



# FRESH THINKING

N°02/2011 | QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

## Europe on the borderline

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# Join us for progressive thoughts on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor



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**“We’re going to kill you, you red bastard.”**

My dad was the first to get to the phone when it surprisingly rang in the small hours of night, the angry voice screaming in his ear. This was in a time before mobile phones. I was at school, still living at home and also becoming politically active in leftwing circles, where the fight against neo-Nazism was top of the agenda.

I ended up on a “death list” put together by a Swedish Nazi group. I later got hold of a copy. It states that I’m an anti-racist (true); it has the address of my parents’ house (now sold), and our landline phone number (still used by my mum). But the scary calls, made at night at the weekends when the Nazis had had one beer too many, stopped long ago.

“Uuuh, you must mean my son. I’m voting for the liberals.” That was my dad’s answer to the accusation of being a red bastard – which was a mixture of being sleepy and very probably feeling a little scared. If so, the 22 July 2011 showed that my late father was scared of the violent extreme right for a reason.

The terrorist attacks on Oslo and Utøya, and the broader questions around immigration and xenophobia, had to become the main themes for Fresh Thinking’s second issue.

Our lead story shows how the hate and racism in the phone calls to my family’s house have been polished in the “populist laboratories” of northern Europe. Today, nationalist rightwing parties use liberal values and the fear of Islamic extremism to present a modern version of the old hatred. Even the liberal parties – my father’s sleepy excuse – have fallen into the trap set by Europe’s new populists. To avoid that trap, we need to remember that words are the smallest building blocks of politics. In Progressive Talk (p.8) we show how racists and populists would like us to speak about these issues. We also provide a progressive alternative interpretation.

The late Stieg Larsson’s column from 2003 proves that we were warned about the growth of rightwing extremism (page 25). We are proud to have been given permission to posthumously publish a text that highlights the closeness between Larsson’s work as a journalist, and an underlying political message of his Millennium trilogy.

This magazine aims to become a reference point for progressive politicians, so it should not be a surprise that we asked Norway’s Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg to address our readers. His message reflects profoundly the impressive way in which he handled a national tragedy – that was also an attack on our social democratic values (p. 29).

We have two important rules at Fresh Thinking. Firstly, that photography is a key part of journalism. Our photo essay explores the lives of Germany’s Italian “Gastarbeiter” (foreign workers) who have settled in the country (p. 16). Our second rule is that we never shy away from the difficult aspects of our chosen subjects. In this issue we cover the story of a controversial Muslim mayor (p.26) and the ethical values of asylum (p.30). We also talk to Sofia, who tells us that lies, fraud and corruption are all a part of her life as a migrant in the capital of Europe (p.22).

Racist ideas sharpened in “populist laboratories” have not only conquered some European liberal parties. They have reached the borders of social democracy. In this second issue of Fresh Thinking we are fighting back, guided by true social democratic values.

I’m as happy as always to be a red bastard, and I’ll proudly keep this issue of Fresh Thinking in the folder with my copy of that old “death list”.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Sundström".

Eric Sundström  
Editor-in-Chief



## FRESH THINKING N°02/2011

Front cover and photo essay by  
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[www.werner-photography.com](http://www.werner-photography.com)





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42,000: the number of people granted refugee status in the EU-27 in 2009.

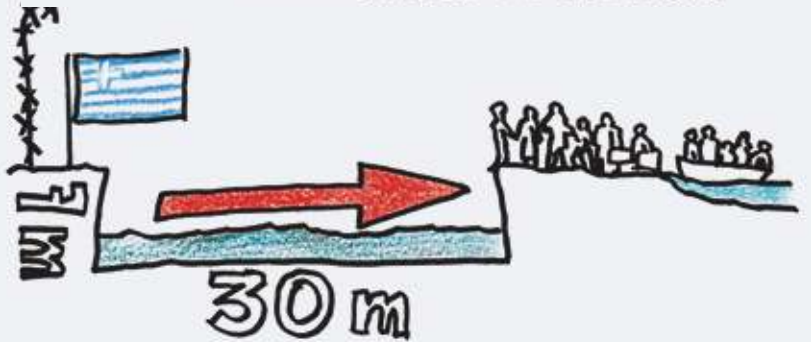
Source: Eurostat



16: the number of EU member states that have rightwing parties in their national parliaments.

7 metres: the depth of the 30 metre-wide ditch that Greece is building to detain refugees.

Source: Pro Asyl

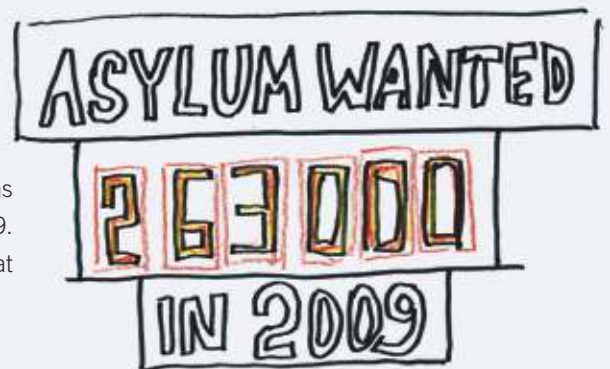


3.4: the number of asylum applications per 1,000 citizens in Sweden (See Stieg Larsson's posthumously published essay on racist tendencies in European societies on p. 25).

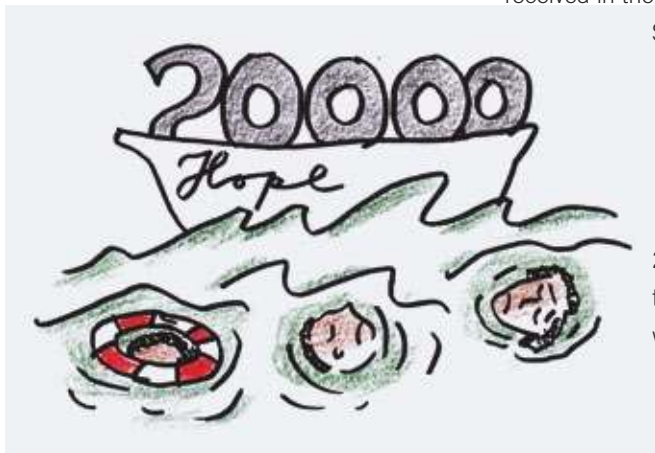
Source: Pro Asyl

263,400: the number of asylum applications received in the EU-27 in 2009.

Source: Eurostat

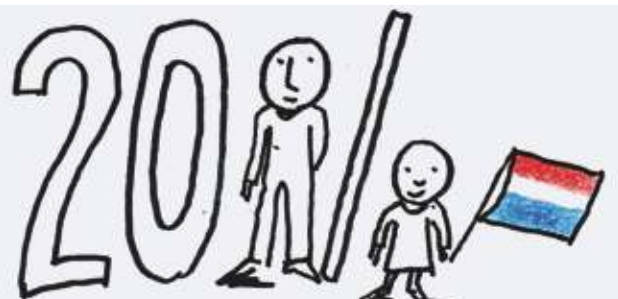


20,000: the approximate number of people who died trying to escape to Europe (See Piotr Buras' interview with Ilija Trojanow on p. 30).



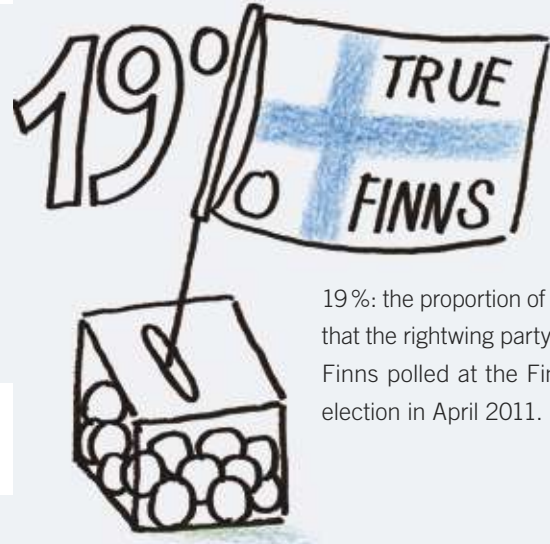
20%: the proportion of the Dutch population that are immigrants or children of immigrants (See Rob Savelberg's portrait of Ahmed Marcouch's integration policy in Amsterdam on p. 26).

Source: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung





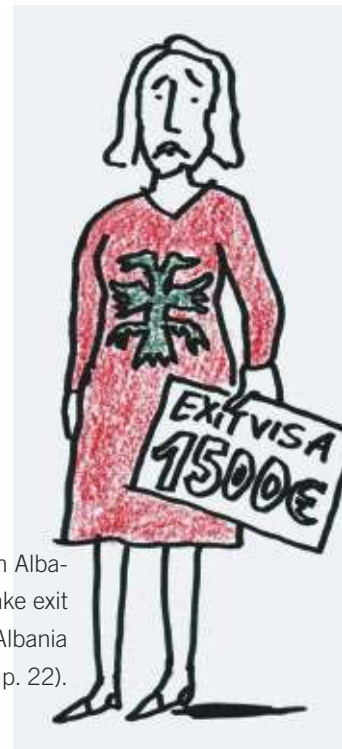
€80million: the increase in the budget since 2005 for Frontex , the EU agency that coordinates member states in the field of border security.



19%: the proportion of votes that the rightwing party True Finns polled at the Finnish election in April 2011.

40%: the proportion of asylum applications in the EU that come from Serbia, Afghanistan, Russia, Iraq and Somalia.

Source: Pro Asyl



€1,500: the amount that an Albanian woman paid for a fake exit visa to leave Albania (Read her story on p. 22).



600: the number of Anders Behring Breivik's Facebook friends who the killer claimed were members of the rightwinged English Defence League (Read how EU member states discussed the attacks in Norway on p.34)



66%: the proportion of successful asylum applications issued in the EU in 2009 – represented by the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Sweden. Source: Eurostat

The words we use are the small but important building blocks of politics and democracy. Myths and exaggeration previously used by racists and neo-Nazis are now appearing again today spoken by populist politicians dressed in suits and sitting in the parliaments of Europe. Here is our guide to the words and logic used by populists and xenophobes – and Fresh Thinking’s progressive interpretation.

Words	What xenophobes mean ...	What progressives mean ...
Racism	An accusation thrown by the elite towards anyone who dares to talk about the evident problems in society.	A serious democratic threat posed by a small group of people, regardless of whether they are anti-Semites, Islamophobes, or Nazis. And is it a serious threat? Remember Utøya.
Crime, riots, unemployment	Proof that immigrants and the natives of EU countries can never live together.	Challenges that have always existed – and something that must be discussed in order to find policy solutions. The solution is not to generalise and find scapegoats; that would be to shy away from the real problems.
Democracy	Something that demands unity and that you share the same culture and values.	A system built to handle disunity.
Multiculturalism	A massive and failed experiment.	The natural state of many societies throughout history. Nationalism, on the other hand, is a more recent innovation.
Patriotism	Something the elites would like you to feel ashamed of.	Something that can give you pride and confidence. Unrelated to the myth that coexistence between different cultures is a threat.
Tolerance	A naïve project presented and supported by the elite.	Something that is practiced by all people every day, a prerequisite for a functioning democracy.
Intolerance	A natural reaction against the powerful elites and the authorities, who through immigration have created an impossible situation.	A dark reflex and desire to simplify what we all can feel sometimes – but we know better than to give in to such an attitude.



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# Next Left Economic

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**Public debt crisis in Europe :**  
Urgent solutions  
&  
long-term remedies

With guest speaker

**Laurent CORDONNIER**  
Associate Professor Lille 1 University  
"Centre lillois d'études et  
de recherches sociologiques et  
économiques"

Chaired by

**Liem HOANG NGOC**

Member of the European Parliament,  
Professor of Economics at Paris I University

&

**Stephany GRIFFITH-JONES**

FEPS Consultant  
Professor of Economics at Columbia University

Day: **December 8<sup>th</sup>**  
Time: **from 12.00 to 14.00**  
European Parliament  
Room A5H1

Lunch and translation (EN-FR-DE) provided  
Please register to: [s-d.gdf@europa.eu](mailto:s-d.gdf@europa.eu)



# The new racism

Northern European countries have become a “populist laboratory” with nationalist groups exploiting fear and hiding behind liberal values to deliver a modern version of old hatred. **Per Wirtén** argues that the left has fallen into a trap set by rightwing political groups.

**I had just left Graceland** in Memphis, Tennessee, when I heard about the massacre of young social democrats in Norway. An American I met said a few nice words, but I noticed how his worldview was challenged when I told him that the terrorist was white. Terrorists, aren't they supposed to be Muslims?

The US media had no illusions. Reporters and columnists analysed how the fear of both Islam and multiculturalism have been incorporated into European politics. They underlined the collaboration, a mutual understanding, between Islamophobic opinions and the political elites in the Netherlands and Denmark. You could predict the shape of a developing European consensus. The dark image of

Europe that the US media portrayed might not have embraced all the complexities of the issue, but it was unblinkered and correct about how the new attitude fitted into a wider context. Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian terrorist, summarised his enemies as Muslims, multiculturalists and “cultural Marxists” – and that was no surprise. Hadn't we heard that before, but in a more enlightened context?

**When history is written, you look for** the turning points. 2010 might have been one. In the Netherlands, the governing centre-right parties enacted an agreement of cooperation with Geert Wilder's Islamophobic Freedom Party. During the last days of summer, Roma people were hunted

down by police and deported from France, Sweden and other countries – despite having European citizenship. In Hungary, the newly elected government prepared restrictions on the freedom of press, while writing a new constitutional law based on religious and national mythology. “Austerity” became the only answer for the Euro crisis. Adding the small incidents together, an image emerged of a continent drifting towards an old abyss.

I visited Amsterdam over a few cold days in spring of 2010, directly before the election that was Geert Wilder's breakthrough. I talked to left-leaning liberals, social democrats, socialists, and intellectuals. Monica Sie, chairman of a social democratic thinktank, hit the nail on the





Norway, Switzerland, and Austria. Jimmie Åkesson, party leader of the xenophobic Sweden Democrats (pictured on p.15 in national costume with his wife), declared in 2010 that he understands “the significant worry felt by many homosexuals before the mass influx of immigrants and the hatred of homosexuality that increasing Islami- sation brings with it.”

The following election became the breakthrough for the Sweden Democrats, winning seats in the Riksdag for the first time. During the election campaign, Åkesson visited gay clubs in Stockholm. When the newly elected Riksdag opened, he arrived wearing the national costume. It is a racism finding its way in a northern European laboratory experiment, and right now it has a strong political wind in its sails. There is no room for complacency at the setbacks that the Norwegian and Danish xenophobic parties suffered in this autumn’s elections. This movement works patiently, with the assumption of power – political as well as cultural – as its fixed goal.

In their laboratories, liberal rhetoric is mixed with unforgiving anti-liberalism. Many are tempted – not just the Danish and Dutch rightwing liberals who have chosen political cooperation. Even social democrats, feminists and leftwing intellectuals seem to have problems resist- ing the trap set by Geert Wilders. Not by cooperation, but by overtaking their way of presenting the problem. Perspectives are narrowed, concepts disappear and

head when she described her country as a “populist laboratory”. The entire political establishment is being called into ques- tion, and on good grounds. It has refused to politicise questions such as immigra- tion, integration, the EU and globalisation. The populist uproar has been channelled through these very questions. PvdA, the social democratic party, is 100 percent loyal to the system and very technocratic. Populism, Monica Sie observed, then becomes a deadly threat to the very iden- tity of the party.

**Back in Stockholm I began to ponder** the silence I had met in Amsterdam. Why had my Dutch colleagues removed the word multicultural from their vocabulary? Why had they stopped talking about struc- tural racism? Why had they avoided ques- tions about discrimination? In recent times, these concepts have been the starting point for all radical discussions on the sub- ject. To me, they are still important tools when trying to understand Europe. Was the silence a sign indicating how quickly the public conversation can be limited?

The Netherlands is not just a populist laboratory. The country has also, together with Denmark, led a successful quest for a sort of racism tailor-made for the welfare states of northern Europe – and not just through populist politicians such as Pim Fortuyn (pictured right) and Geert Wilders (pictured above), but sometimes integrated in the state itself. It has become a model

for others. What I met in Amsterdam is now flowing through many European cities.

**The new racism in Northern Europe** manages to leave its old limits behind. Instead, its representatives successfully portray themselves as defenders of the Enlightenment, secularism and the eman- cipation of mankind – the basic values of the left.

They describe the fundamental con- flict as a battle between European freedom and Muslim intolerance brought by immi- gration. Consciously, the rights of individu- als are put in sharp contrast. They kidnap the ideas of freedom, and incorporate racist and Islamophobic values.

This pattern has been repeated suc- cessfully in precisely the European welfare states that regard themselves as espe- cially enlightened and modern: Denmark,









word from the debate, which is not surprising. Just by saying multiculturalism, a more independent conception of the world is set in motion: nationalism is questioned, immigration welcomed.

**In countries such as Britain and Sweden,** the concept has become a popular signal illustrating a popular will to live in open societies characterised by immigration. It has been confirmed by their own experiences of everyday life in a big city; of conflicts, negotiations and new perspectives, different languages, new music and a different way of speaking about the meaning of life. The concept was a political achievement. Many mistakes have been committed in the name of multiculturalism. A simplistic view of culture, religion and ethnicity has been mixed with old racism; language education for immigrants has been inadequate or non-existent; so-called honour killings have been neglected. The state and the public have not always taken responsibility. But if you leave behind the concept of multiculturalism as a social narrative, and racial discrimination as an important explanation of grave injustices – what are you left with?

These dislocations in the European public debate, which the US reporters quickly grasped after the massacre in Norway, are in turn wrapped into a bigger narrative about unsuccessful integration. The situation for people with a different coloured skin, so-called immigrants, is serious: high unemployment, violence and hostile attitudes. In his enthusiastic book *Europe's Promise*, American Steve Hill observes that the continent needs a civil rights movement.

**But the question of integration has** lately focused on the fear of small clusters of revolutionary Islamists instead. The critique of integration policy has merged with the critique of multiculturalism, transforming into a political question of security focusing on the “Muslim”. The volume is turned up. London, previously the model for European cities of immigration, has

cultural explanations replace political ones. How many European social democrats still speak about institutional racism? Instead, an old desire has woken up among left-wing socialists: allowing class to exclude other perspectives of power relations, such as racism.

**In other parts of Europe, there are** similar attempts to make racism appealing for those who portray themselves as modern and enlightened. It is happening with varying degrees of success in Italy, France and Hungary. In a much-discussed speech conducted in the autumn of 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel disassociated herself from the attempt to create

a “multicultural society where people live side by side and enjoy each other”, since it “has failed, utterly failed”. France’s leader Nicolas Sarkozy and Britain’s David Cameron quickly followed in her footsteps.

No social democratic opposition could be heard, instead it was a sigh of relief. The ideas surrounding the concept of multiculturalism have always created an anxiety – even within large parts of the left. Merkel simply expressed a common desire for what is ordinary and recognisable, a return to a lost cultural security in a time of difficult economic insecurity.

The disassociation from multiculturalism was a major victory for the xenophobic right. They have long tried to erase the very





been transformed into a dangerous example of “multicultural appeasement”. It is as if Europe had ended up in a repetition of 1938.

There’s a hair’s breadth between the defence of the liberal values of freedom and anti-liberal legislation – even among some progressive social democrats. Karl Popper’s classic device about “intolerance against the intolerant” can be transformed, with a gentle push in the back, into the “no freedom for the enemies of freedom” of the French revolution. So where has it gone, the tolerance we were supposed to defend? The Dutch trap shuts. The kidnapping is complete. We are left with a question: How could conceptions about freedom be distorted to support discrimination and exclusion?

**One practical way to avoid the carefully set trap is to come back to reality.** Out there piles of research reports about discrimination in the workplace are waiting, together with experiences told by the low-paid working class (for many years now those who are non-white), and testimonies from the Roma people about violence and contempt. To let questions about freedom have their starting-point in the powerlessness of the excluded, isn’t that a social democratic mission?

And how deeply rooted in reality is the assertion that freedom primarily is threatened by Islamists, conservative Muslims, and multicultural-loving politicians

of appeasement? When British Muslims were burning The Satanic Verses in 1989, the anger of intolerance was widespread among Europe’s Muslims. But when the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published the Muhammad cartoons 16 years later, only small crowds were protesting with similar militant messages in Europe. The violent reactions occurred on totally different continents. In Paris, the cartoons were published only a few months after the civil unrest in the suburbs. Everyone held their breath, but no Molotov cocktails were thrown. Most Muslims seemed to embrace

the general view; the cartoons were offensive, but you have to endure such a thing in a democracy. A law against blasphemy would require the moulding of public opinion – not murder. That was one of the more hopeful European stories, lost in the new prevailing silence, that I reflected on after my journey to Amsterdam.

Geert Wilder’s and the Danish People’s Party’s Pia Kjaersgaard’s description of society has an advantage in the ongoing battle that is deciding how the reality should be portrayed. Even socialists and social democrats have moved in under their shade. Does that explain why the Norwegian terrorist’s creation of three enemies – Muslims, multiculturalists and “cultural Marxists” – felt so unpleasantly familiar?

After all, we had already met versions of these enemies on enlightened editorial pages, in respected periodicals and reviews, and even at conferences for progressive social democrats. ■

*Per Wirtén is a Swedish author and journalist. He has written extensively about migration, immigration, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism.*



# Wolfsburg, Germany – the largest Italian village north of the Alps

**Towards the end of the 1950s** the young German Federal Republic experienced something new. For the first time there were more positions to fill than people looking for work. A new employment policy was set which resulted in the mass recruitment of “Gastarbeiter” (foreign workers). Companies started recruiting workers for Germany from abroad, especially from Italy. Fifty years on and the Italian traditions and values that the migrants brought with them are mixed with German ones. Many foreign workers started families and made their homes in Germany – only visiting Italy for their holidays.

Photographs by **Christian Werner**.





















# Fear and loathing of a migrant in Europe

Sofia left war-torn Albania to start a new life in Brussels, but after an unsuccessful attempt to gain citizenship she felt forced to turn to fraud and corruption to provide a home for her small family. Now she lives with the constant worry that she will be found out. **Ruth Reichstein** talked to her about her dilemma.

**For many mothers, a daughter's wedding day** is one full of joy and happiness. But Sofia [not her real name] fears the day like no other: "What am I going to tell the in-laws? That I have no idea about my home country's culture? That I don't know what to cook at a wedding and that I don't want to play any special music too? That's not possible", says the petite woman in her mid-30s, shaking her head slowly. Sofia keeps her name a secret with other people as well as the press. In her day-to-day existence in Brussels, she lives a life built on lies – even her name is false. And these lies, so the mother fears, will break her in the end, when her 11-year-old daughter eventually gets married.

Sofia has built a foundation of lies because she was born in the wrong country. A country which doesn't give her any right to live in the European Union. Sofia comes from Albania. She fled the country with her husband in March 1998. "We couldn't see

**Our country was  
completely destroyed after the war.  
My parents lost everything.  
We had no hope.**

any future there. Our country was completely destroyed after the civil war. My parents had lost everything. I no longer had any work. We had no hope," Sofia says. Her black, sad eyes lose themselves in emptiness and she falls silent. It wasn't an easy decision back then, but she wanted to do something with her life, she wanted to work and start a family. She wanted a future and that's why she and her husband bought visas for the European Union with their families' savings. Each visa cost \$1,500. They applied as asylum seekers in Belgium, citing the civil war and possible acts of revenge. But the Belgian authorities didn't believe them. They were going to be deported. "I can understand it. It was a made-up story. But what else could we have done? Our wish to live a humane life and to work wouldn't have been enough to get the right of residence", Sofia says.

Going back to Albania was not an option at all for the couple. That's why in the end they accepted an offer from a southern EU member state. They were sold fake passports at an embassy there. All of a sudden, Sofia and her husband were EU citizens, they could move around freely and had a new identity and name.

### **A living nightmare**

But what sounded like a dream quickly turned into a nightmare. "I'm living in constant fear of being discovered. I don't dare to make friends, because I never know if someone might expose me. Even in our own flat I don't feel at home. It is someone else's flat."

Sofia sits on a beige sofa in their small living room in central Brussels. The flat is only 40 square metres. Her daughter's bed is next to the parents' double bed in the bedroom. There's a built-in shower in the hallway. In the living room there's space for a small dining table next to the sofa. The walls are almost bare. Two photographs of her daughter and a goldfish bowl sit on the mantelpiece. Next to them on the wall is an oil painting. Sofia looks at it. "I don't know what it is. A friend has given it to me. It doesn't really matter."

### **Losing self-respect**

Along with her identity she has also lost her self-respect, she says, and briefly covers her face with her hands. She hardly knows the culture and language of her new, official country of origin. That's why she would rather hide so as not

**I don't dare to make friends,  
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to make any mistakes. She constantly denies her own country and hasn't been back there since her escape. Belgium has become a prison for her because the passport she bought has long expired and she would expose herself if she tried to renew it. At least her dad could visit her last summer because visa regulations have been relaxed for Albanians. And they can "talk" to each other on Skype. Otherwise she only talks in Albanian to her husband when they're at home. She has never read any Albanian books or sung any Albanian songs to her daughter. "We wanted her to feel safe here, so that she doesn't accidentally give away our secret at school. We want her to have a future here." Nevertheless, a year ago the girl suddenly asked why her grandparents lived in Albania, and if they themselves actually came from another country. Sofia was frightened by that and told her the whole story. "Now she knows. She carries a great deal of responsibility not to betray us with her friends."

### **Collaborating with the mafia**

At least her daughter has now got a Belgian passport. EU citizens are allowed to adopt the nationality of their country of birth at the age of nine. That comforts Sofia because up until now all efforts to live legally in Brussels have failed. She





and her lawyer, Véronique Melis, have together made several attempts. Melis's office is only a few kilometres away from Sofia's flat at the other end of Brussels's city centre. She is specialised in immigration law. Sofia isn't her only client who lives here under a false identity. "With its politics to keep immigrants away, the European Union criminalises immigration. People who want to live here are literally forced to collaborate with mafia-like networks," the lawyer says. And it has become increasingly difficult, she adds, to encourage the authorities to have any understanding for the immigrants. "In the past, everyone thought it was legitimate to fake their papers to get out of a country where there's a danger of a genocide. Today, the EU doesn't think anything is legitimate."

## **In the past, everyone thought it was legitimate to fake their papers to get out of a country where there's a danger of a genocide.**

She has little hope for Sofia. In 2007, Belgium added to the immigration law that the right of residence will be immediately withdrawn if fraud has been involved. Melis knows that this isn't just an empty threat.

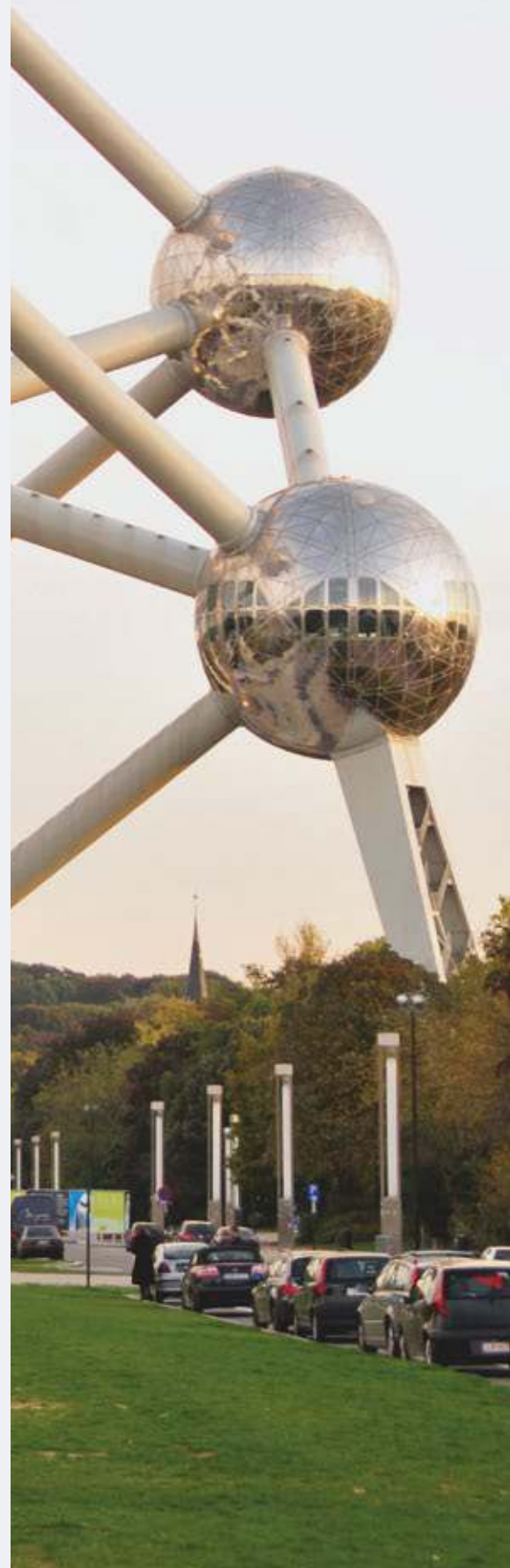
### **Stuck without roots**

Sofia's daughter has, in any case, a secure future. "Even if the parents are sent back, we will always be able to argue that the child really can't be held responsible for their fraud." The Belgium passport makes life easier for the girl. Last summer, she could visit her grandparents in Albania for the first time. "She should carry the memory of them in her heart. She shouldn't feel without roots later in life, even if we had to cut them off for many years."

### **The longing to belong**

Sofia doesn't justify herself. She knows that she is responsible for her hopeless situation and her lies. But she doesn't understand why there are no options to immigrate to the European Union if you're not politically persecuted or threatened by torture. "We never wanted to exploit anyone. We always wanted to work. I would so much love to go back to my old job. Why are there no Greencards in the EU like they have in the United States or in Canada?" Sofia asks with a bitter tone. She is actually a primary school teacher and can now speak French with hardly any mistakes. But because she can't produce any diplomas with her fake name, she has to work as a cleaning woman. Sofia estimates that 70 to 80 percent of all immigrants make up stories to get asylum, because the EU guards its borders so diligently. Sometimes Sofia has a longing. Then she would love to pack the suitcases that have been sitting in front of their door at the bottom of the stairs ever since they arrived. But she knows that she has missed her chance. "We would lose everything if we went back – even our pension that we've earned here. And back in Albania we would feel as foreign there as we do here." ■

*Ruth Reichstein contributes to several German newspapers including Handelsblatt and Der Tagesspiegel. She has appeared on the radio stations Deutschlandradio, Deutsche Welle and TV station Westdeutscher Rundfunk. She lives in Brussels.*



# How the right is changing democracy in Europe

In 2003, **Stieg Larsson**, the celebrated Swedish writer and journalist, assessed how extreme rightwing views were beginning to take hold in Europe. He found that they were stronger than in the 1930s before the fascist dictatorships rose to power.



In 1997, **Expo, the foundation** dedicated to the study of extreme rightwing and racist tendencies, investigated Europe, country by country. The result was remarkable. In 25 of 37 countries, rightwing extreme or extreme nationalist parties were represented in parliament. Seven parties held seats in the European Parliament. In six countries in the former Eastern bloc, the extreme right had influence on government policy. In most European countries, well-organised and militant direct action groups exist. Nine countries had more or less well-armed terror groups.

When summarising the electoral support in different countries, it became evident that in several populous states the extreme right is strong or stronger today than it was in the last free elections in the 1930s, before the fascist dictatorships rose to power.

Of course, such comparisons are dangerous. The situation in the 1930s cannot be compared to one 70 years later. But the sheer existence of active,

anti-democratic groups tells a story about the state of democracy. The common denominator for all these parties is the questioning of the legitimacy of a democratic society. The most common propaganda message is the accusation that politicians are thieves who become rich at the expense of ordinary people, while “selling out” and “betraying” their own countries.

Without doubt, extreme nationalist ideas have grown dramatically over the last two decades. We are witnessing a disastrous shift in the political wind. Democratic politicians have had great problems to define and counter the new extreme right. While the 1930s activists came in black uniforms, the modern vanguard wears tailor-made Armani suits. They march into the European Parliament and national governments with courteous smiles, assuring that they are “democratic” parties through and through.

The politicians who want to downplay the importance of the growth of these groups, willingly suggest that the parliamentary extreme right will “accommodate” or adapt to the democratic system – making them harmless and without sting.

But the reality is that the democratic parties, just as often, adapt to the rhetoric and policies of the extreme right. One example can be traced in the policies of Denmark’s government since the Danish People’s Party seized the role of broker in Parliament. Beliefs that would have been

stamped out as serious racism and xenophobia 10 years ago, have all of a sudden become “house trained”. Pia Kjaersgaard, leader of the Danish People’s Party, managed to set the tone of the rhetoric in the recent election campaign with harsh, populist attacks and hate propaganda vis-à-vis Muslims.

Today, we are no longer dealing with small phoney parties hiding in a basement, getting support by a half percent of the electorate. We are talking about millions of voters who are joining a movement whose aim has been intact since the 1930s.

These parties represent a challenge to our democratic and open society. They will remain on the agenda during the foreseeable future. ■

Stieg Larsson writing in Expo issue 2/2003.

*The writer Stieg Larsson (1954–2004) was a founding member of Expo, an organisation dedicated to the study of anti-democratic, rightwing extremist and racist tendencies in society. Millennium in Larsson’s trilogy of the same name, is modelled on Expo. Expo has kindly granted Fresh Thinking permission to edit, translate and posthumously print this article to highlight the closeness between Larsson’s life’s work as a journalist and the underlying political message of his novels.*





# The muslim mayor of Amsterdam

He was Holland's first Islamic mayor and he relies on a zero-tolerance approach when it comes to integration problems with young Moroccan people. His nickname is the sheriff of Slotervaart, after the Amsterdam district that has a large number of immigrants. **Ahmed Marcouch**, the policeman-turned-politician, tells Rob Savelberg that intolerance must be tackled from birth.

**Ahmed Marcouch has experienced** many disruptions in his life. He was born in Morocco, one of nine children. At the beginning of the 1970s, his dad came to the Netherlands as a guest worker, his mother died shortly afterwards. The young Marcouch left his home country at the age of 10 and visited a school for the first time in Amsterdam. "I was incredibly motivated. I was able to read and write after two years." Now 42, he has worked as a nurse and policeman, and managed to rise up to officer-in-charge and then become a teacher.

But on 2 November 2004, the comfortable Dutch way of life radically changed. Film maker Theo Van Gogh was murdered with a knife on an open street. The perpetrator was Mohammed Bouyeri, a young Dutch man of Moroccan origin. Several eye witnesses watched in disbelief at how he calmly cut the Islam critic Van Gogh's throat, in the early morning on a busy high street. Bouyeri lived in Slotervaart, an immigrant district in the west of the canal city. He worked there for the regional newspaper and was engaged voluntarily in

the district before he became involved in radical Islam and joined the terrorists of the "Hofstadgroep".

During those nervous times, Ahmed Marcouch touched base more and more with the Dutch public which seemed to be a society in a state of emergency, with burning mosques, churches and schools. Marcouch, a practising Muslim, was the spokesman of the mosques in the Amsterdam region. "When I said it's five minutes to midnight in Slotervaart, the minister was on my doorstep the next day."

**The social democrat soon became so** popular that he was elected mayor of Slotervaart in 2006. He had to bridge the enormous gap between the Dutchmen and the immigrants. That wasn't easy because Slotervaart had to fight against high unemployment, a lack of language skills and criminality among its young immigrants. In addition there was a fast-growing group of violent Muslims which

## Children are being taught to turn away from western society

radicalised quickly without the police or the authorities having any answers. "We had bad Imams here, believers who read inappropriate religious texts. The impact of satellite dishes and the internet was obvious: Islam in the Netherlands was being led from abroad. And we were all asleep", says Marcouch.

"When fighting this phenomenon it is important not only to answer it by

clamping down. Intolerance needs to be tackled from its very birth. We have to talk to the parents of these young men about their acts in a direct way. If gay people for example are frightened of Muslims, then I turn this into an issue. So I have demonstratively brought the gay parade "Gaypride" to Slotervaart."

Immigrant children of Moroccan guest workers are caught between two worlds. On the one hand, they go to school and work in a western society, where a lot is permitted that would be forbidden at home. Within the walls of their parents' home, much stricter customs apply. The majority of often not very educated people from the Moroccan Rif mountains have enormous difficulties becoming accustomed to the culture of this modern country. The role of dad as patriarch is under pressure.

**"We have to talk to the parents about their parenting responsibility. Too many Moroccan boys are able to hang around in the streets for hours without any social control. Parents have to buy school books and computers, they must check**



homework. Citizens not only have rights, they also have duties", says Marcouch.

He wants to teach people how to bring out tolerance and solidarity. How serious he is was made clear when he sent 30 older Moroccans, among them several Imams from Slotervaart, on an educational trip to Auschwitz in order to fight the growing anti-semitism.

### **But it's also about self-responsibility:**

"The state has to care for security, good schools and living space, but not about everything. And there mustn't be any whining that discrimination is going on. That is no excuse for someone becoming a criminal, suffering hunger and going off the rails. Nothing of that kind needs to be





here. And people shouldn't complain, if they don't use all the opportunities that are offered to them. I have no time for those who don't make anything with their lives."

Marcouch, who is now a member of the Dutch parliament in the Hague, is a controversial figure. He wanted to expel foreigners after five years if they "represented a danger to society". Some of his "streetworkers" refused to shake the hands of women. The father of three quickly talks about the "daily street terror". He calls criminals from his home country Morocco "rabble". And when another goldsmith has been robbed, he wants to confiscate the offender's driving license.

## Islam in the Netherlands was being led from abroad. And we were all asleep

**The politician breaks taboos which are** controversially discussed by the majority of society. For example, he calls for more Islam lessons at schools. Some party members have protested against Marcouch and accused him of "subtle Islamisation". But Marcouch answers back by saying "it stops hundreds of children sitting in some Imam's back room where corporal punishment is still common. Those are miserable



teaching conditions in stinky classrooms." One day he told the Amsterdam newspaper Trouw: "What children learn during the week is later destroyed at the weekends. They are being taught to turn away from Western society."

But he is not without his detractors. Achmed Baâdoud, the current mayor of Slotervaart, believes that "teaching Islam shouldn't be given too much attention". It's more about language and mathematics. According to him, religion should remain a private matter. And he believes that Marcouch is stigmatising. "We're not Moroccan Dutchmen. We are Dutchmen," says Baâdoud.

Other critics say that Marcouch rushes most of his decisions, which are often just half-developed ideas. Youth preventive detention for intensive offenders for

example. Or the deployment of "lure Jews" to expose anti-semitism. Also, that he considers his media presence to be more important than his political work.

But the results of his politics speak for themselves. He was a strong force in campaigning against the discrimination of gay people and radicalisation. His suggestions to create better teaching of Islam without "hate imams" have been well received in his party. And he wants to demonstrate to immigrants that it is both possible and worthwhile integrating in Dutch society.

**His politics carry a risk too. He** receives threats from the far-right as well as Muslim fanatics and was worried that radical Imams would call out a Fatwa against him. He would defend himself against his own people, and any such radical religious leader, but he remains optimistic: "You can achieve everything. Your origin is not important, but your future is. I'm the best example. The Dutch dream can become reality." ■

*Rob Savelberg is the Berlin correspondent for the Dutch daily newspaper De Telegraaf*



# We are Norway

The mass murder in Norway was an attack on all those who value freedom and democracy – and we can all learn from this terrible event, says **Jens Stoltenberg**.

**My friends in the social democratic parties across Europe** have always been a great inspiration for me. We have learnt from each other. When we have lost elections, others have won – and the other way around. The bond between us is deep and strong, long standing, over decades of improving peoples' lives. But never have I felt a warmer friendship than after the terror attacks in Norway on 22 July 2011. The Labour party in Norway was attacked, in central Oslo and on Utøya. But the attack was also on you, on us, the international labour movement. It was an attack on our values, the future we are fighting for. I would like to express my gratitude for all your condolences – through letters, phone calls, text messages – as well as through Facebook and other social media. But my warmest thanks go to the Norwegian people. We were put to the ultimate test on 22 July. The map was ripped up. The compass shot to pieces. Each and every one of us had to find our way through a landscape of shock, fear and devastation. It could have gone very badly. We could have got lost.

But the Norwegian people found their way. Out of darkness and uncertainty, home to Norway. Our fundamental values are democracy, humanity and openness. With this as a platform, we will respect differences. We will face the debates, including the difficult ones. This is how we will deepen and develop our response to terrorism and violence. Even more democracy and humanity – but never naivety. The time of mourning has rightfully made many of us stop and think about our own perspectives, thoughts and words. In hindsight we may

all realise that we should sometimes have expressed ourselves differently, and that we ought to choose our words more carefully in the future.

We can all learn something from this tragedy. This is equally true in everyday conversations and in the public debate. It applies to politicians and editors. It applies in the canteen at work and on the Internet. It applies to us all. We should all show the same wisdom and respect as the Norwegian people have done. As politicians, we should promise to take this spirit with us as normal political activities resume. And to make sure you will consider this proposal, I would like to tell you about Bano Rashid. Bano's family fled from Iraq in 1996. They found a safe haven in Norway. Bano did well at school and was planning to study law. She dreamt of a future in Norway's parliament. Her dream was shattered by the terrorist on Utøya. She was 18 years old. I am full of admiration for her parents, Beyan and Mustafa. "The answer is not hatred, but more love", Beyan told a Norwegian newspaper. Bano's family has said farewell to her in a ceremony that was both Norwegian and Kurdish. I mourn Bano. She has given the new expanded concept of the Norwegian "we" a face. We will be one community. Across religion, ethnicity, and gender. Bano is Norwegian. I am Norwegian.

We are Norway. And I am very proud of this. Now, it is up to us to write the next chapters of both Norway's and Europe's history. We have already tried to stake out our course. With the strongest weapons in the world – freedom of speech, democracy and tolerance – we hope that many more will follow. ■



*Jens Stoltenberg is the Prime Minister of Norway and party leader of the Norwegian Social Democratic Party Arbeiderpartiet.*



## Ilija Trojanow

(born in 1965), the German writer and translator, fled Bulgaria when he was six years old with his parents and was given asylum in Munich. He lived in Nairobi for 10 years, and after that for several years in Asia. He received the Leipziger Buchmesse award for his novel *Der Weltensammler*. His travel reports, essays and novels have been published in several languages. His novel *Eistau* was published in the autumn of 2011.

# The ambassadors of injustice

There is a growing, but false perception that immigration is destabilising and brings insecurity. Piotr Buras talks to writer Ilija Trojanow about how Europe's views of asylum seekers betrays its ethical values and how it needs to reassess its attitude towards refugees and immigration.

**It's been a hectic few days** for Ilija Trojanow. His new novel *Eistau* has just been published and the dates of his reading tour are strewn across Germany. We meet each other on a sunny September evening in front of the Kulturkirche in Hamburg, where a small queue of interested readers has already gathered, most of whom have a brand new copy of the novel under their arm. While the band, which is accompanying the reading, rehearses on stage, we gather in the nearby park at the foot of a monument that commemorates the First World War. For the whole discussion the warlike figures look down on us.

**One of the founders of the German organisation Pro Asyl once said that "refugees are the ambassadors of injustice". Over the last months and as a result of the Arab Spring, the refugee drama has shaken up European politics. Have we understood the message?**

*Europe doesn't really want to hear this message at the moment. The fatal thing is that many European decision makers think that the Mediterranean region is a border that can be locked. It is forgotten that historically this Mediterranean area, including North Africa, used to be a culturally bubbling region which influenced*

*Europe. Europe today feels that it doesn't have to concern itself with the non-European. This is a result of eastward expansion. This expansion has led to a certain narrowing of views.*

**Nearly 2,000 people have drowned in the Mediterranean sea over the past few weeks. In the last 20 years nearly 20,000 people died during their flight to Europe. Is Europe partially responsible for this tragedy?**

*Of course. You can't really say people shouldn't flee. And there are political, social and economic reasons for their flight which are caused by Europe. Particularly significant are the results of European fishing on the shores of Africa. Spanish companies especially have been depleting fish stocks to such an extent that the native population can't maintain their traditional economic systems. Countless boats that used to be fishing boats in the past are smuggling refugees today. European agricultural subsidies are destroying African small farmers. But the other argument for our joint responsibility is an ethical one. You cannot imagine a civilised society that wouldn't help people in need. This is not only a betrayal of our civilisation but also of our human basic instincts. That wouldn't be*

*possible in day-to-day life. An inhumanity, which none of us would tolerate up close, becomes possible only because of the distance of politics from everyday life. Nearly everyone would act straight away if they saw someone in danger of death. The politics towards these refugees is an example of a cynicism which is not matched by the moral feelings of the population.*

**The counter-argument states that we can't accommodate everyone.**

*Nobody is demanding that. All organisations concerned with the rights of refugees simply demand that the principle of individual case examination is met. Every refugee must have a legal right to be seen as a potential asylum seeker. But this doesn't happen now. People are being sent back without examining whether they would actually have the right to be accommodated. General suspicions and prejudices are part of the operation. Conservative politicians claim that illegality is criminal. That leads to the conclusion that everyone who has chosen an illegal path on their flight will not be acknowledged as an asylum seeker. This is extremely cynical. How can a refugee fight for an ordered way of receiving asylum rights?*



### **The European Union is going to introduce united asylum procedures on 1 January 2012.**

*The problem is that these procedures are very often not followed. The so-called Dublin resolutions that allow EU member states to send back refugees to the place where they first crossed the outer border of the EU are also extremely questionable. The adjacent states such as Greece, Italy and Spain have to unduly bear the burden. In addition, the refugees' situation varies greatly in the EU countries. In some, minimum standards are not met. There has been recently, for example, a very courageous journalist's investigation which exposes the scandalous conditions of refugees in Greece. Another solution has to be found here; this current practice is unacceptable.*

### **When the Italians asked for help to deal with the problems on Lampedusa, the governments of France and Germany denied it. Do we need more solidarity in European refugee policies?**

*I absolutely couldn't follow this decision. Every day, we talk about Greece needing help with its debt crisis because we live in a community of solidarity. But when it comes to refugees, not even the smallest sacrifices are made. The inflammatory perception in the media, the panic of a flood of refugees, actually doesn't reflect the numbers at all. It wouldn't be a problem for a country such as Germany to accommodate a few hundred or even a few thousand people.*

### **But politicians all over Europe are talking about the flood of refugees. The perception now is that the situation of the early 1990s, when Albanians stormed Italy's coasts with their crowded boats and hundreds of war refugees from the Balkan region came to Germany, could repeat itself right now.**

*This perception is down to two lies. One is that everyone from a poor country*

*could be a potential refugee. Therefore we have to apply the thinking "to nip things in the bud". But naturally people only flee when their political and economic situation is so bad that there is no other option. The second lie is that we behave as if all refugees would want to come to us here in Europe. There is never any clarification in the media about the fact that 95% of the refugees actually stay in their poor regions. Yemen has taken in 300,000 refugees from Africa over the last months. People move from one bitterly poor state to another. There is a refugee camp in Northern Kenya where my dad installed a water supply system as an engineer years ago. Back then the camp was thought to host 120,000 people. Now, 450,000 live there. We complain, but the burden is carried by others.*

### **European refugee policies are currently focusing on fighting off more unwanted migrants by strengthening Frontex. What would you call for?**

*Most of all that there is a return to a more generous right of asylum. The legal right of each refugee to receive individual testing has to be enforced. We also can't allow these people to have to wait like criminals in prison conditions. The question of tolerating asylum seekers is extremely problematic. The people who live in these refugee homes without any opportunity to work, have been ripped out of all their life contexts. Re-integration into a normal life is as difficult as it is after a few years in prison. And it is no less important that deportation practices are absurd, especially in the case of minors. I recently heard of a girl from Stuttgart whose parents came from Kosovo but she was born in Germany and her first language was German. She was deported, had to learn the Albanian language and get to grips with her new Albanian school. Her dad had to fight for five years to make her return possible. There are lots of cases like that.*

### **What does it say about our society that we don't really take the right of asylum seriously?**

*By suffocating the right of asylum we give up a moral core area of our western values. It is part of a general brutalisation which has more elements. Because of the social differences and the growing gap between an elite which is becoming increasingly richer and a middle class threatened by impoverishment, new social fears are constantly arising. So it is very easy to manipulate citizens. The saying goes: "We're already in a bad state and now there are all these refugees on top of it". A large part of the rhetoric tries to state that refugees and migrants are destabilising elements.*

*For some strange reason people believe that someone who is escaping something is a destabilising element as a matter of fact. Based on my experiences as a child of refugees and countless conversations, this perception is completely wrong. A refugee has exactly the opposite desire: they want to win back the security they have lost. They are more of a conservative element – keen to build up something and to find their way around. The drama of refugee policies is part of a broader theme. The strengthening of Frontex is a good example of that. It is about the militarisation and the "policing" of society. We follow the wrong argument if we believe that problems can be solved by applying more order, violence and stronger laws. This brings a breakdown of civil rights with it. These are areas where we Europeans think that we have to betray ourselves and put our values on the line in order to protect ourselves from all the threats. That is a fatal development. ■*

**Piotr Buras** is a contributing editor for Fresh Thinking and journalist for Gazeta Wyborcza.

# Progressive thinking needs to stand up to the threat of popular politics

We asked some leading European politicians for their thoughts on how to address the fears and insecurities that give rise to ugly nationalism



**Martin Schulz**

Leader of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament



**Massimo d'Alema**

President of FEPS and former Prime Minister of Italy

**The tragedy of Utøya** has been a sad reminder to all of us that we have to stand united against those who want to destroy our multicultural and multi-religious societies. We all have to be vigilant for growing xenophobic and populist tendencies. As Edmund Burke put it: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Democracy and its basic values of tolerance and freedom cannot be taken for granted; they need to be defended anew every day.

I also believe that we as Socialists and Social Democrats have a special responsibility. We are called upon to take seriously the fears and insecurities of people. The fear of social marginalisation is a breeding ground for extremism.

It is for us to address the concerns of those left behind, rather than dismiss and ignore them. If we do not fight for social justice, cohesion and participation, if we do not take care of the people we leave them to the simplified, but seductive logic of blaming "the others".

In the past we have tended to treat migration and integration as taboo subjects, we did not dare to discuss them and so allowed the centre-right to dominate the debate. In the future, we must actively engage with this topic, both to ensure equal treatment of migrants and non-migrants before the law and to combat the populist threat.

The European Union was an answer to the bloodshed and hatred of the two World Wars, to ultra-nationalism and intolerance. European values are the exact opposite of xenophobia, racism and intolerance. We have to explain better why the EU is not the problem, but part of the solution – and that it will allow us to manage globalisation to the benefit of everyone in an increasingly interdependent and multicultural world.

**Europe needs immigrants.** Thanks to medical progress, life expectancy is rising, so Europe will have to cope with large demographic problems. The number of active people is due to fall from the 333 million it is now, to 242 million by 2050. If Europe wants to maintain the balance between its active population and its passive population, and ensure viability of the retirement system, in the next 30 years it will need more than 30 million immigrants. These figures show how urgent it is to see immigrants as an asset, not a threat.

A derogatory attitude towards foreigners must give way to progressive immigration policies that try to maximise and promote mutual benefits and to minimise and solve problems associated with immigration, in order to prevent rightwingers from playing on the theme to promote the development of nationalist parties and the acceptability of those who express xenophobic ideas. Europe must respect the cultures that immigrants bring with them, this melting pot enriches and helps European civilization develop. But the respect of principles and laws is non-negotiable: those who decide to come to live here must respect this principle that is the foundation of our social contract. Turkey and the Arab Spring show that Islam is not at all incompatible with democratic values.

A clear contract between the host country and immigrants is the basis of a progressive immigration policy – a contract that includes the rights and obligations of everyone.

The EU must accelerate the citizenship process. This means full recognition of social and civil rights of migrants in the host country. Look at Italy where immigrants produce 11 % of GDP. I wonder what kind of democracy we are living in if such a significant part of society does not have the right to vote.



**Anna Karamanou**  
PES Women  
Vice-President

**I celebrate the ideal of diversity** within a value system of equality, freedom, solidarity and social justice for all. However, gender equality and human rights can sometimes clash with the interests of minority cultures. As a feminist, I believe that women's rights cannot be sacrificed in the name of cultural group rights, gender hierarchies and inhuman practices like clitoridectomy, forced marriages, polygamy, "honour" crimes or veiling. I endorse Susan Moller-Okin's thesis that "culture or religion that deprives women of human dignity is not worthy of preservation". I believe that a substantial dialogue with minority groups, in order to find common frames of peaceful coexistence, will be the best answer to the xenophobic right.



**Harlem Desir**  
Member of the  
Progressive Alliance  
of Socialists and  
Democrats in the  
EU Parliament

**European socialists have always opposed** the conservative vision that says immigration means insecurity and unemployment. We believe in integration, and mutual enrichment. But with the financial crisis and the rise of far-right political parties, our progressive and inclusive vision is under threat. What we want is a renewed European migration policy, based on human rights, and an international convention on asylum rights. We want to treat people who arrive at our borders as human beings and potential contributors to our society, not as criminals. To do this, we need new tools such as circular visas, the facilitation of economic investments in developing countries, and a strengthened Euro-Mediterranean partnership.



**Rt Hon Margaret Hodge**  
UK Member of  
Parliament for Barking

**Politicians on both the left and the right claim** we can cut the number of immigrants, but you will never cut the numbers substantially because migration is an inevitable feature of globalisation. We need to focus on social cohesion. What really angers people is the idea that migrants take up public resources but don't contribute anything. I believe we need to set up a system for accessing public goods, like social housing and welfare benefits, that takes into account how long someone has lived in a community and the contribution they have made. If we do that we can tackle much of the hostility to immigration. We also need to make sure migrants learn the language, otherwise we will never achieve proper integration.



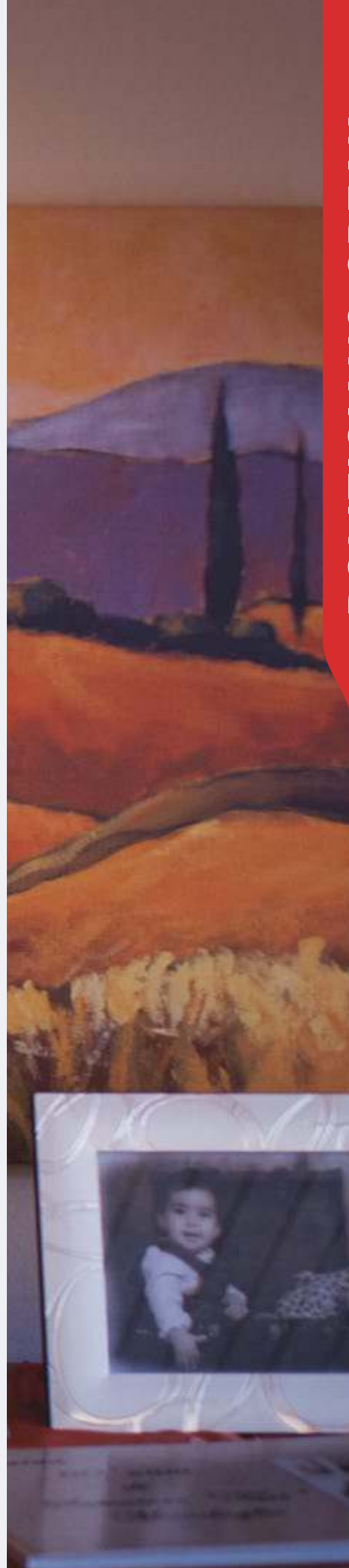
**Pia Locatelli**  
President Socialist  
International Women

**Even centrist leaders,** let alone xenophobic ones, being unable to manage migration well, decry multiculturalism.

Immigrants create social unease and disorder, they say. We socialists and social democrats see it differently.

We regard migration as a complex phenomenon, with both positive and negative impacts on communities.

We have to use the former, such as immigrants' contribution to growth and welfare, to address the latter, often manifested in irrational fear. Our job as progressives is to make sure to educate everyone, but especially the young generation, on all aspects of migration and advocate our belief in integrated societies.





# What's making Europe talk

On 22 July 2011, a far-right sympathiser called Anders Behring Breivik murdered 69 young social democratic activists on the Norwegian island of Utøya. The terror attack sent shockwaves around the world and set Europe discussing the growing threat of nationalistic ideology.

We have collected what some of Europe's leading newspapers had to say on the subject.

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I am reading in the [conservative daily] Rzeczpospolita that this terrorist act testifies for the failure of multiculturalism, and that the guilt for the death of the people falls on the left which has supported multiculturalism against the nature of European societies. This part of the right only perpetuates the results of the assault. It strengthens – along with the logic of the terrorist – the demarcation lines between the “good” Europeans and all “others”. And here, not in the terrorist attack itself, lies the right's largest responsibility.

– *Marek Beylin in Gazeta Wyborcza, Poland*

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With the German and Austrian exponents of Nazi ideology, Breivik shares not only the envy on the unifying power of Islam, but also a hatred of the “Frankfurt School”, the critical theory of Theodor W. Adorno and others. In Austria, fraternity students and members of the rightwing FPÖ organised a symposium a few years ago entitled “Frankfurt School – the ninth mortal sin”. They gave lectures on the “corrosive effect” of Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse, about which the Norwegian mass murderer also lamented. In fact it is this “corrosive” critique in the tradition of Adorno which today gives us one of the best weapons against the occidental delusion, the Islamic jihad, against leftwing Islam apologists and rightwing xenophobes.

– *Die Presse, Austria*

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From the conservative rightwing corner comments are coming that condemn the violence, but which also infer that it is impossible to openly debate immigration and Islamisation. It is not a surprise that someone can draw extreme conclusions from that which should be condemned. This kind of argument is hypocritical and also dangerous.

– *De Standaard, Belgium*

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*Around the circle of radical crackpots, circles of normal citizens accumulate, who do not hold all the postulates of those who hate Muslims, but they do share some of their opinions and tolerate even the most bizarre statements. Reputable newspapers gave them the room to articulate their positions ...[and] misanthropy is barricaded behind the phrase “One dares to say that”. To sum it up: Society's immune defence has been interrupted.*

– *die tageszeitung, Germany*

In Anders Behring Breivik's ideological self-justification as well as in reactions to his murderous act there are things that should make us think. The manifesto of this Christian "Marxist hunter" who killed more than 70 people in Norway is precisely not a case of a deranged man's rambling; it is simply a consequent exposition of "Europe's crisis" which serves as the (more or less) implicit foundation of the rising anti-immigrant populism – its very inconsistencies are symptomatic of the inner contradictions of this view. Although the ongoing crisis of the European Union appears as a crisis of economy and finances, it is in its fundamental dimension an ideologico-political crisis: the failure of referendums about the EU constitution a couple of years ago gave a clear signal that voters perceived the EU as a "technocratic" economic union, lacking any vision which could mobilise people – until the recent protests, the only ideology able to mobilise people was the anti-immigrant defence of Europe.

– Slavoj Žižek in *The Guardian*, UK

Government should not underestimate the roots of terrorism that represents the far-right and its cocktail of extreme ideology: hate of Islam and immigration. Fortunately, Jens Stoltenberg bravely refused to compromise. No question of being intimidated: "Our brand, is an open society, and that's what is under attack today" the prime minister said. There will be no special legislation. There will be no strategy to soften the country's pain by restricting democracy in the name of security, or by strengthening the criminal law for cyclical political means. Norway will remain a country of public liberties. This attitude unanimously prevails inside the Oslo political scene. And it is the opposite of the one adopted by the US in the aftermath of 9/11, opposite to the one, most often, in our countries when any bloody front-page news is the opportunity to strengthen criminal law against individual liberty. In its tragedy, Norway remained true to itself. The country opens the door for discussion, but doesn't question itself.

– *Le Monde*, France

(...) we have to be aware now that extremism is also present in Hungary. No conclusions should be drawn – say our sources – from the fact that the Hungarian Gárda marches less nowadays and that there are no street riots: those men who took to the streets in autumn 2006 are still among us.

– *Népszabadság*, Hungary

AUF [the social democratic youth league in Norway] is mostly associated with its environmental work – and the fight against racism. They have fought intolerance in Norwegian society, and been a watchdog vis-à-vis the mother party. At the same time, European politicians of all colours are capitulating to the constant racist background noise. It is becoming obligatory to have a xenophobic party in government.

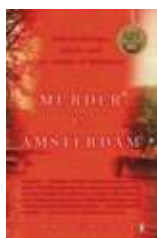
The idea that the Social Democrats have betrayed their own country is dominant within xenophobic circles in Norway. In this type of milieu, Jens Stoltenberg is often labelled as a "Quisling", referring to Vidkun Quisling who assumed office in Norway after the Nazi invasion in 1940. In these fantasies, the invaders are not Nazis but Muslims. According to the researchers, the notion that you are subjected to a conspiracy pulls the extremists together. Unstable individuals are pushed in the direction of violence. Strategies to counter terrorism must therefore combat this development in an organised fashion. When lies are unchallenged in the public debate, our societies will be affected. Narratives have power. The evil ones. The good ones. And the ones we do not dare to confront.

– *Aftonbladet*, Sweden



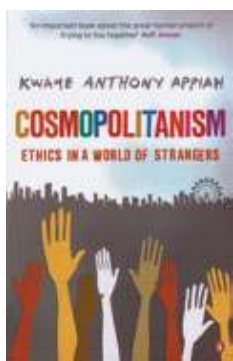
## FRESH THINKING BOOKS

Migration, integration, multiculturalism, xenophobia, and racism. These are the serious issues that we are addressing in this issue – and coming at them from different angles. These subjects are, of course, right there at the crossroads where politics and culture meet. Editor **Eric Sundström** has a few suggestions about what you can read, listen to and look at to see how artists have handled the knotty subject and politics of race and migration.



According to Foreign Policy magazine, **Ian Buruma** is among the 100 top global thinkers. One book that surely helped him make the list is **Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo Van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance**, which also won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Best Current Interest Book. Published in 2006, it is still an important read when trying to understand Europe’s “populist laboratories”.

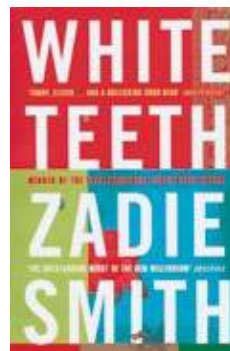
Another provocative book is **Arrival City** by **Doug Sanders**, a British-Canadian journalist and author. Sanders travels to 20 migrant neighbourhoods on five different continents and describes the rural-urban migration into our cities.



A more philosophical read is **Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers** by **Kwame Anthony Appiah**. In short, cosmopolitanism suggests that all human ethnic groups belong to a single community based on a shared morality, creating a contrast with patriotism and nationalism. The New Yorker thought that Appiah steers a course “between the extremes of liberal universalism, with its tendency to impose our values on others, and cultural relativism, with its implicit conviction that gulfs in understanding cannot be bridged.” An adept summary.

For an exhaustive overview of rightwing extremism and rightwing populism in Europe, type “**Is Europe on the ‘right’ path?**” into Google. It will help you find a

pdf of the report of the same name, edited by **Nora Langenbacher** and **Britta Schellenberg** for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.



But let’s not forget to join books on current affairs and policy with novels. And our warm first mention must go to **Zadie Smith**. **White Teeth**, her story about the friendship between the Bangladeshi Samad and the Englishman Archie, is a modern classic set in Britain’s cosmopolitan capital.



Speaking of London, **In The Kitchen** by **Monica Ali** is a forceful novel about migration and the lack of legal rights in the new working life – set in the kitchen of The Imperial Hotel in Piccadilly.

**A Distant Shore** by **Caryl Phillips** is not set in London, but in a small northern English town. Retired teacher Dorothy meets Solomon, an immigrant from a war-torn African country, and an unlikely friendship develops. Again, Phillips manages to write intelligently about people on a journey – geographically and emotionally – from places such as Africa and the Caribbean to Europe and North America.



Two years ago, **Marie NDiaye** became the first black woman to win the Prix Goncourt. **Trois Femmes Puissantes** is a breathtaking novel about women travelling between France and Africa according to the new patterns of a transnational world. NDiaye also travels herself. She moved to Berlin following Sarkozy’s presidential victory, describing France as “monstrous” and “vulgar” under his leadership.

## FRESH THINKING MOVIES



We know we mentioned **Ken Loach** in our first issue, but we just have to bring him up again. **It's a Free World** is an unforgiving look at Europe's

new labour market: illegal immigration, forged papers, harsh work for low pay – or no pay at all. The film revolves around a recruitment agency set up by Angie, brilliantly played by Kierston Wareing.

Speaking of Loach: **Ae fond kiss**, the last in his Glaswegian trilogy, is a cross-cultural romantic film on the surface. But since it is Loach, the story also addresses subjects such as assimilation, racism, and arranged marriages.

Another British film, that is heavy, dark and strong, is **Dirty Pretty Things** by **Stephen Frears**. Okwe, a Nigerian doctor, finds a human heart in a toilet in the West London hotel where he is working. As you probably can guess, the film is not about usual stuff such as drugs and prostitution.



The true classic, however, is **La Haine**, written and directed by **Mathieu Kassovitz**. The film, shot in black and white, follows three

friends from a multi-ethnic housing project in the suburbs of Paris. Vinz is Jewish, Hubert Afro-French, Said is Maghreb and the raw account of a single day in their lives is, according to UK newspaper The Times, “one of the most blisteringly effective pieces of urban cinema ever made”. Tradition suggests that great films are often remembered by their one-liners. In this case: “Jusqu’ici, tout va bien” (so far, so good).



**La Graine et le Mulet** (English title: **Cous-cous**) by **Abdellatif Kechiche** is a Franco-Tunisian film, and something of a tragic-comedy. When Sli-mane (played by Habib Boufares) loses his job at the shipyard, he tries to keep poverty at bay for his large Franco-Arabic family. His recipe: turning an old, ramshackle boat into a family restaurant.

Finally, there are horrific and controversial films about racism. The first two are not European but deserve a mention: **American History X** by **Tony Kaye**, is set in Los Angeles and **Romper Stomper** by **Geoffrey Wright**, is set in Melbourne, Australia. **This is England** by **Shane Meadows**, is closer to home.

## FRESH THINKING MUSIC



It wasn't easy, but we wanted to choose three fantastic songs that carry with them an anti-racist message. The first is a wonderful mix of ska, rocksteady beat and a pinch of punk, combined with blunt lyrics about how to react to racist views among your friends. The result makes your body move. It's by **The Specials** and it's called **Racist Friend**.

According to the legend (and Wikipedia), he heard **Bob Dylan's Blowin' in the Wind** and was “greatly moved that such a poignant song about racism in America could come from someone who was not black”. Later in 1963, he was on tour and spoke to sit-in demonstrators in North Carolina, walked back to his tour bus and wrote the first draft of a song that takes the #12 place on music magazine Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Songs of All Times. The song and the artist? **A Change is Gonna Come** by **Sam Cooke**.

**Sly & the Family Stone** are often regarded as the first major integrated band in the history of music. A message of peace and equality between different ethnic and social groups is the main thread throughout their music, but never more so than in the song **Everyday People**. Just think of the chorus, when the whole band sings **I am everyday people**. The message is a cosmopolitan one: we are all part of one greater whole, not separated into different entities.

But let's not forget the music that can represent Europe as a melting pot of migration and different musical impulses. One fine example is **Transglobal Underground** and their **world fusion** (a mix of western, African and oriental music styles). **Nitin Sawhney**, an Anglo-Indian musician, also mixes musical influences from across the globe and his work is often political dealing with themes such as multiculturalism. One of his best records is called **Beyond skin**. Sawhney is also engaged in education, community building, and cultural festivals.



And have you listened to **Ljiljana Buttler**, “the Mother of Gypsy Soul” who sang about the difficulties of being

Roma in Europe? When she passed away last year, the obituary in The Guardian praised “her smoky voice and ability to convey beautifully languid Balkan blues”. Her last album **Frozen Poses** is a wonderful example of just that.

Finally, more energy in the battle against racism is never more than 2:42 minutes away. That's the length of **All You Fascists (are bound to lose)** sung by **Billy Bragg**. Its lyrics date back to 1942 and were written by none other than **Woody Guthrie** - the original rebel songsmith and fighter and spokesman for the downtrodden.

Listen to all this and learn how to rock against racism.



“Already my legal **fiancée is with her child**, and I am the father ... [I have been] for a long time now without parents and without any support, limited to the earnings of my daily job ... without any savings and without any **chance of being able** to build some, especially **during a period** of unemployment and with no earnings to establish a proper life existence. Through emigration I will **fulfill holy duties** towards the above mentioned person, which I can not willfully neglect. My home town is too poor and cannot afford any support for me.”

– **Jakob Haman**, born in Ebersberg 18 March 1820, Profession: Carpenter. Emigrated to the US in 1853. It remains unclear whether he got any money from his home town for the trip and if he did leave the country. All traces of him are lost.

**Only the misfortune of exile can provide the in-depth understanding and overview of the realities of the world.**

– *Stefan Zweig*

“I want to be the **president of all Germans** and a contact person for all human beings who live and work in this country but do not have a German passport.”

– *Johannes Rau*

“I am a foreigner, unfortunately thank God!”

– Lyric from the song **Ich Bin Auslander** by the Berlin band Torpedo Boyz ([www.torpedo-boyz.com](http://www.torpedo-boyz.com))

**Count Zeppelin: World famous for the airship, he was a lieutenant in the German Army and went to America as an observer of the war in 1863.**

**Wilhelm Kohlreuther:**

The pharmacist of a small village experienced failed emigration.

An adherent of the revolution in Germany 1848-49 he had to flee his country, but came back as a crushed man in 1856.

“The passport is the most noble part of a human. It doesn’t come into existence as easily as a human being. A human can come into **existence everywhere**, light-headed and without any smart reason, a passport never. **That’s why it is accepted**, if it is a good one, whereas **a human can be ever so good and still not accepted.**”

– *Bertolt Brecht*

**Johann Jakob Astor:**

Economic need made him leave Baden, Germany. With a music supplies business he began his rise to become one of the wealthiest men in America. His name is still known around the globe because of the Waldorf-Astoria.

**A scene from Casablanca:**

**Mr. Leuchtag:** Come sit down. Have a brandy with us.

**Mrs. Leuchtag:** To celebrate our leaving for **America tomorrow.**

**Carl:** Oh, thank you very much. I thought you would ask me, so I brought the good brandy. And – a third glass!

**Mrs. Leuchtag:** At last the day is come!

**Mr. Leuchtag:** Mareichtag and I are speaking nothing but English now.

**Mrs. Leuchtag:** So we should **feel at home** when we get to America.

**Carl:** Very nice idea, mm-hmm.

**Mr. Leuchtag:** [toasting] To America!

**Mrs. Leuchtag:** To America!

**Carl:** To America!

**Mr. Leuchtag:** Liebchen – sweetnessheart, what watch?

**Mrs. Leuchtag:** **Ten watch.**

**Mr. Leuchtag:** Such watch?

**Carl:** Hm. You will get along **beautiful** in America, mm-hmm.

– *Casablanca, 1942, director: Michael Curtiz*



# FRESH THINKING

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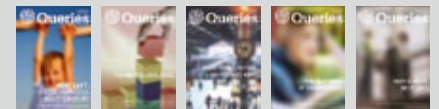
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