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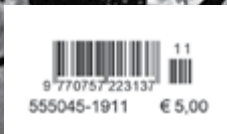
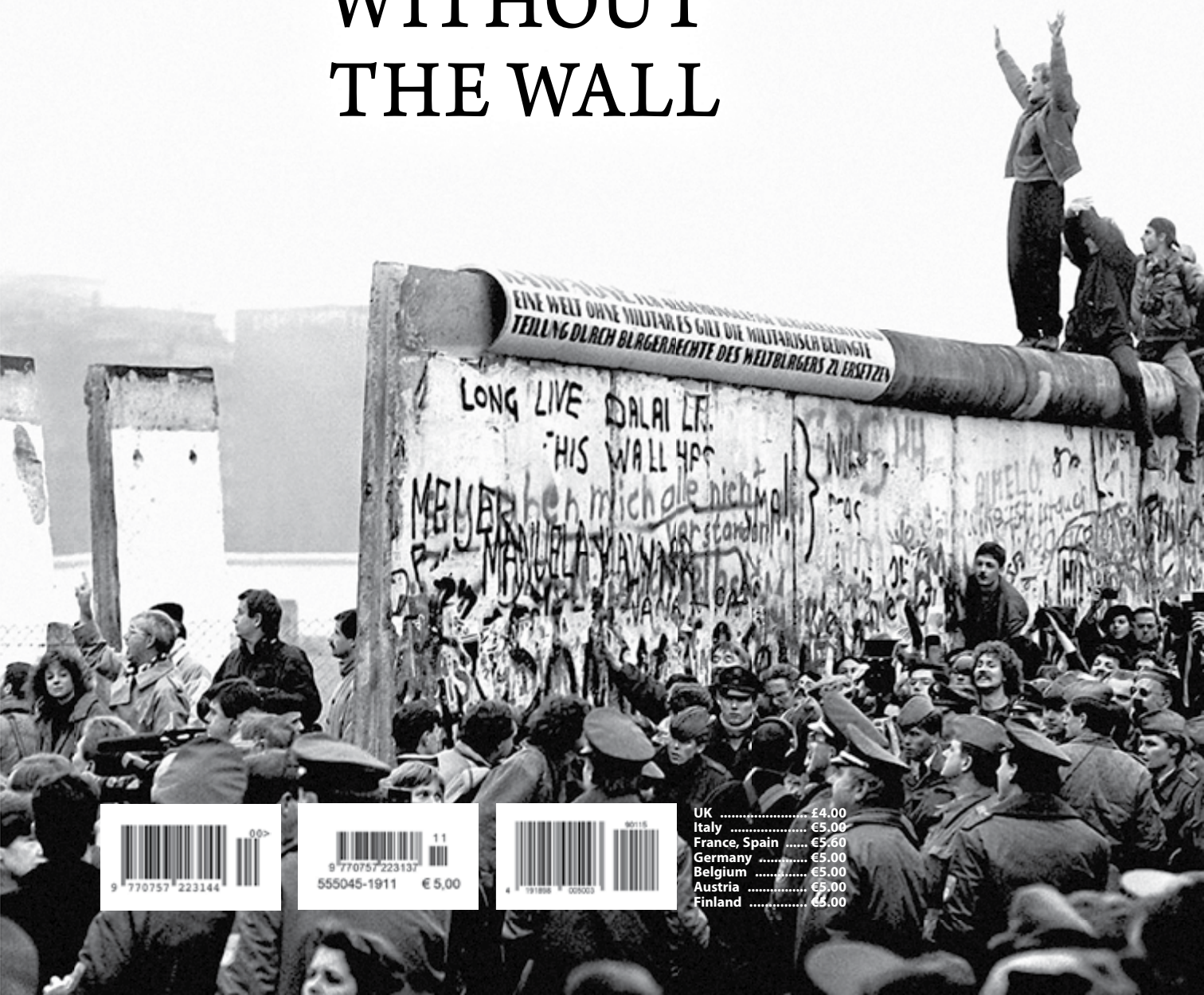
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## EDITOR'S LETTER WELL-TIMED THOUGHTS



The phrase “correct but ill-timed” became a kind of cliché. When thinking of it, we unwittingly revisit Maxim Gorky’s collection of essays on Russian revolution and culture. His “Untimely Thoughts” were actually very well-timed. Gorky liked the Bolsheviks, he was a friend of Lenin. But it is harder to challenge an inner circle than unfamiliar people. Gorky’s critical look at the revolution and revolutionaries is a spectacular example of free thinking. This is his quotation regarding the Red Terror: “Light wings of our young freedom are slushed with innocent blood”. This is another quotation on the revolution and all of us: “The time has come to realise that the deadliest enemy of freedom and law is inside us; it includes our stupidity, our atrocity, and all the chaos of dark anarchist emo-

tions developed in our soles <...>. Whether we are able to understand it? If not, if we cannot step back from the grossest violence against a human – then we have no freedom. It is just a word which we have no capacity to fill with the due content. I tell you – our root enemies are stupidity and atrocity. Whether we are able, whether we are attempting to fight against them? I have no sufficiently sharp words to blame the people who strive to prove anything through a bullet, bayonet or a face punch”.

The bullet, the bayonet or the face punch – all of them are not only the context, but also a metaphoric expression. The current Western “political correctness” promotes violence and intolerance. It is especially most pronounced at the reputable US universities where “conservative” lecturers are welcomed with a real punchfest. Mass media also demonstrate intolerance growing by leaps and bounds.

Freedom is a nice word which meaning still has not been understood by all of us.

**Victor Loupan**

**Russian Mind  
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## HIGHLIGHTS

# GERMAN DILEMMA

*Germany is like the USA – it is also a weakening giant, but at the continental rather than global level*

VICTOR LOUPAN,  
*Head of the Editorial Board*

We have been long accustomed to the German dominance idea. German quality, German economy, German social standards, German progressiveness...

All of this and so much more are perceived by us as a kind of model to be aspired or reasonably compared to. So, it became very common to think that Germany is a leading European country. For example, Eurosceptics have been affirming for long that it dictates its priorities to the other EU members without the consideration of their needs and aspirations.

There is some truth to this, but only some truth. Because the coming historical period will be significantly less fortunate for German economy than the previous two decades.

During Frau Merkel's long-term ruling the problems piled up continuously, so even their partial resolution seems to be impossible in the nearest future. That is why the existing issues being already serious enough will only intensify.

Let us get started with politics. Unexpected electoral success of far-right parties does not prove reanimation of fascism – it proves that a governmental alliance between Christian democrats and Social democrats became obsolete. On the one hand, Social democrats are going through the historically worst period of their post-war path, but on the other hand, Angela Merkel who has irremovably ruled since 2005

is not planning to pretend to take a German Chancellor rank again during the next 2021 election.

Nobody knows what to expect after her resignation and which coalition to take power. The newest reputable surveys support growth dynamics among far-right groups. So, Alternative for Germany (AfD) trails the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) by one percent only. Even now 14% of German electors vote for the first one, and 15% select the second one. But this balance of forces horrifies both mass media and the German ruling elite.

In the context of economic growth, ongoing recession revealed dismal

facts, such as technological underdevelopment of German production sector, evident insufficiency of long-term investments, increasing inability of Germany to observe its environmental undertakings and, finally – and that is what matters – growing disaffection of Germans with the European Central Bank which monetary policy is perceived by them as malevolent towards conservative economical principles of Germany.

From the social point of view, the gap between the lands located in ex-DDR and the lands in the most part of ex-West Germany not only failed to be bridged, but also aggravated. German mass media started speaking



*Completion of the "Nord Stream 2" gas pipeline project will be the most important test before specific determination of Germany's strengthening or weakening*



*Germany dominates the European Union both for population and economic strength*

loud on the regions literally left unattended with severe unemployment. Such lands demonstrate total animus towards migrants. But rejection of people of other faiths and foreign races reaches unprecedented levels even in intact parts of Germany. National average for dissatisfaction with migration and migrants in Germany exceeds 50% of total population. It reflects dissatisfaction with the line pursued by Angela Merkel who opened the door to Germany wide before them. The country, to its own surprise, turned into the "migrants' land" which "hospitality" attracts more and more poor people not only from faraway places, but also from former communist block member states which are becoming empty in the shortest time – especially Bulgaria and Romania having lost a third of their population.

However, it doesn't do to think that all these problems – which number is really great – are critically dangerous. Germany dominates the European Union both for population and economic strength. Last year it became the "absolute world champion" for export indicators. Its financial health is also much more solid than of France that is the main Germany's competitor in the EU.

Germany is like the USA – it is also a weakening giant, but at the continental rather than global level. Its general "health condition" has an effect not only on the EU future, but also on Russia and other countries of Eastern Europe.

Angela Merkel was a powerful player, but her power included rejection of power politics. However, the circumstances changed drastically. Russian reaction to the coup of

2014 in Kiev, war in Syria, migration crisis and Trump's election immediately turned the Germany's permanent Chancellor into an old and tired woman hardly receiving attention. Unsuspected energy shown by Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, is substantially explained by Merkel's apathetic inactivity.

Completion of the "Nord Stream 2" gas pipeline project will be the most important test before specific determination of Germany's strengthening or weakening. Only Denmark throws up roadblocks. But what is Denmark against powerful Germany? A reasonable question. However, Denmark is supported by the USA. That is why this test is for Germany. Its outcome will affect not only the future of energy market in Germany, but also the political development of the total European Union.



# LIES FROM EUROPEAN HISTORICIANS

*"It seems as if Europe would prepare a new march on Russia..."*

TEO GURIELI,  
*political analyst*

In several months, May 2020, the human will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. The Soviet people accept May 9 as the date of the end of the Great Patriotic War which brought huge losses to the people who gained the victory and set the whole Europe free from the fascist plague. Berlin was taken by the Red Army by unprecedented storm. The whole world knows that the Nazi field marshal Wilhelm Keitel was enforced to sign the German Instrument of Surrender in the presence of Marshal Zhukov.

But the closer is the date, the more active are some Western politicians, historians and political analysts when trying to underestimate the role of the Soviet Union in human salvation from the fascist bondage. Public opinion in many countries is attacked by attempts to integrate the affirmation that it was the USSR's loss to set off World War II – at least at the same level of responsibility as of



Nazi Germany; moreover, they pretend to blame the USSR for having been Nazi's ally long before the war. It is surprising that this opinion is now supported by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who had once been a leading columnist at Daily Telegraph and then worked as a chief editor at The Spectator magazine, that means he must have been well informed on contemporary history.

The most notable accusers of the USSR are the politicians in the countries being ex-Warsaw Pact bloc members. This phenomenon is easy to understand. Having reached the forefront of political events resulting from the dissolution of the Soviet Union, they are mortally scared of the nations in Eastern Europe who slowly but consistently realise that they are permanently brainwashed, and who will strive in the course of time to improve their relationship with modern Russia.

Historically the nations of Eastern Europe maintained friendship with Russia. Russian troops assisted in liberation of Balkan nations from Ottoman domination, moreover, over the course of history they had been linked to Russia through Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Few doubted that with age the Slavic community would cease following the Russia-hating rhetoric of temporary rulers. This fact pushes compradors and servers of anti-Russia centers to escalate their attacks to Russia, its politics and its history.

Think, for instance, of Bulgaria. Its Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently acclaimed that at the end of the war the Soviet forces did not liberate the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe. There is nothing more absurd than this declaration. To recap, Bulgaria was an ally to Nazi Germany during World War II, and Bulgarian authorities refrained from massive involvement in the war against the Soviet people, as they anticipated local development of popular struggle against Hitler's risky undertaking. But oppositely, Bulgarian leaders continuously read prop books written by Russophobes both in the West and Eastern Europe. Recently the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria went to even greater extremes by expressing its protest against an exhibition planned at the Russian Cultural Center in Sofia and invoking Russia to "avoid supporting a doubtful thesis that the USSR's war against Hitler's Germany was a liberation of Europe". But who then liberated those countries of Eastern Europe – whether they were Easter Island habitants?

Let us imagine that the Soviet troops (of course, following the order issued by the Supreme Commander) would pass over Bulgaria leaving Nazi forces, Nazi rule and pro-fascist authorities there. It would be interesting to discover the post-war living conditions of the Bulgarians! How would they perceive the Soviet Union who con-



sistently liberated European countries one by one? As a result, such liberated countries numbered even sixteen! Every country saw killed Red Army soldiers who died in confrontation with Wehrmacht soldiers and SS-men. Had the Bulgarian progressive forces reached out the Soviet leaders repeatedly to ask their assistance in the soonest possible extrusion of pro-fascist cabal with collaborators and allow the people to live life freely in cooperation with Orthodox Slavic community and in friendship with Russia?

Even a shabbier lie is often voiced by Polish politicians. They not only underestimate the role of the Soviet Union in liberation of their country, but also declare that the USSR "occupied Poland". And this supposedly led to a continuously poorer life of the Poles in comparison with the Western neighbouring countries, and besides made them suffering from "socialist totalitarianism". Instead, now they are seeing cultural and econom-

ical resurgence of Poland. Actually, Poland reached significant economic growth over the recent years. But this success is based on the funds donated by the European Union and the USA to Polish economy – we think of the amounts never offered to any other European country.

Nowadays Poland consumes nearly nine percent of the total European budget: one 7-year budget cycle brings around 117 billion dollars to Poland. Inflow of labour migrants in Poland (mostly from Ukraine) is of no small importance for Polish economy. It is clear, that Poland pays a good consideration for EU's and USA's money – it pays own sovereignty. It has virtually turned into a bastion used for promotion of anti-Russian, evidently Russophobic policy, into a remote control for the implementation of the US' ideas in Europe. All Polish personalities against Russia are in line with this policy. Including the thesis on enslavement of Poland after the war...

In the 1970s I consistently had professional contacts among Polish officer personnel. They, like descendants of the war-time soldiers of the Polish Forces as well as Polish experts, were proud of being friends with Soviet citizens. One of the Polish commanding officers once proudly told at the friends' table: "We never forget that the Polish Army is the second major power among the Warsaw bloc members after the Soviet Army". It was well-known in the West. It explains why the West thought it was important to separate Poland from the Soviet Union and turn it into the enemy of Russia. In the 1990s, upon the dissolution of the Soviet state, these thoughts became reality. Now Polish politicians and political analysts bear a banner of the propagandist thesis saying that the Soviet Union "occupied" Poland instead of liberating it.

The amazing thing is that someone can say such a thing. When liberating Poland, the Red Army exhibited ab-





solutely wonderful valor and bravery, but paid a horrible price for ejection of the invaders. From July 1944 to March 1945 five Fronts forces and the Baltic Fleet had participated in liberation of Poland; as of 1 January 1945, the troops totally numbered 3,250,000 Soviet soldiers and officers and around 80,000 Polish soldiers and officers included into the First Polish Army. It was a huge, historically unprecedented power; however, the field was hard-fought. The enemy resisted desperately, because the battles occurred on the threshold of Germany. Nearly 500,000 Soviet warriors died on the Polish land and over 1,500,000 of them were wounded or hurt permanently.

A severe tension of forces and resources can be translated into material losses: those battles led to loss of over 2,500 aircrafts, around 3,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, nearly 4,000 main guns, and over 7,000 fighting machines. Expressing in ammunition values, they used around 70,000 rail cars of armaments and nearly 70,000

tons aerial bombs. With this knowledge, with the knowledge of the price paid by the Red Army for Poland's freedom, its leaders failed to invite Russian representatives to the meeting happening on 1 September 2019 in Warsaw which was devoted to the 80th anniversary of the beginning of World War II. They must have totally lost their respect and conscience to fail to invite the representatives of the country who had sacrificed millions warriors to win freedom for Europe and played the key role in overthrow of fascism.

How do Polish leaders explain their behaviour? One of the top officers at the Polish Ministry of

Foreign Affairs Szymon Szykowski pronounced that only countries pursuing "the correct understanding" of history were invited to the meeting. This is a new term used in the EU and NATO for expression of different deformations of history and the total substitution of notions. We will develop this topic later. But now, let us cite another example. In August 1944 the Soviet military units entered the territory of Romania which supported Hitler since the beginning of the war. Romanian forces fought together with fascists, occupied the Soviet land. But the USSR did not revenge the Romanian people. Its towns and villages welcomed the Red Army

soldiers with flowers and meetings on the public squares, with people being thankful for their release from the Fascist regime. Now the Romanian land sees development of NATO military bases and installation of cruise missiles targeting Russia. And this is not a single example.

One of the few now-living Great Patriotic War veterans once told me: "You know, it seems to me as if Europe would prepare a new march on Russia. The environment is very like the one existing just before the war".

It is worth it to pay attention to the words told by a former artillery commander. On 19 September the European Parliament adopted the resolution "Importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe". Actually, this is a document blessing any allusions or shabby lie regarding Russia and its history. With this, the Soviet Union, together with fascist Germany, is accused of triggering World War II due to signing of the non-aggression pact, so-called the Molotov Ribbentrop Pact, in 1939.



Igor Shishkin, a Deputy Director of the Institute of CIS Countries, perceives the European Parliament resolution as follows: again, we have faced a new display of the EU's position on history, but not a scientific approach of European politicians to history. It aims at assistance in distribution of roles within the global geopolitical picture continuously established by the Western countries, but not determination of the historical truth. According to this picture, the West is a preserver of all mankind from the "20th century plague" which includes totalitarianism consisting of Nazism and "Stalinism". But now its sacred obligation is to avoid replication of previous experience and promote liberal values and democracy in its modern, sometimes exotic, context using any possible methods.

According to Igor Shishkin, the "Western nations" perceive Russia (and post-war Germany) as a successor to the failing totalitarian empire. But based on declarations made by catchy Western politicians and political analysts, Germany went through cleanup: it applied denazification, confessed and suffered for its crimes, but Russia failed to do the same: they say, it persists in its criminal behaviour and fails to admit guilt. So, it simply must go through the "destalinization" program.

To avoid any doubts in definition of the "destalinization" used by the EU and NATO, let us cite the former Polish Defense Minister Anthony Maserovich, who declared that Russia is equally liable for Holocaust together with Germany. And the entire campaign equating "Stalinism" to Nazism also started with Poland when they adopted a resolution attaching the USSR's liability, together with Germany, for triggering World War II.

The strategic goal of all these ideological attacks is a review of the Great Patriotic War outcome to accuse the USSR equally with Nazi Germany in triggering the war. Herewith, between 1941 and 1945 the "Free World" was supposed to have unwillingly cooperat-



ed with one evil, Stalin, for the sole purpose of destroying another evil, Hitler.

These words reveal a suggestion of the long-term plan. Russia is still in the center of the Yalta and Potsdam systems, as the UN is a result of them. But now, according to Igor Shishkin, they want to exclude us from the system and make an outlaw country which has to confess and pay all the debts. They also want our territories: Kaliningrad, Vyborg, the Kuril Islands, a half of the Sakhalin Island. But this is just the beginning – the worst is yet to come. Because the final target pursued by the Russophobes is making their propagandist campaign global, developing further defamation of Russia until it is branded the "evil empire" like during Reagan presidency, convincing the nations that this country is banned for international or business relations, or any deals.

For implementation of this shabby plan based on lie, deformation of historical facts, and false stories, the same Russophobic politicians from NATO, the EU members and especially Eastern European countries ad-

vanced the idea of establishment of an international tribunal for investigation of "Stalinism" crimes. With their understanding of impossibility to realise this idea within the framework of the UN – as Russia holds veto power as a permanent member of the Security Council, – they offer creation of the interstate tribunal. Such tribunal established by the countries being adherent to European liberal ideas, will supposedly blame "Stalinism" crimes for the purpose of implementation of an earlier European resolution on equating "Stalinism" to Nazism in terms of outrage committed towards the European nations. It is easy to detect that this is just one of the ways to make a hybrid war against Russia, its people, and its history.

This entire dirty campaign inflated by Russophobes receives support from the Russian "fifth column" and is widely promoted among young people. It seems to be proper time now for giving battle both against the EU Russophobes and local Russophobes poisoning youth's minds.

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## INTERVIEW

# VLADIMIR PUTIN: “WE ALWAYS ASSESS RISKS”

*Read the first part of the interview in our previous issue*

On the eve of the G20 summit, Vladimir Putin spoke with The Financial Times Editor Lionel Barber.

**Lionel Barber:** Can we just turn to North Korea? How do you assess the current situation, and do you believe that in the end, any deal or agreement will have to accept the fact that North Korea has nuclear weapons and that total dismantling is just not possible? If I could just add, Mr President, I ask you this because Russia has a fairly small but still a land border with North Korea.

**Vladimir Putin:** You know, whether we recognise North Korea as a nuclear power or not, the number of nuclear charges it has will not decrease. We must proceed from modern realities, which are that nuclear weapons pose a threat to international peace and security.

Another pertinent question is where this problem stems from. The tragedies of Libya and Iraq have inspired many countries to ensure their security at all costs.

What we should be talking about is not how to make North Korea disarm, but how to ensure the unconditional security of North Korea and how to make any country, including North Korea feel safe and protected by international law that is strictly honoured by all members of the international community. This is what we should be thinking about.

We should think about guarantees, which we should use as the basis for talks with North Korea. We must be patient, respect it and, at the same time, take into account the dangers

arising from this, the dangers of the nuclear status and the presence of nuclear weapons.

Of course, the current situation is fraught with unpredictable scenarios, which we must avoid.

**Lionel Barber:** You have obviously thought of this as an experienced foreign policy and security analyst and a strategist. How do you see the North Asia security situation over the next five to ten years, given you have Russia, you have China, you have Korea and Japan?

**Vladimir Putin:** You have said correctly that we have a common border, even if a short one, with North Korea, therefore, this problem has a direct bearing on us. The United States is located across the ocean, and the UK is located far away, while we are right here, in this region, and the North Korean nuclear range is not far away from our border. This why this concerns us directly, and we never stop thinking about it.

I would like to return to my answer to your previous question. We must respect North Korea's legitimate security concerns. We must show it respect, and we must find a way of ensuring its security that will satisfy North Korea. If we do this, the situation may take a turn nobody can imagine today.

Do you remember what turn the situation took after the Soviet Union adopted the policy of détente? Do I need to say anything else?

**Lionel Barber:** Mr President, you have been in power or very close to power. I think in Davos I said to you

when we met – you were not in power but still calling all the shots. After 20 years at the top or near the top, has your appetite for risk increased?

**Vladimir Putin:** It did not increase or decrease. Risk must always be well-justified. But this is not the case when one can use the popular Russian phrase: “He who doesn't take risks, never drinks champagne.” This is not the case. Quite possibly, risks are inevitable when one has to make certain decisions. Depending on the scale of any decision, risks can be small or serious.

Any decision-making process is accompanied by risk. Before taking one's chances, one has to meticulously assess everything. Therefore, risk based on an assessment of the situation and the possible consequences of the decisions is possible and even inevitable. Foolish risks overlooking the real situation and failing to clearly comprehend the consequences are unacceptable because they can jeopardise the interests of a great number of people.

**Lionel Barber:** How big was this Syria risk in terms of your decision to intervene?

**Vladimir Putin:** It was sufficiently high. However, of course, I thought carefully about this well in advance, and I considered all the circumstances and all the pros and cons. I considered how the situation around Russia would develop and the possible consequences. I discussed this matter with my aides and ministers, including those in charge of law enforcement agencies and other sen-

**Vladimir Putin:** I believe that it has been a good and positive return. We have accomplished even more than I had expected. First of all, many militants planning to return to Russia were eliminated. This implies several thousand people. They were planning to return to Russia or neighbouring countries with which we do not maintain any visa regime. Both aspects are

sitions in the Middle East region have become more stable. Indeed, we have established very good, business-like, partner-like and largely allied relations with many regional countries, including Iran, Turkey and other countries.

Primarily, this concerns Syria, we have managed to preserve Syrian statehood, no matter what, and we have prevented Libya-style chaos there.



ior officials. In the long run, I decided that the positive effect from our active involvement in Syrian affairs for Russia and the interests of the Russian Federation would far outweigh non-interference and passive observation of how an international terrorist organisation grows ever stronger near our borders.

**Lionel Barber:** What has the return been like on the risk taken in Syria?

equally dangerous for us. This is the first thing.

Secondly, we have managed to stabilise the situation in a nearby region, one way or another. This is also highly important. Therefore, we have directly strengthened Russia's domestic security. This is the third thing.

Fourthly, we have established sufficiently good business-like relations with all regional countries, and our po-

And a worst-case scenario would spell out negative consequences for Russia.

Besides, I would like to openly speak of the mobilisation of the Russian Armed Forces. Our Armed Forces have received such practical experience that they could not have obtained during any peace-time exercises.

**Lionel Barber:** Are you committed to Mr al-Assad remaining in power or



can we see, at some point, the transition in Syria that Russia would support, which would not be Libya?

**Vladimir Putin:** I believe that the Syrian people should be free to choose their own future. At the same time, I would like the actions of external players to be substantiated and, just as in the case of the risks you have mentioned, predictable and understandable, so that we can consider at least our next moves.

When we discussed this matter only recently with the previous US administration, we said, suppose Assad steps down today, what will happen tomorrow?

Your colleague did well to laugh, because the answer we got was very amusing. You cannot even imagine how funny it was. They said, “We don’t know.” But when you do not know what happens tomorrow, why shoot from the hip today? This may sound primitive, but this is how it is.

Therefore, we prefer to look at problems thoroughly from all possible angles and not to be in any hurry. Of course, we are perfectly aware of what is happening in Syria. There are internal reasons for the conflict, and they should be dealt with. But both sides should do their bit. I am referring to the conflicting parties.

**Lionel Barber:** Mr President, does that same argument apply to Venezuela? In other words, you are not prepared to see a transition in Venezuela and you are absolutely committed to President Maduro.

**Vladimir Putin:** Oh, and it seemed we had started so well. Please do not take offence to what I am going to say next. You won’t, will you? We were off to such a terrific start, talking seriously, and now you have moved back to the stereotype views on Russia.

We have no nothing to do with what is happening in Venezuela, if you know what I mean.

**Lionel Barber:** What are those advisors doing then in Caracas?

**Vladimir Putin:** I will say this now, if you just let me finish. There is no problem with that.

Back under [President] Chavez we sold weapons to Venezuela, without any limits and problems. We did this absolutely legally just as it is done all around the world and as every country does, including the United States, the UK, China and France. We did this too – we sold weapons to Venezuela.

We signed contracts, which say what we have to do when it comes to servicing this military equipment, that we must train local specialists, ensure that this equipment is maintained in combat readiness, and so on. We provide maintenance services for this equipment. I have already said this many times, including to our American partners: there are no Russian troops there. Do you understand? Yes, there are Russian specialists and instructors there. Yes, they are working there. Only recently, I believe it was a week ago, a group of our advisers and specialists left the country. But they can return.

We have an agreement that our aircraft fly there from time to time to take part in exercises. And this is it. Are we regulating the rebels’ actions as some of our partners are doing, or the actions of President Maduro? He is the president, why should we control his actions? He is in control. Whether he is doing well or not, this is another matter altogether. We do not make any judgments.

I believe that many things could have been done differently there when it comes to the economy. But we do not meddle in things; it is none of our business. We have invested billions of dollars there, mostly in the oil sector. So what? Other countries are doing the same as well.

It looks like everything is preserved only by Russian weapons. This is not

true. It has nothing in common with reality. Where are the self-proclaimed presidents and opposition leaders? Some of them have taken refuge in foreign embassies and others are in hiding. What do we have to do with this? This problem should be sorted out by the Venezuelan people themselves. This is all.

**Lionel Barber:** I was just applying your theory and your experience of



seeing what happened in Libya and Iraq to Venezuela. And therefore, logically, you would say, “We are committed to Mr Maduro because we do not want to see regime change from outside.” Is that the Russian position? Or might you be willing to say, “We will support Guaido because we have important oil interests in Venezuela?”

**Vladimir Putin:** We are prepared for any developments in any country, including Venezuela, if they are taking place in accordance with internal rules and the country’s legislation, its Constitution, and in line with the people’s will.

I do not think that Libyan or Iraqi statehood would have been wrecked if there had been no intervention there. It would not have happened in Libya, the situation was absolutely different there. Indeed, Gaddafi wrote his books there, set forth his theories, and so on, which did not meet specific standards, and his practical work

did not meet European or American perceptions of democracy.

Incidentally, the President of France said recently that the American democratic model differs greatly from the European model. So there are no common democratic standards. And do you, well, not you, but our Western partners want a region such as Libya to have the same democratic standards as Europe and the United States? The region has only monarchies or countries with a system similar to the one that existed in Libya.

But I am sure that, as a historian, you will agree with me at heart. I do not know whether you will publicly agree with this or not, but it is impossible to impose current and viable French or Swiss democratic standards on North African residents who have never lived in conditions of French or Swiss democratic institutions. Impossible, isn’t it? And they tried to impose something like that on them. Or they tried to impose something that they had never known or even heard of. All this led to conflict and inter-tribal discord. In fact, a war continues in Libya.

So why should we do the same in Venezuela? Do we want to revert to gunboat diplomacy? What do we need it for? Is it necessary to humiliate Latin American nations so much in the modern world and impose forms of government or leaders from the outside?

By the way, we worked with President Chavez because he was president. We did not work with President Chavez as an individual, but we worked with Venezuela. That is why we channelled investments in the oil sector.

And where did we plan to deliver Venezuelan oil while investing in the oil sector? As you know, Venezuela has unique oil that is mostly delivered to US refineries. What is so bad about that? We wanted the Venezuelan oil and gas sector to operate steadily, predictably and confidently and to make deliveries to those US refineries. I do not understand what is so wrong with this.

First, they faced economic problems, followed by domestic political problems. Let them sort things out by themselves, and these leaders will come to power by democratic means. But when a person enters a square, raises his eyes to the sky and proclaims himself president? Let us do the same in Japan, the United States or Germany. What will happen? Do you understand that this will cause chaos all over the world? It is impossible to disagree with this. There will be pure chaos. How could they act like this? But no, they started supporting that person from the very outset.

He may be a very good person. He may be just wonderful, and his plans are good. But is it enough that he entered a square and proclaimed himself president? Is the entire world supposed to support him as president? We should tell him to take part in elections and win them, and then we would work with him as the state leader.

**Lionel Barber:** Let us talk about another democracy in Europe, my own country. You are going to have a meeting with Mrs May, which is going to be one of her last meetings before she steps down as Prime Minister. Do you think that there is a possibility of some improvement in Anglo-Russian relations and that we can move on from some of these issues that are obviously of great sensitivity, like the Skripal affair? Or do you think that we



are going to stay in a deep freeze for the next three or five years?

**Vladimir Putin:** Listen, all this fuss about spies and counter-spies, it is not worth serious interstate re-

lations. This spy story, as we say, it is not worth five kopecks. Or even five pounds, for that matter. And the issues concerning interstate relations, they are measured in billions and the fate of millions of people. How can we compare one with the other?

The list of accusations and allegations against one another could go on and on. They say, “You poisoned the Skripals.” Firstly, this must be proved.

Secondly, the average person listens and says, “Who are these Skripals?” And it turns out that Skripal was engaged in espionage against us [Russia]. So this person asks the next question, “Why did you spy on us using Skripal? Maybe you should not have done that?” You know, these questions are infinite. We need to just leave it alone and let security agencies deal with it.

But we know that businesses in the United Kingdom (by the way, I had a meeting with our British colleagues in this same room), they want to work with us, they are working with us and intend to continue doing so. And we support this intent.

I think that Mrs May, despite her resignation, could not help but be concerned that these spy scandals made our relations reach a deadlock so we could not develop our ties normally and support business people, who are doing what? They do not only earn money, this is what is on the outside. They create jobs and added value, plus they provide revenue at all levels of the tax system of their countries. This is a serious and multifaceted job, with the same risks you mentioned, including risks related to business operations. And if we add an unpredictable political situation, they will not be able to work at all.

I think that both Russia and the United Kingdom are interested in fully restoring our relations. At least I hope that a few preliminary steps will be made. I think it would be easier for Mrs May, maybe, because she is leaving and is free to do what she thinks is right, important and necessary and not to bother about some domestic political consequences.



HISTORY

# 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

On 9 November 1989, Berlin was reunited. The Berlin Wall fell – the end of the massive border complex that left Berlin divided into East and West for 28 years, tearing apart families, friends and neighbours.

Today, Berlin is known as a place of freedom, opportunity and individuality. But that was not always the case. On 13 August 1961, work began on constructing the Berlin Wall. It stood as a symbol of a divided city and country, of terror and the Cold War. Overnight, it changed an entire nation.

For many people, the fall of the Wall on 9 November 1989 was the best day of their lives – the day they regained their freedom through a Peaceful Revolution.

Nearly 30 years ago, in the night of November 9–10, 1989, East German border police opened the gates at crossing points in the Berlin Wall, allowing masses of East Berliners to stream through them unhindered.

This started a night of unbridled celebrations as people crossed freely back

and forth through the Cold War barrier, climbed on it, and even danced and partied on it.

The signal for the mass breach of the previously heavily guarded wall was a fumbled announcement in a press conference by the Socialist Unity Party (SED) Party chief of Berlin, Günter Schabowski.

His announcement that travel restrictions for East German citizens would be lifted led to the Wall's transit points being mobbed by thousands of East Germans as they interpreted the announcement to mean immediate freedom of movement to the West.

## What happened?

The opening of the Berlin Wall triggered a series of events that led to an unexpectedly rapid unification of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) on October 3, 1990.

But to really understand this moment, we need to look at when and why the Berlin Wall was erected in the first place. Following Germany's defeat in the second world war, the country was split between the victors – the Western Allies' occupation zones became the Federal Republic in 1949, while the Soviet zone was recon-

stituted as the German Democratic Republic shortly thereafter.

Germany's capital, Berlin, was also split down the middle. The wall was erected by the East German leadership in August 1961 to stop the flow of citizens from East to West, completing a sealed border that elsewhere ran along the frontier between the two German states.

The Wall's opening was the product of two processes that had gathered momentum throughout the second half of 1989: the peaceful demonstrations and protest marches of a number of newly constituted East German civil rights organisations, and the growing number of East German citizens leaving from the GDR's side doors.

The latter mostly happened through Hungary, which opened its border with Austria in May. Large numbers of East Germans on holidays in Hungary took advantage of the opportunity to migrate to West Germany. By November 1989, the trickle of East Germans leaving had become a flood, with thousands a day going to the West by the week the wall was opened.

Furthermore, the East German SED leadership had been increasingly on the back foot since peaceful demonstrations started, following manipulated local government elections in May 1989.

By the start of October, there were regular Monday night protest marches through Leipzig and other East German cities. Initially, there were fears that the SED leadership might suppress these protests with violence.

The Tiananmen Square protests and subsequent mass killings in Beijing in June 1989 were fresh in the minds of



many. But after a large-scale Monday night demonstration in Leipzig was allowed to proceed without armed opposition from the police and security services on October 9, the opposition gained courage and momentum.

A few days before the opening of the Wall, an estimated half a million protesters gathered in East Berlin's Alexanderplatz, calling for democratic reform of East Germany.

There was, of course, a wider context for these events. By 1989, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, had become convinced of the need to carry out economic reform measures in the Soviet Union. He considered disarmament and a winding down of Cold War confrontation in Europe as necessary preconditions for such reforms.

Unlike previous Soviet leaders, Gorbachev signalled a tolerant attitude to reforms in the member states of the Warsaw Pact, including relaxation of censorship and central control of economic matters.

Indeed, Gorbachev even began to encourage the replacement of older generation communist hardliners with younger reformist leaders. When Gorbachev visited East Berlin for the official 40th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the GDR on October 7, 1989, he was rapturously welcomed by young demonstrators. They saw his visit as promising reforms that had hitherto been resisted by the ageing SED leadership under Erich Honecker.

On October 18, Honecker was obliged to step down in favour of his younger protégé Egon Krenz. However, in the following weeks, despite the almost inadvertent opening of the Berlin Wall, Krenz failed to keep up with escalating popular pressure for change.

## The impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall

The new openness to reform in what was still known as the "Soviet bloc" had already seen contested elections in Poland in May 1989, and political and economic reforms in Hungary. These were catalysts for the changes in East Germany (especially events like Hungary's opening of its western border).

In the weeks after the opening of the Berlin Wall, there was a peaceful transition to democratic government in Czechoslovakia, and less

peaceful changes of régime in Romania and Bulgaria, as it became clear the Soviet Union was no longer prepared to support hard line Communist governments in Eastern Europe.

## Contemporary relevance

The lasting consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall were momentous.







Despite the presence of hundreds of thousands of Soviet army troops in the former Cold War front line state of East Germany, Gorbachev agreed in negotiations with the United States President

George H. W. Bush and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to permit a swift unification of the two German states. This occurred almost entirely on West German terms.

The speedy collapse of the East German economy in mid-1990 left East German leaders, now democratically elected, with little leverage. Once the West German currency, the Deutsche

Mark, was introduced into the East in a currency union in July 1990, East German firms, already exposed by the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, were drastically unequipped to compete.

For two centuries, modern European history had largely revolved around the “German Question”: what external borders would a German state have, and what political order would

prevail in this pivotal Central European state? The peaceful and democratic unification of 1990 seemed to provide a definitive answer.

Providing real unity between West and East Germans required massive financial transfers from West to East. The transformation of the Eastern states in practice caused significant economic and social dislocation. As East Germans made enormous adjustments in their lives, their Western cousins were also paying slightly higher taxes to cover the costs of unification.

More globally, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the symbolic end of the Cold War. Berlin had long been a cockpit of Cold War confrontation – now it was the victors’ trophy. One US policy analyst prematurely proclaimed the “end of history”, in so far as history was a clash between major political orders, and Western democracy and capitalism had won.

But since 1989, many disappointments have followed the initial euphoria. The “peace dividend” hoped for by millions, and Gorbachev’s sunny but characteristically vague formula of peaceful coexistence in a “common European home”, have not eventuated. Instead, a triumphant NATO has pitched its tents inside the borders of the old USSR, and a surly and resentful Russia has responded with brinkmanship and confrontation.

Following the end of the Cold War, neoconservative US administrations sought to put their stamp on the world, and the “blowback” has resulted in chaos in much of the Middle East and think tank predictions of a “clash between civilizations”.

Economically, turbocharged neoliberal capitalism has come under question, especially following the 2008 global financial crisis. But, what is significant to note is that since the collapse of state socialism, symbolised by the fall of the Wall, the contours of an alternative social order have become almost impossible to discern.



# TOP 10 GERMAN FOODS

German food is rich, hearty and delicious and many top German dishes make great comfort food. Each region has its own speciality dishes and traditional cuisine, and your list of top 10 German foods can easily change from one city to the next.

## 1 Rouladen

This typical German food involves wrapping thinly sliced meat – usually beef but also veal or pork – around a filling of bacon or pork belly, chopped onions, pickles and usually mustard, and then browned and simmered in broth (braised). The mixture changes between regions, with some variations including minced meat. It is common to serve this dish with gravy, dumplings, mashed potato or blaukraut (cooked red cabbage). This was once considered a common dish using cheap meats but is now eaten at festivals, weekends and family meals.

## 2 Käsespätzle

These soft egg noodles are Germany's answer to pasta. Spätzle is especially popular in the south of Germany and considered a Swabian speciality and associated with the Baden-Württemberg state, although the origin of this dish is disputed and variations are found in neighbouring countries. These noodles made from wheat flour and egg are often served topped with cheese (käsespätzle) – rather like macaroni cheese – and sometimes with roasted onions too. They are also used to accompany German meat dishes that use lots of sauce or gravy, such as Rouladen, or in stews, such as Gaisburger Marsch (a Swabian stew).



They are sometimes served boiling hot, straight from the pan, so be careful. When cooking, a Swabian guide is to use one more egg than the number of guests. In some regions the dough is mixed with other ingredients, such as cherries or apples (Kirschspätzle or Apfelspätzle respectively, common in Allgäu), liver (Leberspätzle), saukraut (Krautspätzle) or even using beer instead of water.

## 3 Rote grütze

Rote grütze is a red fruit pudding that is a popular dessert in northern Germany. It's made from black and red currants, raspberries and sometimes strawberries or cherries, which

are cooked in their juices and thickened with a little cornstarch or corn-flour. It's served with cream (sahne), milk or vanilla sauce or ice-cream.

## 4 Eintopf

A steaming bowl of eintopf will warm anyone on a cold day. The name of this traditional German stew literally means 'one pot' and refers to the way of cooking rather than a specific recipe. However, most recipes contain the same basic ingredients: a broth, vegetables, potatoes or pulses and then some meat (commonly pork, beef or chicken) or sometimes fish. There are many eintopf regional specialities, such as lumpen und flöh (which means 'rags and fleas') in the Kassel area, similar to Irish stew, or with lentils (linseneintopf) typical in Thüringen.

## 5 Sauerbraten

Germans love their meat dishes, and sauerbraten (meaning 'sour' or 'pickled' roast) is a pot roast that's regarded as one of the country's national dishes. It can be made from many different meats, which are marinated in wine, vinegar, spices, herbs and seasoning for up to 10 days. This recipe is ideal for tenderising cheap meat cuts. Schweinebraten is a delicious roast

pork dish usually served with braised cabbage or sauerkraut and dumplings (knoedel), and washed down with a pilsner beer.

## 6 Kartoffelpuffer, Klösse and Bratkartoffeln

Surveying the top German foods, one might come to the conclusion that Germans love the potato. Certainly it is a common ingredient in many German foods and side dishes.

Kartoffelpuffer are shallow pan-fried pancakes made from grated or ground potatoes mixed with flour, egg, onion and seasoning. You can enjoy them either salty as a side dish to a main course of meat or fish, or sweet with apple sauce, blueberries, sugar and cinnamon. Look out for them in outdoor markets in the winter.

German potato dumplings (Kartoffelknödel or Kartoffel Klösse) are also a common staple in dishes, served either as a side or main dish, in soups or sweet. You may see dumplings on menus called Klösse (or Klöße, said 'kla-sa') in west and north Germany and Knödel (said 'ka-nadel') in south-east Germany, or sometimes filled with fruit or meat.

Another common German side dish made of potatoes is bratkartoffeln, sometimes referred to as Germany's answer to fries. It's a basic but tasty recipe that involves boiling potatoes and then frying them with bacon and onion.

## 7 Brezel

Brezel are soft, white pretzels made from flour water and yeast and sprinkled with salt (and sometimes different seeds). It's great to eat as a side dish or snack, especially with a strong

German beer. They're in every bakery and on street stands, sold plain, sliced and buttered (butterbrezel) or with slices of cold meats or cheese.

## 8 Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte

You'll find lots of cakes and tarts to tempt you in Germany, commonly made with fresh fruit. Few can resist a huge slice of the most famous of German cakes: the delicious Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte, or Black Forest gâteau. The cake is named after Schwarzwälder Kirschwasser, which is a liqueur distilled from tart cherries. Alternating layers of rich chocolate cake, cherries and whipped cream are topped off with more cream, maraschino cherries and chocolate shavings.

## 9 Schnitzel and Apple Strudel

What do these dishes have in common? They are both the national dishes of Austria, although they have also

been adopted into German cuisine and in restaurants worldwide.

A schnitzel is a thin, boneless cutlet of meat, which is coated in breadcrumbs and often served with a slice of lemon. You can choose a Wiener Schnitzel (Viennese schnitzel), which is made of veal, or a Schnitzel Wiener Art made of pork (Schwein). If you order a Hamburg-style schnitzel, it will arrive with a fried egg on top, while a Holsten-style schnitzel will come with an egg, anchovies and capers.

Apfelstrudel (apple strudel) is a popular dessert of buttery pastry filled with apples flavoured with sugar, cinnamon, raisins and breadcrumbs. It became popular in the 18th century under the Habsburg empire. The delicate flaky pastry is made from an elastic dough, which is kneaded and stretched until it's almost paper thin. The thin pastry layers are buttered together, before being wrapped around the apple filling and baked. It's served warm in slices sprinkled with powdered or icing sugar.

## 10 Wurst

There are more than 1500 different types of Wurst (sausage) made in Germany and you'll find street stalls selling them everywhere. The most popular include Bratwurst (fried sausage) made of ground pork and spices, Wiener (Viennese), which is smoked and then boiled, and Blutwurst and Schwarzwurst, which are both blood sausages. Look out for regional specialities like Berlin's Currywurst (sausage with curried ketchup on the top), Bavaria's Weisswurst, a white sausage that you peel before eating with a sweet mustard, and Nuremberg's grilled Rostbratwurst, served with fermented shredded cabbage (sauerkraut). In Thuringian the local Thüringer Rostbratwurst has received protected geographical status and the recipe dates hundreds of years. It is characterised from other sausages by distinctive spices (such as marjoram and caraway).





BOOKS

# 10 GERMAN BOOKS YOU HAVE TO READ

ALEXANDER JOHNSTONE

These ten novels, ranging from the late 19th century to the last couple of years, are modern German classics. Earning international acclaim, each one is essential reading.

From Nobel Prize winners to a book burned by the Nazis, this list takes a whistlestop tour through Germany's most influential books and authors.

## 1 Die Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum) by Günter Grass (1959)

In *Die Blechtrommel*, Oskar Matzerath narrates his life story from a mental hospital in the early 1950s.

Born in 1924, Matzerath decided at the age of three to stop growing, retaining the stature of a child whilst having an adult's capacity for thought. Nobel Prize-winning author Günter Grass' most famous novel is not the easiest of reads, but it is definitely worth the effort.

The book "most completely defines the [20th century] in all its glories and catastrophes – the moods, atmospheres, manias, streams, currents, histories and under-histories," writes *The Guardian*.

## 2 Der Tod in Venedig (Death in Venice) by Thomas Mann (1912)

*Buddenbrooks* and *Der Zauberberg* (The Magic Mountain) are probably Thomas Mann's most renowned novels.

But to get a taste of Mann's writing, *Der Tod in Venedig* is a good place to start.

Gustav von Aschenbach is a famous writer who takes a summer holiday in Venice. During one dinner, he notices an exceptionally beautiful adolescent boy.

He becomes obsessed from a distance, shutting out the ominous news of a danger spreading through the city.

## 3 Der Vorleser (The Reader) by Bernhard Schlink (1995)

In the late 1950s, 15-year-old West German Michael Berg finds himself in a passionate but secret love affair with a woman who is over 20 years his senior, leaving him confused yet enthralled.

As a law student several years later, he is observing a trial when he realizes that the woman in the dock is his former lover. But the woman on trial is a very different person to the one he thought he knew.

*Der Vorleser* belongs to the genre of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – a term used to describe post-war attempts to come to terms with the Nazi past – and is one of the best-known examples outside of Germany. In 1997, it became the first ever German book to top the New York Times bestseller list, and Kate Winslet

won an Oscar for her performance in the 2008 film adaptation.

The book has however come in for staunch criticism, as critics claim it encourages identification with the perpetrators of the Holocaust.

## 4 Im Westen Nichts Neues (All Quiet on the Western Front) by Erich Maria Remarque (1929)

One of the most well-known books about the First World War, Remarque's novel tells the story of German soldier Paul Bäumer, giving a human perspective to the mass of fighting in Europe between 1914 and 1918. Remarque was himself a veteran of the war, and he wrote and published the book a decade after its conclusion.

The novel zooms in to the daily life of a private soldier, detailing both the violence of battle and the mundaneness of life on the front.

Published in 1929, it quickly received international acclaim, being translated into 22 different languages and selling 2.5 million copies in the first 18 months.

It was also one of the first books banned and burned by the Nazis for being "degenerate."

## 5 Das Parfum (Perfume) by Patrick Süskind (1985)

Whereas most good novels manage to conjure up images in your head, *Das Par-*

fum also conjures up scents and smells that waft up from the page.

Following the journey of a boy with an exquisite sense of smell which drives him to gruesome deeds, Süskind's novel transports you back to 18th century France, and the sprawling, stinking city of Paris.

When it was published in 1985, *Das Parfum* shot to the top of the best-seller tables. It stayed in *Der Spiegel*'s bestseller list for eight consecutive years, also experiencing great success internationally.

You will not regret picking up this gripping yet grotesque read.

## 6 Austerlitz by W. G. Sebald (2001)

W. G. Sebald's fourth and final novel before his untimely death in a car crash in 2001 is a challenging but unquestionably rewarding book. He lived in southeast England for the majority of his life as a university professor, and the breadth and depth of his knowledge shared in the novel could only be that of an academic.

The novel traces the journey of Jacques Austerlitz, a man who arrived in Britain in 1939 as a young boy from Prague. Through a series of lengthy conversations with the narrator, Austerlitz slowly reveals his life story.

Sebald's unusual style has been described as its own genre: dense and slightly old-fashioned, it still captivates the reader and leads them on a fascinating journey through the history of Europe.

## 7 Die Verwandlung (Metamorphosis) by Franz Kafka (1915)

Franz Kafka was born in Prague in 1883, now capital of the Czech Republic.

At the time, Prague was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Kafka

wrote in German. He is now regarded as one of the most influential literary figures of the 20th century, and the adjective "Kafkaesque" – meaning nightmarishly complex and oppressive – is taken from the themes of his works.

*Die Verwandlung* is probably his most famous work, and many are familiar with the bizarre first line: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect-like creature."

Don't expect this novella to get any less nightmarish from thereon in.

## 8 Berlin Alexanderplatz by Alfred Döblin (1929)

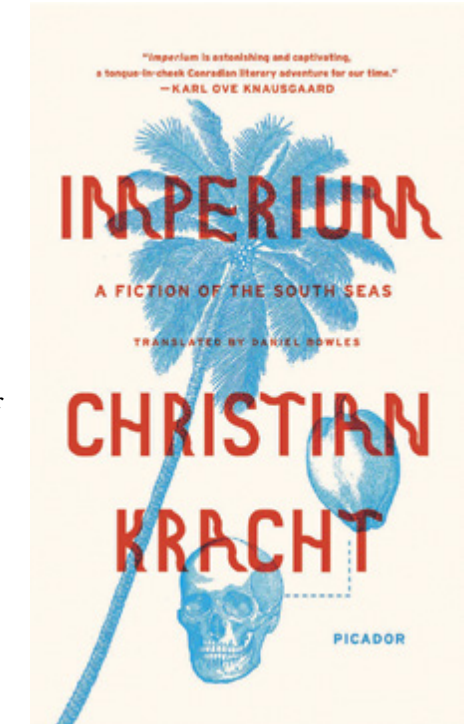
The year 1929 – when *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was published – was the high-point of the Weimar Republic, before it all came tumbling down with the Wall Street Crash. Berlin was like no other city in the late 1920s: diverse, liberal, and often debauched.

This iconic novel narrates the story of ex-convict Franz Biberkopf who, after being released from prison in Berlin, swears that he will live an upstanding and decent life.

He is soon, however, plunged into the capital's louche but exhilarating underworld. Döblin's novel was voted one of "The top 100 books of all time", a list compiled in 2002 by *The Guardian*.

## 9 Imperium (Imperium: A Fiction of the South Seas) by Christian Kracht (2012)

In *Imperium*, a vegetarian nudist from Nuremberg sets sail for a South Pacific island to set up a religion worshipping



coconuts and the sun. Sounds like absurdist fiction? Kracht's novel *Imperium* is actually based on a true story.

In this witty and ironic book, Kracht – one of modern German literature's most elusive figures – tells more than just the surprising yet true story of this extreme figure. He also deals with extremist movements of the 20th century, as well as offering other interesting insights.

## 10 Effi Briest by Theodor Fontane (1896)

Written at the end of the 19th century, Fontane's novel tells the story of a way of life that was also on its way out, with the unification of Germany and its rapid modernisation.

Effi Briest is a young girl from traditional Prussian nobility, who is married off to a considerably older official. Although a devoted servant to the state, her husband is less loving towards his wife, which leads to great problems.

This poignant work is seen as one of the great German realist masterpieces, and a beautiful yet tragic story of two people caught up in the shackles of society.



FILMS

# 10 EPIC GERMAN MOVIES

ALEXANDER JOHNSTONE

Films in German have won more foreign language Oscars than any other language since 2000, and half of the movies on this list were Oscar-nominated. But even if you don't go in for award-winning or critically acclaimed films, there's something for everyone in this ten.

## 1 Das Boot (The Boat), 1981

Let's start with a true German classic. Telling the story of the German U-boats in the Atlantic during the Second World War, this war epic still manages to seem contemporary. Two full-scale submarine models were created for the interior and exterior filming, making it one of the most expensive German films of all time.

Because the cast was forced to act inside an accurate replica, their pale faces and increasingly scraggy beards make the film very authentic. Also,



don't miss the opening scene in a French nightclub that makes even the drunkest house party look sedate!

## 2 Der Untergang (Downfall), 2004

Oscar-nominated, this movie has become famous outside of Germany too. Bruno Ganz, the actor who portrays Hitler, is eerily convincing. Don't take our word for it: Ian Kershaw, a renowned historian and biographer of Hitler, said that "of all screen depictions of the Führer [...] this is the only one which to me is compelling."

The film also became a YouTube sensation, with hundreds of videos dubbing over one of Hitler's angry speeches. Funny or tasteless, it's certainly landed a few people in trouble, including a Scottish MP, who had to resign after he posted a parody video.

## 3 Die Fälscher (The Counterfeiters), 2007

This is an Austrian film, so it's maybe a bit cheeky to put it on this list, but it is set in Germany and is German language.

The winner of the Oscar for best foreign language film, Die Fälscher the fascinating but little-known story of a Nazi wartime operation. Operation Bernhard



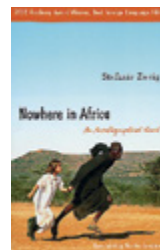
was the plan to counterfeit British pounds in order to flood the British economy and create hyperinflation.

Based on memoirs, it follows the journey of Jewish counterfeiter, Sally Sorowitsch, who is forced to lead the operation in Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

## 4 Nirgendwo in Afrika (Nowhere in Africa), 2002

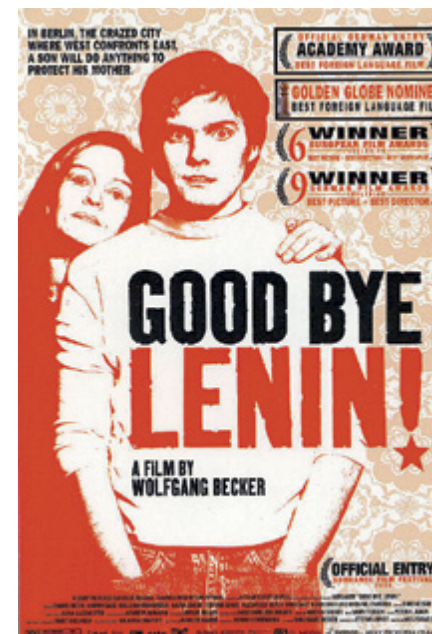
Set mostly in remote Kenya, this beautiful classic is another Oscar-winner, and a truly moving piece. Made more authentic by the mixture of German, English and Swahili, the film chronicles a family of Jewish refugees that migrates to a small farm in the middle of Kenya before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Focusing on the relationships between the family members and the native people, this one is guaranteed to move you.



## 5 Good Bye, Lenin!, 2003

Humour doesn't spring to mind when you think of the GDR and East Berlin, but this film takes a surprisingly comical standpoint. The 'tragicomedy' follows a young East Berliner



called Alex who tries to conceal the fall of the Wall and the end of communism from his staunchly socialist but very ill mother. As signs of capitalism start springing up everywhere, the film deals with the whole idea of 'Ostalgie' – nostalgia for East Germany – and it is a funny yet emotional watch.

## 6 Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others), 2006

Probably one of the best-known German films, Das Leben der Anderen depicts the terrifying presence of the Stasi (the East German secret police) in East Berlin in the 1980s. Stasi agent Gerd Wiesler is assigned to spy on a Berliner playwright, but he becomes increasingly uncomfortable doing so.

Fascinatingly, the lead actor, Ulrich Mühe, who was a star of the stage in the GDR, discovered he had been informed on by four of his former colleagues, and accused his wife of informing on him. When asked how he prepared for the role, he simply replied: "I remembered."



## 7 Barbara, 2012

For those who prefer slower, more arthouse films, this could be the one for you. Whereas most German Cold War movies are based in Berlin, this feature shows what life was like in provincial East Germany. Barbara, a physician who applied to leave for the West, is punished by the state and finds herself in an isolated rural hospital. No explosions or gunfire, but a very heartfelt story and beautifully filmed.



## 8 Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex (The Baader-Meinhof Complex), 2008

Especially for those who are too young to remember the Cold War, West Germany is often seen as the prosperous and peaceful one in comparison with its eastern sibling. This movie proves the opposite: it documents the growth of the radical youth movement in Germany, focusing on the extreme left-wing Baader-Meinhof Group that the state deemed a terrorist organisation. A great film that gives insight into the minds of these extreme activists.



## 9 Die Welle (The Wave), 2008

This thriller is inspired by the true story of a high school teacher in California who de-



## 10 Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter (Generation War), 2013

The last one is actually a TV mini-series. Broadcast as three 90-minute parts, it follows the different journeys of five German friends between 1941 and 1945.

It has been compared to Band of Brothers, but alongside the action scenes it also raises many moral questions. Dividing the critics, some say the show has sparked discussion about the past at a family level, whereas others see it as ignoring many important issues. Watch it and see what you think.



signed an experiment to teach his students about Nazism. Similar to the 1971 Stanford-prison-experiment – excellently depicted in another German film, Das Experiment – it powerfully portrays the horrific allure of mass movements.

It asks whether fascism could still happen in the modern world. By the end you're not so sure that it couldn't.



TRAVEL

# GERMANY FOR FIRST-TIMERS

ANDREA SCHULTE-PEEVERS

Germany is a combination of cutting-edge cool and timeless tradition, wrapped in a package of spectacular landscapes, vibrant metropolises and idyllic half-timbered villages, architectural masterpieces and fairytale palaces.

Indeed, the toughest thing about your first-time venture into Germany may be deciding your route. Its cities are high-tech hubs with an infectious energy, happening cultural and dining scenes. The great outdoors deliver cinematic changing scenery, from wind-battered coasts to sky-scratching Alpine peaks. You can visit castles and cathedrals built before Columbus set sail or take in the latest trends in street art. Wherever you go, Germany is here to charm, enlighten and surprise you.

## Berlin

Since the fall of the Wall in 1989, Berlin has been on a breathless journey to turn itself into one of the world's most vibrant capital cities. Go ahead and snap those selfies with the Reichstag, the Brandenburg Gate, Checkpoint Charlie and other famous landmarks. And yes, do stand in awe of the monumental antiquities in the Pergamon Museum or the eternal beauty of Queen Nefertiti at the Neues Museum. But then tap more deeply into this cauldron of cultural experimentation by checking out those 'only-in-Berlin' places.

Hit the Tempelhofer Feld, a former airport turned urban frolicking zone for everyone from kite-surfers to community gardeners. Across town, get a bead on the contemporary art scene

at the Boros Collection in a WWII-era bunker or treat your ears to a concert at Silent Green, a crematorium reborn as a cultural centre. On a hot summer day, there are few better places for cooling off than the Badeschiff, a cargo barge up-cycled into a beach club. Or scope out Berlin's vibrant street art scene on a walking tour led by an actual spray-can meister before popping into Urban Nation, the world's first street art museum. All of Berlin itself is still an unfinished canvas.

## Weimar & Dessau

The year was 1919. Germany was in turmoil, struggling deeply with post-WWI trauma and chaos. But order was restored in Weimar, an idyllic town in the Thuringian countryside. Not only did it give birth to the Weimar Republic, Germany's first experiment with democracy, but also to the Bauhaus, the design school whose 'less is more' credo would revolutionise 20th-century aesthetics. A new

museum in Weimar will soon pay tribute to this midwife of modernism that entered its seminal phase after moving to Dessau in 1925. In this city on the Elbe, you can take a spin around the



original school building, then pop into the Meisterhäuser, the private homes of some of its famous teachers – Walter Gropius, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky among them. Wrap up a Bauhaus tour in Berlin, where the school was quashed by the Nazis in 1932. Fortunately, plenty of modernist buildings survive, including the horseshoe-shaped

Hufeisensiedlung, one of half a dozen 1920s housing estates granted Unesco world heritage status.

## Hamburg

Germany's second-biggest city is poised to blow you away, and not just because of the brisk North Sea winds. A trading powerhouse since the Middle Ages, Hamburg is a captivating mosaic of contemporary culture, architecture, music and wickedly fun nightlife. Start by scanning the city skyline from

the outdoor viewing platform of the wave-inspired Elbphilharmonie, the city's spectacular new concert hall and gateway to the HafenCity, a former docklands area turned futuristic waterfront quarter. Break for coffee in the canal-laced Speicherstadt, a Unesco-recognised warren of red-brick warehouses that also shelters the truly mesmerising Miniatur Wunderland, the world's largest model railway. Grab a fish sandwich at Brücke 10 in the harbour and chase it down with a beer while counting container vessels from a beach chair in the funky StrandPauli bar.

No visit to Hamburg would be complete without a night on the Reeperbahn, Hamburg's gloriously tawdry nightlife and red-light district where the Beatles once cut their teeth. Drift away from this neon-lit mecca of mischief to party with the locals, perhaps by catching an up-and-coming band at the Golden Pudel Club or sipping a smooth martini at Chug Club.

## Munich

The Bavarian capital is always happy to deliver on the clichés visitors to Germany expect. Yes, Munich is indeed a city of Beemers, dirndls and beer halls with oompah bands. But beneath the cutesy veneer lies a sophisticated, proud and wealthy town.

Gobble up canvas candy from Rembrandt to Richter in the trio of







Pinakothek museums or in the exquisite Lenbachhaus with its new Foster-designed wing. Connect with Germany's soccer obsession by scoring tickets to a home game of the FC Bayern München, Germany's superstar team that plays in the spectacular Allianz Arena. Gear heads should make a beeline to the BMW museum, plant and showroom while royal groupies can take a spin around the rambling Munich Residenz. Daredevils can surf the Eisbach wave or take a screaming zip line ride over the Olympic Stadium.

## Moselle Valley

German wines don't get nearly enough credit, but if you worship at the altar of Bacchus (the Roman god of wine), a trip down the serpentine Moselle River should quickly turn



you into a convert. Incidentally it was the Romans who first fermented grapes here some 2,000 years ago. They also founded the city of Trier (making it Germany's oldest town) where you can zoom in on their ancient amphitheatres, thermal baths and the famous Porta Nigra town gate. Trier is also perfect for kicking off a driving or cycling tour along the river. En route to Koblenz, you'll clap eyes on Europe's steepest vineyard, legend-shrouded medieval castles and historic wine warehouses. Half-timbered Bernkastel-Kues, Belle-Epoque-flavored Traben-Trarbach and romantic Beilstein are all inviting villages to pause in and sip fine Rieslings and other classic German wines.



## Bavarian Alps

Like Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders, the Bavarian Alps hoist up the rest of Germany. A lyrical landscape of forests, brooks and meadows smothered in wildflowers unfolds at the foot of these broad-shouldered mountains, making it prime terrain for all sorts of outdoor pursuits.

Topping the sightseeing hit list is Schloss Neuschwanstein, the world's most famous palace whose turreted magic truly unveils itself at night after the day trippers have left. Bavaria brims with churches and even non-pious types will likely rejoice at the exuberantly rococo Wieskirche that rises serenely from an Alpine meadow. Peak baggers are drawn to Garmisch-Partenkirchen for its famous ski slopes and breathtaking cogwheel-train ride to the top of the Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain. If you're into dark tourism, con-

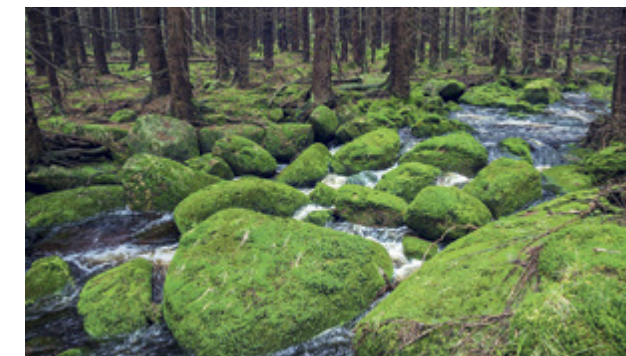
front Germany's sinister past in Berchtesgaden, home to the Eagle's Nest, Hitler's mountaintop retreat, and the Dokumentation Obersalzberg, an exhibit about the town's stint as the Nazi party's southern headquarters.

## Black Forest

Steeped in timeless mystique, the Black Forest is a sylvan slice of Germany where patches of woods are indeed so dark and thick that one might expect to stumble upon the witch's house in the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale.

Unfolding east of the Rhine between the Swiss border and elegant Baden-Baden with its glorious thermal baths and casino, the region is gourmet central with more than two dozen Michelin-starred restaurants. It's also the birthplace of the black forest cake, a creamy kirsch-drenched confection; Cafe Schäfer in Triberg has some of the

best. Triberg also happens to be Germany's cuckoo clock capital with two house-sized versions plus Germany's tallest waterfalls. From here, it's just a short hop to Freiburg, a charismatic university town with a grand minster and lively, cafe-rimmed squares.







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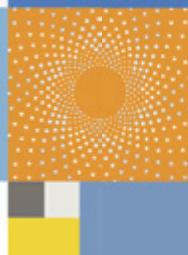


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LEGAL ADVICE

## MY VISA APPLICATION HAS BEEN REFUSED – WHAT'S NEXT?

MERIAM ALTAF

Simply making an unintentional mistake on an immigration application form can have severe long-term consequences. All visa categories in the UK have certain criteria, which are written in the form of specified evidence, immigration rules, guidance, legislation and Regulations. These criteria are scattered throughout different sources and it does require a thorough research and analysis to fully understand how everything works in practice, which would enable an accurate gathering of documents and filling of the necessary forms.

So what are the actual steps to follow once you have received that spine-chilling letter from the Home Office notifying you that your application has been refused and requesting you to leave the UK?

The simplest way, some lawyers would argue, to deal with a visa refusal is to re-apply, submitting a new application with additional evidence and paying the fees again. However, submission of the new visa application is a step that should be taken only when you are certain that the application was refused on the basis that the evidence provided did not satisfy the immigration rules. If there are any other reasons for refusal, you should seek expert legal advice, as

you may have a limited amount of time to take any remedial action.

Administrative review is another option that might be available to applicants that have received a visa refusal. This process will not allow you to send new additional documents unless requested by the Home Office. Essentially, in an administrative



review process, your application will be reconsidered by the Home Office and the decision will be checked for any errors in the original decision that you may be able to point out. This process should be considered only if you are certain that the Home Office has made errors in deciding to refuse your application.

The final available option may be to appeal the decision through the Court system. This option is available to most immigration applications. The appeal process is quite complex with strict time limits and can potentially be very expensive. However, if a valid claim is brought in front of the judge, your chances of success may be quite high.

In other situations, where for example you have no right of appeal, the only other available option may be a judicial review. It is a type of legal challenge where an individual asks the Court to review the lawfulness of a decision, action or failure to act of the Home Office. This may be the most expensive process of all explained above. If you are successful, the case will normally go back to the Home Office for reconsideration in light of the Court's findings.

The brief overview of the available options explained above should provide a basic understanding of the steps

that should be taken after receiving a refusal from the Home Office. Nevertheless, each detail in the process is paramount to the actual outcome of the case. Regardless of the way you decide to proceed, the time is always of the essence in such cases. Each process has a deadline in which you need to act, and if it is missed, you may have no options left to consider.



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