of his microscopic art of reading both the city-text and the railway-text politically (Ferguson 1988; Azaryahu 1990). The paradigm of this sort of reading politically, Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* (1983) is mentioned when Enzensberger speaks of houses in Budapest (1987: 140; 1989a: 102).

My nominalist conception regards politics from the viewpoint of two temporalising figures – politicisation and politicking. The first opens a horizon for action; the second is operative within the horizon. Travelling is a situation likely to make people attentive to political aspects in diverse phenomena. These may, however, be experienced as a key to the dimensions of 'the political'. Language, space and time are quite obviously political, when read *à la* Enzensberger. With their help the spatial ordering of the polity and the temporal ordering of policy can be deconstructed, by demonstrating their dependence on the primary operations of politicking and politicisation.

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