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EDITOR'S LETTER

FREEDOM OF SPEECH



Apprehension of Julian Assange, a WikiLeaks founder, in London was the red flag raised in front of those who understand a freedom of speech as a concept of dissemination of information beyond the permitted limits.

Noam Chomsky, an American philosopher and an honorary professor at the reputable Massachusetts Institute of Technology, thinks that the USA has overstepped the sacred boundaries dividing justice and punishment. In his opinion, the fact that the countries like Great Britain and Sweden recognize the de facto priority of the American jurisdiction, witnesses of their vassalage and subjection.

Julian Assange is a specific journalist. His activity is focused on revelation of criminal schemes which are dissembled by the governments and their related agencies. Over the years his publications had touched many countries, however,

they were mainly focused on the sealed outrage tolerated by various U.S. administrations that made this country the WikiLeaks' key enemy. The issues included illegal military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, presidential elections and many other subject matters.

Being under the threat of extradition to the USA, Assange has spent seven years at the Ecuadorian Embassy. However, following changes in its political leadership, the Ecuadorian government played false with him extraditing him to the British police which in all probability will further extradite him to the USA with the perspective of the Assange's life sentence until he dies incarcerated. I reflexively recall the bad fortune of Mindszenty, a Hungarian cardinal, who hid himself for 15 years at the U.S. Embassy in Budapest to avoid his apprehension by the Soviet authorities after the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

Strange as it may sound, that the USA today is a country hunting the dissidents. They include Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, Julian Assange. They either serve time in prison, or escape abroad. What are they guilty of? They are guilty of disclosure of the truth banned by the U.S. government!

Victor Loupan

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HIGHLIGHTS

STORY OF ONE MISREPRESENTATION

A perverse theory based on self-esteem of German generals still prevails

VICTOR LOUPAN,
Head of the Editorial Board



Both Churchill and De Gaulle always emphasized the exceptional role of the heroic path of the Soviet people

In 1945 no one of the participants – and certainly the Allied leaders – challenged the victory of the Red Army (it was renamed to the Soviet Army in 1946). Thus both Churchill and De Gaulle always emphasized the exceptional role of the heroic path of the Soviet people. In an ecstatic heat Churchill once even mentioned that Marshal Georgii Zhukov conquered Hitler solely.

The fact that the Allies, the USA and Great Britain, supported the USSR's struggle against Nazi Germany was not denied by Stalin too. However, such assistance was primarily financial in nature. The U.S. supplied military equipment, munitions, Studebakers, foods, medications, oil products, etc. to the Allies under Lend-Lease. Between 1941 and 1945 the U.S. spent over \$50 bn that was a huge amount at the time. But the amount was obviously distributed in an imbalanced way. So, the USSR received only \$11 bn, while the UK got \$31 bn of them. Any reasonable and educated person with the knowledge of history immediately understood that military efforts and military needs of the USSR were incomparable to the UK's efforts and needs due to the fact that Great Britain protected itself from Luftwaffe attacks but never participated in military actions against Germany – until the American-British Normandy landings occurred on 6 June 1944 just nine months prior to the end of the war, when the Wehrmacht crushed by the Red Army literally was in its death throes. Only the Red Army participated in the historical Battle of Berlin which led to the end of the Third Reich. At the time the Allied armies stayed hundreds miles away from the capital of Nazi Germany.

I just remind you this fact, because after the victory (truly speaking, not immediately after it) the emphasis was suddenly changed resulting in appearance of strange theories based on the war record. The following idea started prevailing slowly but steadily: the Red Army's victory was not "doubtless". The German Army failed because it could not mobilize the necessary number

of soldiers and produce the sufficient volumes of military equipment, so it became weaker during the war and was actually crushed due to the enemy's advantage in numbers. One German military officer wrote in his memoirs that the German troops were distributed across the Eastern Front line like small islands continuously beaten by the waves generated by the great "red ocean" which swallowed them up eventually. He affirmed that regardless of discomfiture, the German Army dominated the Red Army in terms of command, strategic and tactic parameters.

The first publications focused on the Eastern Front operations appeared in the Western world in the 1950s; they were presented as memoirs by the German war veterans. Like any career officers, they glamorized their professional skills and underestimated enemy's properties. They started affirming that destruction was caused by Hitler's incompetence on the one side and the enemy's quantitative superiority on the other side. As they represented, Nazi Army was "patriotic" but not "Nazi". Only Waffen-SS Divisions were truly Nazi ones. But Hitler was like only a headcase.

Such unfair stories became very popular, especially among Anglo-Saxon audiences. The one reason was that their authors were status German officers. The other reason – the Western armies (especially the American one) wished to apply the Hitler Armies' practice during the expected military confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. It should be remembered that the Cold War reached its peak by that time. Particularly due to this context the German interpretation of the military operations on the Eastern Front becomes official – and thus unopposed.

Lieutenant General Franz Halder was a Chief of the General land staff in the German Army between 1938 and 1942. Hitler fired him after fiasco of the strategy applied to the Battle of Stalingrad and in the North Caucasus. In 1944 he was even sent to the Dachau concentration camp. In 1945 the Americans freeing prisoners from the concentration

camp moved him into the POW camp. Testifying as a witness at the Nuremberg trial, he declared the following: "Germany might not win the war, but with Hitler prevented from interference in the military affairs it might be



Only the Red Army participated in the historical Battle of Berlin which led to the end of the Third Reich

able to make peace under honourable conditions and so avoid inglorious defeat". In 1949 he wrote his first book presenting Hitler as the sole person being guilty in Germany's failure. And you know what? This man had worked at the United States Army Center of Military History 1950 through 1961, where he wrote extensive comments to his own diary. Upon completion of his service he was granted the most significant U.S. award which can be presented to foreign civilian employees.

By the early 1960s the interpretation of the military operations by the former German generals turned into the U.S. official historical opinion. All of this was backgrounded by the total lack of any competing papers issued in the English language, such as books published by Soviet military historians or memoirs by frontline generals. But even in case of their availability they would be presented in the context of the "Soviet propaganda" that would immediately make them unperceivable. It is worthy of note that the Soviet military historiography of the time actually apotheosized only victories – in Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, Berlin, – but stonewalled failures, defeats, millions of voluntary surrenders and army defectors, that critically reduced its graveness.

Only upon cancellation of the Cold War and making Soviet and German archives maintained in East Germany available to public, it came to light that all the post-war Western historiography focused on World War II mis-

represented the facts. All the experts suddenly revealed that the Red Army got real military, qualitative, strategic victory over the "unconquerable" German Army. For example, the German military intelligence service obviously was beneath the mark. Sometimes it was completely unaware of tactical movements of whole armies, but at the same time the Soviet military intelligence service worked perfect allowing the Red Army to predict the enemy's actions, reflect its attacks and even prevent it from bunching together.

However, a perverse theory based on self-esteem of the German generals still prevails. With this knowledge we start seeing the source of the current underestimation of Russia and its army demonstrated by Western news outlets. With ignorance of the warnings made by the American experts, who know that the existing Russian Army is well-equipped and fast-reacting, the Western collective consciousness is still led by the concept that a "Russian bear" can only push with a large body of people with unavailability of any sophistication and science.

Yes, it is a monumental amount of nonsense. I wished to show its origin due to the Great Victory anniversary coming soon.

DISSENTING OPINION

IMMUNITY FROM A LIE

Stealth propaganda often reaches its goal

TEO GURIELI,
a political scientist



Stalin before the war

PBS America, a British channel, demonstrated the show “Who Killed Stalin?” on this 25 March. Properly, it was a TV movie with a number of dramaturgical inserts, namely, drinking bouts and shameful orgies happening at Stalin’s dacha. According to the script created by the show authors, the “parties” involved the highest-level leaders, including full members of the Politburo, marshals and scientists. TV audience could check how they – and generalissimo Stalin among them – drank hard, behaved outrageously, maltreated each other, so to sum up, the scenes were bizarre, caricatural, and execrable.

It is commonly known that Stalin did not drink strong waters, and one never saw him drunk. His dacha obviously hosted country leaders (5-12 people) for the late dinner almost daily, offering simple dishes from shchi to borshch to cutlets with potatoes to fish – and a couple bottles of Georgian dry wine. Sometimes Stalin had one or two glasses of wine, but it happened very rarely. Practically speaking, they continued working here around the table discussing the matters left without attention during the day. For example, designers, military commanders, regional leaders as well as diplomats were also invited for a dinner from time to time. It excluded hard drinking, moreover, no one of the attendants could ill afford excessive drinking in the presence of Stalin. It was recorded both by Stalin cohorts and other people – aircraft designers, engineers, scientists, even cultural figures who had visited Stalin’s dacha.

Instead, why such lie is broadcasted across the globe? There are several reasons for this. Firstly, fierce attempts of the Western agitators to turn Stalin into a monster, a killer of millions his fellow nationals, and the most bloody historical dictator, fail constantly and everywhere. Many years ago, back in the late 1960s, I got an interview from Vyacheslav Molotov who was one of few Stalin’s close associates being alive at the time. He

ended up his speech very simply: “Stalin’s name will be remembered by the people”. Stalin turned a backward country into a vigorous, great, powerful industrial nation, moreover, the USSR became a state where the whole population regardless nation had social protection, the right and opportunity to higher education, and decent retirement benefit.

Since the moment of Stalin’s accession its enemies dreamed of his displacement. He was too great. But in 1953 Stalin died – according to many historians’ opinion, he really was poisoned. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then, world balance has changed, over 25 years have passed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. One might wonder why the Western world recalls Stalin’s death and at the same time episodes from his life, including his dacha “adventures”.

The Western agitators think it makes sense. Because the name of Stalin is linked not only to establishment of the Soviet state, but also to the Great Victory ending World War II, conquest of Berlin, defeat of Nazi Army and its allies – Finns, Romanians, Italians, as well as Latvian and Spanish fascists. Many European countries attacked the USSR together with the fascists at the time and were beaten by the army led by Marshal Stalin. Now the majority of those countries are both EU and NATO members. Their politicians and historians cannot turn back the course of history, however they can sophisticate meaning beyond the Great Victory, underestimate the USSR’s role during the war where over 20 million its citizens gave their lives, into the bargain asperse Stalin and his close associates.

The purpose of their lie and their frame of mind are clear. “We cannot turn the world back to the beginning of the war or change war summation. But let us show the sleaziest appearance of Stalin and his companions like they were winebibbers and hooligans. Let us ignore murders, executions, violations, and demolitions of Soviet towns and settlements committed by

our soldiers on the occupied territories of Belorussia, Russia and Ukraine; we will better split ears of our fellow nationals with the stories about murders, tortures and violations which allegedly were applied widely as of the moment of arrival of the Red Army in



Stalin and his fellows, including Molotov, Kalinin, Mikoyan, Voroshilov and others, after the war

Europe. Well, let us represent Stalin and his generals as stupid and drunken brutes, and as a result the truth will be bemudged with such mud, hidden from people behind a massive curtain of stealth propaganda. Like Goebbels and his key propagandists, we will repeat our fictions hundreds and thousands times until the Europeans finally leave their interest to this subject matter memorizing our abraxas and our lies like the multiplication table. The more unbelievable is such lies, the better the result is, because the most horrific, dark and nasty subjects are remembered with ease. Then not only Stalin’s name, but also everything related to the USSR, its victories and achievements shall be hated by ordinary people in our countries”.

If we take into consideration that over 70 years have passed already since the end of World War II, but almost any shows broadcasted in the West are false or consist of perverted interpretation of the USSR- or Russia-related events, then we have to recognize: such stealth propaganda often reaches its goal. Follow suit. A British TV

channel is broadcasting the documentary “The Battle of Kiev”. Do you think that this movie is about a heroic relief of the city of fascists, historical forced crossing of the Dnepr river, 2500 Soviet battlers becoming Heroes of the Soviet Union after the Battle of Kiev?

No. “The Battle of Kiev” is understood by the authors as a blockade and occupation of Kiev by fascists in autumn 1941, just three months after the Soviet Union being treacherously attacked by fascist Germany and military treason committed by several Soviet generals. On 19 September Kiev was left by the Soviet Army after utter fighting, although battles around the city still continued for a long time after that.

NATO countries like to tell about casualties of the Red Army at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. In their opinion, it proves that literally the USA and Great Britain won a victory over fascism! But how can they film the relief of Kiev in November 1943, if the facts establish the entirely different picture of the offensive operation by the Red Army? Let us speak about the 3rd Guards Tank Army. After the offensive operation the Army Headquarters prepared a statement declaring that between 3 and 10 November 1943 the Army troops defeated thoroughly 229 German tanks and self-propelled artillery platforms, 130 armored troop carriers and armored vehicles, 315 guns and mortars, as well as killed over 12 000 German soldiers and officers. With this, they lost ten times less machinery and staff. Again, how can the Western mass media publish the above mentioned interpretation?

Well, let us come back to the discussion of the show about Stalin’s death. They even provide the answer to the question “Who Killed Stalin?”: Lavrentiy Beria. This version did not

arise without reason. Of course, initially, right upon the murder of the country leader, Khrushchev and his circle, including State Security Minister Ignatiev who got his post with the support of Khrushchev, explained Stalin's death as resulting from his severe illness. But when Khrushchev with a group of marshals and generals killed Marshal Beria and dozens of state security top commanders, another version came to light: Khrushchev generated an idea that Stalin was killed by Beria. Foreign agitators caught this idea and, as we can see, they still support it. Moreover, it is declared loud in the show "Who Killed Stalin?" by Sergei Khrushchev, a son of Nikita Khrushchev, who is the one "scientist" being mostly notorious in the USSR due to his incurable alcoholism and who has been living in the USA since 1991 regularly delivering speeches full of disdain and detestation for his motherland.

For a better understanding of this tragic rebellion story which is completely unknown among the majority of the Russian (especially, young) citizens, we need to grow some immunity from a lie. To do so, they have to make themselves aware of history and check some facts. Nowadays, thanks to existence of press freedom in modern Russia and



Ignatiev, an initiator of the "Jude doctors case" against those allegedly killing Soviet leaders; later he became Khrushchev's supporter to kill Stalin



Lavrentiy Beria, the Marshal of the Soviet Union



Genrikh Yagoda, an organizer of the first round of repression in the 1930s, and Khrushchev. They were close friends

public access to archive documents, we finally have an opportunity to reach the truth.

First of all, it pays to remind the reason for which Khrushchev and his cabal accused the country leader executed by them. They declared the following formal accusation: illegal murders, espionage in favor of Great Britain, domestic repression in 1937, opening to Adolf Hitler, and high treason. To be able to present such charges, they had to both disregard the people and perceive it as a completely brainless mass. They did not formally present a single illegal murder, moreover, they could not find the facts of high treason or espionage in favor of Britain. The people could only guess when and where Marshal Beria might "open" to Adolf Hitler. Even more, Beria became the NKVD head in 1938, but before that he was engaged in political work and general labour management. I was acquainted with a person who was sent to Leningrad in 1938 under Beria's order to deal with hundreds of people being arrested by former People's Commissar Yezhov and release those who was arrested and imprisoned without sufficient grounds. Additionally, Beria prohibited torment and extermination in NKVD-managed facilities.

Shortly before the war Beria was defined by Stalin for management of transition of a range of munitions factories to the east of the Urals and construction of new plants. At the same time he supervised external intelligence, munitions production, and development of new aircrafts and tanks. During the war he was a member of the State Defense Council, and the NKVD troops supervised by him participated in military operations. General of the Army Maslennikov who had been Beria's deputy to rule the NKVD forces, the Hero of the Soviet Union who had been wounded 13 times over the service period, viewed Beria as a talented organizer and Stalin's right-hand man. It should be noted that Maslennikov committed suicide in 1954, when Beria, his generals and State Defense officers were murdered after the rebellion organized by Khrushchev and military officers.

In the post-war era Beria established the most effective external intelligence in the world and managed to ensure forced development of nuclear weapons and rocket technologies in the USSR based on its support. When supervising these sectors, he ceased management of the State Defense Ministry and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It allowed Khrushchev and Ignatiev to extend the intelligence community with their supporters – feeble place-seekers, bootlickers and treachery-ready persons. They replaced security in the Kremlin, security officers residing at Stalin's dacha, even cooks working at the Kremlin and at Stalin's dacha. They prepared everything to kill the leader and commit the rebellion.

Independent historians, and today we know many of them, concur that Stalin was killed by Khrushchev. Shortly before the assassination attempt, his helper Ignatiev had gained control over the poisons laboratory at the Ministry of Internal Affairs; among them one could find poisons causing cerebral hemorrhage. It was easy for Khrushchev to put the poison in meals or wines during the din-

ner held at Stalin's dacha, because he was a frequent visitor. He had the reasons for killing Stalin, and they were quite serious.

The first reason is revenge. Khrushchev's son Leonid who was born to his first family, had tied himself with persistent criminals and so was arrested and convicted, however Khrushchev saved him from imprisoning by sending to the flight school. In the course of the war Leonid was shot down (according to the documents, he landed his aircraft on a German airfield) and upon being captured he started co-operating with the Germans. Around the same time Stalin's son Yakov Dzhugashvili was also captured. The Germans offered his and Leonid's exchange for feldmarschall Paulus who was captured near Stalingrad, however Stalin refused such proposal with the words: "I will not exchange a soldier for a feldmarschall". Yakov was killed by the Germans, Leonid was sent back to Moscow with the support of intelligence men, but later he was supposedly executed on the spot for committing high treason. Khrushchev could not forgive Stalin for such outcome.

The other reason included Stalin's plan of 1954 to terminate party secretaries of any levels as an extra lumber and maintain only local government officials and housekeepers. But Communist Party workers composed a large group of people: each of them not only governed a specific area but also assured significant personal benefits. Khrushchev also expected his demission and naturally took the lead of party careerists. In addition, Khrushchev and his circle made many debts:

during repression they could not resist against their drive to arrest and kill as much people as they could. The above-mentioned was especially appropriate to himself and his friend general Serov who later became the first KGB head and then an unfortunate GRU head, as both of them pulled a trick in Ukraine.

Upon having killed Stalin, Khrushchev and his henchmen decided to make away with Beria who at the time became a Deputy Premier and a head of intelligence service. They clearly understood that Beria and the state defense leaders would get at the truth unavoidably. That is why Khrushchev being supported by a group of marshals and generals decided to commit a domestic rebellion. The group included Marshals Zhukov and Konev, Generals Batitskiy and Epishev, and possibly Brezhnev. Interestingly, that they expected the rebellion to be bloody, because with its commitment they would actually become high traitors and violators.

In July 1953 a group of military officers secretly brought a gun to the Kremlin (that constituted a separate crime), caught Beria and delivered him to the headquarters of Moscow Air Defense Command being under Batitskiy's control. He was kept there for 5 months under tortures aimed at obtainment of his recognition of his



Meeting at the locomotive depot on the day of Stalin's death



Conspicuous Soviet secret service agents: generals N. I. Eitingon and P. A. Sudoplatov. Eitingon who managed finishing of Trotsky was arrested as a "Beria's gang" member and spent 12 years in prison. Sudoplatov who supervised the 4th Administration of the NKVD during the war, was convicted as a "Beria's gang" member and spent 15 years in prison. Both of them were exonerated in the 1990s.

espionage activities to the benefit of Britain. Notice that no prosecutor's authorization was obtained for such apprehension, so actually it was the act of terror. Once Marshal Beria kept up his end, they established so-called Special Court-Martial headed by Marshal Konev. The accused person was deprived of his right of defense and appellation and doled out the death penalty. General Batitskiy killed him immediately upon imposition of sentence using his trophy Parabellum-Pistole. The body of a murdered man was removed to Donskoi Crematorium and burned to avoid potential investigation.

For avoidance of any possibility of resistance to coup, Zhukov ordered the chief of Kantemirov Tank Division to bring tanks to Moscow and enclose the Kremlin. Some officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs tried to resist against the coup, however all of them, similar to generals Kobulov, Volodzimirskiy, Meshik and some others, were killed immediately. Soon Khrushchev reached his dream: he became a country leader.

But what possessed a group of famous military commanders to commit a collusive crime? Why Marshal Zhukov decided to lead this criminal group? You will learn it from the next issue of the magazine.

HISTORY

HOW THE RUSSIANS TOOK BERLIN SINGLE-HANDEDLY

ALEXEY TIMOFEYCHEV,
RBTH

The Battle of Berlin was the final large-scale military operation to take place in Europe during World War II. The British and American allies did not participate in this offensive, leaving the Soviet army to conquer the city alone.

The Battle of Berlin was one of the largest battles in human history. It began on April 16 in the outskirts of the city. By April 25, Soviet troops had entered the Third Reich's capital. About 3.5 million soldiers from both sides participated in the fight with more than 50,000 weapons and 10,000 tanks.

Why didn't the other Allied forces fight in Berlin?

Soviet troops stormed Berlin while the rest of the Allied army remained more than 100 kilometres outside the German capital. In 1943, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt declared that "the U.S. must obtain Berlin." British Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed that the Nazi capital must not fall into Soviet hands. However, in the spring of 1945, these Allied forces did not make any effort to take possession of the city. British historian John Fuller called it "one of the strangest decisions ever made in military history."

However, this decision had its motives. In an interview with RBTH, Russian historian Andrei Soyustov said that there were at least two reasons for this decision. First, according to preliminary agreements, including the accords made in Yalta, Berlin was located in the zone of So-

viet military operations. The demarcation line between the USSR and the other Allied forces went along the Elbe River. "Rushing into Berlin for the sake of status, could have, at minimum, backfired and may have resulted in a USSR decision not to fight against Japan," explains the his-

torian. The second reason for not storming the giant urban centre was that the Allies had been fraught with casualties as the end of the war approached. In the period between the Normandy landing and April 1945 the Allies "were able to avoid storming large cities," Soyustov notes.



The Red Army in the streets of Berlin, April 1945

Soviet casualties in the Battle of Berlin were indeed very high with 80,000 injured and at least 20,000 killed. The German side suffered just as many losses.

A night attack under floodlights

Berlin was captured by Soviet troops on three fronts. The most difficult task fell to the soldiers from the First Belarus Front, commanded by Georgy Zhukov, who had to charge the well-fortified German position in Seelow Heights on the outskirts of the city. The attack began during the night of April 16 with an unprecedentedly powerful and coordinated artillery



Victory Banner over the Reichstag, 1945

barrage. Then, without waiting for morning, tanks entered the battle supported by the infantry. The offensive was conducted with the help of floodlights, which were set up behind the advancing troops. Even with the use of this clever tactic, several days were needed to seize Seelow Heights.

Initially, almost one million German servicemen were concentrated around Berlin. However, they were met by a

Soviet force that was 2.5 times greater. At the very beginning of the Berlin operation, Soviet troops succeeded in cutting off the majority of the German units from the city. Due to this, the Soviet Army encountered only a few hundred thousand German soldiers in Berlin itself, including the Volkssturm (the militia) and the Hitler Youth. There were also many SS units from different European countries.



Berlin, the end of the World War II

All bets on the tanks

Hitler's troops worked desperately to defend themselves with two lines of defence organized in Berlin. Many homes were equipped with bunkers and these houses, with their thick walls, became impregnable strongholds. Of particular danger for the advancing Soviet troops were the anti-tank weapons, bazookas and hand grenades since Soviet forces were heavily reliant on the use of armoured vehicles during the attack. In this environment of urban warfare, many tanks were destroyed.

Following the war, commanders of the Soviet operation were often criticized for relying so heavily on the use of armoured vehicles. However, as emphasized by Soyustov, in such conditions the use of tanks was justified. "Thanks to the heavy use of armored vehicles, the Soviet army was able to create a very mobile unit of support for the advancing troops, which helped them break through the barricades into the city centre."

The tactics used in the Battle of Berlin built on experience from the Battle of Stalingrad. The Soviet troops established special assault units, in which tanks played a critical role. Typically, manoeuvres were carried out in the following manner: The infantry moved along both sides of the street, checking the windows on both sides, to identify obstacles that were dangerous for the vehicles, such as camouflaged weapons, barricades and tanks embedded in the ground. If the troops noticed such impediments up ahead, the Soviet infantry would wait for the arrival of their self-propelled tanks and self-propelled howitzers, known as "Stalin's sledgehammer." Once this support arrived,

the armoured vehicles would work to destroy German fortifications at point-blank range. However, there were situations where the infantry could not keep up with the armoured vehicles and consequently, the tanks were isolated from their cover and became easy prey for the German anti-tank weapons and artillery.

The capture of the Reichstag

The culmination of the offensive on Berlin was the battle for the Reichstag, the German parliament building. At the time, it was the highest building in the city centre and its capture had symbolic significance. The first attempt to seize

the Reichstag on April 27 failed and the fight continued for four more days. The turning point occurred on April 29 as Soviet troops took possession of the fortified Interior Ministry building, which occupied an entire block. The Soviets finally captured the Reichstag on the evening of April 30.

Early in the morning of May 1, the flag of the 150th Rifle division was raised over the building. This was later referred to as the Banner of Victory.

On April 30, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker. Until the last moment, Hitler had been hoping that troops from other parts of Germany would come to his aid in Berlin, but this did not happen. The Berlin troops surrendered on May 2.



Soviet combat troops on the way to the center of Berlin, 1945

Was the Battle of Berlin necessary?

Calculating the losses involved in the Battle of Berlin at the end of such a bloody war, some historians doubt whether the Soviet attack of the city was necessary. In the opinion of historian and writer Yuri Zhukov, after the Soviet and American troops met at the Elbe river, surrounding the German units in Berlin, it was possible to do without the offensive on the Nazi capital. "Georgy Zhukov... could have just tightened the blockade circle on an hourly basis... But for an entire week, he mercilessly sacrificed thousands of Soviet soldiers... He obtained the surrender

of the Berlin garrison on May 2. But if this capitulation had occurred not on May 2 but, let's say, on the 6th or the 7th, tens of thousands of our soldiers would have been saved," Zhukov continues.

However, there are other opinions that contradict this view. Some researchers say that if the Soviet troops had just besieged the city, they would have lost the strategic initiative to the Germans. Nazi attempts to break the blockade from the inside and outside would have resulted in just as many losses for the Soviet Army as the attack, claims Soyustov. It is also not clear how long such a blockade would have lasted.

Soyustov also says that delaying the Berlin operation could have resulted in political problems between the Allied forces. It is no secret that towards the end of the war the Third Reich's representatives tried to negotiate a separate peace deal with the Americans and British forces. "In these circumstances, no one would have been able to predict how a blockade of Berlin would have developed," Soyustov is convinced.



Columns of the infantry of the Red Army marching through the streets of Berlin, 1945

OLGA LOMAKA AT VENICE BIENNALE

London based Pop Artist Olga Lomaka announced that two of her sculptures will feature in this year's prestigious Venice Biennale 2019. The sculptures, 'Infinity' and 'Moscream' will be included in the European Cultural Centre's exhibition, which runs from May 11th – November 24th 2019, in the context of the 58th International Art Exhibition (La Biennale di Venezia). The ECC exhibition, titled "PERSONAL STRUCTURES", will be hosted in the beautiful scenarios of Palazzo Bembo and the Giardini Marinaressa, in the very center of Venice.

Olga Lomaka's "Infinity" was featured in the hugely successful Grayson Perry curated RA Summer Show 2018 – which prompted Caroline Worthington (Director Royal Society of Sculptures & Board member for the Association of Independent Museums) to comment: "Olga Lomaka's 'Infinity' epitomizes the joyful approach to this year's Royal Academy Summer Show".

The installation "Infinity" will be situated in Palazzo Bembo, one of the most prestigious Palazzo in the center of Venice. "Infinity" is a part of "Pink Magic" project, a series of thirteen installation and relief sculptures which explore a multi-layered interface of meaning through a rich panoply of sources; from the artistic, to mass media, to the unexplained and less obvious. At the heart of this compelling series is the interplay between the masculine and feminine – as both universal and individual

energies which organize, determine and create our existence.

The familiar is met in the form of the humorous male Pink Panther, a vehicle of association which crosses numerous media and contexts. A sense of mystery, of the magical, of something hidden within another form, is implied by this reference, obvious only upon close inspection. Holes in the sculpture, symbolic of the feminine, cuts through to the background revealing a deep colour of an inner dimension. The void becomes infinity with its endless possibilities, manifestations and creations; an aspect of the magical. The temptation of the symbolic void is communicated through the playfulness of the panther.

The second artist's sculpture titled "Moscream" will be located in famous the Giardini Marinaressa, one of the exhibition spaces of Venice Biennale. "Moscream" was created in the form of the most popular ice cream in Russia. It combines images of a dome that represent a symbol of traditional Russian architecture with an iconic ice cream cone. This visual connection between the shape of St. Basil Cathedral's dome, the most recog-

nizable building in Moscow, and the main summer delicacy through the prism of pop-art style encompasses the true values of the Russian society, the spiritual culture that needs to be preserved and protected, despite the trends of the consumption era. The artist was trying to emphasize that even in the most everyday and ordinary objects everyone sees first of all, what they want to see.

Olga Lomaka (Artist) commented: *"I'm extremely excited about the launch of the exhibition, it is an honour to showcase my art in such an iconic and renown international art exhibition like the 'Biennale'"*

"PERSONAL STRUCTURES" will highlight a general approach to making art and a view of art's social function as embracing both pleasure and critical thinking. The exhibition will focus on the work of artists who challenge existing habits of thought and open up our readings of objects and images, gestures and situations. Visually, the artworks may appear very different, but all artists present their own subjective, personal expression of their reflection on the concepts Time, Space and Existence.



The installation "Infinity"

RUGBY RETURNS TO SAINT PETERSBURG THIS MAY!



European Rugby 7s Champions Trophy among club teams will take place at Petrovsky Stadium in St. Petersburg on May 25–26, 2019. For the first time in the Tournament's history, not only men's, but also women's teams will take part in the championship. This year Tournament is held in association with the Russian Federation's Ministry of Sport, the Government of Saint Petersburg, Rugby Union of Russia and Rugby Federation of Saint Petersburg.

Within two days, the strongest European rugby clubs will fight for the Champion's title as well as for the Champions Trophy. Sportsmen from Russia, England, France, Georgia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova will come to Saint Pe-

tersburg this May to take part in European Rugby 7s Champions Trophy.

Ivan Okhlobystin, famous Russian actor, will participate in the opening ceremony of the Tournament, which will be held on May 25 at 14:30, along with Waisale Serevi, Russia national rugby 7s union team head coach.

European Rugby 7s Champions Trophy is a unique opportunity to get acquainted with the rugby world. Rugby 7s is a spectacular, energetic and each year becoming more and more popular sport in Russia, which will fit everyone's preference.

Every single year the scale of the Tournament is growing in audience. In addition to rugby games, guests will enjoy a wide variety of entertainments. This year RugbyFEST includes a music festival, children's zone with

various entertainments for kids of different age, stylistic workshops and a food truck festival.

We will teach you how to rugby like a Russian!

Address of the Tournament: Petrovsky Stadium, Petrovsky ostrov 2.

Tickets are available on European "Rugby 7s Champions Trophy" website or at official partners of the Tournament.

Official website: rugby7.spb.ru

Vkontakte: vk.com/rugby7spb

Instagram: [instagram.com/rugby7spb](https://www.instagram.com/rugby7spb)

Facebook: facebook.com/rugby7spb

YouTube: youtube.com/rugby7spb

FILMS

4 MUST-SEE SECOND WORLD WAR FILMS

Rife with drama, tragedy and danger, the Second World War has inspired – and continues to inspire – countless filmmakers across the world, generating a huge catalogue of action movies, thrillers, animations and romantic dramas. Here, we highlight just a few of our favourites, from ‘Schindler’s List’ and ‘The Great Escape’ to ‘Letters from Iwo Jima’...

1 Schindler’s List (1993)

Despite being a mainstream Hollywood movie, Steven Spielberg’s haunting Schindler’s List broke new

ground for its unflinching portrayal of the horrors of the Holocaust.

The multi-award-winning film recounts the extraordinary real-life actions of Oskar Schindler, an industrialist and Nazi party member believed to have saved the lives of around 1,200 Jews during the Holocaust. Schindler recruited Jewish workers to his factories in Nazi-occupied Poland and bribed Nazi officials to protect them from deportation to concentration camps. He is believed to have made a total of seven lists filled with the names of those he intended to save, four of which still survive today.

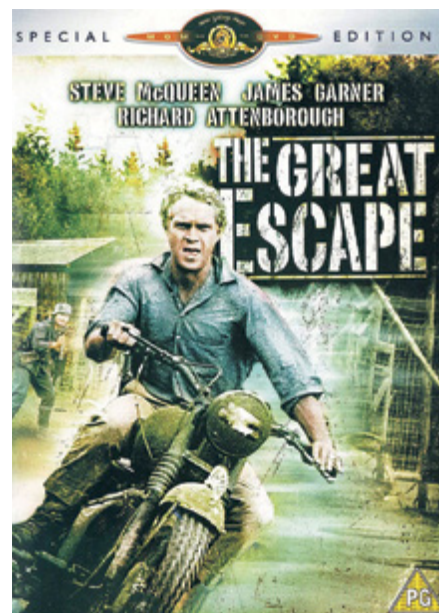
Spielberg was drawn to the story by Thomas Keneally’s 1982 Booker Prize-winning novel, Schindler’s Ark. “It was a dry, dry book,” Spielberg told the New York Times. “I thought if I could take that approach with a motion picture, I could present it almost like a series of events, facts and dates. And the emotionality would be much stronger”. Spielberg chose to shoot the film almost entirely in black and white. His crews also filmed at many of the real locations, including the gates of Auschwitz.

The film’s shocking subject matter was close to home for Spielberg, whose own relatives were murdered in Poland and Ukraine during the Second World War genocide. After refusing any salary for directing

the film, in 1994 he used the movie’s profits to found the USC Shoah Foundation (originally named the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation). A not-for-profit organisation that has collected and preserved more than 54,000 video testimonies from Holocaust survivors, the foundation is intended to educate future generations about the genocide.

2 The Great Escape (1963)

With its stellar cast, thrilling action sequences and inimitable theme song, The Great Escape has certainly earned its place as a stalwart of British Christmas television scheduling. Depicting the daring 1944 escape made by Allied airmen from a German Prisoner of War (PoW) camp, the 1963 film is an iconic – if somewhat bombastic – celebration of wartime bravado, heroism and derring-do.



The film is largely based on a 1950 book by former Australian PoW Paul Brickhill, a fellow prisoner at Stalag Luft III whose severe claustrophobia prevented him from taking part in the escape.

The true events behind the film certainly had all the drama, tension and tragedy a Hollywood movie producer could wish for. Organised by RAF squadron leader Roger Bushell (the inspiration for the film’s ‘Roger Bartlett’ character, played by Richard Attenborough) and designed to disrupt their Germans captors as much as possible, the escape saw Allied PoWs dig three escape tunnels. Known as Tom, Dick and Harry, the tunnels were intended to reach more than 300ft under the camp boundaries to the woods beyond. On the night of 24 March 1944, some 76 men made their audacious escape from the Stalag Luft III camp, but within a matter of days, 73 escapees had been recaptured. Angered and embarrassed by their actions, Hitler personally ordered for 50 of them to be shot.

Many aspects of the escape depicted in the film reportedly reflect reality, such as the elaborate preparations undertaken, the huge number of PoWs involved and the nerve-shredding moment the tunnel came up short and escapees had to run to the trees over open ground. However, some of The Great Escape’s most memorable moments are undeniably based more on ‘box office appeal’ than historical fact, such as Steve McQueen’s audacious motorbike chase as all-American hero Virgil Hiltz (a fictional character – no US soldiers were involved in the real escape). This sequence did not appear in the original script – it was reportedly added in to soothe the ego of Steve McQueen, who kicked up a fuss about the size of his part and demanded more screen time. On the film’s release, the iconic sight of McQueen’s bike flying tri-

umphantly over barbed wire was deemed so preposterous that former PoWs booed in the cinemas.

Despite several film companies initially being reluctant to back The Great Escape (perhaps due to the lack of a glamorous female love interest), it was one of 1963’s box office hits. Indeed, the film has gone on to become a much-loved classic of Second World War cinema – in the words of a 1963 Time Magazine review: “The Great Escape is simply great escapism”.

3 Das Boot (1981)

Claustrophobic yet compelling, Das Boot depicts life onboard a German U-Boat submerged in the depths of the Atlantic.

It’s 1942 – the war is beginning to turn against Hitler and the Third Reich’s propaganda is wearing increasingly thin. The audience’s insight into the action comes from Lt Werner, an enthusiastic yet naïve war correspondent assigned to report on the submarine’s progress. In contrast, the U-boat’s war-weary captain (reportedly based on real-life U-boat captain Heinrich Lehmann-Willenbrock) is highly cynical about the regime he serves and about Germany’s progress in the war.

Tension mounts as the submarine creaks and groans, and shelling is heard overhead. Yet it’s not only the constant risk of imminent death that Das Boot evokes so effectively, but also the mind-numbing boredom of life on board a submarine. The sweaty corridors and cramped living conditions of the U-boat make for very uncomfortable viewing.

While Germany’s Second World War

fighting forces are frequently portrayed on film as two-dimensional villains entirely devoted to National Socialism, Das Boot gives these men a human face. They are neither heroes nor villains, but rather ordinary men grappling with everyday concerns and individual fears. In the close quarters of the submarine we watch them bullying one another about photographs of loved ones, slicing the mould off bread, visiting the medic to be treated for crabs and singing along to British anthem “It’s a Long Long Way to Tipperary”.

4 Downfall (2004)

In this chilling portrayal of Hitler’s final days in the ‘Führer bunker’ audiences watch the dictator unravel as the Third Reich collapses around him.

Outside, chaos reigns as Soviet forces close in on Berlin.

The film is based partly on the memoirs of Traudl Junge, a personal secretary who worked for Hitler between 1942 and 1945 and eventually joined him in the Berlin bunker. As the gaping holes in his war machine began to emerge, Junge described Hitler’s

behaviour as becoming increasingly erratic and unstable, culminating in his eventual suicide. The fate of others was equally harrowing – the Goebbels’ family joined Hitler in an attached bunker, with Joseph and his wife ultimately giving cyanide capsules to their children to “save” them from living in a world without Nazism.

Downfall made waves for its detailed and intimate portrayal of history’s most vilified figure. Director Oliver Hirschbiegel acknowledged the dangers of getting an onscreen portrayal of Hitler wrong, stating: “it was a great risk for all of us. I was scared every day I was shooting. It is a very thin line we were walking”.



BOOKS

THE BEST BOOKS
ON WORLD WAR II

The popular military historian, Antony Beevor, recommends some of his own favourite books on World War II.

You have won numerous awards, sold millions of copies of your books and had them translated into lots of different languages. But I was wondering which historians inspire you?

The very first historian to inspire me was John Keegan, who I studied under at Sandhurst, because he wrote *The Face of Battle*, which was one of the key moments in the turning points of military history. Up until then military history had usually been written by retired officers or generals, trying to make out that commanders were chess grandmasters playing some brilliant game, when in fact it was all chaos and fear and smoke. It was the first time that military history had been written as history from below.

Then, interestingly, there was a period afterwards when suddenly oral history started to become fashionable. I was always rather dubious about oral history because I felt it had no proper context. From my point of view John Keegan's book was the greatest influence because it pushed me in the direction where I was eventually heading, of trying to integrate history from above with history from below.

What is it that makes you particularly interested in World War II?

To start off with I was particularly interested in the Napoleonic Wars and I will eventually go back to them when, for me, World War II is finally over. But World War II continues to be the most important war in history because of the effect that it had on so

many people's lives and on so many countries.

The most important lesson I ever learned came to me in the French archives when I was researching a book about Paris after the liberation. After six months of waiting for permission from the Ministry of the Interior I came across this report from the security police describing how a German woman had been found in Paris in the summer of 1945. In fact it was a German farmer's wife who had fallen desperately in love with a French prisoner of war who had been working on their farm and she'd followed him back to France by smuggling herself on to the train carrying deported prisoners back to France. That suddenly raised so many other questions for me. We always think about those who have died and the casualties of war without fully appreciating how the decisions of Stalin or Hitler changed everybody's lives.

*The first book you've chosen is a novel by someone whose work you know very well indeed – the Russian writer Vasily Grossman. You edited his war notes. But this is his novel, *Life and Fate*, which was considered highly controversial and banned in Russia.*

Yes, the manuscript was confiscated when it had just been written in 1960. The KGB came into his apartment and then went to his secretary's apartment, and confiscated even the typewriter ribbons and the carbon papers because the novel was regarded as so dangerous.

Why was that?

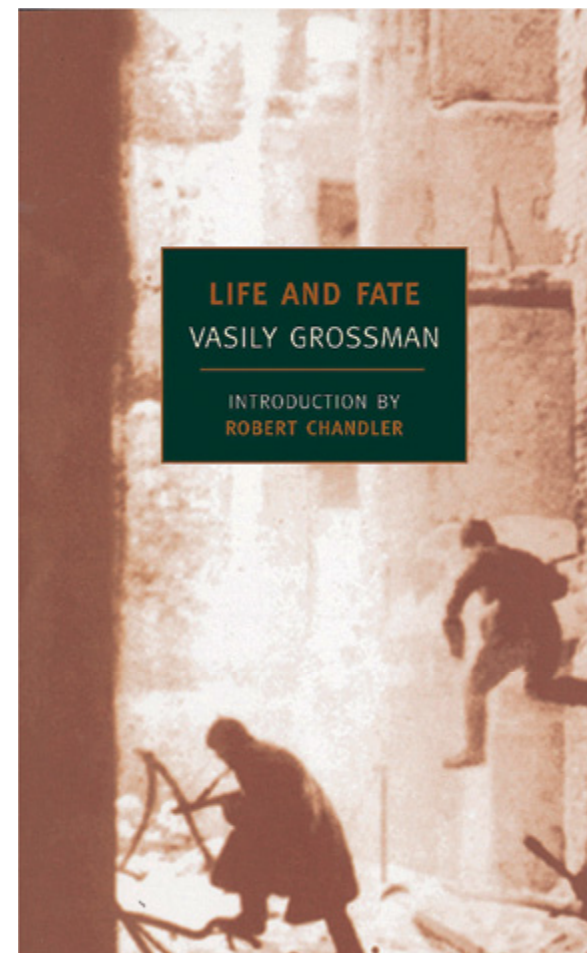
Grossman was the very first person to make the moral equivalence be-

tween Nazism and Stalinism. It was that which was so devastating. He quite clearly indicated that Stalin had been responsible for the appalling disasters of the early part of the war and for the repression that came through towards the end of the war. What is interesting about Grossman is that he is one of the few examples where you get both physical courage and moral courage in the same person. That is very rare – normally moral courage and physical courage are two separate things and don't exist together.

How did he show physical courage?

He showed physical courage as a slightly middle-aged, totally unfit, Jewish intellectual from Moscow going into the front line with the Red Army and living the same life alongside many of the soldiers. This is where he got his material. He was obviously not one of the Stalinist hacks who came out with preposterous propaganda. The soldiers had read his stuff in the Red Star, the army newspaper, and they knew that he was about the only honest one. And he wouldn't take any notes. He would just sit down beside them and then write up the notes afterwards, because he knew perfectly well that if he sat down with a pad that would switch them off. And he used to work incredibly long hours into the night writing up all the conversations that he had had.

These were the notebooks that we worked on in Moscow and one realised that here was most of the raw material for *Life and Fate* which I think is probably the most important work of fiction about World War II. But, in fact, it is more than just a fiction because it is based on very close report-



ing from his time with the soldiers. It is a deliberate act of literary homage to Tolstoy as one can see in the title. It is definitely the War and Peace of the 20th century.

Your next choice is a two-volume biography of Hitler by Ian Kershaw.

Ian Kershaw is a totally admirable historian. He is absolutely scrupulous. He does incredible research. His books have superb scholarship and breadth of knowledge as a result. But, above all, he has a clarity of thought and a clarity of prose which is not merely enviable but should be followed by any sort of academic historian who wants to know how to write and how to reach a wider audience and also to remain a completely scholarly source.

His biography very much relies on primary sources.

Yes, indeed, and he knows them almost better than anyone. I don't think

that any historian should ever accept that a book is definitive. Nothing is definitive. But I don't see Kershaw's work on Hitler really ever being surpassed.

What did his book teach you about Hitler?

So much of it is in the detail rather than overall. One sees so much written about Hitler that just churns out the same sort of stuff. Where Kershaw is so judicious and magisterial is that he manages to put details and, above all, Hitler's words into a much wider context. One sees the implications particularly when it comes to the difficulties of a setting and the exact progress towards the Final Solution. For example, he looks at the decision

about when to launch the Holocaust or the Shoah by gas, as Grossman called it, which is one of the key areas of debate amongst historians. And Kershaw's assessment is probably the most reliable and accurate of all.

What is his assessment?

In his book he defines "the Final Solution to the Jewish question" as "the systematic [Nazi] attempt to exterminate the whole of European Jewry". And this is the traditional view and the one currently accepted by mainstream historians. Kershaw goes on to state the three major questions that, in his view, surround the Final Solution. They are: How and when the decision to exterminate the Jews came about; what was Hitler's role in this policy of

mass murder, and whether the Final Solution followed a single order from a long-held programme or evolved in a haphazard and piecemeal fashion over a period of time?

After posing these questions, he concludes: "The deficiencies and ambiguities of the evidence, enhanced by the language of euphemism and camouflage used by the Nazis, even among themselves when dealing with the extermination of the Jews, mean that absolute certainty in answering these complex questions cannot be achieved." He is saying there is room for doubt in regard to the answers mainstream historians have given to the previous questions.

*Your next book takes us to a part of World War II in which you have a particular interest. *Leningrad* by Anna Reid reveals the Nazis' deliberate decision to starve the city of Leningrad into surrender.*

This was the longest and most devastating siege in the history of World War II. Hitler was determined to take over the Russian city for symbolic reasons, and during the two-and-a-half-year siege 750,000 civilians were deliberately starved to death. This amounted to a quarter of Leningrad's population. Much has been written about Leningrad in the past. One famous book is *The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad* by Harrison Salisbury, and although it is excellent there weren't any archives open at that particular stage so he was limited by what he could obtain through official sources in Leningrad. It is still a remarkable book.

But Anna Reid's book goes far further because, with excellent research in archives which weren't available before, she is able to show how totally cynical Stalin's attitude was to Leningrad. Indeed, it was a major factor in the appalling loss of life and suffering, which is very hard



to appreciate. When I was researching my own book *Stalingrad*, and for years afterwards, I couldn't look at a plate of food without thinking what that would have meant to about a dozen people in Stalingrad. In Leningrad it was even worse. There are photographs, for example, of the same woman taken just a few months apart for her identity documents and in a matter of months she has become an old hag, even though she started off as a rather plump young woman. So, the effects of starvation on a whole society is indeed worth studying and I think that Anna Reid has done it brilliantly. Another interesting aspect of her book is her exploration of the extent to which people living in Leningrad had to resort to cannibalism in order to survive.

You mentioned that Stalin had a cynical attitude towards Leningrad. What does Anna Reid's book reveal he did to his own people?

The problem was that Stalin failed to evacuate Leningrad before the siege ring closed and he made little attempt to stockpile extra food when it was still possible. As starvation set in, inhabitants began to boil calfskins for hoped-for nutrition or eat joiner's glue made from the bones and hooves of slaughtered livestock. At the height of the German advance on Moscow, Stalin was even prepared to withdraw all troops from Leningrad and abandon the city to a terrible fate. He had always distrusted Leningrad as a city of intellectuals and lovers of Western influences, which made them tantamount to traitors in his eyes.

That is an interesting aspect to World War II you don't often hear about. You are obviously famous for your book *Stalingrad* — can you explain why that was another key moment in the war?

Stalingrad was the psychological turning point of the war. It took place between 23 August 1942 to 2 February 1943 and it was the largest battle on the Eastern Front. Nazi Germany and their allies were fighting for con-

trol of the city of Stalingrad in southwest Russia. The geopolitical turning point of the war came slightly earlier, even though people didn't really recognise it at the time. It was in December 1941, when the German armies were repulsed in front of Moscow and Hitler decided to declare war on the United States after Pearl Harbor. But Stalingrad was vital in its own particular way because the Red Army for the first time held its ground in the city, fighting in desperate circumstances. Also, its new commanders had the foresight to do what they felt was necessary rather than being terrified of being arrested for their actions, which was the case in the earlier part of the war.

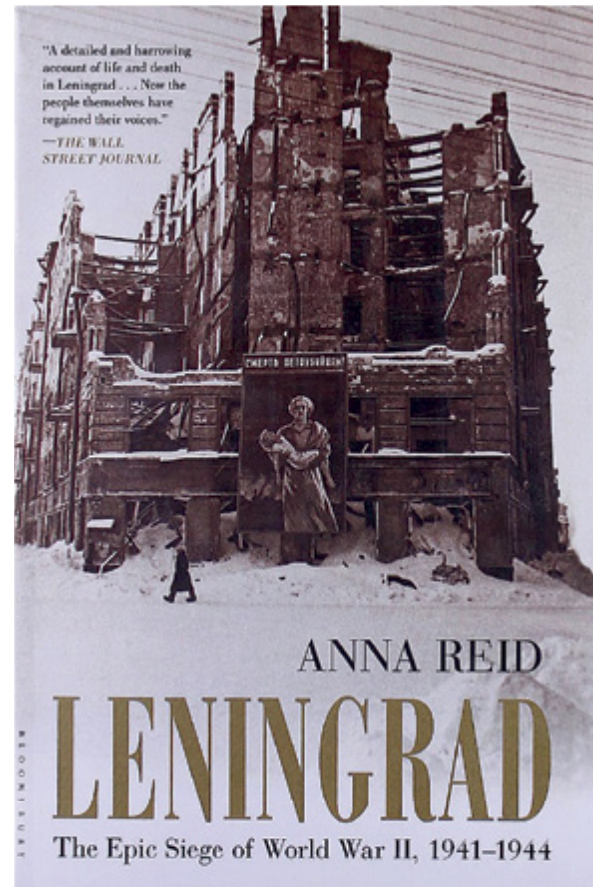
Two Soviet generals, Georgy Zhukov and Aleksandr Vasilevsky, came up with this plan to encircle the whole of the Sixth Army, which was incredibly ambitious. The Germans saw that it was a possibility but they simply did not believe that the Red Army was capable of carrying it out. And the very fact of achieving that meant that the whole psychology of the war, not just in the Soviet Union but elsewhere as well, led to this belief that finally the Germans were beaten and the Allies could win. As far away as Chile the poet Pablo Neruda wrote his homenaje a Stalingrado — so Stalingrad had this tremendous effect on the resistance throughout the world. Stalingrad itself was a byword for courage and it was also a byword for suffering.

This is really what I was trying to do when I researched the Russian military archives. I wanted to find out the detail of what life was like for the soldiers and it was simply terrifying. They executed 13,000 of their own

men during the course of the battle, which is something that we simply could not imagine.

Why did they do that?

Because they were so afraid of them breaking. Anyone who retreated without orders was executed.



So much about history focuses on the politics and the people in power but your next choice tells the very personal story of a young woman who preferred to remain anonymous, living in Berlin in 1945, who kept a daily record of her life.

This book, *A Woman in Berlin*, is one of the great diaries of the whole war. Although it was published anonymously we do know the name of the woman who wrote it now. She was called Marta Hillers and she was an extremely intelligent journalist who had travelled quite a lot before the war and was certainly not a Nazi. She was extremely open-minded and it was her enquiring mind and observation

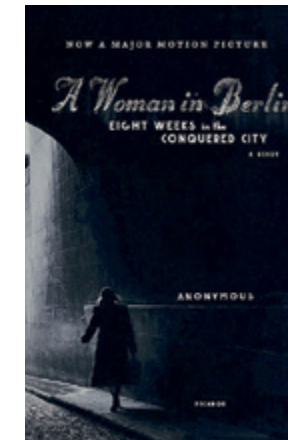
which really showed the reality of the Soviet attack on Berlin in April 1945 through to the beginning of May.

There is the whole question of the mass rapes by the Red Army. This is a very controversial subject, as I know only too well. Her account is so patently well observed of what was going on. There is no self-pity, even though she herself was raped on numerous occasions. Through her you see the reality of life and war for civilians in those sorts of circumstances. There is this need of unity, particularly among the women, in order to survive. They manage to surmount their appalling experiences by being able to talk to each other.

And then, of course, they found their menfolk when they returned from the war simply couldn't face up to the reality that they had not been able to protect their women. And one saw a fascinating but dismaying gender divide in that particular way. In many ways it was the women who were morally far stronger than the men. She describes how the role of the women is to support all these fragile men and basically massage their egos because otherwise they will go to pieces.

Your final choice is *Bloodlands* by Timothy Snyder.

This book is about not just World War II but it is also about the Stalinist repression of the areas known as the borderlands, which Snyder has termed the bloodlands. Snyder is looking at the deliberate mass murder of civilians in a particular zone of Europe between about 1930, at the start of the second Ukraine famine, and 1945. The zone is the territory that lies between central Poland and, roughly, the Russian border, covering eastern Poland, Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic republics. It is a remarkable work, not just of scholarship and research but, above all, of a fresh angle on the way that the



inter-reaction between Nazism and Stalinism actually caused such appalling levels of hatred and murder in this particular area.

For example, the great famine in the Ukraine in the early 1930s was blamed on the Jews by the communists. They created rumours to indicate that it was the Jews who had been responsible for the famine when it had been the communist authorities themselves. And this fuelled a sort of latent anti-Semitism within the Ukraine.

So, of course, when the Germans arrived, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, who actually served the Germans both as volunteers in the army but also as concentration camp guards, gave the extra impetus to the terrible massacres that took place.

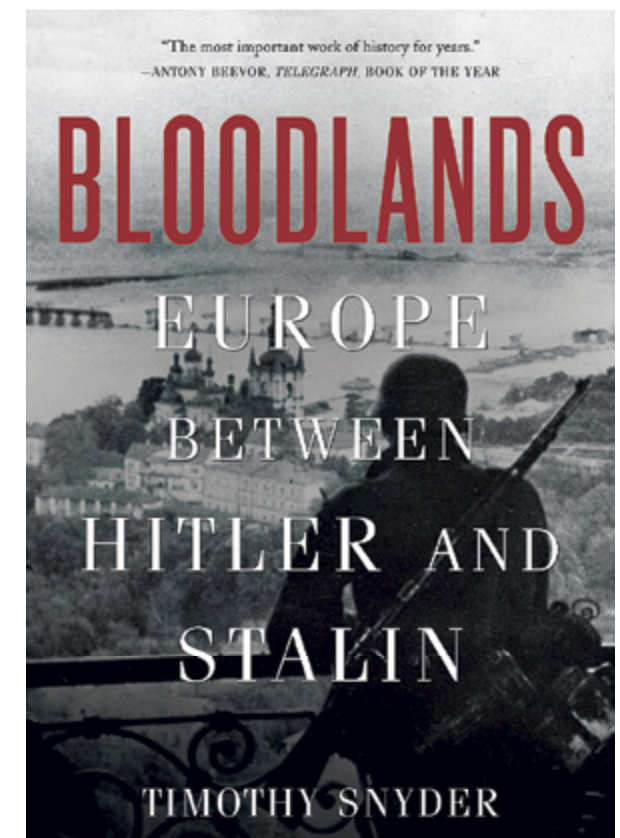
One of the themes of the book is the power of propaganda which was used throughout World War II.

Yes, and even from before. I think that Goebbels was a diabolical genius. He saw that hatred was not enough and you had to combine hatred with fear if you were going to get the maximum killing potential out of your followers. Snyder, in this extraordinary book, shows how some 14 million people were killed in this particular region, which basically runs from Eastern Germany all the way though to Eastern Belarus and the Ukraine as well as the Baltic States, Poland and Hungary into the Balkans. These were the areas where most of the Jews lived who had suffered in the Holocaust

but also where the Nazis positioned their extermination camps. The borderlands were the most blood-soaked regions of World War II.

What particular aspects of the war does your book, *The Second World War*, focus on?

In a way the book has not a very admirable genesis. I became more and more conscious that I had concentrated on certain areas of World War II and I always felt a bit of a fraud being billed as the great expert because I knew perfectly well that there were certain areas of which I knew nothing! And I also realised how important it was to bring the whole thing together. For example, I start with the Battle of Khalkhyn Gol on the Manchurian Mongolian border in 1939. This was a battle between the Soviets and Japan and it was one of the most influential battles in the whole of World War II. You have all of these knock-on effects between the Pacific War and the European War and that was what prompted me to write the book.



THE RECIPES THAT KEPT BRITAIN GOING IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

You too can rustle up something delicious out of meagre rations with these austerity recipes from the Imperial War Museum. The Second World War had a huge impact on the kitchens, and the stomachs, of millions of British people.

Food was 'a munition of war' and without it, military forces could not fight on; civilian workers could not contribute to their nation's 'war machine' in the unrelenting production of weapons and equipment; and ordinary people living through a state of war on the home fronts had to be sustained. Food was their fuel.

With imports hit hard by the attacks on shipping convoys, compromises were made to get Britain as far as possible towards self-sufficiency. Food was never wasted; alternate ingredients were constantly tried out. Those efforts have been celebrated in a new book called *Victory in the Kitchen*, published by the Imperial War Museum.

Victory in the Kitchen is not your usual cookbook: there are no beautiful photographs of food carefully prepared in studios, but instead a collection of simple, delightful and – to our modern palates – unusual recipes from the Second World War. It's all beautifully illustrated with some of the museum's collection of beautiful and often very funny wartime posters.

We've picked out two of the recipes for you to try – two of the pie recipes, just like your mothers, grandmothers or great-grandmothers might have made in the war.



Lord Woolton's Pie

For a nation that favoured meat, it was extraordinary for a vegetarian dish to be accepted by

the British people. Lord Woolton's Pie is an example of a dish that was so successful, it in fact became a legendary wartime recipe. As overseas supplies became increasingly



threatened by the war, there was a push towards home-grown produce and self-sufficiency.

That need led to the creation of this pie, one of the most popular wartime recipes, which was named after the wartime Minister of Food. It's a root vegetable pie, including the infamous 'Doctor Carrot' and 'Potato Pete,' blended with oats and topped with a potato crust.

Ingredients – filling

1lb seasonal vegetables such as potato, swede, cauliflower and carrot
3–4 spring onions
1 teaspoon vegetable extract
1 tablespoon oatmeal
Chopped parsley

Ingredients – pastry

8oz wheatmeal flour
1 level teaspoon baking powder
Pinch of salt
Pinch of powdered sage (optional)
1 pint cold milk, or milk and water

Method

Dice the vegetables and spring onions. Cook together with the vegetable extract and oatmeal for 10 minutes with just enough water to cover. Stir occasionally to prevent the mixture from sticking. Allow to cool.

To make the pastry, mix all the dry ingredients together then stir in the milk and water, and roll out the mixture.

Finally, put the filling in a pie dish and sprinkle with chopped parsley, then cover with the pastry. Bake in a moderate oven until the pastry is nicely brown and serve hot with brown gravy.

Ingredients

2 eggs
2–3 oz bacon, chopped
1 oz fresh breadcrumbs
1 tablespoon milk
Salt and pepper to taste
Pastry (as above)
using 6oz flour

Method

Line a seven-inch flan ring or sandwich tin with two-thirds of the pastry. Beat the eggs and mix in the bacon, breadcrumbs, milk and seasoning.

Pour into the flan case and cover with the remaining pastry. Bake in a hot oven for an hour and serve hot or cold.

Egg and Bacon Pie

If veggie pie doesn't appeal to your taste buds, why not try an Egg and Bacon Pie? Two of Britain's favourite breakfast ingredients mixed together and topped with pastry, what more could one want?



WHERE TO GO ON HOLIDAY IN MAY

Can't you almost taste it? Summer's citrusy zing in May's creeping warmth and brightening light. In the UK, it's a time to start braving lunch on park benches, jackets in place of thick coats, and the pub garden. Even if that means hunching under heated lamps. Mercifully, the rest of Europe is emerging into summer proper, everywhere from Tuscan hill-top towns to golden Grecian beaches. Even Canada's warming up! So why wait a minute longer? It's high time you hit the road.

Munich, Germany

Can't wait until autumn to pull on the lederhosen? May in Munich brings Springfest (or Fruhlingsfest), Oktoberfest's little sister. Expect the same risky

mix of fairground rides and beer-filled steins, but smaller. The city has its own version of hygge: 'Gemütlichkeit'. Soak it up in one of the many twinkly pub gardens, or under the vaulted ceiling of a beer cellar. Enough hops? The sun is shining on river surfers riding the Eisbach wave in the Englischen Garten – a year-round swell best left to pros. It might just be warm enough for the park's nude section to fill up, too; this is Germany, after all.

Brighton, United Kingdom

Kinky and quirky. Bohemian and burlesque. Brighton invented Britain's seaside scene long before Margate started

luring London creatives from their concrete cocoons. It's still our coolest beach town – for proof, come in May. That's when the Great Escape new music festival hits: what The Times calls Britain's answer to SXSW, and Steve Lamacq claims is the music world's Cannes. Expect a studiously obscure line-up you're definitely not hip enough to have heard of (sample bands: Pyschedelic Porn Crumpets; Tropical F*** Storm). Also on in May is Brighton Fringe. As England's biggest open-access arts festival, count on it to bring the weird. Plus, the sun should be peeking onto that pebble beach this time of year. Sorry, Kent Riviera: Brighton's just better.



Sicily, Italy

The football at the toe of Italy's boot, the Mediterranean's largest island is a reliably sunny way to kick off an early summer. There's scalded volcano



country and fertile wine land, Greek temples and Roman ruins. You can wander the shady lanes of baroque hill towns such as Ragusa, then stroll sun-soaked plazas in the coastal city of Syracuse. Come May, the countryside blooms, and the water lapping the beaches is warm. Bring your towel with you when you go to lunch in the old fishing village of Porto Palo – Sicily's prettiest secluded cove, Capparina di Mare, is just a little further west.

Memphis, USA

The Memphis in May Festival – a month of celebrations centred around the beloved preoccupations of blues and barbecue – brings an already party-loving city even more to life. Lately, this storied part of the American South has been gifted with a little extra sparkle, too: an expanded Graceland features an entire museum dedicated solely to Elvis's cars; the



new Mighty Lights of Hernando de Soto Bridge shine a nightly show over the Mississippi's swell. Beale Street remains an essential destination: a neon strip of legendary blues clubs. And don't leave without a taste of those famed baby-back ribs. With around 115 barbecue restaurants inside the city, there's really no excuse.

Norwegian Fjords

Cruising through the fjords is one way to do it – another is a monu-

mental road trip, skimming cliff edges and winding through greening countryside, above blue water sparkling below. In May, wildflowers are flourishing and hiking trails are blissfully quiet; free not only of tourists, but also of summer's irksome midges. Drive the Discovery Route from Bergen and catch spring's blossoming apple trees at dramatic Hardangerfjord, then feel your stomach drop at the lip of flat-topped Pulpit Rock. Steady your nerves back in Bergen, where Scandi-red clapboard houses sit aside buzzy cocktail bars; No Stress prides itself on its house-made syrups and juices, and can be relied upon for a good-time throng.

Bahamas, Caribbean

Behold the Bahamian sweet spot: May. The winter hordes long gone, and spring-breakers freshly departed. Hurricane season doesn't set in until June. Beaches relieved of rowdy crowds settle sedately in the sun. There's nothing to do but stake out your patch on pristine Cabbage Beach (even quieter at the north end), take



your pick of poolside lounge chairs, and pluck the fruits of Gladstone Road Farmers Market (open until the end of the month). You might even splash about with a sow at Pig Beach. But where to stay? On our 2019 Gold List, Harbour Island's Bahama House is a chic little cottage on its own pink-tinged slice of paradise sands.

Catalonia, Spain

There's more to Catalonia than Barcelona – though May is an excellent time to explore the provincial capital, with hot days, clear skies and fewer folks ahead of the summer squeeze. Further north, Girona's old quarter is medieval enough to have starred in Game of Thrones.

Plus, it's the site of the nation's greatest dining experience: El Cellar De Can Roca hasn't been hailed the world's best restaurant twice by chance. Then head down to the Costa Brava, not the resort-y part, but the section where stone-cut towns such as Peratallada and Pals pack honey-hued charm, and beach-side Begur's Cuban-style mansions house gorgeous, independent hotels. From here, it's a short, winding drive to Aiguablava, this Costa's most perfect patch of sand, in a Car-



ibbean-blue bay. In May, you might just find a vacancy, before it feels like the most coveted sunbathing spot in Spain.

Botswana, Africa

The Okavango Delta hogs all the press, but Chobe National Park, in Botswana's north-east corner, is every bit as captivating, especially in May. It's the beginning of dry season, but



just before high season, so camps aren't too crowded, the weather is mild (around 25 °C) and evaporating surface water drives large herds of animals to the Chobe River. Cruise past crocs and hippos on a boat safari, with a glass of chilled South African wine in hand. The park is also home to one of Africa's largest concentrations of elephants. And Beyond's Chobe Under Canvas provides a proper adventure, bringing you as close to nature as you might care to get.

Egypt, Africa

Rebounding Egypt shows new confidence this year with the long-awaited opening of its \$1 billion Grand Egyptian Museum. Just over a mile from the show-stopping Giza Pyramid Complex, the museum promises,



among other things, a faithful reconstruction of Tutankhamun's extravagantly ornamented tomb, featuring more than 5,000 original pieces. Though the country's troubles have not vanished, the number of returning tourists has crept upwards enough to encourage other luxuries; the new Cairo St Regis is a chic high-rise hotel offering respite from street-level chaos. And with Foreign Office advice pointing thumbs up at time of writing, 2019 might be the best time to see Egypt's wonders without an accompanying rabble. More so in May, before summer gets truly sweltering, but off-season enough to bag five-stars for less.

Dublin, Ireland

What, not for St Patrick's Day? But Dublin isn't all braying pub mobs. In May it makes room for brooding artists. Its writerly sons Joyce, Yeats and Wilde all wandered these Georgian streets for inspiration, and May's annual International Literature Festival honours the capital's high-minded pedigree, with authors flying in from all over the globe to argue and provoke. Then embark on a literary pub crawl, and sip pints where Dublin's greatest writers did so a century before. In May, there'll be moderate weather, crowds and prices: a pleasant time to wander the Grand Canal, dine in restaurant/bookshop The Winding Stair, and take in the works of new Irish playwrights at the Abbey Theatre, originally co-founded by Yeats.

The Scottish Highlands

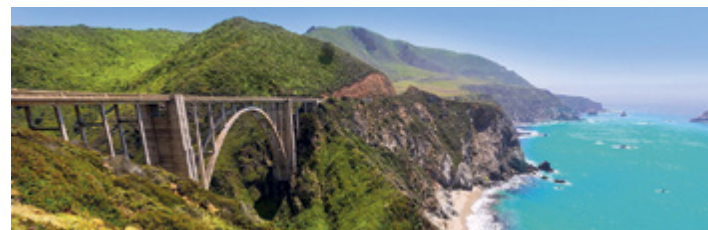
The Scottish Highlands are insanely beau-



tiful year-round but in May they burst into life. The wildflowers and rhododendrons are brightly blooming and the midges have not yet arrived to spoil the fun. There's something gloriously untamed and forgotten about The Highlands – wonderfully grand country estates such as Ardtornish are still the norm, with reams of lochs and lakes for fishing or acres of land for tramping. There's an abundance of romantic hidey-holes to forget about the rest of the world; and if you're finding May still a little chilly, a trip to a whisky distillery will soon warm you up. All this, so tantalisingly close to home.

California, USA

Come May we're California-dreamin' – of Yosemite National Park, cool and quirky San Francisco and shiny sparkly Los Angeles. If you harbour Jack Kerouac fantasies then take an all-American road trip through the state or along Big Sur. Conversely, the cities and towns of California are diverse and interesting enough individually to brave the long-haul flight for. San Francisco has always been laidback and welcoming, but now a burgeoning food scene makes a visit even more timely. Los Angeles is a strange



glittering town of health, wealth and youth, while San Diego is great for surfing. The smaller towns dotted along this sunny coast, such as Malibu and Palm Springs, are also charming enough to keep you occupied.

Tuscany and Florence, Italy

If you weren't already head-over-heels in love with Italy, a trip to Tus-



cany will inevitably cast you into the deepest of adorations. The birthplace of the Italian language is crammed full of UNESCO world heritage sights, medieval country houses and ancient cities. This region isn't just a living, breathing museum though, it is also famed for its Chianti growing vines, rolling Tuscan hills, the crazily cute Cinque Terre and coastal region The Maremma. Florence, the capital, is great for a bank holiday weekend, warm enough to stroll in a sundress and devour gelato, but before the city becomes stuffy and overrun by organised tourist groups.

Dodecanese Islands, Greece

Think of the Greek Islands and think of whitewashed stone villages illuminated against the blue Aegean, ancient ruins and tiny little fishing villages. The Dodecanese islands, a chain of 12 larger islands (Rhodes is the best known of them) and lots of little ones, are all these clichés and more. For a real

taste of Greek life, the volcanic island of Nisyros is wonderfully welcoming and a haven for artists. Symi, half an hour from the Turkish coast, has Michelin stars and is glamorously old school, Kastellorizo inspired the likes of Pink Floyd and Patmos has incredible Byzantine architecture, or if you can't settle on one, go island hopping on the Calypso.



Tel Aviv, Israel

A beach holiday and city break – Tel Aviv has the best of both worlds. Its outdoor-loving locals come alive in May, when everything spills outdoors and beautiful young people hit the

beaches and restaurant terraces for the most superlative food and lively arts and social scenes. Those seeking history and culture should head to Jaffa,



the old part of the city where hip boutiques are springing up in its ancient stone walls.

Vancouver Island

In amongst the knotted tangle of Vancouver Island's evergreen forest, it's easy to forget that this is supposedly the most populated island in North America. Mother Nature is still queen, with bears (grizzly and black) roaming the in-



terior and excellent whale-watching off the coast. Even if you're not barmy about wildlife, this island is one big playground. Daredevils can throw themselves down whitewater rapids, paraglide from peaks or snorkel and dive the sea. The surfer town of Tofino is quickly becoming the best place for food, while glamping takes on new heights at Clayoquot Wilderness Resort.

Algarve, Portugal

Before you dismiss the Algarve – look between the tourist resorts and



there is a quieter, more peaceful side to this coast. Not to mention some of the most fantastic beaches in Europe. In May the weather's hotting up but it's not yet too busy. Stay at the wonderful Bela Vista Hotel with an amazing spa on Praia da Rocha; and explore the secluded town of Castro Marim. Yes, the area is synonymous with beach holidays – but venture off the beaten track for quiet hillside retreats set in olive groves, such as Casa Arte, or Fazenda Nova, a quaint country house.



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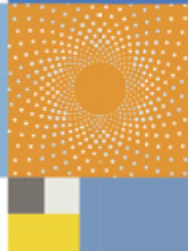


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LEGAL ADVICE

IMPLICATIONS OF THE DIGITALISATION ON THE UK IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

MERIAM ALTAF

In addition to the pilot of the new Immigration Rules and introduction of the Innovator and Start-up visa categories, a major change in the recent times has been the digitisation of the immigration applications procedures. The Government has invested almost £38 billion into digital improvement and transformation programmes that should assist governmental departments, such as the Home Office to increase efficiency and processing times. This attracted significant criticism from the applicants and legal practitioners.

Digitalisation came gradually into the lives of immigration applicants and practitioners. Initially, commencing a few years ago with an online form for overseas Visa4UK applications. Then it was followed by the Access UK, rather more developed user-tested application system. Finally, at the end of 2018 majority of immigration applications were switched to online forms. In 2019, online app has been introduced for EU Settled and Pre-settled applications.

There are currently two main third party contractors that provide visa services on behalf of the UK's government around the world, these are

Sopra Steria and VFS Global. UK Visa and Immigration government agency stated that online processes should make the application process clearer for the applicants in terms of what they need to do, what supporting evidence they need to provide and where they

The new processes are inevitably accompanied by delays and confusion on the part of the applicants and their legal representatives. Technical glitches are unavoidable and while these are positive trends that should in theory be valuable for the Home Office and applicants in a long run, the way the new systems were introduced so far has created more problems, such as additional costs and difficulties with availability of information when using third party contractors' services, who are often unequipped to deal with specific complicated case related queries or legal matters.

There are certainly positive implications to the digital changes that are brought by the immigration system, nevertheless, they are still at a very early testing stage. Applicants and advisers must have a clear understanding of the processes, otherwise serious cost implications and status of immigration applications could be easily jeopardised.



need to go to complete their application. While the new systems can bring effectiveness in terms of procedure, their set-back is often accompanied by poor communication and practical/technical glitches.

These developments have coincided with major changes in the Home Office application procedures concerning provision of payments, supporting documents and biometric information. Most of this is now handled by third-party contractors. For the applicant and their legal advisors, these changes have created undue complications and problems.



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