

# The Berlin Times

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**TEN  
THOUSAND  
THREE HUNDRED  
FIFTEEN**

**10,315**

The Berlin Wall stood for 10,315 days.  
It's been almost 10,315 days since  
it collapsed. Berlin has finally caught up to  
history – and is now defining the future.

SHUTTERSTOCK, MONTAGE: BT





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### EURO VISION

The citizens' movement Pulse of Europe speaks up and signals its opposition to populists and nationalists. In Berlin, they meet once a month at Gendarmenmarkt. Peter H. Koepf spoke with activists.

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IMAGO/REUTERS

### SQUARE ONE

Berlin's storied Alexanderplatz in the middle of Berlin has seen better days. The city wants to make the large square more attractive. Tong-Jin Smith reports about the latest plans. /page 8



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### HUMANE CAPITAL

Even entrepreneurs and conservative economists have advocated for the introduction of a basic income. But Michael Bohmeyer has actually done it. His crowdfunding organization gave 100 people 1,000 euros per month for one year. Is he crazy? Benjamin Walter met the man. /page 10



MAURIZIO GAMBINI

### EQUAL RIGHTS

Seyran Ateş founded Berlin's first mosque where women can preach to men. Why did she do it? Felizia Merten found the true answer. Because it's 2017. /page 14

# TEN THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED FIFTEEN

## EDITORIAL

Most people – even most Berliners – are unaware of a unique and fast approaching Wall anniversary. Not the “Day of German Unity” on October 3rd, 2017, which marks the 27th anniversary of the country's official reunification. Nope, the one after that. On August 13, 1961, the GDR began erecting the Wall, and on November 9th, 1989 – that most wonderful night exactly 10,315 days later – the Wall came tumbling down. And now, believe it or not, the time is coming when the Wall will have been down as long as it was up. Is it really possible? Yes, it is. The Berlin Times did the calculations and determined that on February 5th, 2018, Berlin will have lived free of the Wall for as many days as it was forced to bear it.

Berliners are fond of commenting on how time flies, and these days, “all of Berlin is in a blur.” Is there anything that hasn't happened in this new, free and united city? Where darkness once reigned, today there is light. Where the Wall once stood, today people literally dance and sing. Once poor and completely drained of industry, Berlin has now emerged as a creative hub for young people aiming to try new things, launch startups, forge their own paths and develop ideas that improve our world. In this issue, we invite you to read about people demonstrating in favor of something – in this case, Europe – as well as a young man who collects money just to pass it on to others. We visit new restaurants where patrons are treated to food quite unlike the typical Berlin dishes of Currywurst, Döner and Eisbein. We also take a look at a neighboring capital city that's revamping its historical core. And, finally, we'll speak to a courageous Berliner who founded a mosque where women and men can preach and pray together. As usual, it appears that Berlin is more than living up to its reputation as a city in which anything – and everything – is possible.

**Detlef Prinz**  
Publisher



## IMPRESSUM

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### GROWN ON CONCRETE

Large murals created by street artists inhabit the empty lots and exposed façades left behind by WWII. Johanna Trapp reveals some of the stories behind the walls. /page 16



SHUTTERSTOCK

### COMING BACK

It all started with a tweet: “Chocolate pudding, 19 cents. See you in Berlin!” Now a steadily growing number of Israelis are moving to the city. Some are even opening up great new restaurants. Franziska Knupper checked out the dishes and the people preparing them. /page 18



BERNARD KAUFHOLD

### BORN IN THE GDR

André Kubiczek writes novels about the former East Germany like no one else. He spoke to The Berlin Times about unification, his youthful idealism and his daughter's take on the Wall. /page 22



SCOTT STACHE

### REBUILD, RELOAD

The basketball club Alba Berlin has celebrated legendary wins over the past 25 years. But the latest season was the worst in its history. Some young guns and a sly old fox from Spain are raising hopes among hoops aficionados again, writes Horst Schneider. /page 30

# No new walls!

The reflexes of the Cold War will not help us

By Sigmar Gabriel

For us Germans, the year 1989 is inextricably linked with images of singing and laughing people climbing on to the Berlin Wall, celebrating the fall of the Wall and the end of the Cold War. We see people who have overcome fear. These images show an unshakeable optimism and courage, which inspired people across the globe. I felt the same way myself.

At that time which moved the world, I have to admit that I had an even more wonderful experience – the birth of my oldest daughter. She was born at the very moment when the people on the other side of the Iron Curtain were finally able to dream again of a time of peace. When Saskia was born, I thought that she might grow up in the most peaceful world there had ever been.

My youngest daughter was born 29 years later. I felt just as joyful about her birth as I did with my first child. But over the past 29 years, the world has gone in a very different direction than we expected back then. In 2017, we see that we have managed to preserve peace in Europe, to work together and to communicate with each other for an entire generation. But the past years have shown that unfortunately we are not living in the most peaceful world ever, but rather in what is perhaps a more complex world than at any other time. Moreover, the optimism of reunification has vanished, although we need this spirit more than ever today.

I have been German foreign minister for just over seven months. Since the day I took office, I have been confronted with one crisis after another. Not a day passes without new information about crises and conflicts. And the news is rarely good. There is the war in Syria that has traumatized an entire generation; famine and food crises in Africa that threaten the lives of hundreds of thousands of people; the conflict in Eastern Ukraine that has raised the question of war and peace once again in the heart of Europe; millions of people all over the world who have to flee their homes because they do not have even the bare minimum needed to survive; the situation in Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq and Venezuela; the insanity in North Korea, where Kim Jong-un is blackmailing the world with a nuclear bomb; and problems such as climate change and international terrorism, which transcend national borders. The list could go on

and on. And now of all times, we are suddenly no longer able to rely on some of our partners. Who would have thought that Turkey, with which we have so many ties, would become one of our most complicated partners 12 years after the start of EU accession talks?

These are merely some aspects of a highly alarming image of a world in disorder. And how do we react to this? We use the reflexes of the Cold War. We react with fear and timidity rather than with courage, commitment and confidence.

We are at the threshold of a new arms race. In China, India, Latin America, the United States, Russia, Europe, Africa – everywhere you look, people are only talking about armament. But one thing is certain – our world will not become safer if all countries arm themselves to the teeth. That is the geostrategic thinking of the 20th century – a strategy based on fear.

Naturally, we need to pay attention to our defenses. But if we turn our world into a powder keg, we should not be surprised if it only takes a spark for it to explode.

Isolation is the second type of reaction to the new complexity. International agreements are being revoked, international organizations bypassed, walls rebuilt and anything foreign vilified. Threats and insults are prevalent, and those who think differently are bullied

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It's a popular misconception that European integration was originally an economic project that only developed into a political union as a result of the machinations of shrewd Eurocrats. In fact, the opposite is true. From the outset, the EU was a political project and, particularly in the eyes of its founding fathers, a community of values, that is, a union based on the values of human dignity, democracy, the rule of law, freedom, tolerance and the principles of dialogue, solidarity and subsidiarity.

Today, this community of values is being challenged by a discourse that focuses on national self-centeredness and a process of walling-off. This approach is championed by both right and left-wing populists. They see the EU as having failed and often propagate a return to the nation-state, thereby eagerly invoking doomsday scenarios. Often these forces look with admiration to the authoritarian path tread by Vladimir Putin's Russia – one that recalls the logic of those 19th century powers for whom the right of smaller states to self-determination was of no consequence.

We all know where the logic of 19th century nationalism ultimately led us. The horrific carnage of that era stands in stark contrast to the 70 years of peace enjoyed by the countries that, over time, joined the European integration project, today's European Union. Outside of this zone of peace,

The EU must be a community of solidarity; this applies, for example, to the support for southern EU members in migration policy, including the fair distribution of refugees. One of Europe's foremost values is the willingness to engage in dialogue, which is why we Germans should be open to the proposals made by the reform-oriented French president, Emmanuel Macron, with regard to the remodeling of the Eurozone. We should enter into a serious exchange with the goal of reaching an agreement.

One element of such a reform is the transformation of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) into a European Monetary Fund (EMF). Solidarity should, however, be closely linked with the values of fiscal stability and subsidiarity: Eurobonds and other instruments that override market mechanisms are misguided incentives that would result in renewed crises and thus repeatedly to a weakening of the community of solidarity. We also need more dialogue in the EU between East and West. This includes more respect for unique national characteristics and sensitivities. However, we must draw a clear line where the separation of powers and the freedom of the press – two cornerstones of democracy – come under attack.

At the same time, the EU must always set a course for the future: on the one hand, by adapting the labor market to digitization and on the other by fostering a more active

# A word on Europe

The EU should be proud of its values

By Hans-Gert Pöttering

there was war in Europe, for example, in the Balkans in the 1990s and today's war-like situation in Eastern Ukraine.

And yet, today, calling attention to the EU's extraordinary record of peace is no longer sufficient. Indeed, in order to secure a promising future, the EU must sway its citizens by providing solutions to current

common European foreign and security policy that can shape international policy and global standards based on European values.

First, we need a proactive trade policy. The future of the transatlantic free-trade agreement is uncertain, which means the EU should work even harder on treaties with other countries that share our values, such as Canada, Japan, Mexico and the Mercosur member states. Second, we need a common European foreign policy with joint representation in the most important global institutions.

Third, we need a European Security and Defense Union that has integrated European (military) forces and a joint defense fund designed to foster research and skills development. In addition, the EU needs – now more than ever – a capable defense policy that enables it to live up to its responsibility to protect when faced with crimes against humanity in the European neighborhood. Fourth, the EU should provide reform-minded countries in its immediate neighborhood, for example in Africa, with stronger support in their efforts to democratize and modernize. This includes a much stronger opening-up of European markets.

In the long term, it is European values themselves that will be our most important



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and future challenges: in times of political, economic and technological transformation, Europe must stand for security and justice. The EU must also play an active role in designing the future. In the course of pursuing these goals, European values are by no means an obstacle; they are our most important foundation.

In concrete terms, the EU should invest more in safeguarding its external borders: as a community governed by the rule of law, it must guarantee control over entry into and exit from the EU. For this reason, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency adopted at the end of 2016 should be developed further and swiftly established as an EU entry authority. At the same time, however, the EU must uphold its own values and remain open to vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees.



# BREAKING EVEN

1961 1962 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989

February 5th, 2018. It’s quite possible this date will come and go without anyone taking notice, even in Berlin. And yet, this date is particularly important to the once-divided city of almost 4 million inhabitants. This date tells a special story, one of growing together, of hope, but also of a younger generation who no longer cares exactly where the Wall once stood and whether they’re in the former West Berlin or the new East Berlin. On February 5th, 2018, Berlin will have seen as many days – 10,315 to be precise – without the Wall as it had to endure the dreary eyesore. It had been erected by Socialist Unity Party (SED) leader Walter Ulbricht, Erich Honecker and others who sought to cut off West Berlin but instead ended up building a prison wall around their GDR co-citizens. It took 10,315 days from the day it was built on August 13th, 1961 until that happy night of November 9th, 1989 to reunite the divided city. And soon, on February 5th, 2018, the Wall will have been gone for exactly 10,315 days.

Today, hundreds of tourists and school groups visit the one-kilometer open-air Berlin Wall museum and memorial on Bernauer Straße every day to reflect on the horrors of the former border. Parents show their children what it was like when the city was divided by this brick-and-cement monster with its armored barriers and firing orders that forced friends and families to live parallel lives for almost three decades. It was an era in which the East German regime tried to live out its dream of socialist modernism in those pre-fab apartment buildings – “Plattenbauten” – found near the TV Tower on Alexanderplatz and all the way to Lichtenberg and Marzahn. It was a life lived according to the party member book of the SED; indeed, no other city in East Germany had as many Plattenbauten in such a small area.

Erich Honecker was the SED Central Committee Secretary responsible for security matters at the time and thus for “Operation Rose,” that is, the construction of the Wall. Honecker would go on to become General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and head of the GDR in 1971, at which point he continued to tend to his concrete wall. After that, a new generation was born and the Wall started to take on its

characteristic gray appearance. However, in the late 1980s, there were simply no funds available to complete the necessary renovations. Indeed, the GDR was at its end both economically and morally; the aged leadership of the East German workers’ and peasants’ state proved ineffective in responding to the reforms underway in the Soviet Union.

Mikhail Gorbachev’s policies of Perestroika and Glasnost were ushering in changes that extended all the way to free speech. The idea was to engage in discussions that would help save socialism and reduce the ever-growing number of GDR citizens applying to leave across the increasingly permeable Wall. The GDR was a pressure cooker waiting to explode.

These and many other historical aspects are on display today along Bernauer Straße

and in the Tränenpalast Musum at S-Bahnhof Friedrichstraße, where the focus is on the past. On Friedrichstraße, for example, visitors can walk through the former passport check-in counters where all West Germans visiting East Berlin experienced late 20th-century German totalitarianism in the form of the rough treatment by a GDR border guard before having to exchange their Deutשמarks for Ostmarks.

Visitors to Berlin are still fascinated by the city’s history. Today, however, there is no need for fear. These days, the only negative vibes along the former Wall arise when the popular lookout platform at the Bernauer Straße memorial has to be closed again for staircase renovations. But no worries, visitors just have to cross the street to see the old East German border tower and a few remaining sections of the Wall to experience that eerie sensation of finding oneself on a film set. The open-air Wall memorial remains one of the city’s most popular spots: 976,000 people visited in 2016, and it’s possible that that number will reach one million in 2017.

“Parents show their children what it was like when the city was divided.”

Wall Museum, visitors can see small cars with secret hiding places, special ladders and even flying devices people used in trying to make it over the border. Today, a section of the Wall stands in the corner; visitors can walk right up to it and touch it here, at the memorial on Bernauer Straße. In other words, the once mighty Berlin Wall, which inspired fear and anguish in so many people, is now no more than a museum piece.

And yet, the events in Europe that led to the erection of the wall – perhaps the most famous manifestation of the Cold War – are once again on the agenda. Indeed, 28 years after the fall of the Wall – and 56 years after the Wall was built – the jingoism that led to the Holocaust and two catastrophic world wars in the 20th century has reared its ugly head again.

In 1992, Francis Fukuyama cheerfully announced in his book The End of History, that the fall of the Iron Curtain signaled the achievement of the moment described by the great German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as the final

The Wall divided Berlin for more than 28 years – or 10,315 days. But it’s also been 10,315 days since it came down. Wearing the weight of the past and reveling in its present glory, the city is coming into its own

*By Frank Hofmann*



1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Only a couple of years later, when officials began arguing that the jets were in violation of the War Weapons Control Act, the artists soon had to pack up their bags. At the time, the state often resorted to obscure laws when confronted with such unique and overwhelming challenges. Indeed, who wants to have to call out people illegally drawing electricity in a city where every second household had had to resort to such methods in the wake of a collapsed GDR economy? Instead of that, it was much more important that someone had one of those beloved pump showers that could – at least briefly – warm you up in those old, cold and coal-heated apartments.

Back then, every day felt like the weekend, especially in Berlin-Mitte, where DJs dropped their beats for free in any number

of run-down candlelit buildings. Contrary to what you might have heard, people at the time were playing more than just electronic music; it was rock, pop, techno, house and basically anything a couple of speakers would amplify. In addition to the Tacheles, another hotspot of Berlin’s alternative culture was the “Eimer” in a building at Rosenthaler Straße 68. You could also enjoy music and a beer in basements on Steinstraße and Tucholskystraße. By that time, Dimitri Hegemann had already founded Tresor, the world’s most famous club, on Leipziger Straße. The Love Parade was growing larger every year and Berlin was constantly abuzz. It was as if the city were trying to forget the gravity of its own former division by dancing it off as quickly as possible.

In the Berlin Senate, Urban Development Director Hans Stimmann worked for six years starting in 1991 at erasing Berlin’s division architecturally. Building cranes and jackhammers soon greeted the clubgoers emerging from Tresor in the wee

hours of the morning and spilling out on to Potsdamer Platz next door. After the Wall came down, the city also had twice as many theaters and operas as any major city would need; and yet it was precisely this situation that gave Berlin the opportunity to assert its cultural hegemony in the German-speaking world.

At the same time, Auguststraße in Berlin-Mitte began attracting a flush of artists thanks to a unique policy set up by the district of Mitte’s Public Housing Association – one for which other cities envy Berlin to this day. Acknowledging that it would take years for courts to process the re-transfer claims of previous homeowners – which included many Jewish families worldwide – policymakers offered artists one-year rental contracts and required them to pay electricity and heating costs only. The advantage to this was that the homes were prevented from deteriorating any further. Gallery owners soon moved in and made exhibition spaces out of the studios. By the time U.S. President Bill Clinton visited the city to give a speech that many hoped would top John F. Kennedy’s famous “Ich bin ein Berliner,” anything was possible in Berlin.

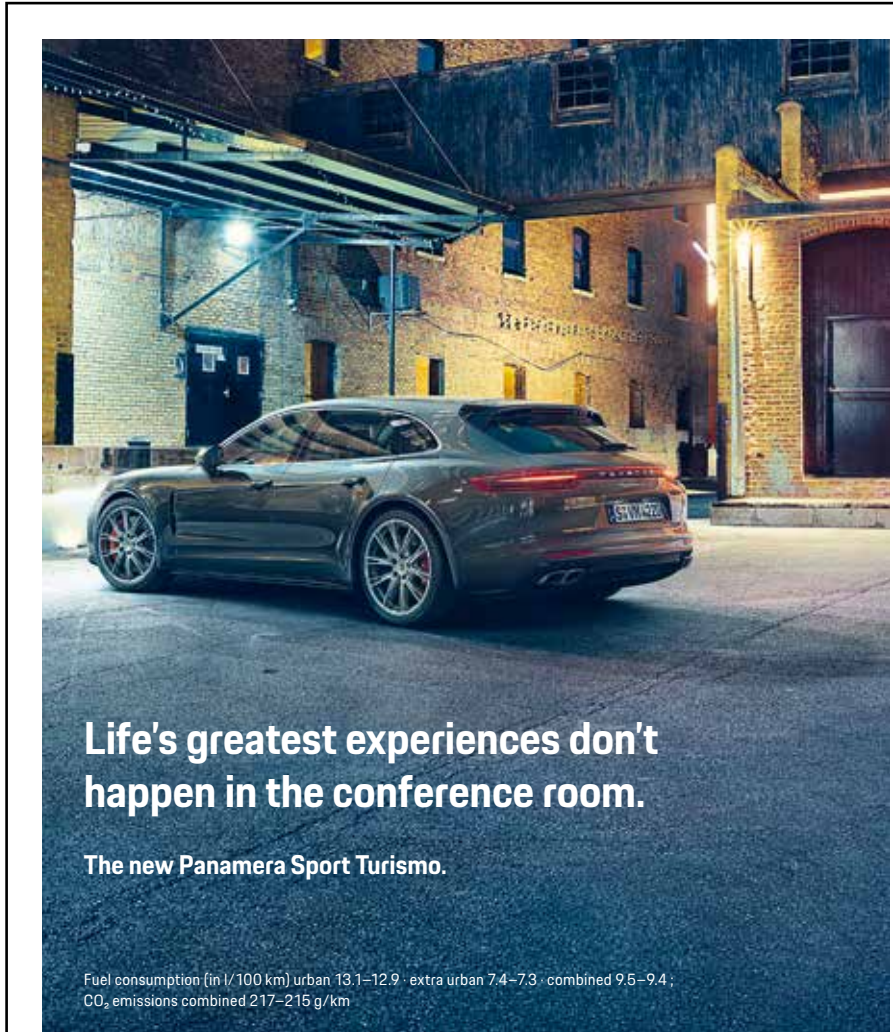
Addressing Berliners gathered at the Brandenburg Gate in July 1994, Clinton said: “We stand together where Europe’s heart was cut in half and we celebrate unity.” This is speech writing at its best. “We stand where crude walls of concrete separated mother from child, and we meet as one family. We stand where those who sought a new life instead found death. And we rejoice in renewal.” Clinton soothed Berlin’s wounded soul, especially in the West. “Berliners, you have won your long struggle. You have proved that no wall can forever contain the mighty power of freedom.”

Back then, this sounded a bit ridiculous to those fresh young Berliners who’d turned jetfighters into art and those DJs who were starting to make well-paid jobs out of their hobby. “Berlin is free” was Clinton’s cliffhanger sentence, but young people in the city had figured that out years before.

And yet, more than two decades later, this speech rings out like a challenge, especially in light of the right-wing populists

who are giving 19th century answers to 21st century questions. Today, Berlin has lived without the Wall for 28 years. The city has caught up to the other great European capitals and is mentioned in the same breath as London and Paris. Isn’t it time we took on the political challenges of our day? What city is better positioned to most effectively oppose authoritarianism than

Berlin, a city that suffered for years under a dictatorship of concrete? Berlin prides itself on all the new Berliners who live here today because they loathe the Orbáns, Kaczynskis and Trumps of the world. Let’s show them what we’ve learned in the 28 years we’ve lived without the barrier referred to by Willy Brandt as the “Schandmauer” or “Wall of Shame.”



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Gabi Bertin is an 18-year-old from Berlin-Marzahn. Her mother is Polish, her father is German, and she just completed her university entrance exams. In August, Bertin stood up on Gendarmenmarkt in Berlin and gave an impassioned speech expressing her worries about the nationalistic tones emanating from Poland. Two weeks later, she traveled to Poland to celebrate her sister's wedding. "Without the EU, I wouldn't be here," she said. Many Europeans only pay attention to the EU when things go wrong, for example, when bureaucracy gets carried away or fails to create a binding refugee policy. At such moments, the EU is seen as an anonymous, bureaucratic, anything-but-heartwarming institution. Indeed, people tend to overlook the positive sides of the EU, such as the freedom to travel, 70 years of peace, and prosperity for a larger number of people, etc.

At the moment, individual EU states are causing the most stress: the British voted to leave, the leaders of Hungary and Poland are behaving in strikingly nationalistic ways, and France came close to electing a president who wanted to leave the EU, which would have been the death knell for the decades-old economic and political union.

All this, plus the election of Donald Trump, caused Julia Hahn, a 35-year-old Berlin-based scientist, to do something, "a withdrawal into nationalism is not a sustainable response," she said to herself. But the idea of joining a political party also didn't inspire her: "Political parties lack an emotional side," she argues. She wanted to get involved in civil society, so when she heard about Pulse of Europe, she contacted Sabine and Daniel Röder.

The Röders' Pulse of Europe demonstrated for the first time in January in Frankfurt am Main. Since then, there have been offshoots in 98 German and 37 other European cities.

In Berlin, Hahn met up with a dozen other men and women to found the city's local chapter. What unites them is the conviction that the continent is home to more pro-Europeans than anti-Europeans. They believe a silent majority of people want a united Europe and don't consider an "ever closer union" to be an obsolete idea. Indeed, the goal of Pulse of Europe is to make the EU even better.

"My work with the group has changed my feeling about Europe," says Hahn. "I would never have walked around with an EU flag before. Now I've got one hanging on my balcony." For her, Europe used to seem

# Euro vision

Pulse of Europe is a citizens' movement where members of a silent majority speak up.  
*Peter H. Koepf met with activists in Berlin*

too bureaucratic, but now she's "learned that we have common European values." At each Sunday gathering, she would hear old people tell stories about the war and young people talk about their experiences on Erasmus exchanges abroad. "At that point I realized we're connected by a great idea," she says, pointing to things like the rule of law, human rights protections and gender equality. "Many of us only recognize how good we have it once we travel to a country where that's not the case."

On August 6, Hahn listened intently when Gabi Bertin spoke at Gendarmenmarkt:

"Democracy in Poland is at stake." The government has radically transformed Poland, where press freedoms, assembly rights and the separation of powers are under attack. But the people have begun to rise up in protest. "This is not the moment for the other European countries to leave Poland alone. We all benefited from the Solidarność movement decades ago. Now it's our turn to show solidarity with them." Poland belongs to Europe, and Europe has an opportunity to strengthen civil society both in Poland and in Europe: "Politicians can do a lot, but in the end, it's up to us, the people of the world, to make a difference."



Demonstrating in favor of something: Julia Hahn (left) and Gabi Bertin (right).

## No new walls!

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range and shorter-range nuclear missiles in 1986. Shouldn't a similar thing be possible today as well?

We also need people to be able to participate more in the world, both in economic and social terms. Only when we ensure that the world's poorest people have a share in prosperity will we solve the problems that pose a threat to security and stability worldwide.

However, we also need greater participation in international politics. This includes fairer global trade and better regulations on globalization. It also means that we need to ensure that countries and regions which were not seen as important enough after the end of World War II have a greater say in the United Nations. The other side of the coin is that these

countries naturally also have a responsibility to help make our world sustainable and peaceful. Only through dialogue, reliable treaties and strong international organizations will we be able to bring order to this chaotic world once again.

All of this requires courage because it means we have to seek dialogue, work together and accept compromises. It also requires optimism because such negotiations do not have a certain outcome and it can take years before they bear fruit. In the trench warfare of domestic politics, this notion is harder to sell than rearmament and isolation. But one thing is clear – the reflexes of the Cold War will not help us. We need to be courageous again and tear down walls rather than building new ones out of fear.

## A word on Europe

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bargaining chip. Indeed, in the coming decades, it is possible that European countries will lose ground in terms of demographics and economic and political power. What must remain the normative force of a value-based EU. For this reason, too, the EU must defend itself vigorously against attacks – from both within and without – on its values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and pluralism.

In an era in which other representatives of the West speak more of deals than of values, the EU has an even greater obligation to express its values; not only for itself, but for the entire "free West," as we used to call it, and for the world as a whole. Our values do not contradict our interests. On the contrary, only by

When listening to women like Bertin and the Hungarian man who spoke of curtailed free speech in his country, Hahn learned that "what happens in Poland and Hungary is relevant to me, too."

She now calls on Europe's politicians to develop a common future vision for Europe, one that is more democratic, social and just. Citizens should have more of a say, and the European Parliament should have more democratic oversight vis-a-vis the Council and Commission. The EU should serve the people, not corporate interests. Europe must do more to deepen and expand social inclusion.

Julia Hahn's vision involves a United States of Europe. This is a name that's being spoken more often again these days, even in academic circles, without garnering loud guffaws. In 2016, in a book titled *Why Europe Must Become a Republic. A Political Utopia*, Ulrike Guérot criticizes the EU for its democratic deficits, unequal social standards and its "race-to-the-bottom tax competition." The founder of the European Democracy Lab in Berlin argues that the euro has brought "a shift in the costs of the political-economic system from the economy to citizens." Business and industry were given the euro, she notes, "without any remuneration in the form of a European fiscal and social union." This is what Guérot calls the "decisive birth defect of the euro."

Guérot wants to change this in fundamental ways. Incidentally, the common market comprises much more than just free trade. For example, it offers protection against discrimination. Indeed, no country is currently allowed to provide companies from other EU countries less favorable conditions than companies based in their own country.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome and the creation of the European Community. Public opinion regarding the EU will most likely be dominated by complaints about bureaucracy, even though the EU's success stories are equally as compelling. Case in point: In just 60 years economic output in the EU's founding states has more than tripled, even when adjusted for inflation – something other global regions can only dream of. Yet many Europeans fail to connect the mental dots between their prosperity, the common market and open borders.

Julia Hahn wants more Europe rather than less, which is why her group congregates every first Sunday of the month on Gendarmenmarkt.

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HAPAG <sup>18</sup>/<sub>91</sub> LLOYD  
CRUISES



# SQUARE ONE

Berlin's Alexanderplatz is ever in the making

By Tong-jin Smith

Alexanderplatz, the famous and infamous central square in Berlin-Mitte was named for Czar Alexander after his visit to Berlin in 1805. It was used for military parades and farmers' markets until the end of the 19th century. Almost one hundred years later, it was the site of peaceful demonstrations during the downfall of the East German regime. Today, the "Alex" – as Berliners call it – is a landmark and commercial center lined with shops and eateries, train and tram stations, the TV tower and the Park Inn hotel. It's a meeting point, a stage for street artists and musicians, a tourist attraction and traffic junction – and some might say an eyesore.

People do not generally come here to spend their lunch break or enjoy an afternoon stroll with the kids. Quite to the contrary, for Berliners Alexanderplatz is a throughway, a hub to change from train to subway or to rush from a department store to the Alexa mall on the other side of Grunerstraße. In a sense, the Alex of today is an evolution of the place Alfred Döblin describes in his 1928 novel Berlin Alexanderplatz, where his protagonist Franz Biberkopf encounters hustle and bustle, clamor and chaos, prostitution and crime. Commerce now reigns supreme and has replaced the once rough yet charming sociality of the pre-war years and the GDR.

And critics fear that things will not improve once the international developers, who purchased properties along the edges of the square, bring to life what was laid out in a master plan in 1993. Identifying Alexanderplatz as a high-rise location in a city otherwise dominated by buildings with a maximum height of 22 meters, the master plan has been an object of heated political debate and still waits to be realized. But with Berlin's massive population growth and soaring property prices, developers are seizing the moment.

The American real estate investment firm, Hines, is set to build Alexanderplatz Residential on the northeast corner of the square. Designed by star architect Frank Gehry, plans for Berlin's first residential skyscraper were introduced to the public in 2013. The structure's sculptural design made headlines, prompting Regula Lüscher, Berlin's chief building director, to say: "On the one hand, Gehry's design has an expressive form and an unusual, eccentric, new shape for this location. And yet, its façade emits a pleasant sense of calm. In addition, the design fits well into its surroundings and conveys well the aspect of Metropolitan living." However, realization of this 150-meter tower has been halted by concerns regarding possible damages to the subway tunnel below. With preparations now completed, construction is scheduled to begin soon to meet the planned 2019 deadline.

In the race for Berlin's first residential skyscraper, competition is welling across the street on the corner of Grunerstraße and Alexanderstraße, where Russian developer MonArch plans to erect another 150-meter high-rise designed by Berlin-based architects Ortner & Ortner. According to its marketer, Bewocon, Alexander Tower will sport a three-story

## "Can Alexanderplatz become a more welcoming urban space?"

shopping mall – in direct competition to neighboring Alexa – and an in-house private movie theatre and fitness club topped by 32 floors of luxury apartments. Prices are expected to start at about 5,000 euros per square meter and apartment sizes will be upwards of 30 square meters, with penthouses offering a breathtaking view of the Berlin skyline.

On the other side of Alexa, Dutch investor Dekor Vastgoed has begun building yet another residential high-rise. Not quite as high, but no less expensive than its neighbors, Grandaire will be 20 stories of condominiums starting at 4,800 euros per square meter. Connected to the tower will be a 12-story apartment building with about 100

rental units – something the city needs more than luxury condos for the international jet set. The architecture is less eccentric and more in tune with the Bauhaus idea that "form follows function"; it is a building Berliners can relate to with more ease.

But the question remains as to how Alexanderplatz can become a more welcoming

urban space, a place Berliners and visitors alike will enjoy and where one might consider taking an after-dinner walk. "One key aspect will undoubtedly be how we decide to regulate traffic in the future," says Carola Bluhm, chairwoman of the parliamentary group Die Linke in the Berlin city parliament. "Alexanderplatz itself may one day become less commercial and offer more sojourn quality, but we need to talk about the multi-lane streets surrounding it." Making the plaza more accessible and walkable is one of ten principles established for the further development of Alexanderplatz and its surroundings in a yearlong public dialogue process with more than 10,000 citizen participants.

Among the postulated guidelines are also the need to create a connection to the history of the city center, opening the space in front of City Hall south of the TV tower for democratic political debate, and ensuring that Berlin's center is firmly established as a place for art and culture. "We have the unique situation here that nearly all of the current residential buildings and many of the commercial spaces surrounding Alexanderplatz, reaching all the way down to the old town center in Nikolaiviertel, belong to the city's public housing society WBM," explains Manfred Kühne, director for urban development in Berlin's Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing. "This opens the opportunity to give more cultural and social institutions affordable spaces instead of focusing on achieving the highest possible rent by giving preference to fast-food restaurants and other highly commercial chains."

This idea was echoed by a civil society initiative formed to rescue and develop the ruins of Haus der Statistik, one of several buildings constructed in the 1970s for the GDR regime. Contrary to its sisters – Haus des Lehrers, Haus des Reisens, Haus der Elektroindustrie, Haus des Berliner Verlags and Kongresshaus – the large building complex along Otto-Braun-Straße north of Alexanderplatz was abandoned in 2008, prior to which it had been used by federal government agencies for almost a decade. The other former GDR showpieces lining the streets around Alexanderplatz were converted into modern office spaces and partially declared heritage sites, protecting them from alteration and demolition. However, Haus der Statistik, which has remained federal property, has been more or less abandoned, and is now crumbling – a fact that has infuriated Berliners and provoked public debate, especially in the wake of a growing housing shortage and the refugee crisis of 2015.

But change is in sight. In an agreement between Berlin and the federal government, the city will purchase Haus der Statistik at market value. "Negotiations are well under



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To be continued: Haus der Statistik in need of renovation.



In the heart of historical Berlin: the new Bertelsmann Stiftung offices.

## BIG NAME MOVE

The Bertelsmann Stiftung is the latest in a long list of organizations to make a move to Berlin. In early September, property developer Frankonia Eurobau announced that the Stiftung – a leading non-partisan operating foundation and the largest of its kind in Germany – had acquired almost 2,000 square meters of commercial space in a new office complex currently being built on Berlin's historical Schinkelplatz. A purchase price was not disclosed. The Stiftung is scheduled to take up residence in the space at the southern end of the complex in 2019.

The Stiftung's new offices are found in the heart of historical Berlin between the Friedrichswerder Church and the Bauakademie (Building Academy), both designed by eminent German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841).

In November 2016, the Bundestag officially signed off on the funds for a full reconstruction of Schinkel's Bauakademie.

The new Bertelsman Stiftung building was designed by renowned Spanish architect Rafael Moneo and will also house restaurants and high-end apartments in addition to offices.

"Our new space in Berlin will help us further intensify our partnerships and cooperative activities in the capital," says Liz Mohn, Vice Chair of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Executive Board. At its new offices, the foundation is especially interested in fostering exchange with leading figures drawn from the worlds of science, academia, civil society, business and politics. **BT**

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# Humane capital

Michael Bohmeyer founded an organization that has given more than 100 people 1,000 euros a month for one year – no strings attached, no questions asked. What effect has that had on the recipients?

By Benjamin Walter

Michael Bohmeyer was fed up with the rat race. Following several years as an IT administrator and startup manager, he jumped ship in 2013, at age 29. Instead of netting 3,000 euros monthly, he had to get by on a monthly 1,000-euro share of profits. “Funnily enough, it made me much freer, healthier and more creative,” says the native Berliner. “I had better relationships and became a better father.”

That was because he received money for free. No conditions, no pressure, no obligation to work and, as a result, no worries. Soon something remarkable happened. “Within me I felt a new, irresistible drive to create, a new interest in the world.” It then dawned on Bohmeyer that receiving money without binding obligations could help liberate others as well. He wanted to find out, so he set up My Basic Income, a non-profit organization that crowdfunds basic incomes of 1,000 euros a month for those interested in receiving them – for one year, with no strings attached.

The idea of a basic income for all is nothing new. In his 1983 book *Paths to Paradise*, André Gorz sketched out the concept as something all people are entitled to, rather than as remuneration for some kind of work in the usual sense. It draws on the wealth of society, “which results from the productive forces of society altogether, not the accumulation of individual labor. The principle of ‘each according to his performance’ is no longer valid. It must now be replaced by the principle of ‘each according to his needs’ – in the words of Marx in his Critique of the Gotha Program.” Gorz calls it social wages, social income or the social dividend. For “production of the necessities,” Gorz calculated 20,000 hours of labor per lifetime. That equals 10 years of full-time work, 20 years of part-time work or 40 years of working ten hours per week.

Indeed, the moment may have arrived to try out an alternative to working 9-to-5. “Digitization holds enormous opportunities, but will lead to job losses,” Bohmeyer predicts. Today, the vulnerabilities of labor exploited by companies like Uber cause a lot of anger, he says. But even those jobs will vanish as more and more cars become self-driving. Germany alone will see 800,000 jobs lost for full-time drivers, Bohmeyer says.

Wherever machines perform tasks better and cheaper, humans become obsolete. Unemployment results from the flawed allocation of labor. The consequences include more welfare recipients, fewer available jobs, yet more pressure to work. That makes people sick.

“The dams are going to burst anyway,” Bohmeyer says, “so why not learn to swim instead of trying to build new dams.” He recommends harnessing the profits from

automated labor and putting them into a fund to finance basic income, so that the gulf between rich and poor ceases to keep growing.

And yet, unconditional basic income has had a bad reputation. Someone sitting at a cash register, or sweeping the street, or cleaning toilets asks who would do such unattractive work in the future. Others sitting in a beer garden might wonder who would bring them their refills.

Why is resistance so strong to a system that would give people “the freedom to say

do not reflect the true value they have for greater society,” Bohmeyer says, explaining that real market wages for undesirable work will be achieved only once no one can be forced to do it anymore. Toilets will still be cleaned and old people cared for when these kinds of work are compensated according to their real market value.

To date, My Basic Income has given more than 100 people the good fortune of having their number chosen. Did they all stop working? Far from it. Only three recipients quit their jobs, one of them a call center

a factor,” Bohmeyer happily reports, “and he managed to stop taking pills for the first time in his life.” One man who had been jobless for years found work, because at the interview, instead of confessing he needed a job to survive, he could say, “I have money and would like to work here.”

Freedom from duress and insecurity is something the 20 employees of the organization also enjoy. All are paid according to their individual needs. “We do not ask what I’m worth on the market. What we ask is, ‘What do I need to keep my mind at ease so that I can work?’” No one earns fewer than 10 euros an hour. The highest hourly wage is just under 30 euros. Full-time staffers earn between 1,430 and 2,300 euros monthly. “That’s not me,” Bohmeyer says with a wink. The most modest one of all is 27-year-old Melanie Schichan. 1,430 euros suffice for her and her two cats. She can afford gym membership and insurance, and even puts a little money aside each month. “I don’t earn much here. But I have a cool workplace, great coworkers and security, because I won’t be told, ‘Get lost. We don’t need you any more,’” she says. The only downside is the economics degree she’s been earning. “It’s so nice here that I can’t manage to finish my degree.”

What objections could there be to a guaranteed basic income for all? For those who would gladly make do with 1,000 euros a month as well as those who earn a wage, salary or fees – in a nutshell, everyone from beggars to billionaires? Of course, this income would be taxed like any other, meaning that “earners” would keep less. Also, high incomes would have to be levied at higher rates. “I think it’s fine to accumulate wealth through work,” Bohmeyer says. “But that shouldn’t be at the expense of others. And I would like to be able to stop at any point and still have enough to survive as a human.”

There already exists something approaching basic income, namely social welfare payments. But receiving this kind of support is tied to coercion and obligations. That demands time and energy while inhibiting creativity and, incidentally, family planning. In Western societies, those who work long hours – and earn handsomely – have no time for children. Meanwhile, it’s especially hard for welfare recipients to raise three children, because assistance in Germany is allocated per family, not per capita. Thus, more kids means less money to go around, which worsens the compulsion to find work.

Yet every kind of family would benefit from basic income. If Bohmeyer’s concept of basic income were implemented, a couple with three children would receive 5,000 euros monthly – with good reason. “Raising three children is a full-time job,” he points out. Wouldn’t that be something? Germans might actually start having children again.

“The dams are going to burst anyway, so we better learn to swim instead of trying to build new dams.”



“They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself.”  
Andy Warhol

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# FOODIE FANTASIES

For many years now, food startups from Berlin have been among Germany's most successful new companies. Today, even large corporations from outside the food industry are investing in the sector

By Bastian Brauns

We believe in a world that prioritizes food again." This is how the founders of the gourmet online shop "Gegessen wird immer" describe their mission. Founded in 2015, the Berlin-based startup promises its customers quality products, pleasurable eating experiences and fair relationships with producers. Items offered include organic pasta with an extra-fine touch of truffle, spicy tuna fish mousse, popcorn with Malabar pepper and sea salt, and cold-brew coffee with a hint of licorice. Another way to describe the company's approach might be: "The unusual is our normal."

"Gegessen wird immer," which can be loosely translated as "everyone needs to eat" or "there's always eating going on," is only one of a growing number of Berlin food startups that are becoming increasingly important for the capital city's economy. Two other startups that are better-known but not as high-end are HelloFresh and Marley Spoon. These two also deliver food with a concept; customers order so-called Kochboxes (cooking boxes) that contain all the ingredients they need to cook a meal at home without having to come up with their own recipe or go shopping themselves.

The Rocket Internet startup HelloFresh is so successful that it's already set up shop in nine countries on three continents. Experts estimate its value at several billion euros and the company is expected to go public soon. But the undisputed champion in the field is Delivery Hero. Rocket Internet also owns a large share of that company, which had the largest German IPO in 2017. Among the other well-known food delivery services are Lieferheld, Pizza.de and Foodora.

But it's not just online delivery services that are flourishing in Berlin. Several other food startups are developing the know-how and tech solutions that all major companies are looking for, and many are even developing entirely new food products. This is a fascinating trend, especially as the food sector was long considered to be dominated by global corporations like Nestlé, Unilever, Kraft, Coca Cola and Pepsi.

There are a number of reasons why young Berlin companies in the food sector are enjoying tremendous success. For example, the name and the much-lauded concept behind "Gegessen wird immer" already reveal why more and more investors are drawn to food startups. Human beings need to eat and drink several times every day, and this promises a stable sales market. However, the crucial aspect is that people now want to consume very special products: organic, regional, seasonal, vegan or simply new and innovative food. These are the most common characteristics attracting more and more people

in search of nutrition sourced from places beyond conventional supermarkets and restaurants.

Jan-Frieder Damm is head of the new food-tech division at the Association of German Startups (Bundesverband der deutschen Startups). "The market for food startups has definitely exploded," he argues. Just

toothpaste, the idea was to make it possible for Nu3 online customers to find the product that best reflects their lifestyle and overall philosophy, whether this involves weight loss, organic food, sports or health. "Back then, we found out that the idea of functional nutrition was becoming increasingly important. People want to live longer and stay healthier,"

and that food delivery services such as HelloFresh ultimately began in response to this demand. Indeed, he says, "All players in the field want to facilitate the process of buying and preparing food."

But Sünderhauf also knows that many people still associate healthy food with a severe lack of enjoyment: "Of course, a



Not pictured: Pizza, cake and ice cream.

a few years ago, investors and corporations were still belittling the goals and ideas of these young companies. "Today, however, food has become sexy, whether its new products or innovative services." Damm even manages his own food startup, the Berlin-based Daizu GmbH, which has developed a counterproduct to energy drinks; his "sleep ink, the natural sleeping aid" is designed to allow people to sleep better. With his promise of a healthy drink and deeper sleep, Damm and his colleagues are eager to combine two customer top trends, that is, improved sleep and health-conscious nutrition, both of which have the same goal of achieving a better quality of life.

Robert Sünderhauf also sought to profit from food-industry trends. Back in 2011, he joined with two colleagues to found the company Nu3. From chia seeds, coconut oil and protein bars to creatine, bath salts and

says Sünderhauf. Today, Nu3 is active in 24 countries and Europe's leading provider of so-called intelligent nutrition. At the moment, customers can select from a growing assortment of roughly 6,500 articles and also get free advice from ecotrophologists, sports scientists and physicians.

Sünderhauf confirms that people's interest in a healthy lifestyle and in organic, sustainable nutrition is on the rise: "With all the black sheep on the market, we wanted to be a provider that works with customers in a transparent and honest way. We wanted to offer only those products that have been proven to have a high quality and impact." As Sünderhauf notes, thousands of studies have already shown that "if we want to become healthier and live longer, we need enough sleep, healthy food and low levels of stress." He argues that these factors are becoming increasingly important to people

healthy snack is never going to taste like a chocolate donut," he admits. Fat and sugar happen to be flavor carriers, and yet "after ten consecutive days eating chocolate donuts, they won't taste particularly good either."

Until recently, Nu3 had distributed its products exclusively online and via their shop on Amazon. But now you'll find Nu3 products on the recently launched online marketplaces belonging to the Rewe supermarket chain. "We plan to be on real-life supermarket shelves soon, as well. We've already made it in France, but Germany will have to wait until the beginning of 2018," says Sünderhauf. This, too, is evidence that major corporations are eager to profit from new food trends and ideas. "It's interesting for companies because they can try out the startups without investing enormous amounts themselves," says Sünderhof.

Some of the industry's largest food companies are indeed getting involved today. For example, Oetker is investing in food startups, with the recently founded delivery service Kuchenfreunde now inviting customers to order fresh cakes and pies. Oetker also invested in Atlantic Food Labs, the new Berlin holding company owned by entrepreneur and business angel Christophe Maire. Atlantic Food Labs invests in food startups and helps them grow; media company ProSiebenSat.1 is one of their most recent investors.

Large and established names are taking a fresh new look at the industry, for example the gummy bear company Katjes increased its share in the vegan food manufacturer Veganz this year. Like Nu3, Veganz always focused on their own innovative products; however, they faced certain challenges selling them in purely vegan supermarkets. Today, Veganz products can be found on the shelves of large supermarkets like Rewe

and drug stores like dm, right next to long-standing product made by Katjes. The gummy bear company has now invested in the Berlin porridge startup Haferkater and taken over 10 percent of that young com-

pany network Techstars to develop a mentoring and accelerator program designed to foster tech startups in creating innovative new solutions for the industry. Metro wants not only to deliver food, but also to help

Metro to its customers in Berlin and Munich within a few hours.

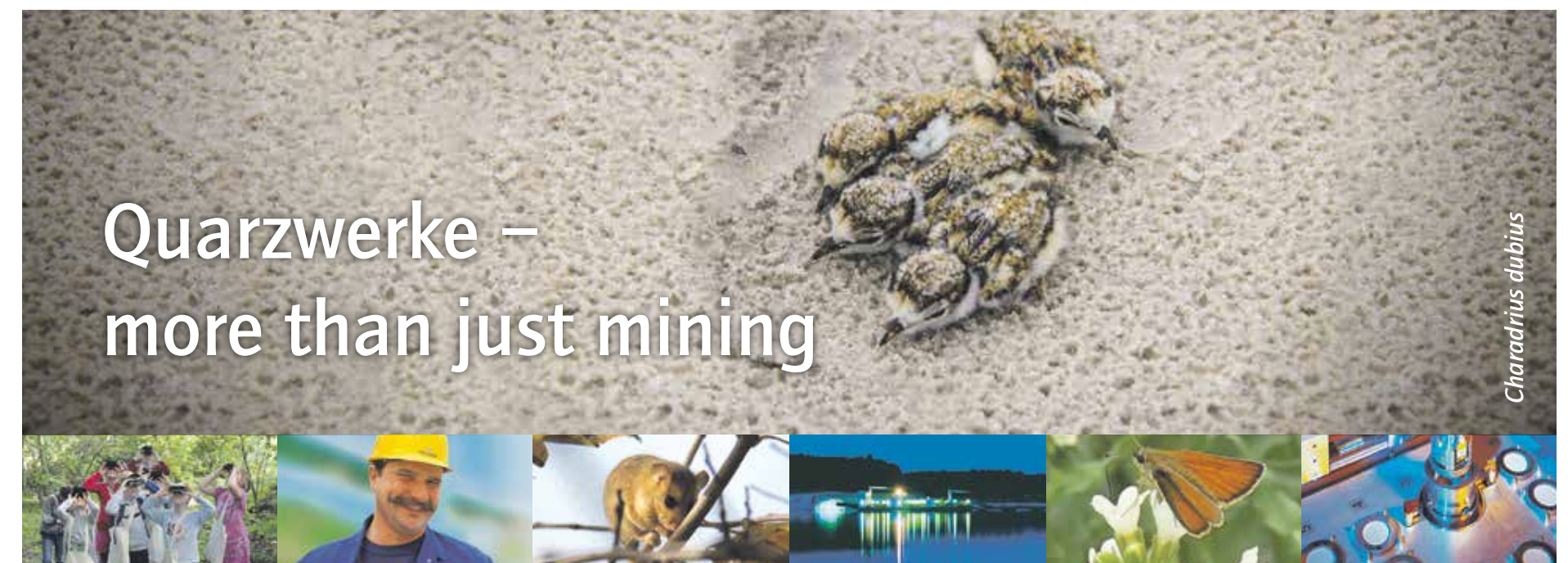
In light of all of these developments, Robert Sünderhauf from Nu3 is certain: "We're still at the beginning of an extremely exciting development." In his view, though in its infancy, food-sector digitization is already causing major shifts within the industry. It's therefore not surprising that Berlin – of all cities – is becoming a hub for this development, as hardly a weekend goes by without a hummus, kebab, coffee or beer festival here. Indeed, in the past several years, food and drinks once considered to border on "fast food" have now morphed into full-day recreational and nutritional happenings, especially in larger German cities. Thousands of visitors seek out these events to enjoy food and drinks, but also for inspiration and enjoyment. The competition is great, says Sünderhauf: "But it's the perfect way for food startups to test how well their products actually reach their target groups."

“People want to consume very special products: organic, regional, seasonal, vegan or simply new an innovative food.”

pany. Porridge, which bears the unfortunate German name "Haferschleim," is set to be the next big thing in food.

Metro, once Germany's largest trade and retail group, is now investing so heavily in the food sector that it is joining with the U.S.

millions of medium-sized restaurants across Europe achieve digital transformation and profit thereby as a service provider. Metro has even begun cooperating with a competitor of Amazon Fresh; the food delivery service getnow.de delivers fresh food from



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# Because it's 2017

The liberal Muslim activist Seyran Ateş has founded Berlin's first mosque where women can preach to men | *By Felizia Merten*

In the beginning were the words: "In the name of the merciful and compassionate God who created humanity in His endless variety, society must help shape the coexistence of people of the Islamic faith in Germany according to the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany."

This is how the Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque, newly opened in an annex of the St. John's Church in Berlin's Moabit neighborhood, welcomes its visitors. This former theater space above the youth center is where a liberal and democratic Islam has been preached and practiced since mid-June of this year.

Although Berlin is already home to at least 75 registered mosques, the opening of this house of worship

garnered an extraordinary amount of attention. In the Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque, men and women pray side by side. Homosexuals are welcome. Women can be prayer leaders or imams; they need not wear headscarves. In addition to members of all Muslim sects, Christians, Jews and atheists are likewise welcome. "This mosque should be a home for all those who feel alienated by the traditional, conservative and patriarchal structures of Islam," says the mosque's founder, Seyran Ateş. The Turkish-born 54-year-old feminist and human rights activist is a lawyer by training, not an Islamic scholar. In Germany she is as equal as a liberal Muslim woman and is a frequent guest on prime-time talk shows, where she raises her voice both eloquently and combatively. On the air and in prayer, she refuses to leave Islam in the hands of radicals or terrorists.

Ateş saw the need for the project during her tenure as a member of the German Islam Conference, a forum for dialogue between the German state and the Muslim communities in the country, from 2006 to 2009. She watched as conservative Muslim associations imposed their interpretation of Islam and its practice on the forum. "They divided the world into halal and haram – Islamic and non-Islamic. There was no room for liberal views," Ateş says. By 2009 the idea of a liberal mosque had become a top priority for her. "I wanted to stand up and do something against Islamist terror and the misogyny in Islam," she adds. Together with other founding members using their own money and donations, Ateş made her idea reality, establishing the mosque as a charitable enterprise under German law. For the Ibn Rushd Goethe congregation, which

cites human rights and freedom of worship among its tenets, the point is not to oppose conservative and traditional mosques and associations. "We want to work together with these associations against Islamist terror and towards a more democratic and enlightened Islam," Ateş says.

It was with this in mind that the founders named the mosque after the Arab philosopher Ibn Rushd (1126–1198). Also known by the Latinized name Averroes, Ibn Rushd was a polymath and progressive thinker whose writings united faith with reason. This is precisely what Ateş hopes to achieve as well: a reasoned and historically attuned reception of the Quran and the traditions of Islam

alongside peaceful dialogue with other religions. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1748–1832),

probably Germany's greatest writer, set an example for this respectful dialogue and was therefore selected as the mosque's second patron. Goethe's collection of poems West-Eastern Divan, inspired by the Persian poet Hafez, includes the famous quote: "He who knows himself and others well / No longer may ignore: / Occident and Orient / Dwell separately no more."

Ateş and her new congregation have found support and approval around the world. "Our project is recognized as a project of peace," she says.

The liberal stance of the Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque is hardly a novelty. Comparable projects already exist in Germany and the UK (the Inclusive Mosque), the US and in Switzerland (the Offene Moschee Schweiz). Other congregations allow women to lead prayers or become imams. In the women's mosques of China, this has been a reality for 300 years. Europe's first mosque for women, the Miriam Mosque, opened its doors in 2016 in Copenhagen. But Seyran Ateş knows why her mosque is so controversial. "We're making a revolution and publicly exposing abuses. That makes us visible.

And many Islamic functionaries don't like that one bit," she says. The response to the opening of the Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque could hardly have been more polarized. Berlin Mayor Michael Müller, along with parties spanning the city's political establishment, has welcomed the project. Alongside plans for an Institute for Islamic Theology at Berlin's Humboldt University and the House of One, where Muslims, Christians and Jews can soon worship together, the Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque fits in perfectly with efforts to establish the German capital as a center of liberal Islamic life.

The positive reactions were joined by vehement condemnations, however, especially from abroad. Dar al-Ifta, an Egyptian government institution with wide-ranging doctrinal authority in Islam, has criticized the mosque for its practice of joint

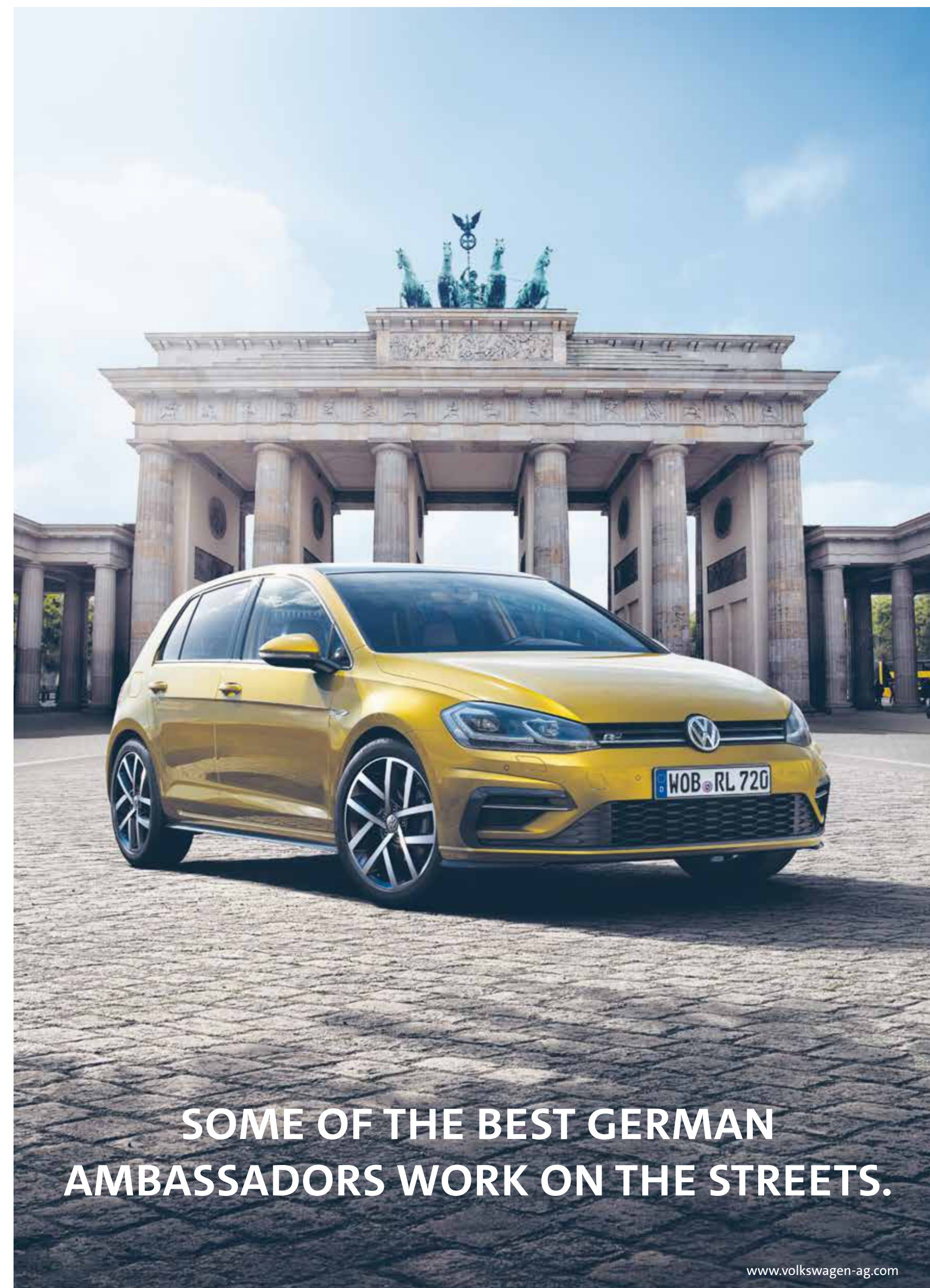
worship for men and women. "Islam forbids physical contact between men and women during prayer. This violates the foundations of Islamic law," its assessment concluded. The Turkish religious authority Diyanet not only accuses the Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque of undermining Islam; it also alleges that the project is not even a mosque, but rather a group run by Fethullah Gülen, the man Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan accuses of having staged a coup attempt in Turkey last year. The effects of these official condemnations have been harassment and death threats against Ateş and her congregation and, consequently, heightened police protection for her. Yet Ateş remains undaunted and has vowed to push ahead with her project of a liberal Islam opposing extremism of every kind. "There are astonishingly many Muslims worldwide who have been wishing for a liberal and enlightened Islam that is free of prejudice, but remain silent out of fear. I want to give these people a voice," she says. For the future, Seyran Ateş hopes for many more such places of worship, and good news is already on the horizon. A cofounder of the Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque, the Islamic scholar Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, has announced plans to establish another liberal mosque in Freiburg, in Germany's southwest.



Seyran Ateş

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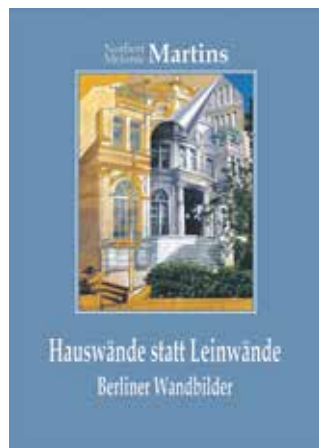
1 Zillestraße 98-100, inner courtyard. Artist: Gert Neuhaus, 1979 | 2 Ritterstraße 12. Artist: Jadore Tong, alias S.Y.R.U.S., 2014 | 3 Skalitzer Straße/Oranienstraße 195. Artist: Victor Ash, 2007 | 4 Frobenstraße/Schwerinstraße. Artist: Shepard Fairey, 2017 | 5 Alvenslebenstraße/Potsdamer Straße. Artist: Vhils, 2011 | 6 Mehringplatz. Artist: Shepard Fair, 2014 | 7 Turiner Straße 7. Artist: Kwast, 2017 Oranienstraße/Manteuffelstraße. Artist: ROA, 2011 | 8 Neheimer Straße 2-6. Artists: Collin van der Sluijs and Super A, 2016 | 9 Prinzenallee/Badstraße. Artist: Artistgruppe Graco, 2013 | 10 Bernauer Straße/Strelitzer Straße. Artist: Marcus Haas, installed by XI-Design (Die Dixons), Size Two and Mario Mankey, 2016 | 11 Mehringplatz. Artist: Don John, 2014 | 12 Falckensteinstraße 41. Artist: BLU, 2007 | 13 Lützowstraße/Kluckstraße 23. Artist: Nomad Clan, 2017 | Wollankstraße 20. Contractor: Mario Kwast, installed by Irma Peña, 2012 | Book: Norbert and Melanie Martins: Hauswände statt Leinwände – Berliner Wandbilder (Walls not Canvases – Berlin Murals), c. 300 color photos, hardcover, 29.90 euros.

# GROWN ON CONCRETE

Large murals inhabit exposed façades left behind by World War II bombs  
By Johanna Trapp and Andreas Schoelzel (photos)

This image is more than a mural,” says Norbert Martins, “it’s a monument.” The work of art he’s referring to is located in the multicultural, working-class district of Wedding and portrays three brothers next to the words “gewachsen auf Beton” (grown on concrete). Two of the men, Jérôme and Kevin-Prince Boateng, play soccer in the world’s biggest stadiums and are venerated by the youth of Berlin. No one would think of removing this monument, even though it violates public law; indeed, the mural also happens to be an advertisement for a sports shoe company and has yet to receive official approval from the district, probably because no such application has been submitted. In other words, if the rules were taken seriously, the three Boateng brothers would have to go.

Norbert Martins knows the story behind these images like no other. He has published a book on Berlin’s street-art jungle and takes tourists on regular guided tours. Roughly 750 such murals have been created since 1975 and he has photographed them all. Sometimes he was even there when they were made.



In 1929 when he painted the interior walls of the National Palace in Mexico City. In 1933 he was invited to create a mural in Rockefeller Center in New York City, but a scandal ensued when people noticed that his Man at the Cross-roads contained portraits of Lenin, Marx, Engels and Trotsky.

Germany discovered street art in the 1970s. In 1971 the city of Bremen commissioned destitute artists to paint public buildings and civilian bunkers. In 1975 the movement reached the “frontier town” of West Berlin, where there were still countless vacant lots destroyed by WWII bombs; the exposed walls overlooking these spaces offered naked, bare and ugly canvases. Across from the Tiergarten S-Bahn station, Ben Wagin and three colleagues painted the city’s first mural, Weltbaum – Grün ist Leben (World Tree – Green is Life), a clarion call for environmental preservation. Wagin thereby also helped protect the house from a scheduled demolition. Today, however, it looks like the Weltbaum’s time has come, as there are current plans to build offices and a hotel on the site. The building contractor can even point to the fact

Gert Neuhaus’ Zipper was created in 1979 on an exposed brick wall zipping up a fin de siècle façade. As Martins explains, Neuhaus would have liked to have shown more fin de siècle and less exposed brick; in fact, the original idea was to have the brick visible only above the zipper, with the rest of the wall in a beautiful turn-of-the-century look. But that would have cost three times as much and was simply too expensive for the client.

At the time, a mural like Zipper would have cost 20,000 Deutschmarks and the paint would have been applied by brush. Today, artists earn less and can work much faster with spray cans.

Kosmonaut/Astronaut by Victor ASH was created in 2007 and also harbors a secret you can only discover in the dark. While visiting the site at night, the artist noticed that a nearby spotlight casts the shadow of a flagpole onto the wall. These days, at night, the hand of the astronaut stretches in the direction of the shadow as if trying to grab hold of it.

Murals were first painted in Mexico. Frida Kahlo’s husband, Diego Rivera, became famous

that back in the 1970s Wagin admitted the painting was not a work of art, and thus it is not protected.

The Berlin Senate then sponsored competitions for “Kunst am Bau” (Art on Buildings) and “Farbe im Stadtbild” (Color in the Urban Landscape). House squatters also made use of façades for illegal protest images and slogans. As the empty lots began disappearing, so, too, did many of these murals. But new paintings are still being created today. Indeed, local housing associations recently discovered that homes with attractive murals are easier to rent out.

Last year, a new work at the Wall Memorial along Bernauer Straße caused many heads to turn. Martins was one of the people who was not crazy about the image of a raw piece of meat being sliced by a knife: “When I first saw it, I was shocked,” he says. “How can you paint something like that?” But when he looked closer, he saw the dates 1961–1989 and the outline of Berlin’s districts. Now a fan of the piece, Martins says: “Only here, at this site, is it possible to paint such a provocative and disturbing image.”



# IT'S ALL IN THE PUDDING

How the price of a chocolate dessert is fueling an influx of young Israeli restaurateurs who now feed locals' appetite for hummus

By Franziska Knupper

Were it not for the war, Berlin would never have happened." She delivers this sentence almost casually, followed by a smile outlined by red lipstick. "My cousin was killed, my brother was drafted and I was certain we would all die. I was constantly drunk for three straight months and just totally out of it. I couldn't wait to get of there somehow." It was summer 2014 when Shani packed her bags in Tel Aviv and moved to Germany to live with her then-boyfriend Felix. In her home country on the Mediterranean, Operation Protec-

a strip of coastline. The language spoke at Yafo in Berlin is a mixture of English and Hebrew. But it's more shouted than spoken, more hustled than strolled. Suddenly, the sound of cheering and clinking glasses. One of the bartenders is celebrating their birthday and arak – the Israeli variant of ouzo – is being handed around. Shani is in constant motion, passing on orders and seating tables while persistently nipping at her glass of red wine. Now and again she eyes the plates in the hands of the waiters. "It's important for me that the food is well presented. It has to look nice enough for me to want to eat it."

tion in the Holy Land and around 12,000 to 20,000 Israelis currently reside here. The exact number is not known, as most of the expats possess a European if not German passport. The reasons for the migration of young Israelis cover a broad spectrum; like Shani, several were fleeing conflict in their native land. Others come for economic purposes. The cost of living in Israel has risen sharply over the past decade. During a three-month-long tent protest in 2011, younger generations denounced the exorbitant rental prices in Israel's largest cities. And three years ago, a Facebook post by a young Israeli from

economic nor political. "We came here for the music," explains Doron. Their Gordon Café is thus a bistro as well as a record store, a result of the duo's interest in melding personal passion with cultural identity. The sound of a drill blasts from behind Nir. "We're renovating at the moment. We're making the café into a restaurant serving modern, Middle Eastern cuisine."

If you think about it, what actually is Israeli food?" This question is indeed a difficult one to answer. The national meals have their roots in Morocco, Lebanon and Spain, Poland, Russia and Romania. Nir's mother comes from Yemen.



A hands-on experience: Yafo is drawing Berliners to its tables with feasts for the eyes, ears and the stomach. Located on Gormannstraße 17b, Yafo is open Tuesday – Sunday, 12am-12pm.

tive Edge was wreaking havoc between Israel and Gaza. In Berlin, Shani waited with trepidation for the verdict from the municipal authorities on whether her application for a restaurant license would be approved.

Three years later. The boyfriend is no more, but the restaurant – Yafo, in Berlin-Mitte – is jam-packed. "Yafo" is Hebrew for "beauty" and also the name of the Arab quarter of Tel Aviv separated from the Jewish center of town by cliffs and

Baked eggplant, cauliflower in lemon juice and sesame sauce with garlic seems to appeal to Berliners; indeed Israeli food is ascendant in the German capital. Mugarbi in Kreuzberg, Gordon in Neukölln and Kanaan in Prenzlauer Berg – the arrival of Israelis in Berlin was accompanied by chickpeas and balls of falafel. Benedict Berlin on Uhlandstraße has an all-day Israeli breakfast and Hummus & Friends in Mitte is 100 percent kosher. Berlin is popular among the youngest adult genera-



Shani Ahiel (middle) and Felix Offermann (right) founded Yafo in 2014. Pictured here with a friend.

Berlin made quite a stir. "Chocolate pudding, 19 cents. See you in Berlin!" wrote the 25-year-old. The entry quickly had almost one million hits. "Olim L'Berlin" (Hebrew for "Let us ascend to Berlin"), as the sudden mass migration came to be known, would culminate in the Israeli Finance Minister Yair Lapid labeling the initiator of the chocolate-pudding scandal "anti-Zionist."

For Doron Eisenberg and Nir Ivenizki, the reason for moving to Berlin was neither

Who was first to cook the legume in its own stock to make msabbaba? Did the Israelis literally assimilate a central element of Arab cuisine?

Shani would like to liberate Middle Eastern cuisine from cultural and geographical borders. "The main thing is good olive oil, lots of vegetables, the right spices. Everything has to be fresh. For me, that is Israeli cuisine." She still can't believe she has to teach Germans to eat with their hands, she says, laughing, her black curls bobbing up and down. Hanging on the wall is a portrait of her grandmother – a smiling face wrapped in a white headscarf. Her head is tilting, as is her smile. Shani also has roots in Yemen. "You can really tell. She's so caring, and always loud." It's a close-knit group; Berlin's Israeli community is tightly networked, and not just in terms of food. As luck would have it, Shani lives right across from Gordon Café. In her black leather jacket and sunglasses she leaves her building and waves across the street. "Guten Morgen!" answers Doron, in German. Most newcomers over the last five years have settled in Neukölln. Suddenly, within a radius of four kilometers from Sonnenallee to Kottbusser Tor, Hebrew can again be heard on the streets of Berlin. The

"Shruna," or neighborhood, is critical, says Doron. It's a safety net that softens the arrival in a foreign country and helps lessen the anonymity of a large city. Shani agrees: "In Germany, the independence and freedom of the individual are primary. I respect that. But in Israel you experience more of a community feeling. And I miss that here."



Tel Aviv natives Nir Ivenizki (l) and Doron Eisenberg (r) in their cafe-meets-record store "Gordon" in Berlin-Neukölln. These two DJ-restaurateurs offer tasty Israeli food and vinyl from their record label Legotek. The Gordon Café in Neukölln's Schillerkiez (Allerstraße 11) is open Wednesday – Monday, 11am-6pm.



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# Catherine in the countryside

The small town of Zerbst in Sachsen-Anhalt is looking to attract fans of the Russian empress and rebuild its once-splendid Baroque castle

By Christine Keilholz

At the old palace residence in Zerbst, the future is already on display. Transparencies mimicking wood panels hang on the salon walls and, although it's hard to see, even the floor is made of paper. Dirk Herrmann, an Internet entrepreneur and chairman of the Schloss Zerbst Association, asks visitors not to walk on the "floor," because his team would have to wash off their shoe marks. Herrmann used his own low-tech methods to bring a more Baroque feeling to the interior of the palace ruin, printing images of other interiors in the appropriate sizes on its walls. For visitors, it feels like they are walking into a pre-war photo.

The tiled stove that forms the centerpiece of a small room rings hollow and is actually a fake. So, too, are the fireplaces, ancestral portraits and theater seats bought at online auctions and set up here for the visitors who've started coming in droves. "When people come in and there's something to see," says Herrmann, "they're more likely to leave a donation."

Zerbst is a small village of 24,000 residents in the federal state of Sachsen-Anhalt, just 130 kilometers outside of Berlin. Very few have heard of it, but history buffs will recognize the name; indeed, Princess Sophie Friederike Auguste von Anhalt-Zerbst – otherwise known as Empress Catherine the Great – spent a number of years in Zerbst before leaving for Russia in 1744 to marry the man who would become Peter III.

In April 1945, shortly before the end of World War II, the palace was bombed and burned to the ground. After that, the ruin fell victim to the destructive policies of the GDR leadership. The west wing was demolished upon orders from the ruling SED party, and the rest of the castle grounds stood abandoned for decades.

Fifteen years ago, when Herrmann and friends first formed their association, the only thing they had were exterior walls. Since then, 1.2 million euros have flowed into the palace reconstruction, mostly into new concrete ceiling slabs.

In the Baroque era, Saxony-Anhalt was not exactly a hotspot of European politics. The area comprised four small principalities wedged between the more prominent Electorates of Saxony and Brandenburg. If you wanted to be someone, you had to hire yourself out.

This is exactly what Christian August von Anhalt-Zerbst did. As a second son born into the House of Ascania, he had no hopes of inheriting and instead pursued a career in the Prussian army. The gruff soldier was eventually named Governor of Stettin, where his oldest daughter, Sophie, was born in 1729. Only later did Christian August



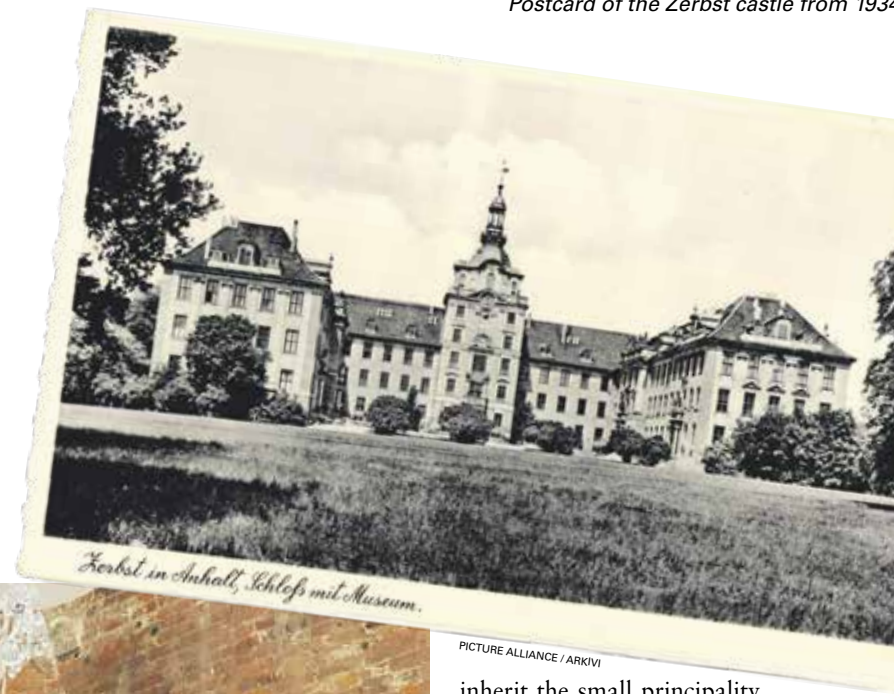
Fake fireplaces, real princesses: "When people come in and there's something to see, they're more likely to leave a donation."

"Of course, the ruins today are nothing compared to the splendor that greeted visitors in 1745."



Abandoned for decades: Zerbst castle.

Postcard of the Zerbst castle from 1934.



inherit the small principality of Zerbst with its large castle and 20,000 subjects, most of whom were farmers. Agriculture was one of the few livelihoods here along the small rivers near the mid-section of the Elbe. And yet, the family managed to build their castle without going into debt like many other local Baroque princes.

Of course, the ruins today are nothing compared to the splendor that greeted visitors in 1745 as they arrived in Zerbst to celebrate the wedding of Prince Christian August's eldest daughter to the Russian heir in faraway St. Petersburg. Indeed, the prince spared no dime organizing a gigantic fireworks display.

Back then, the site was built in a grand style that included a riding hall, stables and seven orangeries. From 1681 on, the princes hired architects and builders from all over Europe to build an ambitious palace at the edge of the city where previously only a musty old water castle had stood. With the advent of the Baroque era came an additional lush garden complex and a settlement of craftsmen that served the court.

It's easy to imagine the tomboy princess reading and riding horseback here in the 18th century. In her memoirs, however, the later empress noted that her mother also made her kiss the hems of the high-society ladies who came to visit. Sophie's mother never felt entirely comfortable in the Anhalt countryside, but it was her relations to the Swedish royal family of Holstein-Gottorf that facilitated her daughter's marriage to the Grand Duke.

In the course of the 1990s, what was left of Zerbst castle fell into the hands of the city and the guardianship of the association. Its 267 members, who come from all over the world, are united by their interest in the location, the Baroque era and the reconstruction of the castle.

Today, the bulk of the work is being done with the simplest of means. Instead of expensive windows, they're having to do with batten frames and Plexiglass panes. Once upon a time, the private rooms were decked out with the finest elements. In fact, Sophie's mother wrote her letters in a cedar writing cabinet clad with silver fittings and expensive mirrors on the walls.

Sophie herself only lived here for a brief time from 1742 to 1744. But Herrmann is eager for this famous historical figure to help foster Zerbst's links to the East. As he says, his plans for castle visitors are carried out with an "eye on the Russians." For now, he could still use a bit of publicity. Plus a lot of wall transparencies.

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*"The good thing was that our military service was cut short as a result of the fall of the Wall. It would have lasted through summer, but we were all out by the end of January," says André Kubiczek.*

Berlin Times: Mr. Kubiczek, do you know what February 5th, 2018 is?  
André Kubiczek: (laughs) No.

10,315 – do these numbers mean anything to you?  
Not yet.

On February 5th, 2018, 10,315 days will have passed since the Berlin Wall fell – after it had stood for 10,315 days.  
Then it has been gone exactly as long as it was in place.

Yes. Is that a special date?  
Absolutely.

For you, personally, as well?  
Not the February day itself, because I never would have known that without you having mentioned it. But it's comparable to the date that marked the day when we'd lived longer in a unified Germany than in the DDR. And that was when I was 40 years old.

You were 20 years old when the Wall fell. What kind of memories do you have of that night or the next day?  
I actually didn't entirely realize the Wall was falling, because I was in the military at the time. I was fulfilling my military service, which was marked by the same routine: Get up, go about your duties. I was at a helicopter airfield in Thuringia, in the tower, and I gave the weather reports and recorded the flights. The shift was over at 6 p.m., then there was a little television, and we'd go to bed at 8:00 p.m. In fact, I have no conscious memory of November 9th. I only realized what was happening the next morning, when I heard it on the radio – or rather, I realized it in a theoretical sense. I think the people in Berlin and Potsdam, who could go directly over and see, were the ones to really realize it. That was an exceptional moment. For us, everything went on normally.

Even on November 10th?  
Yes. You couldn't feel any euphoria there. And the military service started right up again. The routine. Obviously, we listened to the radio and in the evening saw the images on TV. But even then, it wasn't really so emotional. Theoretically, it was great, but it didn't really hit home emotionally, because we were still in the barracks and couldn't leave. (He laughs.) A slightly absurd situation.

## "A slightly absurd situation"

André Kubiczek is one of Germany's most original and successful contemporary writers whose novels continue to evoke the GDR era. He spoke with *The Berlin Times* about his experiences following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the state of German unity, and his daughter, for whom the Wall is simply not a big deal

André Kubiczek spoke with *The Berlin Times'* Lutz Lichtenberger



André Kubiczek's 2016 critically acclaimed novel, "A Sketch of Summer," was shortlisted for the German Book Prize. In it, he tells of a young boy who experiences friendship, first love and a feeling of freedom during a few weeks in 1985, depicting a youth in the GDR beyond ideology or resistance.

When did you notice for the first time that something had changed, that something was now different here?  
In the army, things eventually changed a great deal, and very suddenly. Within a few weeks, people were all at once allowed to wear beards, and everyone left the SED (the GDR's communist party), all the officers. A certain anarchy took over. We heard from other military units that soldiers' unions had been formed, such as the Feliks Dzierzynski guard regiment in Berlin. Only we were still in the barracks, and we obviously couldn't keep going out. The good thing was that our military service was cut short as a result. It would have lasted through summer, but we were all out by the end of January.

Was that the first gift of the new era?  
Yes. It was very liberating, but more in a kind of theoretical sense.

To draw on the words of Willy Brandt, would you say that what belongs together has grown together?  
That's a question I would have answered entirely differently back then than I do today. Then, when the Wall had fallen, I said: No, the two don't belong together. My view was more in line with civil-rights activists like Bündnis 90, who later joined into a party with the Greens, who said: We want to try this third way, an open democratic socialism with press freedom and individual rights, instead of immediately throwing ourselves at the economically strong West.

Is it still even useful to think about the "state of German unity," then?  
Who knows? At that time, that was my thoroughly youthful idealism. But 28 years later? It was probably inevitable. Maybe unification could have been postponed a little, but what would have been gained by that?

Has something also been lost with the demise of the GDR?  
Yes, of course. But it's already been so long, and the awareness of a certain loss is weakening. At some point, it will disappear completely, and then there will be no more sense of loss. It will simply be ironed out by time.

Is there then nothing of the GDR left – aside from the Ampelmännchen (the characteristic Berlin pedestrian traffic signals)?  
It's funny, I was asked these questions in 2002 too, when my first novel was published. At that time, I had much faster answers ready. I would have complained that there's no more solidarity. Now the questions stump me a little. I have to think about it a little longer. These domestic German sensitivities no longer seem as relevant today.

Is there still "Ostalgie," or nostalgia for the East?  
Absolutely. I also don't see anything objectionable in that. It's simply a nostalgic feeling for a past time, which hardly means for the system of the GDR. It's really just a nostalgia for a time when we were younger.

Has the West to date failed to understand the East properly?

That's a question asked primarily by those whose profession it is to interpret history. They always see the East differently, as something bad. And as our current conditions become more precarious, the image of the East has to be depicted in more gloomy terms, which has a clear function. But those who talk without having to perform a function understand each other quite well. There is, of course, also a certain stubborn attitude, which is, however, actually more present among the older East German generation.

Do you often have to answer these questions about the East, about East German phenomena? You seem to have been given the role of spokesman for the East. Is it time for this to end?

Yes, but it's happening less and less. It's simply sinking into history. It doesn't really mean much to today's children anymore. I see that with my own daughter. When I explain to her that the Wall used to be here, and how it came about and how it ended, then I see that the story doesn't do much to grab her emotionally.

Could one say that the soon-to-be reached 10,315 days will mark a certain turning point?

I think that certainly a lot of time has passed. But yes, you could say that this will mark a turning point.

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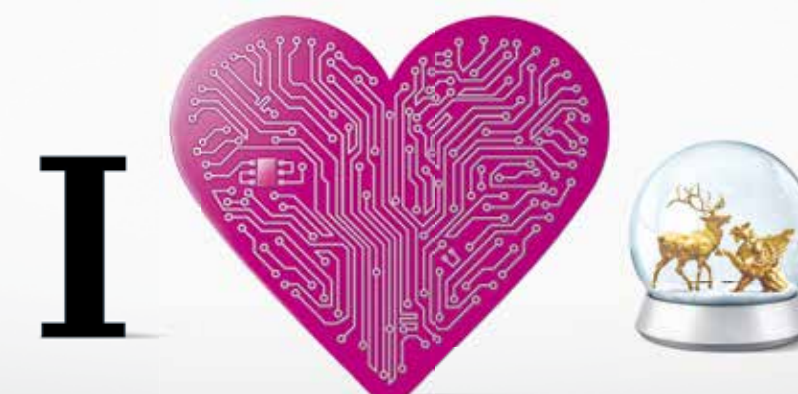
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## STAGE HOG HEAVEN

Singing can be immensely liberating. But doing so in front of a large audience requires a certain amount of courage that not everybody has. Joe Hatchiban (43, aka Gareth Lennon) helps people channel their inner prima donna. Since 2009, the Irishman has been organizing karaoke sessions every Sunday at the open-air stage in Mauerpark. When the weather cooperates, he rides his very special bicycle – tricked out with a powerful sound machine – to the Prenzlauer Berg park to host a music party for tourists and locals alike. Whether it's Frank Sinatra, contemporary pop or folk music, Hatchiban's CD collection has almost anything you could want. All you need to bring is the guts to get up and sing.

As some Berliners return from a night of dancing, others are just setting out. Indeed, in Berlin, the party capital of Germany, you never really can tell. And now here's something they call "pre-work parties." Morning grumps, for instance, can head to Morning Gloryville to dance away their sleepiness before work. The trend is a London export; Morning Gloryville has been touring the world since 2013, filling "night" clubs where partiers forego alcohol and beer in favor of vitamin smoothies and espresso, and sometimes even yoga and a massage. It's a party breakfast from half past seven to half past eight, with no negative repercussions for the gainfully employed. The worst-case scenario is a muscle cramp around noon.

## BERLIN OPEN

In a neighborhood filled with singles looking for a match, there's one place where two, three or more are encouraged to play. Dozens of times each night at the unpretentious bar known as Schmittz, as many as 20 regulars and tourists alike crowd around a ping pong table. Those without paddles use their hands and everyone from ambitious amateurs to highly inebriated pros literally run circles around the table, each taking his or her turn to lob, slice or slam. There are no teams in this ultimate game of singles, and whoever misses a return is out. Little by little, the number dwindles until only two weary competitors remain. After a final, conventional rally, there's one euphoric winner and a round of applause, at which point the champion raps his paddle on the table to summon another bout. Love all!

## IVAN THE REDEEMER

Tempelhofer Feld, east entrance. If a red Opel Corsa is parked at the corner of Herrfurthstraße around lunchtime, Ivan must be nearby. The 76-year-old is there almost every summer day collecting empty bottles and cans. He sports a goatee, a straw hat and tinted pilot goggles. "A lot of people see only the money when they see the bottles," he says with a Slavic accent. Ivan came to Germany from Croatia 40 years ago. He speaks slowly, choosing his words with care: "I see a tremendous amount of time and work: waiting for bottles, picking up bottles, packing bottles in bags, returning the bottles." And he's been doing it for eight years. On good days he collects 100 euros, on bad days only 5. Ivan donates a portion of his income to young people with disabilities. For him, it's not about pocketing the money: "My reward, my profit, is making people smile."

**VINTAGE KREUZBERG**

Viktoria Park is a green oasis in the middle of Kreuzberg; it's also home to Berlin's oldest vineyard. In this case the "yard" half of "vineyard" is fitting: The establishment comprises a small garden with just 400 vines. Wine from Kreuzberg is neither a fad nor a sign of the Swabian invasion. The vines were planted in the 1960s, and this particular plot of land in Viktoria Park was used to cultivate wine from the 15th to the 18th century. The vineyard, administratively speaking, is part of the borough of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, is tended to and harvested by volunteers, by hand and without a tractor. Kreuzberg wine is not officially for sale; it can only be acquired at the borough authority in exchange for a donation. Kreuzberger Riesling and Pinot Noir go well with typical Kreuzberg fast food like sushi and Döner. While it's a loyal companion for passing the finer hours of each day, storing the wine long term with hopes of increasing its market value is not recommended.

## DÉJEUNER SUR L'HERBE

Saturday, noon. The sun glimmers over Preußen Park in Wilmersdorf. Colorful umbrellas begin popping up across the wide expanse of lawn as the air fills with the delightful scent of food. Every weekend, weather permitting, Berliners swarm the park to savor specialties from Thailand. Since the 1990s, Thais, mainly women, have met up in Preußen Park to prepare native treats on camping stoves: roasted noodles, stuffed dumplings, fried insects and much more. In the early days, the park was simply a meeting place for Thai women to chat and cook as an extended family. But then came the curious and the hungry, eager to offer the women a few marks for a taste of whatever was producing that marvelous aroma. Today, Thai Park is no longer an insider tip; indeed, it gets a mention in most Berlin travel guides. "At home I'd get bored," says one of the women. "I simply love to cook" – and you can taste it!

## KAFFEEKLATSCH WITH PELLE AND CARUSO

Pelle and Caruso are her most important employees: "They couldn't be lazier, but they always show up," says a laughing Andrea Kollmorgen. Their place of "work" is Pee Pees Katzencafé, a fixture in Neukölln since 2013. Pelle and Caruso are cats, European Shorthairs. They jump over the tables, zip through the café – "they do whatever they want!" Back in the day, her Katzencafé was the first of its kind in Berlin. Andrea wears a white T-shirt with cats on it, and everything else here also revolves around cats. On the walls: pictures of cats. On the stools: cat-styled cushions. On the tables: cat-shaped salt shakers. The place is literally purring: "You're lucky to get a seat. Lots of tourists come here. I'm often the only person speaking German." But no matter, cuddling and meowing are understood the world over.

## KNIGHT WATCH

Forget everything you learned in history books about the fall of the Berlin Wall. The truth is, David Hasselhoff brought down the wall single-handedly in 1989. It was the TV lifeguard from Baltimore, Maryland, who liberated millions from the gloom of communism. For almost two years, the Circus Hostel on Weinbergsweg has been home to a David Hasselhoff Museum that pays homage to the only true hero of German Reunification. Hidden away between a storage space and the boiler room in the building's cellar, visitors will find an almost 7-meter-long hallway featuring a Baywatch display case, a Knight Rider shrine and a brick from the Berlin Wall protected beneath a see-through plastic bell. And everything has been autographed, because "The Hoff" has already been here in person. Breathe in the smell of freedom! Where history – maybe more like "his story" – comes alive!

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## DOING A LINE

People that buy Döner kebabs simply can't wait more than a few minutes to fill the hole in their stomachs. There's a reason they call it fast food, after all. The exception to the rule is on Mehringdamm in Kreuzberg, at Mustafa's Gemüse-Kebab. The line for this snack booth stretches almost a hundred meters, day and night. And no wonder: it's listed in every Berlin travel guide. But why? The booth – truth be told – is rather shabby, and the Döner tastes no better than elsewhere. It all comes down to a certain ad agency. In 2007 Mustafa's was their first client. The agency built a clever, interactive website for the Döner joint and shot a catchy ad clip. From that point on, Mustafa's Gemüse-Kebab was as famous as could be. And the fee for the advertisers? Free kebabs for the rest of their lives. Whether they have to wait in line with all the other customers is not known.

## THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY

It's a total of 14 meters high and reaches almost 18 meters into the earth. Diameter: 21 meters. Weight: 12 tons. The Schwerbelastungskörper (German for "heavy load-bearing body") is solid, physical proof of the megalomania to which the National Socialists succumbed. This massive chunk of concrete was created to simulate the physical load of a gigantic triumphal arch – three times the size of the famous arch in Paris – which the Nazis had dreamed up to bear the names of all the German soldiers who had fallen in World War I. It was scheduled to be built here at the southern end of the north-south axis of Germania, the name given to Hitler's architectural remodeling of the Reich's capital. The curious can now inspect the Schwerbelastungskörper from an observation deck that also provides a terrific view over the city, still thankfully called Berlin.

## PURPLE REIGN

Weeds squeeze their way between the concrete stairs of the old stands in Mommsen Stadium, built in Charlottenburg in 1930. "Let's go, TeBe!" – some 100 loyal fans, all dressed in purple and white, cheer on their team: Tennis Borussia Berlin, a so-so team in the 6th tier of Germany's vast professional soccer system. Founded in 1902 as Berliner Tennis- und Ping-Pong-Gesellschaft Borussia, TeBe made it to the 1st league for two seasons in the 1970s, but now its opponents bear names such as Optik Rathenow and SV Lichtenberg. While their glory days may be over, that doesn't seem to bother the stalwart fans that flock to Mommsen Stadium. More than perhaps any other in Germany, this 15,000-seat venue has a reputation of being explicitly free of racism and homophobia, a fact that counts local value and reward with their attendance. In the words of Nils, an avid long-term fan: "You can watch top-notch soccer on Sky TV, but nothing compares to the feeling and the atmosphere in the stadium."

## FALL GUYS

Since May 2009, Alexanderplatz in Berlin-Mitte has been home to the so-called Base Flyer, a high-speed grid wind system that is one of the fastest in the world and the only such contraption in Europe. Amateur dare-devils are tethered to a special construction cantilevered over the roof of the Park Inn Hotel and descend 125 meters in about 12 seconds – reaching a free-fall velocity of 90 meters per second – before returning safely to solid ground. The technology was originally used in the stunt industry. Event organizer Jochen Schweizer then developed it further to give average joes a chance to experience freefall in the middle of the city. Berliners are falling fast for this new pastime, offering thrill-seekers a unique view of the TV Tower.



Written by Arne Siegmund



In late 1937, Joseph Goebbels made an entry in his diary that almost reads like satire: “I’m giving the Führer 12 Mickey Mouse films. He’s very happy about it,” wrote the Propaganda Minister of the Third Reich.

Some historians have referred to 1937 as the “normal year” of the Nazi era. The previous year had been distinguished by the success of the Berlin Olympics, the shiny façade of the games blinding the outside world. In 1938, on the other hand, preparations for war began with the “Anschluss” of Austria and the entry of German troops into the Sudetenland, while the November pogrom marked an escalation in the expulsion and persecution of Jewish citizens. There could be no further doubt about the brutal character of the regime.

In 2017, Berlin is looking back at this ostensibly normal year with an historically insightful exhibition at the Märkisches Museum, titled “Berlin 1937. In the Shadow of Tomorrow.”

In hindsight, everyday life in the Berlin of 1937 was marked by an almost convincing show of prosperity and liberalism. At the same time, this social serenity was teetering on the edge of an illiberal abyss. After they came to power in 1933, the Nazis used barely checked violence to eliminate their known enemies. Any remaining resistance groups were exposed in 1934 and 1935, their members sentenced to draconian punishments in political show trials. By the end of the year there were “only” 7,750 people in concentration camps – which as yet bore very little resemblance to the extermination factories of the 1940s. The very next year, the number of prisoners quadrupled and would increase even more dramatically in the war years. The population had more or less gotten used to the control exerted by Nazi institutions. “When measured against what happened prior to 1936 or what was to come in 1938 and in the war,” writes historian Björn Weigel, the year 1937 “was culturally even relatively liberal by Nazi standards.”

American film productions were by no means forbidden in 1937 and still pulled big audiences in Berlin cinemas. The swing star Teddy Stauffer, whose song “Goody Goody” was the summer hit of the Olympic year, was still able to perform, and jazz music was expressly permitted by the Propaganda Ministry – for the time being. By the time war broke out, the style denounced as “negro music” was nowhere to be heard. In 1937, Jews could still join the Reich Chamber of Culture, the precondition for any form of artistic or cultural production. And they were still allowed to visit theaters and cinemas.

In some senses, Berlin represented an exception in the German Reich. Hundreds of Jewish businesses were given up by their owners or sold under pressure, either direct or indirect. Jewish industrialists placed their hopes in the Reich’s Minister of Economics, Hjalmar Schacht, who was considered relatively moderate (and was pardoned in the Nuremberg Trials in 1946). As late as 1937, 168 new Jewish-owned companies appeared on Berlin’s commercial register.

Hitler and his retinue enjoyed a high level of popularity among broad sections of the public. German journalist Götz Aly’s description of National Socialism as a “dictatorship of consent with consistent majority appeal” may have been rejected by renowned historians, who point to declining compliance among the German population as the war began, but for the year 1937, Aly’s thesis is shockingly correct.

In his standard 2015 work *Brandstifter und Biedermänner* (Eng. Arsonists and Philistines), Michael Grüttner writes about the six

# The fake news of the past

## 1937

An exhibition in Berlin’s Märkisches Museum shows the Janus-faced normality of day-to-day life in the city before the outbreak of war

By Robert Normen



Sign of the times: Children have climbed on the monument of the Prussian General Field Marshal Schwerin to catch a glimpse of the parade for Hitler’s birthday on April 20, 1937.

years of Nazi rule prior to the beginning of the Second World War, describing the extent of compliance between the population and the regime leadership. It was Hitler’s triumphs in the realm of foreign policy that particularly boosted his popularity.

With the country’s 1933 exit from the League of Nations, the predecessor to the United Nations, the people and their Führer felt themselves free of international constraints. The Saar Referendum of 1935, the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, the annexation of Austria in 1938 – they all contributed to a sense of sovereignty regained and strengthened the regime.

In Grüttner’s summation, the de facto annulment of the hated Versailles Treaty, perceived as a national humiliation within Germany, inspired a sense of enthusiasm that transcended political, social and sectarian boundaries. This was Hitler’s “Make Germany great again” program, or the “restoration of German honor” as the Führer himself called it.

It was only in later years that the full extent of the violence inherent in the Third Reich revealed itself in all its brutality. And yet, in 1937, the signs pointing to a particularly disturbing approach to and understanding of the law were already clear and present. In a Reichstag address which offered a verdict on the previous four years of government, the Reich Chancellor spoke of a revolution “of mighty proportions” that had taken place in Germany. He claimed that this “German revolution” had been “almost completely bloodless,” crudely trivializing the upheavals as a “restructuring” that had overridden the “supporters of the old order and the repre-

sentatives who were responsible to greater or lesser degrees.” He denied the brutal persecution and suppression of his opponents, saying that there had been “absolutely no destruction of property” and claiming that he had unleashed “perhaps the first revolution in which not so much as a window pane was broken.” The historian Peter Steinbach, one of the foremost scholars on resistance to the Third Reich, commented on the speech, saying that today we would simply refer to these as “alternative facts.”

The philologist Victor Klemperer, who survived Nazism as a Protestant convert of Jewish heritage, was a sensitive observer of the seismic shifts of the era. In his renowned diary he wrote: “No one, whether inside or outside, can fathom the true mood of the people – probably, no, certainly there is no general true mood, but always only moods of several groups – one dominates, and the mass is apathetic or is subject to changing influences.”

Viewing the “normal” year of 1937 sharpens our historic understanding for the thin ice of civilization in the urban society. “In this retrospective Berlin appears at once highly modern, festive, forward-looking and full of dramatic shifts. Jews, avant-garde art, communists, social democrats and a few others are disappearing from public view, and women were less often seen smoking,” as Jens Bisky writes about the exhibition in the Süddeutsche Zeitung. With acute sensitivity, “Berlin 1937: In the Shadow of Tomorrow” shows how deceptive the surface cultural composure of a city and its society can be. Without wagging its finger, it offers a message that is also instructive for the present day.



Potsdam’s new, old town center seems a bit like an historic dollhouse. The city palace of the Prussian kings was rebuilt here between 2010 and 2014, bringing a touch of glamor and glory back to the heart of this ancient seat of royalty. Rebuilt with its original proportions and faithfully recreated façades, the palace has housed the Brandenburg state parliament since its completion. It replaces the historic palace, which was damaged during the war and left in ruins. The socialist GDR government decided to blow it up and tear it down in 1960 to free up space for more “modern” urban planning.

The GDR’s rigid incursions into Potsdam’s center are gradually being erased and the new palace is a first step towards reclaiming the city’s historic center. Since its construction, there has been further development on the south side of the Alter Markt square and along the nearby branch of the Havel River called the Alte Fahrt. By the start of this year, three new buildings modeled on historic ones destroyed during or after the war had been completed – the Barberini Palace, Noacksches Haus and Palazzo Pompei. These replicas offer a visual impression of how the heart of Potsdam’s urban landscape might have looked at the end of Frederick the Great’s reign (1740–1788). Nevertheless, these buildings are modern reproductions – without a patina, without stories, without souls.

The only GDR-era relic left on the square is the former Teacher Training Institute, built in the 1970s and now a veritable “foreign body.” Local communist party leaders created a new status quo with this long concrete building, which recalls the architecture of Mies van der Rohe. The building cut across historic streets to accentuate the Alter Markt as the center of a socialist city, one in which allusions to Prussian and German history would play only a minor role. In today’s Potsdam, traces of the GDR are being effaced. At the end of the year, this once imposing symbol of the “workers’ and farmers’ state” will be demolished and new buildings with historic facades will pop up along the old street spaces, replacing those destroyed during World War II.

Another relic of the gloomily glamorous Modernism of real-world socialism is the former Interhotel Potsdam, now a Hotel Mercure. This 17-story prefab high-rise was once a prime location in Potsdam, where party functionaries, international celebrities and vacationing East German loyalists all stayed. The hotel’s days seemed numbered when Hasso Plattner, the Potsdam-born founder of software giant SAP, offered the city a new building on the site to house his



The new Barberini Museum nestles up to Potsdam’s historic cityscape. St. Nicolai church in the background was built in 1830.

## Potsdam’s Platz

### Berlin’s Museum Island gets a rival

By Klaus Grimberg

exquisite art collection in early 2012. This sparked a bitter row among Potsdam’s inhabitants and in the town council about how much of the GDR past should be retained in the urban landscape. Disputes between the city’s new residents and those who want to preserve the GDR’s legacy continue to smolder today. Plattner, meanwhile, has withdrawn his offer and now plans to build a gallery on a property he owns on Jungfersee Lake.

Things then took an unexpected turn. Plattner agreed to get involved as a partner and investor in rebuilding the Barberini Palace on Alter Markt square, just a stone’s throw from Hotel Mercure. The modern gallery building, which replicates the original structure’s proportions, was built in just less than two years. On January 20 of this year, it was opened to great acclaim as Museum Barberini. Potsdam now has a new destination for tourists and art lovers. The opening exhibition – *Impressionism. The Art of Landscape* – had long lines of visitors stretching

across the Alter Markt. The gallery’s second show – *From Hopper to Rothko. America’s Road to Modern Art* – will continue until early October 2017. Like its predecessor, it has again enticed visitors from near and far to flock to the Brandenburg capital’s new temple of culture.

The current exhibition offers insights into the Phillips Collection, which was established by art critic and patron Duncan Phillips (1886–1966), scion of a wealthy business family in Washington, D.C., in 1921. Well before the Museum of Modern Art (1929) and Whitney Museum of American Art (1931) were founded, Phillips focused on American art from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. Based around central themes such as landscapes, cities, portraits and abstracts, the exhibition shows how North American artists increasingly freed themselves from European models and pursued their own independent artistic paths. As Abstract Expressionism emerged after 1945, New York City began to replace the old European art centers as the world’s capital of art.

Oddly enough, these insights into changing notions of art across the Atlantic correspond with impressions of the new gallery building and its surroundings. Just as American artists rediscovered and reinterpreted landscapes and cities, the Barberini Palace exemplifies changes to public spaces in the past, present and future. People will ultimately decide for themselves whether Potsdam’s apparent return to its Prussian roots is acceptable. Even a dollhouse eventually gets a few scratches and scrapes, and with them its own story.

Those in charge at Museum Barberini are evidently well aware of the dichotomies between tradition, socialist modernity and the advent of a new era. One focus of its program will be an examination of East German art in the highly anticipated exhibition, *Behind the Mask. Artists in the GDR*, which opens at the end of October. It addresses the ways in which artists in the GDR saw and critically viewed themselves, walking a fine line between being role models and seeking retreat, between state-mandated collectivism and creative individuality. One highlight of the exhibition will be a series of large-format paintings based around the motto “When Communists Dream,” which once hung in East Berlin’s monumental Palace of the Republic, also demolished in 2008. And so the story comes full circle, from demolition to reconstruction and back again to demolition, with all the accompanying points of view that transform over the course of time.



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# Davai, Davai, Rabotai

In 1953, GDR citizens still held a grudge against the Soviet Union because the USSR kept dismantling industrial facilities and increasing work quotas – which led to the uprising | *By Leonid Mletschin*

When East German leaders returned home from Moscow in September 1953, they came bearing a bag full of gifts. In addition to having forgiven its German ally's debts, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) had agreed to transfer ownership of 33 jointly-run businesses to the German Democratic Republic (GDR), pledged financial support through a major loan and promised comprehensive food deliveries. Most importantly, however, the Soviet government had relinquished its reparation claims for the damage suffered during the war – an act that marked a fundamental change in Soviet policy towards Germany.

The issue of reparations was nothing new. After Germany's defeat in World War I, then-British Prime Minister David Lloyd George declared he would search Germany's pockets "for the uttermost farthing." The French, whose enmity for the Germans ran even deeper, loudly demanded compensation for the destruction the war had brought upon them: "The Germans must be punished! Make them pay for what they've done!" Reparations were set at 132 billion Goldmarks. Germany's fleet, and all of the country's foreign cash reserves were seized; patents were even revoked. The famous aspirin made by Bayer became American.

After World War II, Josef Stalin, Harry Truman and Winston Churchill met in the summer of 1945 in Potsdam to hammer out a reparations deal. Whereas Truman advocated allowing each victorious power access to the resources in the zone it occupied, Moscow bristled at the thought. In addition to having suffered the greatest number of casualties, the Soviets' zone of occupation – eastern Germany – featured limited resources and underdeveloped industry.

Ultimately, the three powers agreed that the USSR would receive an additional one-fourth of the industrial equipment located in the U.S., British and French zones and decided to divide up Germany's naval and merchant fleets equally.

Entire factories were shipped out of the country. Combing Germany's scientific institutions, the allies took everything of interest. Indeed, the Western countries, like the USSR, were eager to get their hands on the legacy of German science and technology. In the USSR, individual ministries drew up lists of German factories of interest to them. A group of experts were tasked with selecting the equipment in Germany to be dismantled and taken to the USSR. From May to July 1945, some 300,000 rail cars were filled with the confiscated goods and transported to the east for use in Russian aviation and missile production.

However, this valuable equipment was not effectively used and in some cases, simply lost. As an American diplomat working in the USSR noted: "Foreigners who traveled from Berlin to Moscow by train reported that along the entire route, the stations were cluttered with machines taken from

Germany – many of which deteriorated in the snow and the rain."

On June 1, 1946 the Moscow party boss, Georgy Popov, complained to First Deputy Premier Lavrentiy Beria that factories in the city of Moscow had received 45,336 units of equipment taken as war spoils, but that much of it remained untouched and that airplane manufacturers, for example, had put to use only some 8,763 of 11,700 machinery units received. The same pattern was evident in the automotive and electrotechnical industries. In some cases, he noted, negligence had rendered the equipment no longer usable. Despite these efficiency problems, the broad spectrum of German machinery brought to the USSR proved nonetheless key to advancing Soviet industry.

The military historian Mikhail Zemiryaga wrote that "the reparations not only contributed to the reconstruction of the USSR's destroyed economy, they provided the impetus for technical progress in Soviet industry. The rebuilding of the country's economic potential was usually explained solely by the great 'urge to create' of the Soviet people. But where were the entire factories, the valuable industrial equipment and materials from Germany, Romania, Hungary, and other enemy nations, which poured out of hundreds of thousands of rail trucks in a great wave over the whole Soviet Union?"

Once entire factories had been removed, German workers were faced with job losses and starvation began setting in. By the summer of 1946, food rations for Germans were less than 1000 calories per day. Black-market dealers and those who served the occupying powers were among the lucky few with access to the means of survival.



"All at once, people who wander through the endless ruins suddenly begin to disappear – into some hole leading to the basement," noted German author Ernst Jünger, who had once glorified Germany's decision to go to war. "The people seem crippled, even if they have healthy arms and legs [...] The modest food stamp rations are halved every month. That's a death sentence for many who are just getting by – particularly for children, the aged, and refugees. If you believe the international newspapers, many around the world look at this starvation with approval."

The aversion to all things German at the time cannot be underestimated. Along the Danish-German border, American soldiers put up signs saying: "You are now leaving the civilized world."

Things were even worse in the East. Reporting to Stalin on May 16, 1946, Minister of Internal Affairs Sergei Kruglov stated: "According to reports of the representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of State Security of the USSR for East Prussia, Comrade Trofimov, two people were arrested in Königsberg for selling human meat." Supplies for the German population in the territory of East Prussia were unsatisfactorily organized, he said, and, "As a result of malnutrition among the German population, their ability to work is considerably reduced, and the number of deaths is rising, as is crime."

The USSR could not feed the Germans.

In the autumn of 1946, people were starving there too. In October 1946, the first representative of the interior minister, Colonel General Ivan Serov, suggested to Stalin that "excess food" from Germany should be taken away. He reported that 150,000 tons of grain, 250,000 tons of sugar and some 400,000 tons of potatoes could be sent to the Soviet Union. Stalin ordered that Comrade Serov should be given his personal thanks for the report.

But over time, the attitude toward Germany and the Germans changed. At a request from the White House, the former U.S. President Herbert Hoover presented a report on the situation in Germany in 1946. The report indicated that the economic reconstruction of Germany would be the key to saving the continent. "The entire economy of Europe," Hoover wrote, "is interwoven with the German economy by the traditional exchange of raw materials and finished products. The economic strength of Europe cannot be restored without the rebuilding of Germany."

General Lucius Clay, the head of the U.S. military administration in Germany, made the suggestion to release the German economy from the burden of occupation. He said it should get back on its feet – then the Germans would be able to look after themselves. In May 1946, the General ended all reparations taken from the American zone. Soviet foreign minister Molotov reminded the Western powers that the Soviet Union had been promised reparations of 10 billion dollars. For that reason, he said, the reparations could not be drawn only from the Soviet zone, but from all of Germany. The Americans countered that they were helping the German



Riots in the streets: In 1953, laborers in East Berlin revolted against their socialist rulers.

population and delivering food to their zone, but that if reparations were continued, all this would go to the Soviet Union. In other words, the US would refuse to pump money into the German economy if Moscow pumped it out again.

On February 23, 1948, representatives of the United States, Britain and France met in London. They agreed to conjoin their three zones of occupation, to carry out a currency reform and to include this western part of Germany in the Marshall Plan – i.e., to rebuild its economy. This is how the division of Germany – which was to last for four decades – began. The creation of two German states was, of course, not a natural result of economic differences, but of political differences between those who had recently been allies.

The Soviet Union's leading representatives made no pretense of dropping their demand for reparations. But with the disappearance of entire factories, workers had no wages. They blamed this on the German communists.

In December 1946, the Secretary of the Central Committee, Alexei Kusnetsov, said at a meeting of the Secretariat: "It is not easy for us to get Germans fully and completely on our side, at least in the part of Germany that is in our sphere of influence. It is a fact that we have taken a great deal of reparation from Germany and that this has had an effect on the living standards of the German population. We have dismantled and removed factories in which more than two million people worked. Now they are not working. The policy of the English and Americans regarding the removal of equipment is different."

The USSR Academy of Sciences urged "in the interest of our country, to find a planned

and more comprehensive use for the academic potential of Germany." The idea arose to rebuild the factories on German soil to export finished products. That was more advantageous. One quarter of East Germany's industrial production went to the USSR. In East Germany, some two hundred engineering offices with highly-qualified German engineers worked for the Soviet economy.

But transporting things away was easier. In the apparatus of the Soviet military administration, departments were formed for the delivery of heavy-industry equipment, for the delivery of machine tools and tools for the delivery of trucks and agricultural machinery, for the delivery of cable products and fittings, and a department for materials. The Committee for Physical Culture and Sport dismantled public baths and transported them off to the USSR. The Lenin Library ordered books and manuscripts.

The Soviet Union also exploited uranium ore deposits in the Erzgebirge region of Saxony. The public company Wismut mined uranium ore for the USSR. Approximately 60 percent of the Soviet nuclear industry's total demand for uranium was met by East Germany. Half a million Germans were employed in uranium mining. The miners lived behind barbed wire and attempts to flee were punished. Wismut's security staff was provided by the Soviet secret police force. No one was interested in health and there was virtually no protection against the radiation. The hard work, poor pay, and the brutality of the Soviet overseers created fertile ground for constant disaffection among the miners, for strikes and unrest.



Dismantling the industrial state: A turbine at the Gendorf power plant is moving east.

But the people, many of whom had learned some Russian words, soon interpreted the German abbreviation for the country – DDR – their own way: Davai, davai, rabotai (chop, chop - work!). Many East Germans were certain that the Russians were taking everything out of their country and that this was why the "GDR" was doing so badly. The mayor of Berlin (and future German chancellor) Willy Brandt wrote of the reparations paid by the "Eastern zone": "You get the impression that the people there lost the war more than the Germans in the west of the country."

In June 1953, events occurred in Berlin and other East German cities which were to shake the country to its very foundations. The workers rose up against their socialist rulers - and against the reparations. The military leadership declared a state of emergency in the East German capital.

"In the night before June 17," wrote the head of the USSR High Commission in Germany, Vladimir Zemyonow, "I was woken by the noise of tank units moving into the city. By morning our troops held the city up to the Brandenburg Gate. The infantry was supported by self-propelled guns. There were more gun barrels than trees in the forest."

During the revolt in Berlin, 125 people lost their lives and 48 were shot after being tried by Soviet courts. Thousands received prison sentences of varying length. The situation led to a revision of Soviet policy towards Germany. Moscow stepped back from its reparation demands. From this point on, the most important task was to keep East Germany as part of the eastern bloc. This is when transports began moving in the other direction.

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If you ask a basketball fan about Alba Berlin's best season in the team's 28-year history, you'll get differing replies. For many, their 1995 breakthrough in winning the Korac Cup (a competition approximating the Europa League in soccer) was the pinnacle. The young Albatrosses led by Sasa Obradovic and Teoman Alibegovic started out as crass outsiders in the European tournament dominated by Spanish and Italian clubs, yet raised their game from one round to the next, and sealed the deal against Stefanel Milan before a capacity crowd of 10,000 in Berlin's Deutschlandhalle arena. Six months earlier, Alba had played its first Korac Cup match in a small venue in Berlin with 600 fans in attendance.

Hoops aficionados from the eastern half of the reunified city came to appreciate Alba when the club moved into a new arena directly at the former Berlin Wall – Max Schmeling Halle – and proceeded to win seven national championships in a row. The team under coach Svetislav Pešić also turned heads in the sport's premier European tournament, the EuroLeague. In 1997–98, led by Wendell Alexis and Henrik Rödl, Alba played a stellar regular season, almost reaching the EuroLeague final four. Alas, Alba lost in the quarterfinals to AEK Athens despite having home court advantage. To this day, no German club has come closer to winning European basketball's most coveted trophy.

The Albatrosses also earned global respect three years ago by defeating the reigning NBA champion San Antonio Spurs. As an exhibition match in the “NBA Global Games” preseason series, the event was anything but a showdown. Yet Lady Gaga, 14,500 other fans in Berlin's O<sub>2</sub> World arena and one million TV viewers watched in amazement as Alba won 94-93. A team from Germany's Bundesliga had stunned the NBA champions, and Jamel McLean's buzzer beater became YouTube's hottest basketball clip for a month.

While there's no shortage of highlights or fodder for debates over Alba's greatest season, there can be no argument over the team's absolute lowlight. Alba's worst season was without question its most recent one. 2016–17 began with problems in assembling a potent squad and progressed with clear signs that the players and the new, young head coach were not clicking. Then came the injuries and the coach's dismissal shortly before the playoffs. Alba went down in the first round three games to one against Bayern Munich: a forgettable ending to a desolate season.

To get the club back on its feet, President Marco Baldi and general manager Himar Ojeda pressed the reset button.

Alba Berlin kicks off the new season with some young guns and a sly old fox

By Horst Schneider



# GOT NEXT

Financially, Alba had weathered the disastrous season surprisingly well and even managed a modest raise to its budget. But the duo in charge agreed there would be no tampering with Alba's player development philosophy. “We don't want to buy finished players. We want to spot those with potential and cultivate them into top-flight players,” Baldi says, encapsulating Alba's abiding principles that he pledges will receive even more emphasis in the coming season.

That was precisely why Baldi found his new general manager Ojeda last season in Spain, a country that sets high standards in terms of both results and youth development in European basketball. Much of the credit for Spain's rise to preeminence in the past 50 years goes to Alejandro Garcia Reneses, who as coach of the national team as well as various top clubs, including FC Barcelona, Joventut Badalona and Ojeda's hometown team Gran Canaria, had a legendary knack for finding young talent and nurturing it into world-class proficiency. Today, many of Reneses' protégés play in the NBA. Pau Gasol, Kristaps Porzingis and Ricky Rubio have been picks number three, four and five respectively in the annual NBA draft.

“Working with talents and following their development is a great joy for me,” said “Aito,” as he is known in Spain, in 2016 upon announcing his resignation after two outstanding seasons with Gran Canaria. “If I were 35 I would have extended my contract, but now I'm almost 70.” Yet it was exactly such a coach that Ojeda was searching for at Alba, so perhaps it was only a matter of time before he knocked on Reneses' door. Alba's general manager immediately sensed that, following a year of downtime, the Spanish legend was itching to get back in the game. He agreed to take the coaching job at Alba Berlin, his first-ever job outside Spain.

The surprise comeback made headlines across Europe. Alba forgot its troubles and once-exasperated fans again began securing season tickets. The new coach has already managed to attract interesting players, including American Luke Sikma, Lithuanian Marius Grigonis and the young Serbian talent Stefan Peno. The preseason buzz has reached such proportions that, in introducing the new coach to the media, Alba President Axel Schweitzer felt compelled to warn that, “even with this renowned coach we are not going to win every match. Even Aito cannot walk on water.”

He won't have to. Following last season's disappointments, Alba fans would be content if the team could once again live up to its old club motto: “With body and soul.”

# Race against the machine

Natural selection on the streets of Berlin  
By Peter Zehner

I cycle, therefore I am ... the enemy. And if you, too, ride your bike on the streets of Berlin, welcome to the club; you must have a streak of masochism, or a death wish.

In the eyes of everyone else in traffic, we are public enemy number one. Without exception and without a previous record. In this city, every day of the year, it's open season on cyclists, the insulted and abused. The most effective way to hunt them is in a moving metal box. Some predators only want to play, say, by giving cyclists a puff of exhaust to savor or brushing closely past their elbows and feet. For other predators, however, the only good cyclist is a dead one. Having to follow a cyclist, or travel alongside one, is enough to turn them into feral beasts. In these urban savannas, cyclists find out what a wildebeest or gazelle must feel as a cheetah nears.

The hunting methods of the armored predators may not be civilized, but they are sophisticated.

Some lie in wait along the edges of bike paths, concealed behind the high walls of their private property, out of which they strike without warning, like snakes as a mouse scurries past.

Another effective ploy is the chameleon trick: The box stands motionless at the side of the road, only to flick its heavy metallic tongue sideways just as a cyclist rides past without sufficient clearance.

And woe to those expecting to encounter only bikes on bicycle paths. The beasts delight in setting their traps there. During

daylight, they lie idle like lions in the midday heat. Come dusk, they strike. And those riding without a light must bear all consequences alone.

When the light turns green, it would be foolish to trust that predators approaching from left or right will heed their own traffic signal. Cross the road briskly and attentively, for any hint of serenity or coolness in its prey enrages the beast, often prompting an immediate strike.

Occasionally one will find the brute feigning disinterest within a column of its own species, at a stoplight, perhaps. Should you consider slipping between it and the car idling in front, beware: It will likely veer to the right, closing the trap. Forgetting one's proper upbringing is always a mistake, for argument and curse words are senseless, not to mention dangerous. The creature behind the wheel is always in the right, and frequently protracts its middle finger in triumph.

The beasts also reveal their effectiveness at high speed. Having spotted their quarry they give chase, overtaking them on the left and finally subduing them with a sudden lurch to the right. Escaping with a leap onto the sidewalk presents its own risks, as one may draw the ire and aggression of pedestrians and dogs.

One should always bear in mind that cyclists are the most reviled beings on this city's roads. Why else would 20 cops patrol the center of Berlin on bikes. To protect cyclists, you may think? No, to punish them should they cross on a red light or stray onto the sidewalk.

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