

ISSUE 25

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Baismag

Dear Readers,

With the second semester well and truly upon us, it may seem that this first issue of BAISmag is a little late. However, with this semester comes the first language lessons of the first years, the elective stress of the second years, and all-encompassing chaos that the third years will be living through well into June. With this in mind, BAISmag will be printing only two issues this semester, but these are extended editions as to make up for the lack of a third. Despite the gap since the last issue, we hope you will enjoy this edition, as it truly has a mix of everything – from entertaining to analytical articles, and from sombre to witty creative contributions. One last note: with many board positions needing replacements next year, as the current board either graduates or goes away on discretionary space, keep an eye on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/BAISmagazine) for announcements if you're interested in joining the team.

Elsa Court
(Editor-in-Chief)

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BY ELSA COURT

Following the seminar he led on negotiating in intercultural relationships (organised by the BASIS Eurasian Committee), I sat down with Jeroen to collect some of the wisdom he has gathered over 20 years of working as a Dutch entrepreneur in Russia.

Where is home for you?

Home is wherever I feel comfortable – it's definitely not in Holland nor in Russia. If I feel well and balanced, then I feel home – it's something inside myself.

Do you consider yourself an early bird or a night owl?

I think I'm average, I prefer to go to sleep before 12 and wake up before 8

What is more important in life – talent or ambition?

Attitude. You can be talented, but without ambition nothing will happen. Likewise, ambition combined with the wrong attitude will mean nothing will happen either. Attitude – being able and willing to give 110%- that is the most important thing.

Is there a book you have read that you believe all university students should read?

I would recommend the old, classic philosophers – only a year ago I read Seneca.

When you read something written 2000 years ago and realise it is still applicable today, it opens up new understanding, but also the knowledge that many things are eternal and don't change.

Favourite restaurant in the world?

The most interesting restaurant I have been to in the past year has been on Mt Elbrus, which is 5642, high. The restaurant is at 3900 meters, the highest placed restaurant in Europe.

If you could travel in time, what would you like to say to your 21-year-old self?

Make more effort to read and learn, stop taking things for granted, and start questioning more.

What do you think will be the greatest challenge that the students of today will face in their future? What can they do to prepare themselves for it?

In the future the pace of change will be the only constant and it will be happening exponentially. You guys are in-between – I am a dinosaur, and the kids born now will be totally used to exponential change, but your generation are in-between and so you're at risk of being lost. The future is happening quicker than ever. For those born today it will be a natural thing and for those born in my generation we will still have 'retro skills' we can still use. So you need to be having the mindset of leading this exponential change, rather than following it.

You have spoken about continuing your business ventures in spite of the crises that have hit Russia since 1991 – do you have a personal mantra when dealing with uncertainty, whether with your business or in everyday life?

The thing is, everything that happens- the good things, but even more importantly the bad things- there are always positive lessons to be found. Everything is an opportunity, even a crappy thing is an opportunity to learn and to grow. I know this is easy to say but hard to do, so the most important thing is to be aware of what you find important in your life- your values, your skills and characteristics, and your vision on your future. So, even if everything is horrible around you, you know what and why you're doing what you're doing. Then you'll never be lost.



In recent months, the president of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu has been the subject of a number of ongoing corruption investigations, launched by his own chief of police, Roni Alsheikh. He is embroiled in four separate cases, while his wife, Sara, is being indicted for using public funds for the Netanyahu's household's private use. If indicted, it is likely that Netanyahu will not step down willingly, despite mounting pressure.

Bibi's Bye Bye Ballad

BY GEMMA LA GUARDIA

There was a man who wanted to be king,
Whose friends call him Bibi,
A man with a thirst for cigars and champagne,
For he was greedy.

He fought bravely in the wars,
That dashing young captain,
He spoke eloquently for his people
Defending them at the UN.

He won the hearts of the right wing,
And led his country thrice,
He may well finish his fourth term,
Were avarice not his vice.

Bibi wanted to be loved by all,
So to bribe the press he went,
In return for increasing their readership,
Positively, he, they did present.

A telecom company to which he gave a hand,
No longer posted on their news site,
Stories which Bibi and his family,
Would consider a slight.

His wife used the people's money for their chef,
But when this came to light,
Bibi offered the judge the attorney generalship,

If she closed the case tight.

His friends went to the defence ministers,
And seduced them with the proposal,
To buy submarines from Germany,
But their reward was ephemeral.

Bibi's own man, the chief of police,
Turned his back on him,
And launched an investigation,
The king's prospects seem dim.

His sycophants are cracking,
A few nights in a cell,
Is not worth the king's benevolence,
And they have stories to tell.

This is a witch-hunt to Bibi,
He is rallying his troops,
He will not go down without a fight,
But to what depth will he stoop?

Listen to the stories of old, of men brought low,
By their ambition and greed,
And see this man is not the new David,
But Midas, dishonoured by his deeds.

If given the task to describe yourself with only one song, would you be able to do it? What if you were given 10 songs? It would not make it any easier either, would it? For certain, our music taste does reflect our true selves. With music intrinsically connected to the subconscious, it is able to tell and express things about ourselves that we are not only unaware of, but also purely and truly describe who we are.

In that sense, music- despite what a lot of people might think- is not something alien to our being, but a mere extension of it. Secondly, depending on the range of our musical repertoire (i.e. our tastes and likes), the easier it is for us to relate with other people at a personal level. There are studies that prove that we tend to like and engage in closer relations with those people who are more similar to us

. It makes sense; if music expresses or reflects an aspect of our inner selves and of who we really are, by sharing it with someone else we are able to understand the other person to a much deeper level. Following the same line of thought, the bigger and more varied our musical tastes are, the bigger the chances we can click with other people. Think of your music taste as a puzzle; a unique expression of yourself. The more puzzle pieces that you have, the bigger the chance that you can “fit” in other people's puzzles. The more different and diverse your pieces are, the more willing you are to accept and adjust to others puzzles as well. This has to do with the fact that you become more flexible, you have such an abundant reserve of material that something you like can be more easily associated with a different thing.

An example: I might like the Arctic Monkeys and because I like them, I may also like the Black Keys. Though they are two different types of rock, there is a quite resemblance in sound and style. Since I like the Black Keys, I may like Queens Of The Stone Age. The latter is a more aggressive sound, nevertheless, in a way it still resembles them. If I were to continue, it is very likely that I will end in a completely different place from where I started, like a dialect continuum. Regardless of the length and variety of my journey, I would still be close to my core, to my true self, given that I started from a place that I identify as me and I built on that. I would have only expanded myself, make it more complex, more full.

Musicians rely on this type of flexibility because that's where our influences come from. By opening up yourself and being closer to other types of music, one can remold and make these new ideas your own. You find more tools to express who you really are and how you really feel, you get closer to get a hold of this idea of self of expression. Furthermore, this search not only possess the element of expression but also of a constructive character. It is from the assimilation of all these new inputs that you construct your identity, you become everything you listen to, not necessarily for the music per se but due to the reasons you had for liking it. In all, being aware of this power that music has in shaping oneself can be extremely beneficial. It promotes a different type of thinking, allows for wider connections, enriches the soul and allows you to find your own soul in a different voice. I am all for opening up the ears and allowing oneself the luxury of experimentation. You don't have to like everything you listen, off course, but you might as well do. Who knows? Maybe you end up liking something you didn't even know existed. Maybe you find that one song that describes you or perhaps... ten.



IS SOCIALISM IN AFRICA DEAD?

BY HUGO CHADIMA

Last November, the president of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe, was overthrown in a bloodless coup by his former vice-president Emmerson Mnangagwa. The new president has promised to take the country in a new direction by making it “re-engage with the world” and “open for business”. This change in direction however is by no means a phenomenon in African politics. Zimbabwe’s shift from a mismanaged socialist economy to a free market oriented one follows in the footsteps of many other countries in Africa that took the same path. The following examples illustrate this pattern, and display the context within which these transitions happen (all of the following examples took place in 1990s to early 2000s).

One of the largest transitions from socialism occurred in Ethiopia under its former prime minister, Meles Zenawi. The country was a fully fledged Marxist-Leninist regime under general secretary Mengistu who headed the tyrannical DERG government. After its fall, Zenawi led the transitional government, and the official government, until his death. During this time, Ethiopia established many trade links with China and the US, and became a source of cheap labour for manufacturing products like clothes. Although still poor, Ethiopia is seeing massive growth and raise in human development. In the Republic of Congo, the former communist dictator Denis Sassou Nguesso won a civil war to regain control over the country. Instead of re-orienting Congo to Marxism however, Nguesso started privatisations and renewed cooperation with international financial institutions. In Tanzania, the transition under president Ali Hassan Mwinyi was quite striking. He took over from his iconic predecessor Julius Nyerere, and was the member of the same “Party of the Revolution”, which believed in a specific brand of socialism called ‘Ujamaa’. Instead of staying the course however, Mwinyi took to liberalising the economy,

which was an essential step to cease its stagnation.

In Mozambique meanwhile, president Joaquim Alberto Chissano is often described as one of Africa’s most venerable leaders. Taking over as president in the Marxist one-party state which has been plagued by civil war and extreme poverty, Chissano brokered peace by transforming the country into a democracy. He utilised foreign investment into Mozambique’s agriculture, cooperated with the international community to write-off large portion of the country’s debt, and drastically reduced the poverty, child mortality, and illiteracy rate. In Zambia, Frederick Chiluba won a landslide in the country’s first free election since the 60s against his predecessor, the former socialist dictator Kenneth Kaunda. The country had large rates of inflation and debt due to the decrease the copper price, Zambia’s main export. Chiluba ended the command economy model, and stabilised the economic situation, although not as successfully as his counterparts mentioned above. Finally, Mathieu Kérékou, the former president of Benin, can be regarded as one of the most fascinating figures of transition from socialism in Africa. He was responsible for turning Benin into a Marxist dictatorship, which he ruled it’s entire existence until the end of Cold War. When his regime fell in a peaceful civilian coup, he publicly apologised to Archbishop of Cotonou for the flaws of his regime and asked for forgiveness from the people. Only six years after being a dictator, Kérékou won the presidency again, this time as a liberal and devout Catholic.

To conclude, it appears that socialism is slowly being withdrawn from Africa, and each of these many transitions were just few of the many nails in the coffin. Zimbabwe was one of the few notorious socialist regimes left in the world, and with the fall of Mugabe, it can be argued that at least the old generation of socialist experiments in Africa is over.

Today, it is commonplace to make sense of the world in terms of nation states and corresponding ethnic groupings. Usually, when I start a conversation with someone who does not speak Dutch, the where are you from-question is unavoidable. When someone asks me about my nationality, I usually answer that I am Dutch. That actually means: I have been raised by two Dutch parents in a small village in the vicinity of Rotterdam. Recently, however, I started wondering: am I Dutch, as in that it is a fixed and stable fact, or is it an identity imposed upon me without my actual consent? And if I consider myself ethnically Dutch, does that mean that other Dutch people could be 'less Dutch' than me? This brings me naturally to a very interesting case: that of immigrants in the Netherlands. I do not mean students who come here to study at Leiden University for a certain amount of time. Although the contemporary Dutch society is very diverse in terms of cultures, I mainly refer to people from Moroccan or Turkish descent, people that according to some discourses, 'do not belong here'. But, tell me? Why would someone don't belong here whereas some else does belong? Did hunter gatherers, for instance, think in such terms? To them, the world was one big, vast, undiscovered space. Never had they heard of borders, states, nationality, or ethnicity. These are all modern constructions, and we should really start wondering if we have made the world a better place by attaching so much value to these constructions.

The ideology of nationalism and the categories of nationality and ethnicity seem to be so embedded in our thinking that we use them without being aware of the danger of them. Real life examples tell me that they often lead to stereotyping, tension and in the worst case even to warfare or massacre. Dutch people, to provide such an example, sometimes make jokes about people from Flanders. Innocent on the surface, but hurtful and stigmatizing in effect. More extreme examples are the large-scale 'ethnic cleansing' that occurred in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s or the racial ideology of the Nazis during World War II. The connection between ethnic genocide and simple jokes perhaps does not seem obvious, but yet they

are both based on our unabating tendency to categorize people. Let's look at a more recent example: Syria. The country is torn apart simultaneously by a civil war and by the terror of ISIS. However, the collaboration of Turkey and the other engaged forces to jointly address these issues is impeded by the fact that the former views the ethnic Kurds, situated in both Turkey and Syria, as terrorists. This is presently turning into a conflict in itself, as if the Syrian war was not already complicated and alarming enough. Regrettably, ethnic cleansing still occurs as well. I read about the deplorable situation of the Rohingyas in Myanmar and this morning I saw an item on the news about mass graves. How much more evidence do we need about the noxiousness of ethnicity as a category?

And what about nationalism? I consider nationalism a desire for unification between people, which makes sense to me. To come back to the beloved hunter gatherer-comparison once more: dividing themselves in tribes was one of the very first things they did. Identifying yourself with a particular flag or ethnic group is not very different from aligning yourself with a particular tribe. But what has all the upheaval in Catalonia genuinely yielded thus far? I am aware of the fact that economics plays a big role in this as well; Catalonia is among the richer areas of Spain and believes it pays too much tax to the Spanish government in Madrid. I also understand that from my lazy chair in The Hague, it is hard to judge about the feelings of Catalonians in relation to the rest of Spain. And yet, when I get a sense of the animosity between the Spanish and the Catalonians, I simply cannot help asking myself: why? For what reason this strict dichotomy between 'us' and 'them'? Why so strongly identifying with nations? I do not wish to be very judgmental, but I do think, quite frankly, that the abstract forces of nationalist thinking have gone too far in our world. I am not advocating for a world entirely devoid of nationalism and ethnicity, but I do think, however, that we should realize that at the end of the day we are all human, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, descent, or any other form of categorization. In that way, I think we could actually make the world a bit better.

NATIONALISM, NATIONALITY, AND ETHNICITY:

A BETTER WORLD WITHOUT THEM?

BY TIM JAN
ROZENDAAL

UKRAINE'S FROZEN CONFLICT

BY RIČARDS ALANS MIEŽĪTIS / PHOTOS BY ELSA COURT

This April will mark the fourth year of hostilities in the eastern regions of Ukraine. February and March of 2014 saw the conclusion of the Ukrainian revolution and the beginning of unrest in the predominantly Russian-speaking areas of the country. What have been the recent territorial and military developments in the conflict? How are the Ukrainian troops faring? Is the end near? To answer the latter right off the bat – no, it is absolutely not. More than 10 000 civilians have perished so far, and more casualties are certain to come.

Despite the signing of the Minsk II accords three years ago, hostilities have not ceased. Instead, the fighting has reduced in intensity and destruction, nevertheless regular skirmishes remain a mainstay of the frozen conflict. There have been no significant changes in the territories of the separatist groups in the recent years even though some acquisitions on their part can be observed. The accords have contributed to this stalemate with restrictions on the use of artillery and other heavy weaponry. Despite that, thousands of alleged violations of the agreement by the separatists and the Russian mercenaries have been logged, including the use and deployment of prohibited heavy weapons at the contact line. The Ukrainian troops are not without fault - both sides, often justifiably, accuse each other of violating the Minsk agreements. Truces agreed between the participants outside of the peace process are often broken, leading to swift resumption in fighting and few breaks for those caught in the middle of it all.

While the frontline is seeing an overall stalemate, armed forces of the Kiev government have been undergoing a significant reform process with the objective of improving their military capabilities. The Ukrainian army in 2014 was claimed to be on the brink of collapse – disloyal, poorly armed and underfunded with a non-existent will to fight. That has changed significantly. A recently-passed budget bill will put military funding at more than 5 billion euros – more than 6 percent of Ukraine's GDP, up from 2,2 billion euros in 2013. A series of reforms are either in the works or already seeing the execution or finalization phase. They are key in securing the state's ability to re-capture the lost territories should this route be undertaken.



Elaborating on some of the reforms, implementation of civilian control of the Ministry of Defense is underway. That would potentially ensure higher levels of democratic accountability and introduce a political perspective in decision-making, both prerequisites to a liberal democracy. Ukroboronprom, the country's dominant military-industrial conglomerate, is under intense scrutiny for widespread corruption and improper production priorities. Proposed reforms could improve the efficiency of military spending and result in a needs-based production system. This would replace the alleged current system of producing what is possible, rather than what is needed. That would further boost the Ukrainian military's ability to wage war on a larger scale. The integration of previously independent volunteer units has been seeing relative success, lowering the risk of their utilization for political or other nefarious purposes, while at the same time boosting the army's cohesion and abilities. Volunteer forces have been credited with averting a complete disaster at the onset of the hostilities in the east, so their normalization has arguably been a necessity. Finally, foreign instructors have been introducing Western military doctrines and contributing to a rise in levels of professionalism and discipline of the troops in the recent years, bolstering their combat capabilities. All of this combined and more is changing the army's image as a pushover that it debatably was at the start of the war.

It is unclear whether Ukraine's reforms will deliver a much-desired end to this conflict. With the separatists backed up against the Russian border, their ability to receive reinforcements and equipment is nearly limitless. Allegations of supply convoys crossing the border into rebel-held areas continue to pile up to this day. Furthermore, observers claim that the Ukrainian military is still riddled with corruption, just as the entire state is, resulting in suboptimal performance of the army. A military offensive, even if successful, might not even be the ultimate solution to the crisis, especially with the prospect of heavy civilian casualties in territories over which Ukraine seeks to restore legitimacy. Kiev might have to make major concessions on the region's autonomy and forego a complete re-integration process altogether. Even that is an optimistic prediction as it relies on the assumption that the separatists will ever abandon their desire for unification with the Russian Federation. European partners continue to urge for a peaceful solution, resulting in little international support for anything but a diplomatic resolution.

At this point, the only certainty around the Frozen Conflict is that there is no certainty – it may last for many more years or could come to a rapid halt. Most of it is dependent on the actions of external actors, like that of the Kremlin, the White House, and Brussels, and the willingness of both Ukraine and the rebel groups to make concessions. With Kiev switching allegiance to the Western camp, it is no longer feasible for Putin to make peace with the Ukrainians. Stability would enable their potential accession to NATO and the European Union, as well as provide more leeway in acting against Moscow's regional interests. Everyone's personal opinions aside, that is not an optimal outcome for an increasingly assertive Russian state attempting to secure a buffer sphere of influence on its borders.



RUSSIA'S **HIV** EPIDEMIC

BY TOM HUGHES

When people think of Russia, the usual imagery that comes to mind includes freezing scenery, military power, and Vladimir Putin's "muscled" body on a photoshopped image of a bear. However, the growing reality is far from this image of health- Russia is in the midst of an HIV epidemic. As of 2017 the estimated number of people in Russia currently living with HIV is between 1-1.5 million people, which roughly equates to just under 1% of the entire population. According to UNAIDS, Eastern Europe and Central Asia are the only regions in the world where rates of HIV contraction are climbing. In Russia alone there were 103,000 new cases of HIV reported in 2016, a number equivalent to the population of Leiden. So who are these people contracting HIV and why are they contracting the virus? In most Western Countries, HIV predominantly effects men who have sex with men and sex workers. While these demographics are definitely high prevalence groups in Russia the issue is far more rooted in intravenous drug users, which has come to affect other members of society (such as women and children).

The rise in the epidemic has been narrowed down to three key factors. The first major factor for the contribution to this epidemic is the lack of sex education in schools. While this might sound absurd, the vast majority of students in Russian schools never receive any kind of formalised sexual education programme. This is largely due to traditional values when concerning discussions about sex, which have been heavily influenced by the Orthodox church. The second major cause of the epidemic is the lack of distribution of condoms for sex workers. As a result of this, the amount of unprotected sex in the nation is significantly high, and thus it has led to a high transference of the virus. The final reason, and probably the most substantial, is the inability to access clean needles and methadone therapy for drug users. So what is the Russian government doing to prevent this escalation? All that is clear is the state's lack of desire in tackling the fundamental issues concerning the spread of the virus. In 1997 Methadone therapy was outlawed in Russia. Combined with the difficulty in accessing clean needles, this has placed significant challenges for controlling the sharing of needles between drug users. In Yekaterinburg, Russia's fourth largest city, 26,693 people had the virus as of November 2016 (amounting to 2% of the population). Over 52% of these people had contracted HIV from drug use.

In the gap left by the government, many NGOs have stepped in to help contain this epidemic. One of these organisations includes the AIDS Centre (СПИД Центр). The organisation is devoted to help prevent the spread of HIV amongst groups that are otherwise ignored by the government, such as homosexuals and drug addicts. The work of the organisation in Saint Petersburg has seen a slow down in the rate of infections (from 2,200 in 2015 to 1,750 today). However, with a conservative government that seems to want little to do with the ongoing epidemic, the situation is likely to remain a crisis for years to come.

For information about what AIDS Centre (СПИД Центр) does and the epidemic in Russia, visit the UNAIDS website.

BY KINAN ALDAIOUB (IRO)

If I looked at you, I have already written my poem on your face
Yet they could not make it more beautiful than it is
And if I heard your voice
I desire for the silence of forever
So that only it can echo inside me


...

You sat on the edge of the moon
And smiled at me nightly
And daily, when you're invisible
I smiled at the thought of you
Sudden, a butterfly comes to home on my hands
I imagine it is a part of your soul
And I whisper to it the most beautiful story
The story of your face
It has a tragic ending, this story
When it leaves my runway palms
I imagine the flower it will adorn
Is your heart, of nectar
I grazed the bluebells with my hands
And imagined they were your hands
I played in the calm and crazy waters
And imagined they were your hairs
I went to live with the clouds
And imagined they were your chest
I imagined so much
I had written a poem on the skin of nature
Each word I spoke, left me like
A dew on a plant
Or a raindrop on an old building
As if each word were a tear I lamented
But these words did not come back to me
And instead, left me alone
I remained, without nature, without words
Without love
I imagined love, but could not
I don't know its taste, nor its smell
And this is the tragedy

IMAGINED

Love

OFF THE BEATEN (FLIGHT



Регулярные авиарейсы из аэропорта Старый Оскол с 3 марта 2017 года

Вологодские авиалинии

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Вторник	17.45	19.00	Вторник	20.00	21.15			
Среда	17.45	19.00	с 12.03.17	Среда	20.00	21.15		
Четверг	16.45	18.00	* с 11 мая 17г	Четверг	20.00	21.15	* с 11 мая 17г	
Пятница	17.45	19.00		Пятница	20.00	21.15		

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Boarding Pass/Посадочный талон

АЭРОПОРТ СТАРЫЙ ОСКОЛ
Диспетчер СОП

Name of passenger / Имя пассажира: *Udol Indh*
SEQ / № РЕГ.: *11*

FROM/OT / TO/ДО: *COI*
CARRIER / ПЕРЕВОЗЧИК: *BT*
FLIGHT / РЕЙС: *2396*
DATE / ДАТА: *2107*
TIME / ВРЕМЯ ВЫЛЕТА: *1745*

GATE / № ВЫХОДА: *6D*
BOARDING TILL / ПОСАДКА ДО: *6D*
CLASS / КЛАСС: *6D*
SEAT № / МЕСТО: *6D*

BY INDY UDOL

Hello. I'm Indy, and I am an airplane geek. No, I am not that type of boy from rocket-building club back in High School who somehow aced every physics exam. I'm a traveller seeking to fly on many dangerous airplanes as much as possible. Since I was born, I racked up approximately 200,000 miles worth of air travelling and I am hoping to reach the million mark by the time I turn 40.

My passion for flying started when I was a year old, and that was the first time I've been on an airplane, from Bangkok to Seoul. Since then, I have found that my de-facto innerself, on an airplane. Flying is like an antidote to stress and what-not crap that is going on in my life. I can recall some of my wicked stories, ranging from binging on the 2005 Dom Perignon Champagne on a free First Class ticket from Bangkok to Munich, to flying a money laundering airline in Russia and Cambodia.

The epic flight I will be recounting in this article was from Stary-Oskol to Moscow's Vnukovo Airport. Stary Oskol is a city situated in the Belgograd Oblast, near the Russian-Ukrainian border. It was hard booking this flight, since this airline "(Vologda Avia)" has no official website. You either need to book it via a third party travel agency, or just walk up to the airport count-

er and hope there is a free seat onboard. This is not a typical airline where you will find on those cheesy travel agents recommended websites, and neither is Stary Oskol a place for you to visit for your holiday in Russia.

Stary Oskol airport is stuck in the times of the Soviet Union, its architecture and such. Unfortunately, for security reasons, I was not allowed to take pictures of the airport. I handed my passport to the check-in lady and then I was presented with my boarding pass. To my surprise, it was handwritten. Classic indeed, flying this airline was like a major throwback to the 60s in Soviet Russia.

After I checked in, I went through the security checkpoint. But this checkpoint was rather unique. Conventionally, security checks in airports like those we have been exposed to, such as Schiphol, are done in an open space. Security checks here at Stary Oskol are conducted privately in a room, as passengers were queuing up outside. When it was my turn to go in, I was greeted by 5 Russian security officers, with a puzzled look on their face, probably thinking what the f*** is this Asian guy doing in Stary Oskol, flying on an airline designated to carry mine workers between this little-known town and Moscow. This was probably their first time encountering a foreigner let alone a tourist.

IT) PATH



They searched my bag as usual, but to their surprise, I carried only my camera gear especially for the aircraft. One of the officers asked me of course in Russian along with series of hand movements. "Tourist"? (With Heavy Russian accent) they asked? I replied Da (Yes). He then replied "Stary Oskol" and then followed by a confused face and a what the fuck hand gesture. Probably, what the hell are you doing here. I said, "Photograph Samolet." Of course, I was referring to the plane that I would be flying in that day. He then cleared me through the holding room without saying a word. Russian hospitality eh?

So, the plane showed up. It is called the Yakovlev-40 (YAK-40). Before I bore you non-aviation geeks from providing those technical details which would have arouse high flyers like me, this airplane is over 40 years old and is of course one of the least airworthy aircraft out there flying. Despite it's horrible reputation of safety, I am in love with this aircraft. It's classic, it's extremely loud and somewhat surprisingly stable when airbourne.

I boarded the aircraft through the rear, which

you can rarely do these days and sat myself down to my assigned seat. The first impression of the cabin was, obviously old, the seats were dusty and I saw stains on it. It wasn't comfortable at all, but hey, it's all about the experience. The cabin somewhat had a nostalgic odor, like as if I was in a museum. As always, I chose the window seat, and I tend to lean on the cabin walls for comfort. If there's a seat mate which was the case. As I rest my head, the walls were not padded thoroughly and I heard cracks and creaks as I put pressure on it, and this is nothing compared to the entire flights that I have done so far. It was time for take-off, a friendly cabin crew did a final check of the cabin and ensured that everybody had their seatbelts on. Those, like me, who expecting a safety demonstration to be performed by the cabin-crew would be disappointed.

This was my home for 2 hours. As the plane was taking off, I soon realized that the seats weren't bolted properly to the cabin floor, so I was bracing for the worst. When I moved my body, the seat was rocking as if it was going to fall off. Luckily, as you can tell from the fact I am writing this, it did stay intact throughout the flight.

city guide:

Havana

“Go and see Cuba before it changes” they say. That message has been hanging around for a while - ever since Raúl Castro, the brother of the former leader Fidel, became Cuba’s president in 2008 and began to ease economic restrictions. Not knowing what to expect, I arrived to Havana this January to have found it in an era long past. To this day, the fifties Buicks and the Russian Moskvitch cars are striking through the streets of Havana, internet is scarce, and the streets are filled with vibrant music that makes the city boom and pulse.

The changes Cuba is undergoing are a slow conversion to capitalism rather than a sudden shift to modernity. Visitors will find crumbling colourful colonial-era buildings alongside baroque style architecture originated from Europe. Conspicuous too, are the buildings of Old Havana that were already crumbling before Hurricane Irma hit in 2017, but visibly took a lashing from the storm, giving the city an atmosphere out of the post-war period.

I had 48 hours to explore Havana as much as possible. I went with my cousin, who luckily speaks Spanish far better than me, and we managed to get around. Within the first hour of stumbling through Old Havana a pregnant girl who must have been in her early 20s asked us to buy her baby diapers. 6 packs of diapers to be exact. She led us to a half empty store and pointed to a pack of diapers which cost \$13 each. After doing the math we realised we couldn’t afford buying so many diapers considering we only had \$100 in our pockets. After a good 10 minutes of negotiations we gave her \$10 and left. As we left the store, another woman tapped us on the shoulder and kept repeating “estan comiendo!”, referring to all the beggars who are “eating us, tourists, alive”. After a chat she smiled at us and advised to ignore the beggars and enjoy Havana. Our first lesson was learnt and our journey began.



If you want to leave your comfort zone and enjoy good music- Cuba is the place to go. I can’t say its cheap but it’s affordable and an experience of a life-time. You see Fidel Castro’s and Che Guevara’s face everywhere and in all forms. Street graffiti, paintings in hotels, sculptures and posters - all with the faces of the legends of Cuba. While purposefully getting lost you can end up surrounded by Communist housing blocks or in a middle class neighbourhood surrounded by embassies and nice places to eat. Though generally, the food in Havana is poor - if you crave authentic food then it isn’t the place for you. The safest bet is to order a slice of pizza or survive on a fruit diet during your trip. Though if you have a passion for art, Havana is the place to be. Almacenes San José Artisans’ Market has an incredible collection of paintings from local artists that will leave you wandering around the market for a good couple of hours. After buying a few pieces of art you could visit the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de la Habana (The National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana) and learn about Cuba’s history through art from collections of the colonial times up to the contemporary generations. Followed by the Museo de la Revolución (Museum of the Revolution) that will give you a clear understanding of the importance and pride Cuban’s have for their history. In the evenings, the best way to relax is to find some live music and order a mojito, or rum if you want to embrace the true Cuban lifestyle and enjoy the Caribbean atmosphere.



***“havana is
vibrant..
and full of
surprises.”***

Havana is vibrant, different and full of surprises. Meandering down wide unpaved streets or narrow alleyways can lead to the great unknown and the locals are always willing to help if you're lost or even give a lift to the airport, as they did for us. In my opinion the best way to discover Havana is to avoid tips from Trip Advisor and let yourself wander around the dynamic city of Havana and you will learn more about Cuban's than from any books.

WRITTEN AND
PHOTOS BY
LEAH COHILL

THE LANGUAGES OF LIFE

BY DARIO MOREIRA

Suppose I went to bed speaking Portuguese,
Yet – come the morning after – woke up fluent in Japanese.

Would I still be me?

My character, brain and DNA would have remained the same, just expressed differently.

But one can only be defined by actions,
Actions which live in expression.
Thus, to express is to be.
So would I seize to be me?

And suppose I learned a second language,
And then a third and a fourth one.

Suddenly my self is speaking in multiple vocabularies,
In multiple idioms. In multiple expressions?

Is to learn new forms of expressions,
To forge a new self?

Who am I? Who are you?
Robin Hood was he who shared,
Mother Teresa was she who cared.
And us? We who speak?

Must language be the only form in which I express myself?

When words don't suffice,
I play the piano, I hum a graceful melody.

When words don't suffice,
I paint the world around me, I sketch my empathy.

When words don't suffice,
I seek compassion, I smile to feel loved.

Life is filled with beauty,
But how can I grasp all this esoteric joy
If no ever taught me to?

How can I grasp the subliminal contrast between a Lydian scale over a dominant chord, if those terms are foreign to me?

How can the beauty in the symmetry of an art work be salient to me, if all I see is a tree followed by a river, followed by a mountain, followed by my indifference?



Just like a word brings an invisible idea to the foreground, knowledge spreads beauty to all realms of life.

But instead?

Instead we learn the criticisms of system A, argument Y, and theory Γ by heart.

We are taught how to parrot the facts, the arguments in favor and against.

Disillusioned. Ideologues who believe that the brain is the self, And to feed the brain is to nurture ourselves.

Come the time to leave education, we find ourselves bewildered. Alienated from the outside world. Incapable of relating to the jobs which ought to lead us toward prosperity.

Come the time to leave education, we are but headless chickens with diplomas on their broken wings, unable to fly. Having been carried through the questions and answers for years we are struggle to ask and to answer.

We are blind to the beautiful complexities which creativity can bring about. No one teaches us how to because it "takes us nowhere."

So we try to fill that void with shallow small-talk and heavy drinking, Superficial friendships and

The good thing though? That we are not trapped in a machine. The good thing? That creativity endures. It is pervasive. It is human.

Even in the lackluster social media, parties and procrastinations a fragment of creativity lingers in the background.

Even in the shadows, there is light.

Because life is but a collection of perceptions, Why not teach oneself new conceptions?

Because life is but an agglomeration of thoughts, Why not craft new tools of reflection?

Because life is but a myriad of expressions, Why not drop the books?

Abandon the goals that have been set By those whom you should upset!

Learn a new language.

PHOTOS BY
AMINA SAHBEGOVIC



Dear Student,

I have been thinking about you the last couple of days a lot, more than usual, and I must say I find it hard to find you reflected in me. This university is home to so many students and cultures that it seems daunting to try and link them all with one single thread. And yet I try because I believe that while our differences are many, our shared experiences and feelings are larger.

You may be a first year fresh into your chosen area or maybe a second year procrastinating that GPE journal entry. Perhaps you are that student reaching the last miles of the race and feeling scared of the finality of it all. Whichever the case, you're no longer a child, in fact you are called an adult in every sense of the word. Not only did you reach adulthood in age, you started working on your degree. You are officially in university and what an experience it has been.

You've met new people and made new friends. You miss your family, your friends, that easy smile that would grace your face because it was weekend and you did not have to worry about school, back when life was a bit simpler.

You didn't do half of the things you said you would and it's okay. And I am so sorry for saying it because I am sure you've grown tired of hearing it... but life got in the way. Nothing happened the way you planned but slowly you feel the pieces moving into place and you breathe easily, despite some pieces going missing in the process. And you are proud, so proud of every mistake and every doubt and every goal achieved. Your family is proud too. They miss you even more than you miss them. And despite the icy cold you pick up the phone and hear that undeniable pride for getting this far and you feel warm again.

The more you've grown the more you've learnt to appreciate all the things sacrificed to get you where you are. And I am not talking of the hours of sleep you sacrificed for a report or the party you missed due to midterms.



***a love
letter to:
Growth***

BY CHELSY GOMEZ HERNANDEZ

You sacrificed your peace and calm because you didn't want to be the nagging roommate. You sacrificed your health because you just could not miss that one class. You sacrificed your heart because 'heartbreak' is a societal construct to sell more chocolate and promote sad songs and God forbid you let people know you still cry at night over someone who might not be worth it.

You and me, the merging of a hopeful past and a realist future, we are still trying to figure it out. I'm still trying to figure out so many things. But I want you to know this, time changes everything. Things I worried about a year ago don't matter now and the things I worry about now won't matter in a year.

And I want you to know that I you should smile as much as you can, not because someone might see and fall in love with it or whichever way that cheesy quote goes. Smile to fall in love with your own happiness, learn to love your smile and your loud laugh and even your weird sense of humor. In the time that has passed since I stepped on a plane and moved here I learned how to stop pretending to be brave. Life taught me that I deserved more and that sometimes it was okay to be selfish. I fought for what I believed in and I didn't give up and sometimes I gave up and didn't fight at all but still got to be proud of myself for trying the next time. Remember that.

And as for the future?

May we find love and lose it and find it all over again like it's the first time. May we find our path and realize maybe it's not our path after all and find it again and again.

May we always find strength and faith when we need it the most.

May we find happiness, the only one that counts, which is the one you give to yourself.

May we grow and recognize that growth as necessary without cowering away from change.

But most importantly, may you live knowing you get to live a thousand lives in the timespan of one.

With love,

A Second Year Who Procrastinated That GPE Journal Entry Writing This



DEAR NO ONE:

what makes me happy

Dear No one,

This past month has been a blur. I got accepted into Honours college, I went to LIMUN (an MUN conference in London), I got a part in the annual BASIS play (it's a small one, but it still counts), I wrote a special edition Dear No one (it's on our website), and I somehow managed to trick this amazing person into dating me (I wish I knew how).

You might think that I have my life figured out by now - I can assure you I don't. Instead of getting the feeling that I've become a full fledged young adult, these past few days I've literally been running around campus, trying to make my deadlines, meet up with people, and attend my classes. Things weren't going my way. I often had to cancel meeting up with friends so I could study, I forgot a deadline from a webpost because I had to write a position paper for LIMUN, I hadn't rehearsed the script of the play, I actually forgot the deadline of this very article, and I've barely had any time to go on a proper date.

Ladies and gentlemen (and non-binary persons), my life is a mess. As soon as the second semester began, life has been throwing me around like a half-empty water bottle. Every night I stayed up and stressed out about every little thing that went wrong. The deadlines I couldn't make, the homework I didn't understand, the friends I hadn't seen or spoken to in weeks. After a few weeks of this bullshit I was able to draw this terrifying conclusion: I had to start saying no to things and stop worrying about what other people were thinking.

You see, last semester I had a lot more time on my hands, so I was able to participate in a lot of extracurricular activities such as debating, acting, and writing. I still love to do all these things, but because of the increased workload for the second semester: I couldn't keep up.

At first, I didn't want to stop with any of these hobbies. They make me happy and I really enjoy hanging out with the people. But, as I later realized, all of these activities made it harder for me to be relaxed and happy in the long run. I knew I had to drop something fast, in order to maintain my grades, as well as my sanity.

Fun fact about me: I hate quitting. So this thought alone made me sick to my stomach. To me, stopping with an activity felt like giving up. It was like I had failed at doing something I loved. It took me many long nights to end all that guilt. I had to realize that I was so stressed out about doing something I loved, I wasn't able to enjoy the activity anymore. Why would I take the fun out of debating, or writing, or acting, or hell just talking to my friends?

So I've designed a system to help me make a decision. Mind you, you must take every step into consideration before you proceed.

1) Do you have to do it?

Are you required to do this, as in: homework, attending lectures, or even just doing your laundry. These are all important things that you have to do, regardless of how you feel about them. Otherwise you'll be in trouble (and out of clean underwear).

2) What are the consequences of (not) participating in this activity?

If you don't rehearse your lines, it'll be harder for you to perform in the play, if you don't attend the MUN training sessions, you'll be significantly less prepared than your opponents during a real MUN conference. For this question, just think about the practical consequences. Ignore the way you feel about it. Just try to approach the hypothetical situation logically.

3) Who will be affected by your decision?

How will my friends feel about me never having enough time to text or talk to them? How will my director feel if I tell her I didn't practice my lines? As much as I wish I could skip this step, it is necessary. Most of the things we do involve other people. So not taking them into consideration would be unwise, as your actions may have a great affect on them emotionally, as well as practically.

4) Will it make you happy?

The answer to this question overrules all of the above. Okay, it may seem like I'm contradicting myself right now, but let me explain: if you have taken everything into consideration and you're still not completely certain, just ask yourself if it makes you happy. Because, your own happiness is more important than anything else.

There are times in which we have to stop and slow down in order to truly catch up with our life. Don't be afraid to give yourself the time and space you need to do that. Nobody can blame you for that, I certainly wouldn't. The midterms are in the air and the stress is about to kick in. Don't let the fear paralyze you, take your time to prepare, and you will survive thrive.

Good luck, I know you'll be great.

Love,

Warsha Autar



to the one who couldn't

It's the third Friday since I said my final goodbye to you
The one that ended whatever was left between us
I put on my high heels and red lipstick and a pushup bra
And I march out the door with counterfeit confidence
This forced confidence that reeks of melting plastic
You can't smell it from where you are though
You see my confidence and my happiness as real
At least I hope you do
Four thousand miles away, thin white lines on your bureau
And a new girl in your bed, a girl who isn't me

I guess we all have our own ways of coping
Our own ways of icing the burn, of turning the scabs to scars
Vodka burning my throat isn't half as bad
As the bitterness of your name rolling off my tongue
For you, it's getting under someone else
For me, it's getting under the influence

The reality of this fucked up situation is that I loved you
I loved you so much that I would have done anything
Gone anywhere, given up anyone, just to be with you
And instead of choosing me, you chose a lifestyle I could never live
Hiding among mountain tops dusted white with snow
and an ambivalent attitude toward love
So I'm forced to choose another direction
One where loving you to the extent that I wish I could isn't even possible
I used to close my eyes and lean in to meet your familiar lips
Now my lips are greeted by the cold rim of another bottle

It makes me sick to think of you with another girl
That's why I kept it going on for so long
Because even if I was miserable with you
It was better than you being happy with someone else
Eventually, though, nothing I could say or do
Could hold us together any longer
The lies, the missed calls, the lack of affection
Everything collapsed on me like a brick building
A building I knew had no steady foundation
But somehow I still prayed it wouldn't crumble just yet

Now here I am on a Saturday night
Trying to decide whether I hate you or still love you
Trying to decipher which one makes more sense
Love, however, is senseless
If it had any reasoning, I wouldn't have loved you in the first place

I do hate you, at least the person you've become
But I think I still love you more than I've ever loved anybody
The way you left me leaves a bitter taste in my mouth
But the way you loved me still chills my soul
You set me free in a way that nobody has before
And I guess I have to be thankful for that
But what I can't ever thank you for is keeping your promises
Your selfishness cut through them like an axe

I will keep applying red lipstick and wearing heels and push up
bras
Until something within my soul feels right again
Until I can press the bottle up to my lips and not taste you
Until the broken promises wash away with the rain
I don't know how I could have been enough for you
Maybe the lesson learned is that sometimes, no matter how hard
you try
You will never be enough for some people
Not because of anything you did wrong
But because the world is a selfish place
And not everyone learns how to avoid that

So take your selfishness and your blow
And your girls and your pathetic choices and leave
While I learn once again how to love myself
How to love my life, how to love, without you

BY JULIA MOORE



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