

H.E. GÉZA ANDREAS FREIHERR VON GEYR AMBASSADOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Dear Readers of Diplomatic World,
It is my pleasure to introduce you to the
“Year of Germany in Russia 2020/2021”

Since late September last year, we have been presenting Germany in Russia in many special ways. Already by the end of 2020, over 500 events have taken place. About another 1,000 will follow. This major and very comprehensive project took off under the highly exceptional circumstances of the pandemic and, thus, we had to combine virtual, hybrid and in-person events. And since the “Year of Germany in Russia” is also taking place

amidst a political atmosphere characterized by many challenges, it is gaining even more importance. Talking about challenges, I do not only refer to the various differences our countries face at the moment, but also to global issues that are important for everyone's future – such as dealing with climate change, pandemics or global crises; only if we work together across borders and continents will it be possible to meet these challenges.



H.E. Géza Andreas Freiherr von Geyr Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Russian Federation



Artwork “Fragment of the Berlin Wall - End of the division of Germany and Europe in 1990” in the MUZEON sculpture park. It was initiated and commissioned by the German Embassy as part of the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union and on the 30th anniversary of German unity. The work of art “Fragment of the Berlin Wall - End of the Division of Germany and Europe in 1990” by Russian artist Tatyana Ludanik represents a piece of the Berlin Wall, a symbol and synonym for the German and European division during - the Cold War.
© Goethe-Institut / Vyacheslav Zamyslov

So how can we make sure that we use our “Year of Germany” to send the right messages? What image of Germany do we want to convey? And, even more importantly, what exactly do we want to achieve for the cooperation between our countries and people?

If we look at the difficult history our countries share – not least this year that marks the 80th anniversary of Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union - as well as at our future as neighbors in Europe, we see many good reasons for striving towards dialogue and encounters, towards knowledge and exchange, essentially towards a mutual understanding of the people. From this mutual understanding, we should see the development of good, open-minded and respectful togetherness. This togetherness is indispensable for our globalized and interconnected world.

To reach such a togetherness we need to present Germany as it is – with all its facets and all its diversity. We would like to bring as much as possible of German day-to-day reality to Russia. We are presenting the quality of German companies, the achievements of our education system, and the excellence of German research, as well as wonderful culture. At the same time, it is no less important to present the underlying foundation for all of this: the social discourse in Germany from which politics,

business, science and culture draw their energy, the different fora in which stakeholders present and compete for their convictions, and the often difficult struggle for the best compromise solution. In short, more than ever before, it is the diversity that characterizes today's Germany. It is essentially the diversity of positions and ideas, the tolerant debate of these ideas and a willingness to engage in dialogue across borders.



Ceremonial opening of the Year of Germany in Russia in the famous Pashkov House in Moscow
© Ivan Gushchin



The Beethoven Line project coincided with Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th birthday and took place during the opening week of the Year of Germany in Russia. For a week, Moscow musicians performed Beethoven's works in the lobby of the MZK station "Nizhegorodskaya" in an unexpected interpretation: in the style of musical genres that had not yet existed at the time of Beethoven. © Yulia Kulintchik

This is how we want to make ourselves tangible in the "Year of Germany in Russia". We are seeking dialogue – be it through large-scale, renowned projects or through smaller events. Our intent is to reach people all across Russia – from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean.

Let me give you some examples to illustrate our efforts. Last October, as we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the German Reunification, it took us a long time to decide how exactly – in addition to the presentation of documents and discussions – we could convey to the people in Russia just how we Germans felt when the Wall fell. We decided to ask a young Russian artist to create a dedicated work of art, to be installed at a prominent location, for everyone to see and also to feel what we felt.

This artist, Ms Tatjana Ludanik, is known for her spectacular installations and performances – and she turned the idea into a big and unique piece of art. Her fragment of the Berlin Wall, which we were able to display in Moscow's Gorky Park for a month, artistically combines a look back into the past with a look forward into the future. It makes the Wall tangible as something cold, something meant to separate people for power-political reasons, something that caused terrible pain to so many people as it

divided my country, and Europe. At the same time, the artwork offers room to exhibit a variety of impressions of the multifaceted German-Soviet and German-Russian relations. It reflects the awareness that 30 years ago without the Kremlin neither the peaceful fall of the Wall nor the reunification of Germany would have been possible. The huge crack in the wall reflects that courageous people overcame the Wall - a moment of indescribable happiness for our country: it was possible to look through the Wall, to walk through the Wall, and thus to build a new common future.

This piece of art is a symbol for Europe's difficult history in the 20th century, with all its highs and lows – of our common European history, of which Russia is part. It also represents the human desire for freedom, which proved to be stronger than walls or barbed wire. The exhibit was an overwhelming success. People spoke about it, took photos, the press commented on it, including words of warning to never again let new walls be erected – neither in people's minds nor in reality. It truly helped countless Russians better understand Germany.

Another example: to mark Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th birthday, the German sculptor Otmar Hörl created golden and green sculptures of the great composer. These sculptures have one



The installation "Ludwig van Beethoven - Ode to Joy" created by the German artist Ottmar Hörl commemorates the great composer Ludwig van Beethoven, whose 250th birthday was celebrated worldwide and also in Russia. The German National Tourist Board sent the approximately one-meter-tall Beethoven figure on a journey through Russia with the Russian airline Utair - from Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea to Surgut in Siberia and onwards to Chukotka on the Arctic Circle. © Andrey Belavin

ingenious difference compared to Beethoven's traditional depictions: Otmar Hörl's Beethovens are smiling.

The German National Tourist Board engaged the Russian airline Utair to take these sculptures on a tour around Russia: from Kaliningrad by the Baltic Sea over Surgut in Siberia to the Chukchi Peninsula at the Polar circle in the Far East these statues have become a popular photo motif and have triggered positive emotions everywhere. The smiling Beethoven surprises; he inspires you to stop and think about how music, a gesture, a smile, can bring people and nations closer together – without a single word.

Bloggers, who accompanied the sculptures, were able to reach tens of thousands of followers in the very first hours. And the positive feedback is increasing steadily. Naturally, the "Year of Germany" is also offering opportunities to enjoy Beethoven's wonderful music – be it large-scale concerts with outstanding German and Russian musicians, also made accessible to a wider audience via the digital media, or live concerts performed by a Big Band of young Russian musicians for the passengers of the Moscow Metro. All these events make it possible for Russians to encounter Germany in a very special way.

A third example: with the "Dreams of Freedom. Romanticism in Germany and in Russia" exhibition, the Dresden State Art Collections are bringing world-famous paintings to Moscow. They are displayed alongside works from important Russian collections. This exhibition is dedicated to an era, in which artists – both in Germany and in Russia – were seeking answers

and reacted to their shrinking space of individual liberties. When placed next to each other - for the first time in history -, these works of art reveal astonishing parallels in their perspectives and their Zeitgeist. When viewed next to each other, some of those paintings by German and Russian artists appear to stem from one and the same art studio, as opposed to having actually been created thousands of kilometers apart from each other.

The mental and spiritual proximity across borders in the striving for freedom is emphasized by the exhibition's unique architecture by Daniel Libeskind. From Moscow, this whole exhibition will then travel to Dresden, thus serving as a powerful example of successful cultural dialogue and exchange, and, undoubtedly, will become a highlight of our "Year of Germany". There are two other major exhibitions worth mentioning, which also prove the European nature of our cultural ties: One of them is an exhibition dedicated to the Iron Age, which, fittingly, carries the words "Europe without borders" in its title. The other is a contemporary art exhibition entitled "Diversity United", which presents works by 90 renowned artists from 34 European countries, including Germany and Russia. This exhibition will be displayed first in Berlin, then in Moscow, and will subsequently travel to Paris. Hence, encounters with Germany are at the same time encounters with Europe.

In addition to these large-scale events, the agenda of the "Year of Germany" is full of various smaller, but no less important, events all over the vast Russian country. These include vocational training conferences, workshops on environmental protection and a sustainable economy, meetings of twin towns' representatives,



Award of the winners of the all-Russian quiz about Germany and the German language © Goethe-Institut / Vyacheslav Zamyslov



"German Days" in the Kemerovo-Kuzbass administrative region © Sergey Karadko



H.E. Géza Andreas von Geyr Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Russian Federation and Nicole Baroness von Vietinghoff-Scheel, Residence of the German Embassy in Moscow © German Embassy Moscow / Nikita Markov



On October 1, 2020, the Embassy, together with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Institute for General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences organized a discussion forum "Landmarks in German-Soviet relations". © German Embassy Moscow / Nikita Markov

readings in libraries, lectures at universities, historical symposia, various sports events, themed film festivals, regional and local German Weeks, exhibitions and fairs with the participation of German businesses active in Russia, and so the list goes on. Using virtual formats has helped us achieve a truly amazing reach: for example, one of the online German language lessons by the Goethe-Institut had over 10,000 participants from 11 time zones. The video of a Christmas concert has been viewed so often it is hard to keep count. And our virtual "Germany train" will travel from Vladivostok to Russia's west, combining virtual encounters with Germany with real-life events.

Such an abundance and variety of events requires many people to join hands and work together. The "Year of Germany" is a joint effort, steered by the German Embassy in Moscow, the Moscow Goethe-Institut and the German-Russian Chamber of Commerce and involving numerous other German partners, such as the German Consulates General in Russia, cultural and scientific institutions, political foundations, educational institutions, and German Länder (federal states) and municipalities, but also many German companies, often actively supported by their Russian partners. The Russian Government, which recently organised a major

"Saison Russe" in Germany, is also supporting us. For that I am very grateful.

When thinking strategically about our future, we must be united by one common goal: to establish and maintain a good, reliable and respectful togetherness. This is what both our history and our geography, as well as the major global challenges demand of us. The very fact that so many people in Russia are participating with their hearts and souls in our "Year of Germany", showing great interest in what we Germans consider to be dear to our hearts and at the core of our country, is in itself proof that we are on the right track in offering opportunities for encounters with Germany.

I INVITE YOU TO TAKE PART AND ENCOUNTER THE "YEAR OF GERMANY IN RUSSIA 2020/2021" ON YOUR OWN UNDER THIS LINK: WWW.DEUTSCHLANDJAHR.RU YOU ARE TRULY WELCOME!



Carl Wilhelm Götzlöff Grotto near Amalfi, around 1828 © Albertinum | Galerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photo: Hans-Peter Klut



Silvester Feodosiyevich Shchedrin, Grotta di Matromania on the Island of Capri, 1827. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow Photo: State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow