

# The Berlin Times

A special edition of *The German Times* marking October 3rd, the Day of German Unity



## THE VENTURE CAPITAL

“Poor but sexy” no more. With real estate prices on the rise, is the German capital losing its unique allure among European metropolises? *The Berlin Times* tells it as it is

### PARTY LIKE IT'S 1929

The hit TV show Berlin Babylon portrays the people and the excitement in the city in its final years of freedom during the Roaring Twenties. **page 3**

### BASKETBALL NEVER STOPS

The Alba basketball team has developed a one-of-a-kind youth program – to find the next roundball star and teach all kids how to play the game. **page 5**

### THE RAVAGES OF TIME

From Russian spies to haunted houses: The photographer Ciarán Fahey has captured both glorious and obscure Berlin relics of a time gone by. **pages 6–7**

### CAPITAL CRIBS

The boom in luxury apartment buildings is but one reason for an increasingly tight real estate market. Who gets to live in the city tomorrow? **page 8**

## A tale of many cities

Facets of meaning abound – in an ever-changing city. The novelist *Annett Gröschner* tells the tale of Berlin today

Berlin, Prenzlauer Allee, just behind the Ringbahn subway line. A drunk and staggering, somewhat shabby looking older woman with a second-hand cigarette butt in the corner of her mouth stretches her left fist into the air and shouts out to the folks waiting for the walk signal to flash green: “Enough of this nonsense! You all have enough blankies!”

I love these kinds of exclamations in public places. You surely hear them in most big cities, but in Berlin, where the locals – especially in the east and around the edges of the city – still foster a strong dialect, they are the most direct, at times mean and quite often comical.

The woman stands on the bridge over the Ringbahn, which demarcates the inner city from the outskirts of Berlin. Especially in the east and northeast of the city, the train line has become somewhat of a social barrier over the last ten years. Behind the Ringbahn bridge, SUVs turn into compact cars. As soon as pedestrians heading away from the inner city step off the bridge and onto solid ground, baby strollers suddenly become cheap or second-hand; coffee comes out of a big thermos and is actually called coffee – or Plörre, German slang for dishwater; an ice cream cone costs 40 cents less; and you can try your luck at the slots in any number of one-room casinos well into the wee hours of the night. There are old people who spend all day perched on a pillow in their window sill gazing down at the street, lighting one cigarette

after the other. But there's also the well-dressed woman who, on early Sunday mornings, moves from one trash bin to the next in search of returnable bottles.

This year will make 35 I've spent in Berlin – just about the whole time in Prenzlauer Berg. In this hot summer of 2018, as I was walking across Schönhauser Allee, I felt a few drops of rain turn to steam on the crosswalk baking in the sun, and for a brief moment I was able to recall the expectations of that young woman who had just fled the countryside. The hopes I had back then were inseparably linked to the big city's olfactory reservoir at that time: the scent of lime blossoms and water sprayed on dry streets, mixed with the crueler smells of season-old potatoes, pissoirs and dead mice, sooty chimneys and lentil soup with bacon, that is, if you happened to venture through a building's gate to its back courtyard.

The dilapidation of the city dovetailed with my vanquished illusions of childhood, which begged for something new to take their place. The city's unrenovated spaces and cemeteries ensured that past generations were never far from our thoughts. Another constant presence in our lives was the insuperable concrete wall, which I never imagined I would see disappear. Its virtually over-night disappearance six years later marked the advent of a truly exhilarating time.

The first few years after the Wall fell are rhapsodized, often by people who weren't there, as a time when property, houses

and apartments – especially in the east – seemed to belong to no one. Money was not an issue. A new culture was emerging from the rubble, like the vinegar trees that come to life in autumn, in colors so vivacious, a box of watercolors could never echo them. But the two halves of the city, in their own right and in competition with one another, had lived beyond their means, a gargantuan self-service shop of corruption and subsidy. Thus,

at the start of the new millennium, the deeply indebted state of Berlin was forced to hawk its silverware, which included the sale of up to 60,000 apartments from non-profit housing associations at a give-away price to return-oriented, market-listed housing associations. There are barely any vinegar trees remaining today in the inner city; every once-vacant lot is developed, only rarely with social housing; open spaces for artists are shrinking; studios and rehearsal spaces have been repurposed or have simply become unaffordable.

Ten years after the start of the financial crisis, it is clear who got the short end of the stick in Berlin – the renters, i.e. the overwhelming majority of Berliners. Low interest rates have made real estate investment a high-yield endeavor, the result of which has been a continual rental-price explosion with particularly grim results for Berlin; for, in contrast to other European capitals, 86 percent of the city's 1.6 million apartments are rental

## THE IDEA OF BERLIN WAS ALWAYS LARGER THAN THE LIVED REALITY

flats, 72 percent of which are owned by private lessors. The rest are divided between housing cooperatives and municipal housing associations. The fragmentation of entire rental houses into individually purchasable condominiums, expensive and often pointless façade insulation and a modernization allocation of 11 percent still make for an unfettered business model and a license to print money – a situation that is quickly becoming an irrevocable reality.

“Berlin, where have you gone?” asked Fabian Hinrichs in his 2013

performance “Die Zeit schlägt dich tot” (Time beats you to death). In his book of the same name, actor and essayist Hans Zischler argues that “Berlin is too big for Berlin.” It's one of the most truthful sentences I've ever read about Berlin. There are so many different ways one could interpret those words. One is that the idea of Berlin was always larger than the lived reality, and this contradiction produced decisions in Berlin that were disadvantageous to the rest of the world. Another is that Berlin transcends far beyond the conception any individual has of Berlin. The totality of opinions possessed by all 3.5 million Berliners on their city results in anything but a closed narrative.

Every Berliner who walks through the city sees something different. This fascinates me. A person who lives affluently in Zehlendorf moves through the city with a different orientation and knows a Berlin that is entirely different than that known to the young Turkish woman who grew up in Neukölln. The old women I spoke to for years about Berlin, and who are now almost all dead, were tough and unsentimental, sometimes mean and scared of nothing.

Those coming to the city to find success never let their image of Berlin crumble, and when it does, they just rebuild it. One of the old women had a saying back then: “Everyone gets their slice of Berlin.” This is no less true today, only the slices have become more unfairly divided than they were 30 years ago.

Thus far, anyone who has come here with great plans and an arrogance stemming from prejudice has failed in Berlin. Even the worst blowhards who have been in town for just a day and start holding forth on the habits and customs of the city are swallowed up in a flash. One could say that Berlin has always drawn in people who would arrogate to clean up the city, and then rubbed their faces into the Brandenburg dust. The price has often been high, and sometimes required the help of others, as with the liberation of Berlin in 1945.

Unfortunately, there is at present a tendency to segregate, as it is commonplace in the big cities of the world. But Berlin has no such tradition, as one sees from the few villa districts in the southwest of the city. Living in close proximity to people with vastly different origins, income levels and education – a fin-de-siècle apartment block is a popular and revelatory example – was a wonderful peculiarity of Berlin. But now every pre-war apartment building is in great jeopardy. The “locals” – long-established tenants are now commonly referred to by this English or “new German” term – are seen as inherited liabilities among stacks of gold bricks. They are increasingly being forced out of their familiar neighborhoods in the inner city and deposited in the outskirts of town. Berlin, now as before, is a conglomerate of 3 cities, 59 villages and 12 former estates. Those who have lived in Prenzlauer



# IT’S ABOUT EDUCATION, STUPID

Filmmaker and author *Güner Balcı* argues that Germany is neglecting its immigrant children. A polemic

The misgivings harbored by many Germans with regard to migrants are steadfast and long-standing. This will not come as a surprise to anyone who has taken the time to examine the state of migrant integration in German society over the past decades. What is alarming, however, is the number of Germans who judge the failed integration of migrants and their children more harshly than they do the failings of their fellow Germans. It’s not only those on the right who see every criminal with Turkish, Iraqi or Tunisian roots as an opportunity to demonize all migrants; they are not the only ones who sneer at “Kanake” talk, a derogatory term used to describe the German spoken among migrant youths that often comprises crude colloquialisms and expressions in their native tongues. In fact, no matter where they stand on the political spectrum, people who are quick to criticize migrants inevitably have one thing in common: a false sense of superiority.

Many of us in Germany have yet to learn how to share our lives with people who are “other.” This seems to be a value and an approach to life that we rarely strive to achieve. Few people in Germany seem to even have the ability to view “strangers”

as equals. Today, this inability is creating an even greater rift in German society. All too often, public debate on integration is characterized by a willingness to focus solely on the shortcomings of “others.”

Indeed, it would seem that for years no one has been prepared to take the social and political responsibility needed to be able to seek out and find new solutions. How else can we account for the fact that over several decades, large numbers of youth socialized in a Muslim context in Germany have consistently lost out in terms of education? How else can we explain why Germany’s current government has not been able to fill a single cabinet post with a person with a “migration background”? And even after nearly 60 years of recruitment agreements, the prospect of having a head of state with Arab or Turkish roots remains wholly inconceivable.

A recent TV program examined the conditions at a school in the Berlin district of Neukölln where almost all students come from immigrant families, including so-called problem students, that is, those whose families depend on welfare funds (Hartz IV). The report begins by stating that 18 of the 24 students in the class arrive late for first period. We

are told that many parents fail to wake up in time to get their kids to school on time. According to the report, these kids are often made to attend school only to render their parents eligible for Kindergeld (child benefits – a social security payout for all parents and guardians). A teacher with a thick Eastern European accent – a man who thinks the plural of “crisis” is “crises” – is seen lamenting the lack of interest in education among his students. The film them shows close-ups of children who, though they appear self-conscious, are nevertheless proud to be the object of media attention. Although most of these students were born in Germany, not a single one of them can deliver a grammatically correct sentence in German.

Scenes such as these should be enough to warrant a thorough analysis of how and where things went wrong. How is it possible that huge numbers of children circumvent the legal obligation to attend school? How can this happen in a country that had a €48.1 billion GDP surplus in the first two quarters of 2018 alone. And what’s wrong with the students themselves? Can it be possible that all their problems are related to their oft-cited “migration background”? In all honesty, do we even want them



Güner Balcı

to be mixed in with the majority of students? Should they lead “normal” lives, where they attend school regularly, that is, where the state actually carries out its supervisory duty with regard to mothers and fathers who are overwhelmed by their circumstances? These children live marginalized lives in districts that many non-migrants actively avoid; and they are cared for and receive their education in kindergartens and schools that are widely known to be problematic.

Kids like these can be found throughout Germany, especially in areas where large numbers of immigrants reside. From a statistical perspective, they are the “losers” of German society. After all, the cold hard reality is that access to education is directly related to a child’s social and economic background. For these

kids, the Muslim ghetto is their only place of influence, a place where the often romanticized traditional values of their grandparents’ culture become the benchmark for their lives in Germany.

By the end of the TV report, attentive viewers will have begun to notice – almost accidentally – the longings and hardships etched into the heart and mind of one particular pimply-faced teenage boy. This boy with Turkish roots sits down and begins to play a piece on the piano – something he taught himself to do. His teacher admits that all these years, she’s never known he could play piano.

It goes without saying that we cannot single out teachers as being solely responsible for the thousands of students who leave school every year without attaining their degree or with a certificate that condemns them to

dead-end jobs. This state of affairs is a consequence of massive political neglect, as well. In fact, the school featured in the TV report was slated to be shut down due to declining student numbers – a fact that was left unmentioned by the producers of the program, which was broadcast on German public television. Instead, the school became a repository for students who were not accepted elsewhere.

Now, with an increased budget and new friendly-sounding support programs, the school has become an institution for those who are more or less biding time before a likely adulthood spent on Hartz IV or in prison. I guess it didn’t occur to anyone to put the few remaining students into a different school.

Instead of disrupting a classroom populated by the children of the ambitious middle class, these children are left to fend for themselves, causing more strain on weary teachers and creating fertile terrain for Islamists in search of new souls. These are clearly not the goals of integration.

**GÜNER BALCI** is a documentary film maker, journalist and author. Her latest novel *Das Mädchen und der Gotteskrieger* (The girl and the holy warrior) was published in 2016.

# BERLIN TIMES 1929

Weighty, warmhearted, brutal – *Berlin Babylon* is the German TV series of the year, depicting life in the German capital during the Roaring Twenties



Party like it’s 1929: Charlotte Richter (Liv Lisa Fries) is out on the town in *Berlin Babylon*.

And why not? Is Germany not the country that – in the era in which *Babylon Berlin* is set – produced films like *Metropolis*? Nazi propaganda films and the repressive kitsch of post-war cinema would later teach Germans a healthy skepticism of the seductive power of imagery. The medium became rather prosaic, often a bit superficial and never experimental. Toeing the line was the order of the day. Epic television was dedicated to the Middle Ages, the present, the division of Germany or the catastrophe of the Third Reich. In terms of the latter, Philipp Kadelbach’s 2013 World War II drama *Unsere Mütter, unsere*

*Väter* (Our mothers, our fathers) tried, at last, to cultivate a complexity and cinematic language that critics compared to Band of Brothers.

But looking back at the 1920s is something new. *Babylon Berlin* is now venturing such a feat – it first ran on Sky in 2017, and now currently on ARD – finding large audiences and already drowning in awards. This is a symptom of something darker, as were a series of recent exhibitions on the art of the era. For Germans, the splendor and misery of the first German democracy seem closer at hand than they were just a few years ago, when trust in the post-

war order was unshakable. This order is crumbling before our eyes; the trans-Atlantic axis is creaking; Europe is struggling for cohesion; the refugee crisis and the fear of radicalized Islam is dividing society; the established parties are faltering and right-wing populists are gaining momentum. Germany is inching closer to “Weimar conditions.” But a series like *Babylon Berlin* is a sensuously shuddering glance into a distant mirror.

Two main characters stare back at us from the panorama, each conflicted, morally suspect yet likeable, and each portrayed by outstanding actors. Volker Bruch is the Great War veteran

Gereon Rath. The commissioner of the homicide division comes to the capital from Cologne. He is concealing a secret mission as well as his love life and a morphine addiction. Only drugs can quell his would-be disqualifying tremors that he and many other soldiers brought home from the trenches. At his side, played by Liv Lisa Fries, is the young Charlotte Richter, a modern girl and a product of Berlin’s grim working-class districts. By day she’s a stenotypist at the Alex, Berlin’s infamous police headquarters. By night she’s a prostitute, who dreams of a career as criminal investigator. And then a character – straight

out of Döblin – that figures in the fate of each our stars: the weighty, warmhearted yet brutal Bruno Wolter (Peter Kurth), who passes himself off as something like a fatherly friend.

A political sex scandal provides but a succulent introductory segue to the main events that will ensnarl the main characters: a bloody massacre and a conspiracy involving a freight train from Russia. Poison gas, bounteous amounts of gold and the ambitions of the “Black Reichswehr,” a group of generals out to restore the Kaiser to his throne – these are just a few of the factors our stars face in season one. Season two features the specter of communists and brownshirts marching the streets, as a pincer movement of right- and left-wing enemies of democracy threatens to take down history’s actual Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann and the fictitious, Jewish Deputy Police Commissioner August Brenda.

*Babylon Berlin* is no history lesson. It is an adaptation of Volker Kutscher’s novel *Der nasse Fisch* (The Wet Fish) with a slew of historical details thrown in a manner somewhat lacking in academic rigor, but the broad strokes of history more or less hit the mark. And Tom Tykwer exploits certain of his talents that have brought him success in the past: his use of kaleidoscopic imagery, his expertise at combining the fates of many individuals into one dynamic narrative whole and his inimitable sense of tempo and timing. It’s no matter that the plot is sometimes overwrought – what a ride! We have love, sex, syphilis, crime, the state, and we’re just getting started; a woman dies but lives on, a tattooed priest of the underworld and an Armenian stir up trouble. The series does not economize on violence, gruesome corpses or gross improbabilities, yet it invokes, indeed flawlessly, the classics of the era of silent film. Its greatest success, however, stems from its atmospheric depth. If you’ve seen even three episodes, you need only hear the menacing brass section in the intro to become fully submerged in *Babylon Berlin*.

**URSULA SCHEER** is a television critic and arts editor for the **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung**.

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BY PAUL OSTWALD

Sandra Maischberger’s TV talk show in the fall of 2015 was drawing to a close when she gave the last word to a guest from the audience. In nearly accent-free German, Hakim spoke about his studies in Syria, his trek across the Mediterranean and his new job as a geriatric nurse in a small town in Lower Saxony. Before applause broke out in the studio, a caption showed viewers at home who exactly this exemplary young Syrian was: “Hakim, *refugee*.”

It was a revelatory moment in a debate on the dangerous denigration of those refugees who had fled to Europe in the summer of 2015. Hakim can vouch that the word “refugee” had become a new label almost overnight. The German word for “refugee,” *Flüchtling*, has the diminutive suffix *ling*, implying that a person must somehow be pitiable as well as from a distant, unknown culture. Reports frequently painted the same image in different shades of negativity.

It was also a rather liberating moment, as this was one of the first opportunities for a refugee to represent himself in the “refugee debate.” The daily reportages, comments and interviews on the new “task of the century” (Angela Merkel on Jan. 14, 2016) had all been delivered by politicians – it remains the exception that a person who had himself fled to Germany was given a voice.

There was widespread disregard for the fact that most refugees brought much more to Europe than a bundle of clothes. Some brought their knowledge: in their native countries they had been professors, students and research-

ers. To treat them only with compassion, regrettably, often meant leaving their knowledge and expertise untouched and thus limiting any intellectual exchange or discourse.

My fellow students at Oxford University and I were preoccupied with the subject in the fall of 2015. To facilitate a new discourse in this situation, my roommate Mark Barclay and I founded the *Journal of Interrupted Studies*. It was to become an academic journal that would give refugee scientists the opportunity to publish their finished and unfinished articles in all disciplines.

At 19 years of age, none of us had the capacity to assess the academic relevance or integrity of articles written by professors and researchers. So we set up a multi-level peer-review process, as is common with scientific publications: subject matter experts receive and rate the essays without being told the name and history of the author. Texts were to be selected based on their quality, not on their author’s biography.

We were hoping to change the perception of refugees and counteract the understandable fears many people have; they may be

less fearful if they realize that refugees are concerned with the same issues as they are. Through contributions on television and in print media, we were able to cast a better light on refugees, one that would reach far beyond our academic audiences. At the

was that our publication would enable and inspire our authors to pursue their academic careers.

Countless submissions started flowing in. Many of them focused in some way on migration: an article by a lawyer from Bangladesh argued that people

teachers. The linguist Husam Aldeen al-Barazy from Damascus described the importance of intonation when learning new languages. He had fled Syria, and now lives in the tranquil German town of Düppenweiler in Saarland.

Gaining the authors trust involved a great deal of responsibility. We set about building a small editorial office and recruiting the first academics for peer reviews. The vast majority was surprisingly open to our project, enlisted more of their colleagues and added us to their mailing lists. But we were missing one crucial component: €1,500 to cover printing expenses. We started getting our first donations and by May 2016 we were able to publish the first issue.

As expected, there were mixed feelings: while BBC, NPR and the German weekly *Der Spiegel* gave us a warm welcome, we received quite a few hateful remarks on social media: “The only knowledge these people bring with them is rape,” was one. The totality of reactions, however, showed us that the project had found an audience.

While the first issue was self-published, we were able

to acquire funding from the German Academic Scholarship Foundation and work with the Dutch publishing house Brill to publish our second edition. Our new budget finally allowed us to pay the authors an honorarium, albeit a very small one.

In 2018, not only did German migration policy change, the origin of our authors did as well. Turkey had replaced Syria and Iraq, which presented the editors with new challenges. For example, the migration stories were often comparable to those of many Syrian academics; in addition to civil wars, environmental disasters and political persecution were now prominent factors; fleeing across the Mediterranean has in many cases been replaced by resettling in a more peaceful region of migrants’ home countries.

Therefore, in addition to translators, we also had to establish some new guidelines: Who should decide whether an author is actually considered a “refugee”? We chose to leave that classification to the authors themselves, to those who were expelled or had to flee.

We are now working on the third edition, and one new factor is the institutionalization of the journal. We are working to create legal and editorial structures that will ensure the survival of the project regardless of whether we stay on as publishers.

PAUL OSTWALD  
The 21-year-old Oxford student is the co-founder of the *Journal of Interrupted Studies*.

# Refugee journal

Sending a message to the political and academic world – why a young Berliner at Oxford founded a science publication for refugees

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same time, we wanted to send a message to the academic and political world: the knowledge and diversity of discourse are jeopardized when refugee academics are not given a perspective. Our biggest hope, however,

displaced by natural disasters should be integrated into the international legal system. A Syrian student visited schools during the civil war in order to ascertain whether, in the future, robots could replace missing

# GETTIN’ SCHOOLED

Alba’s basketballers are taking the game to the classroom

BY HORST SCHNEIDER

For Basketball lovers, Moritz Wagner is a household name. But even lesser fans will be hearing the 7-foot center’s name in the future. He has – after a successful college career with the Michigan Wolverines – signed an NBA contract with the Los Angeles Lakers, thereby becoming the first Berliner to play for the best basketball league in the world. When he was picked 25th by the Lakers in the NBA draft in June, “Moe” mounted the podium at Brooklyn’s Barclays Center in a custom-tailored suit and casually opened his jacket, flashing the two logos inside: the golden capital M of the University of Michigan and the white albatross of Alba, where his basketball career was born 12 years ago.

The now 7-footer grew up in Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg district, just a few blocks away from Max-Schmeling-Halle, the former home court of Alba Berlin. The leap from intramural basketball at school to regular training at Alba was rather manageable, as the head of the Berlin division, just twelve years ago, decided to make a push for youth players. Henning Harnisch, a former national player and basketball idol of the 1990s, found his calling in Alba management at the end of his playing career and developed a new youth concept that today – highly lauded and frequently copied for its successful combination of schools and sports clubs – is a role model for more than just basketball programs and well beyond the confines of Berlin.

Harnisch came to the realization that it will not do to wait for talent to walk through the door and sign up to train: “We have to go to the schools!” Harnisch, who in his playing days sunk shots like no other and made dunking a German Bundesliga staple, eventually visited all the schools in Alba’s immedi-

ate vicinity, where his popularity helped him consistently vanquish his mightiest opponent: the school receptionist. As he got to know principals and teachers, they turned out to be interested contacts who were very eager to work with Alba and offered their school gymnasiums for basketball clubs.

However, these sessions, led by the Alba coaches after classes and during holidays, were just the beginning. Harnisch’s realization that the introduction of the Ganztagschule (all-day school) has fundamentally changed the relationship between school, sports and after-school activities, triggered his innovation. If children sit in school until 4, they’re left with little time or energy to actively play on a basketball team or participate in other after-school activities. The logical conclusion was to directly integrate basketball into the school curricula. The program Alba macht Schule was born. (“Alba macht Schule” is a pun that roughly means both “Alba does school” and “Alba catches on.”)

“At school, on average, a single teacher must encourage 28 children to do sports. There are many great teachers, but that’s almost impossible, especially since elementary school teachers with no background in sports often have to teach sports,” explains Harnisch. So Alba macht Schule puts teachers in the classroom, with a qualified basketball coach by their side. Initial fears were quickly eliminated, as teachers realized that teaching in pairs was more effective, and students were instantly excited by the new life being breathed into physical education.

By now, more than 50 Alba youth coaches at 19 Berlin “schools with sports profiles” support teachers in physical education. Since 2012–13, five other major Berlin clubs – Hertha BSC and 1st FC Union (soccer), the Foxes (handball), the Polar Bears (ice hockey) and the BR Volleys (volleyball) – also attend these schools and collaborate with

Alba. It was made possible with funding from the Berlin Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family in the capital.

The fact that more and more children at school have lives that are too stationary – some, for example, cannot even run backwards – is the basis for the Alba Kitasport project, which youth coaches have been implementing in Berlin day care centers for the past two years. Alba’s pioneering initiative to install height-adjustable basketball hoops at Berlin schools lets even the little ones get a taste for the satisfaction when the ball finds its mark. They can even dunk. Forty years ago, the young Henning Harnisch had to set up a trampoline under his basketball hoop to take his first shots.

The Grundschul-liga (primary school league) founded by Alba, in which around 90 Berlin schools compete for points and victories at the annual championship in the Max-Schmeling-Halle, and the associated Oberschul-liga (high school league) with about 80 schools, ensures that competitiveness is kept alive. Those on school teams that do very well automatically get the urge to fight for Alba wins. Last season, Alba was the first club ever to be the German champions in all youth categories (U14, U16 and U19).

For Henning Harnisch, it’s not just about recruiting new basketball stars. He also cares about the 999 out of 1000 students that don’t make it to the NBA, or even to the Bundesliga. If the majority of these 999 students become “sports citizens” and continue to play sports after graduation or even watch Alba games from the bleachers, the former basketball pro knows that his going door to door in Prenzlauer Berg 12 years ago was most definitely not in vain.



Big stage: Alba youth during an exhibition game in the Mercedes-Benz Arena.



Showing his true colors: Moe Wagner at the NBA draft in June.

HORST SCHNEIDER  
is a basketball writer based in Berlin.



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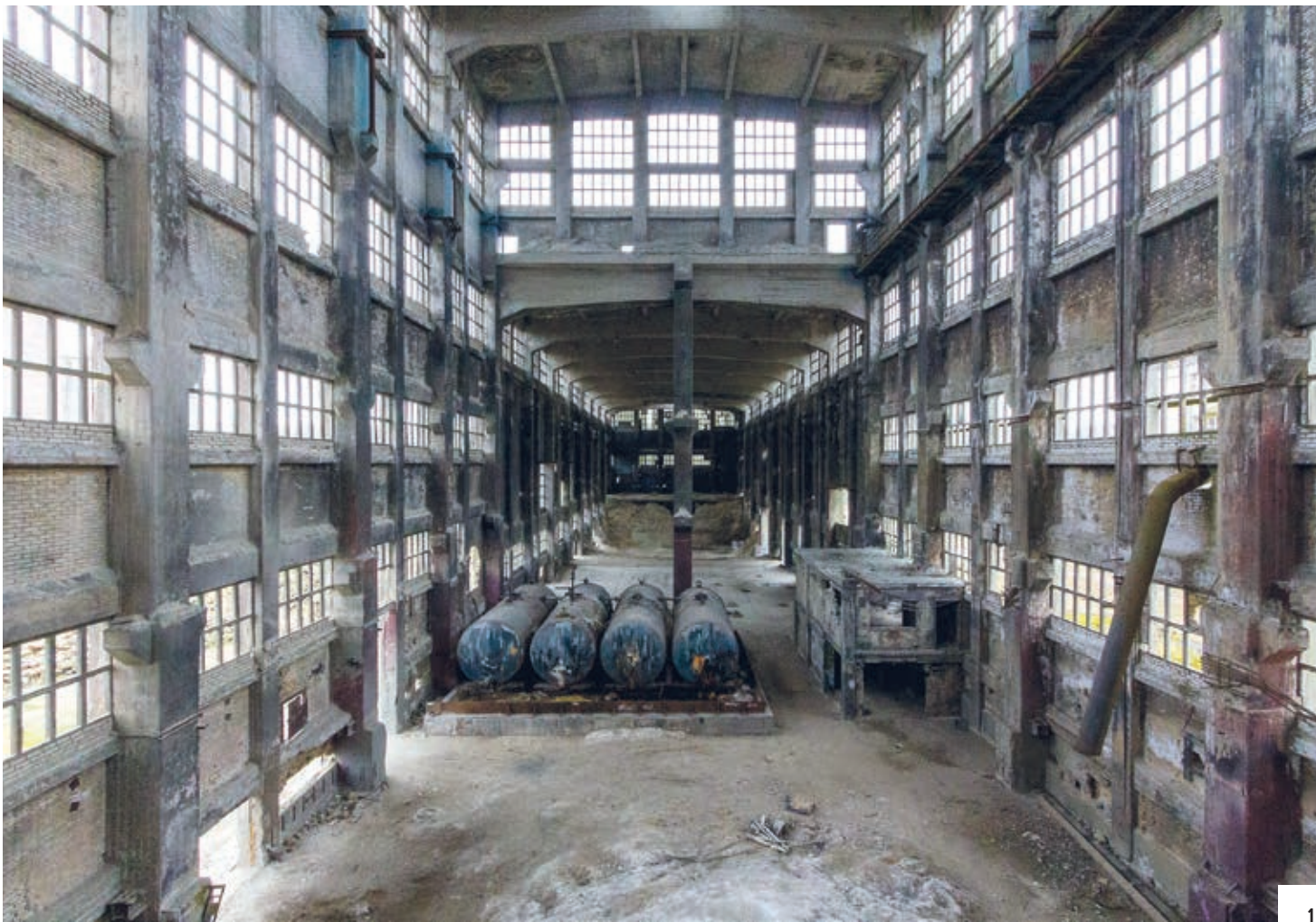
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# RICHES OF RUINS

NO TRESPASSING signs never stopped Ciarán Fahey from exploring Berlin's many abandoned and forgotten buildings

BY PETER H. KOEPF

The giant Ferris wheel loomed silently in the Berlin sky. They could see it clearly through the trees, even from a distance. It stood within the fenced-off grounds of a former amusement park in the Plänterwald district of what once was East Berlin. As they got closer, they saw several signs saying ZUTRITT VERBOTEN (NO TRESPASSING) on the fences surrounding the erstwhile fairgrounds. But nothing was going to stop Ciarán Fahey. He turned to his girlfriend: "I've got to get in there."

In the summer of 2009, Fahey overcame his fear of the security guards and German shepherds that might be awaiting him on the other side. He climbed over the high green security fence, roamed around the abandoned Spreepark and photographed the rusted and uncanny remains of East Germany's theme-park culture. He then published his images and an accompanying history of the amusement park on his website abandonedberlin.com. He also posted dozens of reports on other abandoned properties in Berlin. Soon thereafter, *The Guardian* newspaper rated his blog as one of the best City Blogs in the world.

Ask Fahey what motivates him and the Irish-born journalist and photographer will explain that his goal is to capture the transient nature of things, to show the beauty of structures decaying in front of our eyes before they are demolished or reclaimed by nature. Just like people, he argues, buildings too are not made for eternity. As a journalist, Fahey doesn't limit himself to just visiting and taking pictures of these sites; he researches the whole "biography" of his objects, seeking out the full story often hidden behind the city's decaying structures.

He usually sets out by himself. "I'm more focused when I'm alone," says Fahey. "That way, I don't have to talk and there are no time pressures. It allows me to get a deeper sense of the past. When you find yourself in the very spot where an event took place, it allows you to feel the history much more intensely than in a museum."

On the other hand, setting out by himself also means facing all of the associated dangers alone: guard dogs, security guards, ghosts, falling ceilings, crumbling stairs and tricky entrances that can't be used as exits. But that never stopped Fahey. To this day, he still gets tips from readers and now has a list of more than one hundred further sites to explore before they disappear. That is, before Berlin becomes as clean as Munich. And, seeing as the ravages of time continue to gnaw away at the structures and sites, time and speed are indeed of the essence. In other words, whenever possible, Fahey says: "I've got to get in there."

The pictures shown here are taken from Ciarán Fahey's book

*Verlassene Orte/ Abandoned Berlin*  
German/English  
be.bra verlag, 2015,  
192 pages,  
22,00 euros



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## 1 COLOSSUS OF CEMENT AND IRON

After 100 productive years, German reunification spelled the demise of the VEB Coswig Chemical Plant, which operated this factory in Rüdersdorf. A barbed-wire fence did not stop Ciarán Fahey from sizing up this industrial-era cathedral, which started producing animal feed phosphates back in 1899 and continued to do so even after World War II. // Chemiewerk Rüdersdorf, Gutenbergsstraße, 15562 Rüdersdorf

## 2 THE FUN'S OVER

In 1969, on the 20th anniversary of the GDR, the government gifted its subjects a second television channel and a public amusement park, the only permanent one if its kind in the country: the VEB Kulturpark Plänterwald. The roller coaster and Ferris wheel have now rusted through, and the dinosaurs have died out. // Spreepark, Kiehnwerderallee 1-3, 12437 Berlin

## 3 BAD DOCTORS

Waldhaus Buch was a sanatorium and a hospital, but also a research institute. The clinic was involved in the Nazi's euthanasia program. The house, which served as an orthopedic clinic during the GDR, was closed in 1992. Time has since taken its toll. // Waldhaus Buch, Alt-Buch 74, 13125 Berlin

## 4 TRAIN TO NOWHERE

Trains no longer pass here, even the rails have disappeared. But when you stand in one of the decaying sheds and close your eyes, you can almost hear the whirr of trains, the cries of diesel engines and the din of workers piling goods onto cars. Nothing gets loaded here today. All that remains are loads of rot. // Güterbahnhof Pankow, Am Feuchten Winkel 137-145, Berlin 13089

## 5 TOP SECRET

Vogelsang was one of the few military sites the Soviets built themselves. They mostly took over German ones, but this one, all 5,800 hectares of it, was top secret – they built nuclear weapons here. Let's be thankful it's no longer in use. // Vogelsang, 16792 Zehdenick

## 6 TRABI GRAVEYARD

This old garage began to rot during the GDR. It houses dozens of automobiles in various stages of decline, including a EZ P70 Zwickau manufactured in the fifties, a Sachsenring P70, forerunner of the Trabant P50, and a number of Moskvitches from Russia in very critical condition. // Trabiwerkstatt, Schönelerstraße 5, 13127 Berlin

## 7 AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED

Two abandoned houses with a common family history in Waidmannslust. Wind whistles through the shattered windows of Villa Schade, whirling letters and magazines up through the air, taking with it the memory of what once was here. Ciarán Fahey captured this image before the villa was turned into apartments. The cinema will presumably soon meet the same fate. // Villa Schade, Waidmannslust Damm 167/163, 13469 Berlin

## 8 THE EARS OF THE WEST

This radar station allowed the Americans to overhear enemy plans on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The large hill where the remains of the station stand is not the work of the devil – despite its name, Teufelsberg, or Devil's Mountain – it's the work of Berliners themselves. Over 12 million cubic meters of rubble were deposited here, most of it the remains of buildings bombed by the Allies in WW2. // Teufelsberg, 14055 Berlin

## 9 SNAP-FROZEN

Cool, it isn't. For 99 years, this ice factory delivered ice to all of Berlin, and right from the freezer, back when Berlin households, breweries, pubs and fishmongers didn't have their own fridges. All that's left now is this frozen asset. // Eisfabrik, Köpenicker Straße 40/41, 10179 Berlin

## 10 TANGO TRISTE

They're like twins, Dance Hall Riviera and Event Location Grünau. So splendidly they shone in the 1980s. Partygoers and night owls from far and wide came to Berlin's southeastern district during the German Empire, Weimar Republic and two dictatorships just to visit them. And now? The party's over. The crowds moved on to discos and now clubs, leaving the former dance palaces to endure the people's indifference to their fate. // Ballhaus Grünau, Regattastrasse 161 & 167, 12527 Berlin

## 11 DOWN THE DRAIN

As rats partied in the baby pool, the days of the Blub Water Park became numbered. In the 1980s and 1990s, up to 600,000 visitors got their feet wet here every summer. In 2002, years after it closed, there was an attempt to re-open the waterpark – but only as a health spa. Judging by this photo, it didn't succeed. // Blub, Buschkrugallee 64, 12359 Berlin

## 12 RISEN FROM THE ASHES – NOT

The villa of August Hinderer was destroyed by fire on March 24, 1944. The Professor and director of the Evangelical Press Service, Hinderer was arrested by the Nazis in 1934, yet survived. After the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Hitler in July 1944, he survived yet another interrogation. Hinderer died in October, 1945. Today, his granddaughter dreams of restoring the building. // Hinderer's Villa, Location: not disclosed for fear of rioters



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# Runway model

Berlin is spotlighting the history of the former Tempelhof Airport during the Nazi era. The city is gearing up to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift with a festival featuring almost 40 original aircraft

BY JAN KEPP

Tempelhof Airport is firmly anchored in the collective memory of (West) Berlin residents first and foremost as the main take-off and landing strip used by the American and British “Rosinenbomber” (transport planes) during the Berlin Airlift 1948-49. This “gateway to the free world” would continue to influence the emotional lives of West Berliners from the 1950s on. In contrast, very little is known about the role played by Tempelhof Airport during the era of National Socialism (1933–1945).

The exhibition “Ein weites Feld” (A Wide Field - Tempelhof Airport and its History), which is on display until the end of the year in the former General Aviation Terminal, seeks to change this. Curated by the Topography of Terror foundation in Berlin, the exhibition focuses on the strategic expansion of the airport starting in 1936 and its later use as a weapons production site. Emphasis is also placed on the fate of the thousands of laborers who were forced to work on the assembly of combat aircraft.

Large sections of the monumental airport complex at Tempelhof were built between 1936 and 1939 at the edge of the then airfield. Although never fully completed, at the beginning of the 1940s it comprised the largest building in the world in terms of area covered; in the post-war period, that position would be usurped by the Pentagon in

Arlington, Virginia. The dimensions at Tempelhof in the Nazi era reflected a preoccupation with overly large buildings that was typical of National Socialist architecture. The original terminal building, which functioned as such up until the end of the war, appeared almost as a dwarf in comparison to it.

With the outbreak of war, the new airport complex was transformed into a large-scale aircraft factory. The roof of the building was extended over the airfield’s “apron” and given a wooden exterior, thus creating spacious factory halls. The companies known as Weser Flugzeugbau

bly of aircraft was to use massive numbers of forced laborers taken by the Nazis from German-occupied territories. More than 3,000 men and women were ruthlessly exploited and forced to work in weapons manufacturing for the Luftwaffe. Living in barebones barracks at the edge of the airfield, the forced laborers had to work for ten or more hours each day, all the while with inadequate amounts of food. They faced draconian punishments for the slightest negligence or offense and there was very limited medical care. This meant that many of the forced laborers did not survive their time

Army was actually the first to occupy Tempelhof airport, but in July 1945, the US Air Force took over and maintained an air base in the eastern part of the building all the way up to 1994. The western part of the airport was opened for civil aviation under German administration in 1951.

The image of the US soldiers in West Berlin changed deeply with the start of the Berlin Airlift or “Luftbrücke” (air bridge). After the unprecedented supply of food and especially coal to the city – which had been sealed off on all sides by the Russians – between June 24, 1948, and May 12, 1949, Berliners started to see the GIs more as protectors than as occupiers. From that moment on, this new relationship was reflected and celebrated once a year at the US Air Force’s Open Door Day at Tempelhof, a huge festival attended by hundreds of thousands of people.

The gratitude of Berliners for the energetic and extensive solidarity shown by the Allies for their walled-off city will be on display again in the coming year. A week-long festival is currently in the works for June 2019; the event will take place at three locations and commemorate the end of the Berlin Airlift 70 years prior. The special feature of the fest: those historical “Rosinenbomber” transport planes will be returning to Germany. A number of the original planes – including Douglas DC-3/C-47, Douglas DC-4/C-54 and Junkers JU-52 models – will make their way from several different corners of the world, first to the Wiesbaden Erbenheim Airbase (June 10–12)

in Hessen, then to Fliegerhorst Faßberg (June 12–15) in Lower Saxony and finally to the airfield in Berlin-Schönhausen (June 15–19).

Of the many airplanes that participated in the Airlift, there are only roughly 160 left in operation worldwide. Individual fans, foundations, museums and associations spend a lot of time and effort to keep them in good flying condition. For the one-week festival in Germany, almost 40 planes have already agreed to participate. Some of them will be coming from diverse European cities, over 20 will be flying from the United States, and a DC-4 will be coming to Germany from South Africa. One owner has indicated that he intends to make the flight all the way from Australia to be a part of the reunion.

With the help of these original aircraft, organizers will reenact

the actual schedule and time intervals from 1948–49 at the three airports. In other words, for the first time in 70 years, a new generation of Berliners will be able to experience the Airlift with their own eyes. At the airports in Wiesbaden-Erbenheim, Faßberg and Berlin-Schönhausen, crews and aircraft will also be on display for the general public to visit up close. Plans include a “Luftbrücke zum Anfassen” (hands-on airlift) accompanied by multiple-day public events and school and youth projects.

Whether the airplanes will be able to land at Tempelhof Airport is currently being debated in Berlin political circles. While a special permit good just for the exhibition is theoretically conceivable, it seems highly improbable. The spacious tarmac of the airport, which was decommissioned in 2008, is now a park mainly used



Under construction: Junkers Ju 87 in 1943 at Tempelhof.

by the residents of its surrounding neighborhoods. The technical and logistical arrangements required for a three-day commemorative event will presumably end up being too protracted to incorporate the central site of the Airlift.

For recent generations of Berliners, the sheer scale of the largest humanitarian relief action in the history of the world can be hard to comprehend. For more than a year, propeller planes delivered a total of two million tons of supplies to Berlin. Thus, more than 270,000 flights, i.e. almost 1,000 flights per day to guarantee the survival of the hungry and freezing citizens of West Berlin. The technical and logistical feats of air transport executed by the pilots and ground crews remain one of a kind and will forever be linked to the history of Berlin.

The incessant, positive reports by news outlets all over the world focusing on the Allied air deliveries in 1948–49 and the burgeoning reputation of the Western powers constituted one of the reasons the Soviet Blockade was lifted on May 12, 1949. Nonetheless, the Airlift carried on for another four months until late summer of that year. The twin historical events, Berlin Blockade

and Berlin Airlift, are thus not chronologically identical.

The lifting of the Blockade and the end of the Airlift marked the resolution of the first true crisis of the Cold War by peaceful means. However, the absence of military force did not prevent all loss of human life during the Air Lift. Airplane accidents accounted for the death of at least 78 people, the names of whom are engraved on the base of the Airlift Memorial in front of the former airport.

One of the honorary guests at the 70 Years Berlin Airlift festival will be none other than Gail Seymour “Hal” Halvorsen, born Oct. 10, 1920, in Salt Lake City, UT. Halvorsen was the first pilot to – just before landing at Tempelhof – delight children waiting atop the mountains of rubble in Neukölln by pitching from his plane bags of candy, each equipped with its own little parachute. This Operation Little Vittles led to the Airlift pilots and their airplanes to be called “Rosinenbomber,” or “Candy Bombers.” As the airplanes landed at Tempelhof every 90 seconds, the children on the ground could not tell which one was Halvorsen’s. He thus arranged with the kids that he would “wiggle” his wings



Sent from above: Uncle Wiggly Wings

as he approached, earning him the nickname “Uncle Wiggly Wings.”

Halvorsen’s initiative was quickly picked up by the press, unleashing a wave of support. He and his crew were soon given 425 kilos of sweets to drop on Berlin each day. By the end of the Air Lift, a total of about 25 airplane crews threw 23 tons of candy over the city. Halvorsen would later explain that he had just wanted to bring a little happiness to the

needy children of bombed-out Berlin. Historical eyewitnesses agree that he had a tremendously positive impact on the image of Americans in postwar Germany.

JAN KEPP is a freelance journalist based in Berlin.

## A WIDE FIELD – TEMPELHOF AIRPORT AND ITS HISTORY

An exhibition by the Topography of Terror foundation at the former Tempelhof Airport; until Dec. 30, 2018.

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BY LUTZ LICHTENBERGER

An inconspicuous street in Berlin’s Wedding district: in a light-flooded apartment on the second floor of a classic pre-war tenement stands a seemingly ordinary bookshelf. A closer look reveals that it holds nothing less than the history of German-Russian publishing, literature and culture. And, along with Friederike Jacob, it also holds the future of this tradition. The 35-year-old Slavicist is the new publisher at Friedenauer Presse, the widely renowned Berlin publishing house also known as a one-stop shop for German translations of Russian world literature.

Friedenauer Presse was founded in 1963 in the eponymous southwestern district of Berlin by Andreas Wolff, the grandson of the St. Petersburg publisher M.O. Wolff. From the very beginning it was the mission of the publishing house to make previously untranslated and unpublished works accessible to German readers. Wolff’s successor, his daughter Katharina Wagenbach, describes the idea as follows: “It’s about enabling readers to make discoveries, regardless of time and language – novelties as well as the (unjustly) forgotten, the

excavations that lie unrecognized and dormant in archives, anthologies and complete editions.”

Friedenauer Presse began in the 1960s with a focus on German contemporary literature. The first book they published was written by the later Nobel Prize winner Günter Grass – it was a thread-bound brochure. To this day, the house continues to publish such booklets of bibliophilic elegance in its Presse-Ducked series.

In 1983, Wagenbach took over the management of the publishing house, and with her came increased attention on Russian literature. For the woman who had never lived in Russia but grew up surrounded by Russian parents and grandparents, Russian literature was a time machine, her homeland in the pages of a tattered book. In the midst of the Cold War, her mission was not a political one. However, Wagenbach’s publications had, as all successful books do, just enough global awareness. The publisher also takes on translations from French, Spanish and Polish, but Russian works remain the focus.

Jacob, who was born that same year, remarks that the publishing house has stayed unequivocally loyal to its initial mission. “Literature is not simply reporting,”



HENRIETTE GÄNGEL

For a short time in 2017 it looked like Friedenauer Presse would have to close its doors. But after the 87-year-old Katharina Wolff stepped down, Friederike Jacob (left) could not let the storied publishing house vanish, and decided to take it over herself: “I invite everyone to discover Friedenauer Presse, again or for the first time.”

embarked on an adventurous journey to Moscow in search of the lost manuscript. There, she managed to track down Babel’s widow, Antonina Pirozhkova, who was about to emigrate to Florida. Though she put herself at risk by doing so, she had kept the remaining parts of the diary for all those years. Wagenbach needed barely one afternoon to gain Pirozhkova’s trust. She then retyped the manuscript on her typewriter and journeyed back to Berlin, where the publisher’s star translator, Peter Urban, trans-

tution, thanks in large part to the efforts of its tireless patron and prose stylist, Peter Urban. Urban, who died in 2013, translated all the big names: Daniil Kharms, Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Goncharov, Maxim Gorky, Alexander Pushkin and especially Anton Chekhov. Anyone witnessing one of the countless Chekhov performances being staged at any given time experiences it in the tone set by Urban. It comes without the flowery, almost lovely touch of the older translations, but shines in its sober, elegant timbre. Jacob, who devoured Dostoyevsky as a teenager and later learned to love Chekhov, is publishing a new edition of his Seven Stories.

And in the spring, Friederike Jacob is waiting, as did her predecessor thirty years earlier, in a similarly confused political situation for a supposedly lost trove. Then came the stories of Vsevolod Petrov (1912–1978), whose discovery in the Pushkin Archive in Moscow was a recent cultural spectacle in Russia. “Literature is more direct, it’s a fictional reality – and yet can convey a different image of a society, and thus resonate beyond the private space of the reader,” says Jacob. She sounds very much like her great predecessor Katharina Wagenbach. The tradition of the house is ready for the future.

# Literary mission

Friedenauer Presse is rekindling the international understanding through great works of art

She also wanted to paint a different picture of Eastern Europe. Considering the current political conflict between Russia, the US and Europe, media coverage, irrespective of political direction, is always necessary from a specific perspective. “Fortunately, the raison d’être of literature is different. Literature is immediate

and genuine. It has its own space, it makes it possible to approach a country without receiving a pre-emptive interpretation of it.”

One of the most important books published by Friedenauer remains Isaac Babel’s Diary: 1920, the basis for his famous novel Red Cavalry. In the mid-1980s, Wagenbach

lated the text into German. Friedenauer Presse finally published the book in 1990.

Friederike Jacob has already reissued Babel’s Red Cavalry in her first program this autumn, which will be followed by a new edition of Diary: 1920 next year.

Friedenauer Presse has become a German-Russian literary insti-

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