



**To Our Readers** In an essay written for this special issue of TIME, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana describes his meeting with an 87-year-old resident of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. The man told of how he had lived his entire life in the city, but during the same 87-year period Ljubljana itself had formed part of seven different countries. This anecdote perfectly illustrates a key historical fact about Europe—and one of the major themes of this special issue: the transient nature of borders.

With the launch of Economic and Monetary Union and the expansion of the E.U. and NATO, European borders are shifting once again. As the Continent embarks on these grand political, social and economic experiments, we present *Visions of Europe*, an exploration of the issues that will shape Europe in the 21st century. Will E.U. and NATO enlargement transform Europe into a more cohesive political whole? Will the single currency be a giant step—or even the right step—toward the construction of a common European house in which all countries can feel at home? And almost 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, how are the peoples of East and West getting along?

In considering big questions such as these, we have not lost sight of the actual men, women and children who are living through these tectonic political shifts. To this end, *Visions of Europe* contains a gallery of European thinkers: the politicians, scientists, entrepreneurs and activists who are doing the most to realize their own vision of Europe. Some of these visions are bright, such as the Indian social worker helping Romany children integrate into Czech society; but others are dark, like the Romanian extremist who spouts a crude mixture of racism and xenophobia. Both kinds of vision will have a decisive impact on Europe's future. These perspectives are complemented by *Voices of Europe*, a collection of first-person accounts from ordinary people of their hopes and fears for the new Europe. And to take the title of this issue literally, we also include a journey through Europe as seen through the eyes of six of the best photojournalists in the business.

Our goal in creating *Visions of Europe* was to make it both a kaleidoscope and a Baedeker: to reflect the brilliance and diversity of Europe while providing a guide to the common causes and challenges that face the Continent. After having read this special issue, we trust that you will never look at Europe in the same way again.

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