

Notes on the contents

In his article *Periodisation, naming and fighting for the past: Political transitions and historical representations in Estonia*, Pertti Grönholm discusses the complicated relationship between political transitions and the writing of history in Estonia. He compares the situation during the early stages of the Soviet occupation with that after the Singing Revolution in terms of acknowledging and owning the recent past as well as representations of history. Political transitions and social upheavals always change our views of the past: an era, the arc of a story, seems to be ending. The writers of history strongly contribute to giving meaning to history by periodising, naming periods and events and creating narrative structures that aid interpretation.

In the years after Stalin's death, the Soviet Union launched an extensive series of cultural exchange programmes. Top Soviet artists conquered Western stages. The country also opened its borders to tourism, expanded the coverage of its radio broadcasts abroad, began to exchange radio and television programmes with the West, established sister-city relationships and prominently participated in international fairs and exhibitions. In his article *Cultural exchange programmes in the Soviet Union – diplomacy or cultural cold war?*, Simo Mikkonen discusses the intrinsic nature of these programmes.

In his article *Encounters between Soviet tourism and Western consumption culture in Finland*, Alexei Golubev writes about Soviet tourism as part of the general exchange of information through the Iron Curtain. Soviet tourism had a significant effect on late Soviet society, for it destroyed the official myth about the West, undermined the Soviet Union's great narrative about the supremacy of the socialist system and created a social need for a more consumer-focused economy.

Over the past 30 years, the definition and demographic effects of in-

fant abandonment, as well as changes possibly brought about by Christianity, have been under constant scientific debate among historians specialising in family and legal history in antiquity. In his article *Infant abandonment in Ancient Rome*, Ville Vuolanto examines the history of infant abandonment as well as methodical problems related to the research of social history in earlier ages.

Witch-hunts have traditionally been regarded as one of the most peculiar phenomena in European history. In his review *The false history of witch-hunts: 150 years of misguidance in academic research*, Marko Nenonen points out that research into the history of witch-hunts has been even more peculiar. Towards the end of the 20th century, it became increasingly clear that, for more than a century, researchers had been explaining a phenomenon that never existed.

Research into the transatlantic slave trade has advanced significantly over the past 40 years, and a great deal of detailed information on the travels of slave ships is already available. Despite this, many outdated ideas are still repeated in articles about the topic, writes Kalle Kananoja in his review *On the myth of triangular trade and the number of slaves taken from Africa to America*.

When Operation Barbarossa was nearing its launch in the spring of 1941, Consitorial Councillor Eugen Gerstenmaier, a German Doctor of Theology, arrived in Finland on a lecture trip, invited by the Association of Finnish Pastors. His host was the association's chairman, Paavo Virkkunen, who was also known as a theologian and a politician representing the National Coalition Party. The discussions between the two men during the one-week visit turned out to be interesting, because Virkkunen was let in on something that had been kept strictly secret from Finns: the war was about to begin. Gerstenmaier also revealed a religious-political special plan related to the eastern military expedition, hoping that Finnish churches would participate. The memo of a discussion between Gerstenmaier and Virkkunen is published as part of Eino Murtorinne's review *A side project in the Barbarossa plan*.