

# Testing the Boundaries and Paving the Way to Democratization

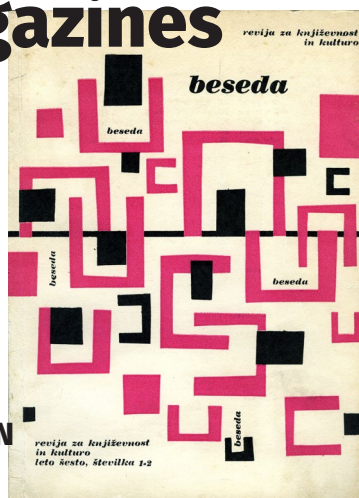
# LITMAG

## East European Literary Magazines 1945–2004

TRAVEL EXHIBITION

ONLINE LECTURES

PROJECT BOOK PUBLICATION



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- National Museum of Contemporary History, Slovenia
- University of Salzburg, Austria
- University of Bielsko-Biala, Poland
- University of Pécs, Hungary
- The Directorates of Vilnius Memorial Museums—Venclovas' House-Museum, Lithuania
- University of Trieste, Italy
- Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia

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#### INTRODUCTION

The project **“East European Literary Magazines 1945–2004: Testing the Boundaries and Paving the Way to Democratization”** reveals creative insurgent efforts to win artistic and political freedom behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War.

Selected accounts from Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, Poland and Slovenia represent various attempts to resist the restrictions on freedom and disrespect for human rights under the dictatorship of communist single-party rule. Numerous refugees and exiles found asylum in the West and with their activity from overseas they promoted the standards of democracy, freedom and respect for human rights in their homelands.

Predominantly male figures, authors, editors, artists and activists share with us their experiences at the crossroads of art and politics, unveiling the interaction between personal, national, state-level and international initiatives for democracy, human rights, freedom, independence...

Through the dialogue of participating institutions that are testing these boundaries, we are also contributing to the dialogue between the East, which has not yet successfully expressed the traumatic experiences with the communist system nor the countless ways of resistance against it, and the West, which all too often turns a blind eye to the scars that this history has left behind. At the same time, this dialogue allows us to transcend the existing boundaries between the states and nations in the East that still haven't provided a comprehensive overview of the grand achievements and creative efforts presented by this exhibition.



#### DR. JOŽE DEŽMAN,

Head of Exhibition Programming Board and Director of National  
Museum of Contemporary History

# THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition is part of the international project LITMAG, which brings together eight organizations from different European countries. The project focuses on Eastern European literary magazines, which have opposed authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and have significantly affected the processes of democratization and joining the European Union after the Second World War. Apart from the exhibition, which will take place in Slovenia, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Lithuania and Italy, this topic will be discussed in further detail in online lectures and a scholarly publication that will be issued in March 2024, at the end of the project.

**Opening of the exhibition:  
September 29 at 6 PM,  
National Museum of Contemporary  
History,  
Celovška cesta 23,  
Ljubljana, Slovenia**

**SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 2022,**

National Museum of Contemporary History

## ***Nova Revija* and *Mladina* for Democracy and Republic**

Literary magazines have always had a significant role in the formation of Slovenian culture, as the language was a core element of Slovenian national identity. After the Second World War and the revolution, individual literary magazines tried to preserve their original purpose and significance even in the face of strict surveillance. Starting with the literary and cultural magazine *Beseda* (Word – 1951), we can trace the struggle of Slovenian dissidents for the right to have a different opinion. Writers and their relatives were monitored, punished and censored. But despite that, excellent texts and poems were created, placing their authors at the pinnacle of Slovenian literature and thought.

In June 1980, a group of 60 Slovenian intellectuals suggested the creation of a new cultural magazine. The first issue of *Nova Revija* (New Magazine) was published in 1982, and despite intense political and media pressure it became the core of the opposition's drive for democracy. The most notorious was the 57th issue, published on 20 February 1987, with its contributions to a Slovenian National Programme. Despite a strong political response, the magazine survived and remained a herald of democracy, Slovenian spring and independence.

Magazine *Mladina* (Youth: a newsletter of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia) supported a number of democratic initiatives, as well as civil and social movements: punk, peace, gender, feminism, ecology... and started breaking through the taboos of Titoism. Several issues of *Mladina* were banned and its circulation increased to 30,000 copies.



**SLOVENIA**



DECEMBER 2022–FEBRUARY 2023,

University of Bielsko-Biala

## Polish Press for Freedom: Magazines in Exile, Second and Third Publishing Circuit in Poland

### Exile

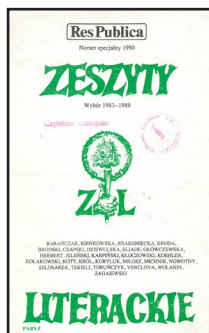
Throughout the entire postwar period, Polish culture existed in emigrant circles. The organisations active included the Polish government-in-exile and the Organisation of Polish Writers in Exile (Związek Pisarzy Polskich na Obczyźnie). They published many books authored by Poles, as well as magazines on a variety of topics. Some of these writings managed to reach Poland, ensuring the availability of accurate information and the circumvention of censorship. The most important postwar emigrant magazine was *Kultura*.

### Second publishing circuit

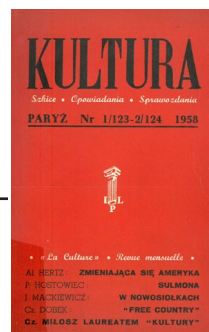
The workers' strikes which occurred in Poland during the summer of 1976 and were forcefully suppressed by the communist authorities, provided an impetus for resistance groups to formalise their activities. This was when the second publishing circuit was founded, Polish underground press which was an illegal movement whose goal was to circumvent government censorship. Due to this, the communist government's monopoly on the control of reading material was broken. One of the most important underground magazines was *Zapis*.

### Third publishing circuit

In the 1980s, the demand for unofficial magazines related to a variety of subcultures and their fans (hence the name "fanzine", from 'fan magazine') began to expand, in large part due to the rising popularity of the photocopier. The magazines, e.g., *Brulion* and *Czas Kultury*, were published with little financial investment, and usually did not have an obvious political motive. Nevertheless, they strongly contributed to the enrichment of culture, containing material which had no place in the official cultural narrative supported by the communist authorities.



POLAND



**MARCH–MAY 2023,**  
University of Salzburg

## **Independent Literary Magazines in GDR 1979–1989**

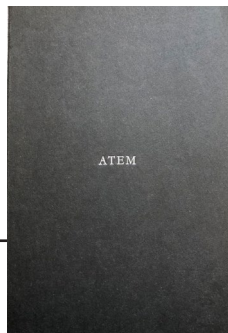
Critics believe that the rise of the GDR Samizdat literary magazines either started in 1979—with the publication of the anthologies *Papiertaube* (Paper Dove; ed. Dieter Kerschek, Lothar Feix, Gerd Adloff) and *Laternenmann* (Lantern Man; ed. Thomas Böhme), which are regarded as their precursors—or with the SED Central Committee’s resolution from 11 November 1981 on “The Concept for Working with Young Authors and Other Citizens Interested in Writing”. “This exclusion of half a generation of young authors from the GDR’s literary industry led to the opposite of what was intended—it strengthened the group cohesiveness of the excluded.” (Peter Geist 2009)

By the end of the GDR, 30 smaller literary art magazines were published with a print run of somewhere between 15 and 200 copies. Among them are *Mikado* (1983–1987, 9 issues, ed. Uwe Kolbe, Lothar Trolle, Bernd Wagner), *Ariadnefabrik* (1986–1989, 24 issues, ed. Rainer Schedlinski, Andreas Koziol), *Schaden* (1984–1987, 17 issues, ed. Egmont Hesse, Sascha Anderson, et al.) and *Anschlag* (1984–1989, 10 issues, 2 special issues, ed. Angelika Klüssendorf, Wiebke Müller, Karim Saab).

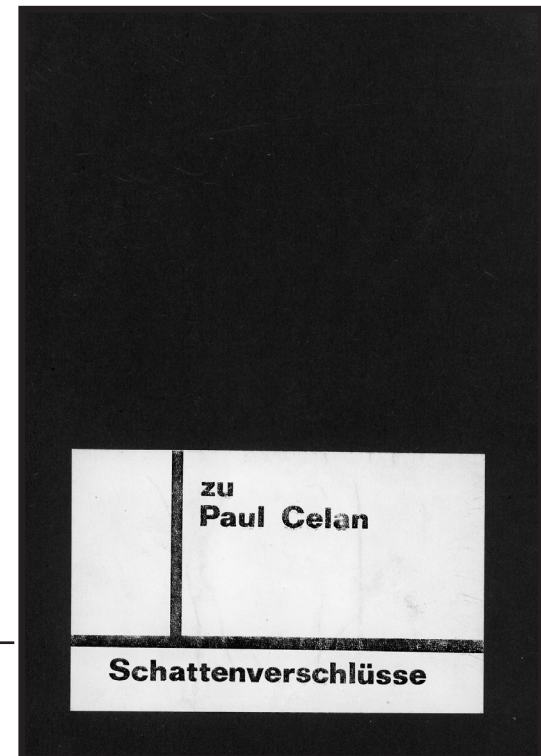
### **Radix-blätter (ed. Stephan Bickhardt, Ludwig Mehlhorn)**

The first issue of *radix-blätter* is the result of a literature camp on the premises of the East-Berlin Stephanus Foundation Weissensee, organised by Stephan Bickhardt and Ludwig Mehlhorn, focusing on Paul Celan’s oeuvre. Its title is derived from Celan’s poem “Radix, Matrix”: “In it, Celan commemorates his

murdered parents. Radix means ‘root’ ... getting radically to the root. New critical ideas ought to be disseminated. That’s it, I thought. This is how the idea developed to not just publish a one-off issue but a samizdat series of issues under this title.” (Bickhardt) Between December 1986 and August 1989, thirteen special issues were published according to no fixed publication schedule, on topics such as “Schattenverschlüsse. Zu Paul Celan” (Vol. 1), “ODER. Literarische Texte” (‘ODER. Literary Texts’, Vol. 4), “Spuren. Zur Geschichte der Friedensbewegung in der DDR” (‘Traces. About the History of the Peace Movement in the GDR’, Vol. 6) and “Atem. Texte und Graphiken” (‘Breath. Texts and Graphics’, Vol. 8).



**AUSTRIA**



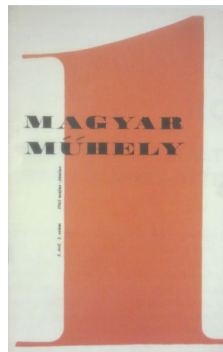
**JUNE–AUGUST 2023,**

University of Pécs

### **Resistance to Political Power—Hungarian Literary Magazines (1945–2004)**

*Jelenkor* (1958–) is one of the most prestigious Hungarian literary magazines, founded in 1958 in Pécs. The magazine's two significant predecessors were *Sorsunk* (1941–1948), edited by Sándor Weöres and Győző Csorba, and *Dunántúl*, edited by Tibor Szántó, who expressed sympathy with the 1956 revolution by publishing an issue with a black cover, because of which the editor-in-chief was arrested and imprisoned. In the early 1960s, *Jelenkor* grew into a magazine of national importance under the leadership of the editor-in-chief Tibor Tüskés. Among its authors were Sándor Weöres, Győző Csorba and Miklós Mészöly, whose drama *Az ablakmosó* (The Window Cleaner; 1963) led to the editor-in-chief's dismissal in 1964. From the 1970s onwards, Ervin Szederkényi began editing the paper in an increasingly autonomous manner, with literary quality and intellectual independence once again becoming the main objectives. Under the leadership of Gábor Csordás (1987–1990), István Csuha (1991–1999) and Zoltán Ágoston (1999–), *Jelenkor's* international relations have also expanded significantly, to which the publication of the bilingual (Hungarian–German) *Jelenkor Anthology* (1993) on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the magazine's publication largely contributed.

**HUNGARY**



*Magyar Műhely* (1962–) The periodical was founded in Paris in May 1962 by young intellectuals who had fled to the free countries of Western Europe in the aftermath of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The profile of the journal was threefold: it functioned as a literary, artistic and critical journal, publishing contemporary literary works and experimental albums, and served as a forum for artists who gathered around the journal to organise meetings and discussions about theoretical issues and each other's works. From the beginning, the founding editors, Pál Nagy and Tibor Papp, sought to bring together expatriate and resident authors, to publish their works, and to create a dialogue between artists on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The journal published authors who had been marginalised in Hungary or in neighbouring countries for political reasons. From 1978 on, Alpár Bujdosó was also involved in the editorial board as associate editor and editor-in-charge in Vienna. From 1990, the journal was edited in Paris, Vienna, and Budapest, then from 1996 on exclusively in Budapest. The members of the current editorial board are Zsolt Kovács, László L. Simon, and Zsolt Sőrés.



**SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 2023,**

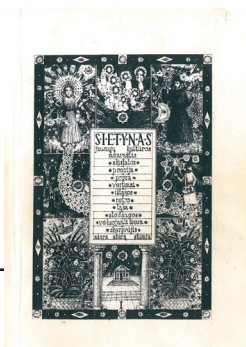
Venclovas' House-Museum

**Official Literary Magazine and Self-publication of Younger Generation:  
Case of *Pergalė* and *Sietynas***

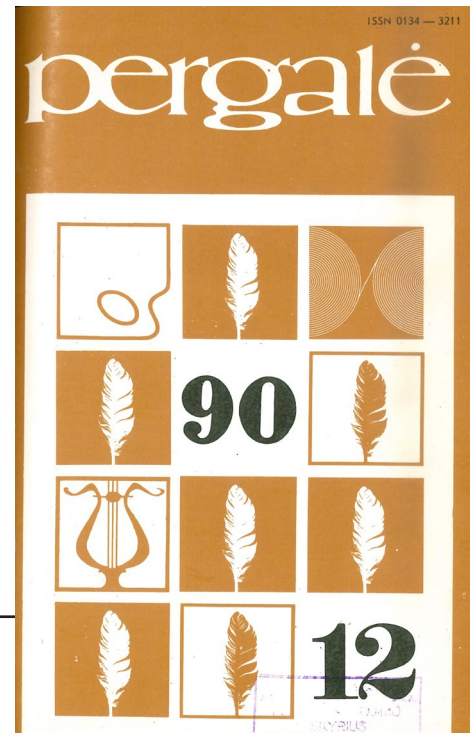
*Pergalė* (published in Vilnius from 1945), the monthly cultural journal of the Lithuanian Writers' Union covering literature and the arts, was the main space for publishing literary texts during the Soviet era in Lithuania. In part it was the courage and inventiveness of the editors that enabled them to tweak the whiskers of the censors and to work with authors in such a way that less ideologically permeated texts came out, and that their final versions were less distant from the originals. Although during the Soviet period the magazine published some serious texts that challenged the framework of ideology and/or imposed on socialist realism, the most intensive loosening of its content naturally coincided with the period of Sąjūdis, the Lithuanian independence movement, and the fall of the Soviet Empire. The magazine retained its prestige amongst writers right up to the present day, after the change of its name to *Metai* in 1991.

*Sietynas* published from 1988 to 1991, can be regarded as a unique story of determination and courage to act independently. Published without censorship, under difficult conditions (no publishing premises, with funds for publishing collected from private donors, but steadfastly refusing institutional support), the magazine broadened cultural horizons, instilled freedom of thought and led the way towards a free, democratic national community.

Symbolically, almost at the same time, in 1988, *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea*, the memoirs of the exile, medical doctor and writer Dalia Grinkevičiūtė were published in both *Pergalė* and *Sietynas* (where it appeared a little earlier), becoming one of key texts and a turning point in the memory of the Lithuanian nation.



**LITHUANIA**



**DECEMBER 2023–MARCH 2024,**

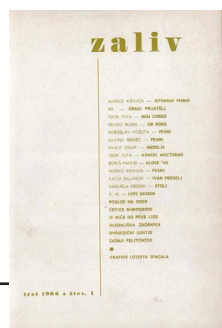
University of Trieste

**Cross-cultural Interventions: *La battana*, *Zaliv* and *Most***

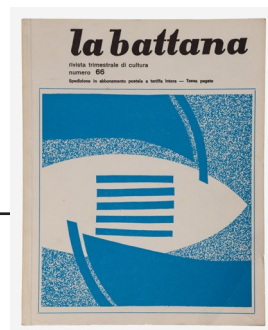
In the North Adriatic area, after World War Two, the role of literary magazines as arenas of broad political discussions became particularly evident thanks to some intellectual experiences that developed from one side and the other of the iron curtain. It is interesting to observe how different cultural projects shared similar stances in terms of critical attitudes, linguistic politics and attention to cultural communities of the minorities.

*La battana* started its publications in Italian in 1964 in Rijeka with the aim of overcoming marginalization and enhance cultural dialogue through the Italian and Yugoslavian borders. On the pages of *La battana*, during the editorial guidance of Eros Sequi (an Italian intellectual, based in Belgrade), a very lively dialogue took place between artists, writers and intellectuals, such as Italo Calvino, Franco Fortini, Ivo Andric (to name just a few), who found the magazine to be a space where they could articulate their different worldviews and opinions on art, writing, literature and cultural politics in a very open Marxist framework. Dialogues and encounters between cultures did not obfuscate a militant critical stance, aiming to construct a common worldview through discussion and confrontation.

On the other hand, in Trieste from the 1950s onwards, several Slovenian literary magazines appeared, which were very important for dissidents from the former Yugoslavia. In particular, Boris Pahor was very active as editor and contributor to various magazines such as *Sidro*, *Tokovi* and, above all, *Zaliv*, which he himself founded in 1966 and where he defended traditional democratic politics against the one-party system of socialist Yugoslavia. Moreover, starting from 1964 the magazine *Most* was also published in Trieste. Its founding editorial board was composed of Vinko Beličič, Lev Detela, Florjan Lipuš, Aleš Lokar and Drago Štoka, then Vladimir Vremec and Aleš Lokar dealt with the continuity of the magazine. The aim of this cultural project was an attempt to bring together members of Slovenian society with different orientations in central Slovenia and abroad. Since 1971, the magazine was bilingual, so all Slovenian texts have also been published in Italian and viceversa. Although the relationship between *Zaliv* and *Most* was rather tense, they shared the same aims and presence in the intellectual circles of the Slovenian minority in Italy, critically illuminating the cultural and social events in their homeland and helping to establish the path towards an independent democracy in Slovenia.



**ITALY**



**The exact dates of the exhibition opening as well as all the details regarding the online lectures and the publication of the project book are available on the project website**

**[www.litmag.eu](http://www.litmag.eu)**



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