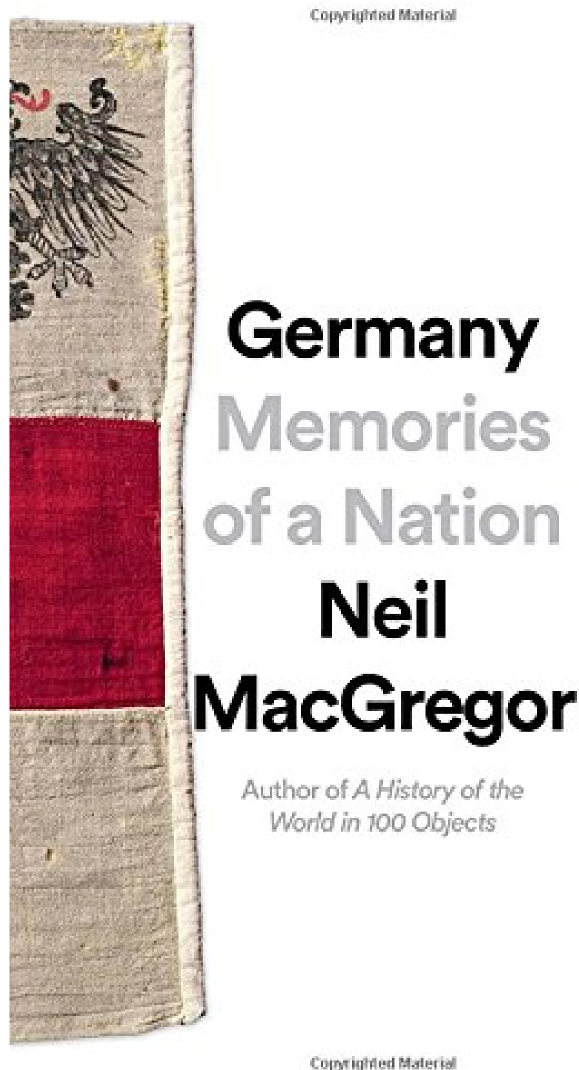
Germany: Memories of a Nation

Neil MacGregor
*DOC | *audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*



DOWNLOAD READ ONLINE

#83774 in Books Neil MacGregor 2015-09-29 2015-09-29Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.42 x 2.21 x 6.66l, 1.25 #File Name: 1101875666656 pagesGermany Memories of a Nation | File size: 63.Mb

Neil MacGregor : Germany: Memories of a Nation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Germany: Memories of a Nation:

24 of 24 people found the following review helpful. Truly revealing and inspiringBy John Heron800 years in 500 plus pages on each of which you will, unless you are a scholar of Germany, find something you did not know before. Nothing is left out, and even the painful parts of history are dealt with sensitivity and insight. A page turner, I read it straight through in a couple of dayssomething unusual for me. I will ponder it awhile, and then reread it again.The graphics, which I studied on an iPad, are beautifully done.8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Eminently

readable history of the former German empire and beyondBy Prudence M. ThornerThis is an excellent book written by the former director of the British Museum who curated a recent exhibition of the same name. There are no footnotes and the references are not very clearly attributed, but these very omissions make this easy and pleasant to read. For a general audience this is a great introduction to the making of the modern united nation. Questions about Prussia, the Hanseatic League, and the Holy Roman Empire are answered here in a beautifully illustrated format. Neil MacGregor has written a fine account of Germany then and now.The book is printed in Germany and these qualities are a tribute to their superior printing technology. (See my disparaging comments about the poor production of photographer Sally Mann's recent book "Hold Still" and you will understand why I appreciate the quality of this book).This is a book to enjoy now and to refer to often in years to come.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This is one of the finest books on German history that I have come acrossBy nmhahlI have a degree in history and have read extensively on European and German history. This is one of the finest books on German history that I have come across. MacGregor's approach is novel in that each chapter is like a short article on a particular topic. Although the flow is chronological, the topics are not detailed expositions of, for example, the Thirty Years' War, but rather a series of tangential and interesting subplots which reveal in their accumulation a fascinating and thoughtful overview of, among other things, what it means to be German. One of the other strengths of the book is that it includes extremely useful maps and contains pictures of nearly all the personalities and pieces of art to which the author refers in the text. A comfortable and hugely enjoyable read.

For the past 140 years, Germany has been the central power in continental europe. Twenty-five years ago a new German state came into being. How much do we really understand this new Germany, and how do its people understand themselves?Neil MacGregor argues that, uniquely for any European country, no coherent, overarching narrative of Germany's history can be constructed, for in Germany both geography and history have always been unstable. Its frontiers have constantly shifted. Knigsberg, home to the greatest German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, is now Kaliningrad, Russia; Strasbourg, in whose cathedral Wolfgang von Geothe, Germany's greatest writer, discovered the distinctiveness of his country's art and history, now lies within the borders of France. For most of the five hundred years covered by this book Germany has been composed of many separate political units, each with a distinct history. And any comfortable national story Germans might have told themselves before 1914 was destroyed by the events of the following thirty years.German history may be inherently fragmented, but it contains a large number of widely shared memories, awarenesses, and experiences; examining some of these is the purpose of this book. MacGregor chooses objects and ideas, people and places that still resonate in the new Germanyporcelain from Dresden and rubble from its ruins, Bauhaus design and the German sausage, the crown of Charlemagne and the gates of Buchenwaldto show us something of its collective imagination. There has never been a book about Germany quite like it.

A Sunday Times bestsellerFascinating. . . .The books high-quality allows for its many illustrations to be reproduced well. Engravings, paintings, photographs and detailed maps from Germanys past all serve to make its legacy come alive. Throughout this magnificent work, Neil MacGregor shows that despite its past, Germany is a country that has come into full flower a quarter-century into its fully unified modern state. He presents the healthy perspective of a people who, despite being weighted with baggage, are reconciling well as they move into the future. Perry Munyon, The Pittsburgh Post-GazetteHighly readable. . . .beautifully illustrated. . . .Mr. MacGregors choice of objects is always interestingand his treatment is lively. Neil Gregor, The Wall Street JournalMacGregor [is] our greatest cultural polymath. . . . Anyone who wants to understand Germany should read this book. Antony Beevor, The ObserverImmensely readable and sharply intelligent. . . . MacGregors chapters move boldly and fluently across time, held together by his own assured by attractively conversational voice. . . . The starting point is often something material, like Riemenschneiders four evangelists, reprising the successful formula of MacGregors wonderful and much-imitated A History of the World in 100 Objects, a previous cooperative venture between the British Museum and the BBC. The objects considered in the present book include things you would expect: Gutenbergs printing press, Luthers German translation of the Bible, Meissen porcelain, a modernist cradle and ceramic vases from the Bauhaus, the Volkswagen Beetle. Other objects might be more surprising to readers. The coinage of the Holy Roman Empire and the no less impressive diversity of German sausages both serve to illustrate the historic fragmentation of the German lands, a major theme of the book. . . . The book is filled not just with objects, but with places of memory. There is a fine chapter on the forest and its place in the German imagination, which draws on the fairytales of the Brothers Grimm and the work of Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, and takes the story up to the present day and the new meaning of the forest within a green Germany. MacGregor writes especially well about monuments, such as the Brandenburg Gate and the Victory Column in Berlin. He is adept at showing how monuments bear witness to the constant reworking of German historythe work of salvaging, even. . . . MacGregors light touch means that we never feel as if we are being hurried along to a predetermined destination, not even in the section called The Descent that takes us from Bismarck to Hitler. There is some artful foreshadowing in earlier chapters. . . . MacGregor shows his sill at making objects speak. . . . There are many brilliant vignettes in this book, too many to mention in a review. .

. . high-minded, cosmopolitanbeautifully illustrated. MacGregor is an engaging guide who never talks down to readers. He has written a remarkable set of reflections on the objects and places of German memory.David Blackbourn, The GuardianFour years ago, Neil MacGregor made marvelous use of the British Museum, of which he is the director, to interpret the history of the world through 100 objects. Since the museum owns a fabulous collection of German artefactsincluding not one, but two of the original Gutenberg biblesit makes sense to apply that same method to a country that, at the end of a year of military strutting, we are beginning to view with more respect. . . . Magnificently illustrated and superbly edited. . . . Its hard to imagine a method more successful than MacGregorsthe careful juxtaposition of singular objects with their surrounding historyfor conveying the complexities of Germanys continuing journey.Miranda Seymour, Daily Telegraph (Four Stars)Neil MacGregors alternative cultural history of a country uniquely difficult to pinpointits borders shifting, its ruling systems manifold for much of the past 500 yearsoffers the sense of a coherent whole nonetheless. His method is memory. His way in is through objects and people; places and buildings; paintings, toys, and printed money; forests and single oak trees. . . . MacGregor knows unerringly which objects to select and which chapters of Germanys enrichingly and confusingly fragmented history to bring to life through them. . . . This book is immaculately researched, timely and important.Rebecca K. Morrison, The IndependentThe director of the British Museum tells the compelling story of a traumatized country through objects and places that represent the enduring strength and hope of the people. . . . MacGregor traces the evolution of German identity. . . . A comprehensive record jam-packed with visuals. KirkusThrough artifacts as varied as a sausage, Gutenberg Bibles, and a porcelain rhinoceros, MacGregor illustrates how a composite German identity was forged and the country came to be. . . . His concise lessons in German history form a cogent and fluent account that gets as close to the core of German identity as any book by a non-German could. Publishers Weekly (Starred)Striking. . . . Germany: Memories of a Nation is deeply felt, carefully conceived, and an important addition to any consideration of the shape not only of modern Germany but of Europe as a whole.The EconomistAbout the AuthorNeil MacGregor was Director of the National Gallery, London from 1987 to 2002 and of the British Museum from 2002 to 2015. His previous books include A History of the World in 100 Objects and Shakespeares Restless World, between them translated into more than a dozen languages. For his work on the BBC Radio 4series, British Museum exhibition and book Germany: Memories of a Nation, he was awarded (in Germany) the Friedrich Gundolf Prize, the Goethe Medal and the German National Prizeand (in the UK) the British Academy's Nayef Al-Radhan Prize for Transcultural Understanding. He is now Chair of the Steering Committee of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Part OneWhere Is Germany?Germany? Where is it? / I do not know where to find such a country, wrote Goethe and Schiller in 1796. In Germany both geography and history have always been unstable. Borders move. The past keeps changing. Cities and regions which were for centuries German are now firmly parts of other countries. What does that mean for them, and for the Germans? For most of the 500 years covered by this book Germany has been composed of many separate political units, each with a distinct history. Enfeebling division, or enriching complexity? 1The View from the GateIf the modern state of Germany can be said to have a village green on which communal events are marked and celebrated, then it is the area around the Brandenburg Gate. It has long been Berlins preferred setting for the citys meetings and rallies, but since the reunification of the two Germanys, the severe neo-classical gateway has become the natural backdrop to all great national events.Professor Monika Grtters, the German Federal Minister of Culture, says:It is the national monument. There is no other that can compete with it. It is of course the symbol of the Berlin Wall, of a world divided into East and West. And it is at the same time the symbol of the fall of that Wall and of liberty regained. It stands for the division of Germany, and the division of the world, into two blocs: two ideas of society. It reminds us of the loss of freedom; but it is in itself also the great symbol of freedom regained. It is the national and the international monument of freedom and unity.Monika Grtters is talking about the meanings that all across the world have attached to the Brandenburg Gate since the Wall fell twenty-five years ago, but the history of the Gate, its own experiences and its far-reaching associations, go back ten times longer than that. Originally the site of one of a number of gates around Berlin, at which customs dues were collected from goods wagons entering the city, it was rebuilt in the 1780s on the orders of the Prussian king, Frederick William II, to a grand neo-classical design by C. G. Langhans. Based on the gateway to the Acropolis, it was conceived as a monument to peace, and it was one of the first architectural signals that Berlinwhich under Frederick the Great had acquired a magnificent library, opera house and other similar institutions (see Chapter 30)now felt entitled to proclaim itself a cultural and intellectual city in the Athenian tradition.The Brandenburg Gate stands at the western end of the long avenue Unter den Linden (Under the Lime Trees), which, rather like the Champs-Elyses in Paris, runs from the edge of the city down to its very heart. At the end of the avenue, closing the vista, was the Stadtschloss, the palace of the Hohenzollern kings. Some time after the Gate was built, a bronze figure of Victory, her chariot drawn by four horses, was placed on top, giving it the appearance of a triumphal arch.The first person actually to use it for a triumphal entry was not, however, the King of Prussia, but Napoleon Bonaparte. After the defeat of Austria at the Battle of Austerlitz in December 1805, the only German state still offering serious resistance to the invader was Prussia. But on 14 October of the following year, Napoleon humiliatingly routed the Prussian army at the battles of Jena and Auerstdt. Two weeks later, on 27 October 1806, the French emperor entered Berlin in triumph, leading his troops through the

Brandenburg Gate, marching them down Unter den Linden towards the palace of the king. The royal family fled to the eastern city of Knigsberg (now Kaliningrad), where they began to plan Prussias survival and recovery. Berlin was abandoned to French occupation. Napoleon, eager to demonstrate that his authority was now absolute and the Prussian king powerless in his own capital, removed the bronze quadriga from the top of the Gate and carried it away as a trophy, to be exhibited as war booty in Paris. For eight years the Brandenburg Gate was without its crowning sculpture.In Knigsberg the king and his advisers effected a complete reordering of the Prussian state, enabling it ultimately to take the leading part in resisting and expelling the French. In 1813, Prussian and Russian troops together forced Napoleon out of Berlin, and pursued him and his army all the way to Paris. In 1814, to scenes of public jubilation, the quadriga returned to the Brandenburg Gate. It was, however, modified before being reinstated. In the bronze chariot you see today, the statue of Victory is accompanied by the Prussian eagle, and her lance proudly bears the Iron Cross (see Chapter 14), the decoration awarded by the King of Prussia to those who had fought with valour against the French invader. The chariot makes clear that Napoleon had been defeated by a Germany which his invasion had largely created. The Gate had become a Prussian triumphal arch.The Brandenburg Gate is not just a monument to which history has added layers of meaning. It is also a remarkable standpoint from which to view some of the key moments in German history. In fact, from this place alone, you can see evidence not just of the Napoleonic Wars, but of many other great events that have shaped the German national memory.If you turn west and look along the broad avenue that leads to the royal palace at Charlottenburg, you see another figure of Victory, this time gilded and alone, standing on top of the 200-foot-high Siegessule (Victory Column), designed in 1864 to celebrate the Prussian victory over Denmark, which began the process of German unification. By the time it was finished, Prussia had also trounced the Austrians in 1866 and defeated the French in 1870 and the base was decorated accordingly to mark the triple triumph. Under Bismarcks guidance, the King of Prussia had become the German emperor, head of a united Germany which was the leading industrial and military power on the continent. The Victory Columns inauguration in 1873 signalled Berlins new role in Europe and the world. In 1945 the French insisted on the removal of the sculpted plaques showing their defeat, but the column is otherwise broadly as intended, and still speaks today of the confident optimism of Berlin in the 1870s. You could say that the westward view from the Brandenburg Gate is a view of Germanys place in the world as it actually was between 1870 and 1914. If things had gone as Hitler and Albert Speer had planned, the view north in the late 1940s would have shown their idea of what that place ought to be. Speer, Hitlers cherished architect, designed a colossal Volkshalle, a Hall of the People. An enormous dome, over 1,000 feet high, crowned the assembly room in which 180,000 people could gather to listen to the Fhrer. It would have dwarfed completely the nearby Reichstag, and been an uncomfortable, megalomaniac neighbour to the Brandenburg Gate, itself a favourite site for Nazi marches and rallies. It is a strange experience, to stand on the spot from which you would have seen Speers dome, had history turned out differently, and from which if you turn south, you can today see the approaches to the Holocaust Memorial. But the views west, north or south from the Brandenburg Gate were always intended to be secondary. In a virtuoso piece of urban scenography it was the view east that mattered, down Unter den Linden, past Frederick the Greats library and opera house, and on to the end of the vista and the Stadtschloss. The Schloss, a huge baroque city-palace, was completed around 1700 and effectively designed to make one great statement: after seventy years of turmoil, in spite of the Thirty Years War (161848), in spite of Swedish invasion (in the 1670s), Brandenburgthe modest state of which Berlin was the capitalhad not only survived, but had emerged as a serious European power.Its survival was remarkable. It is reckoned that in the 1630s the urban population of Brandenburg declined from 113,500 to 34,000, while its rural inhabitants fell from 300,000 to 75,000. Something like three quarters of the population had died or fled. After the war, the position in both town and country was stabilized and prosperity slowly began to return. In the 1670s the Swedes, the great military power of northern Europe, had invaded again, in alliance with the French. The then Elector of Brandenburg, known to history as the Great Elector, had brilliantly outmanoeuvred and defeated them. In a pleasing twist of political and economic revenge, when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes and expelled the Protestants from France in 1685, many of the most educated and most skilled of the Huguenots came to work in, and to enrich, Berlin. Among them were some of the craftsmen who shaped and embellished the palace. The Stadtschloss told the world that you did not mess with Brandenburg.But as you look down Unter den Linden today, you cant see it. Badly damaged by bombing, it survived the Second World War, and could well have been rebuilt. The Soviet authorities decided instead to bulldoze the Hohenzollern Schloss, which they regarded as the physical symbol of a Prussian militarism that they now had the opportunity to annihilate. Only one small part of it was preservedthe balcony from which, on 9 November 1918, the Communist Karl Liebknecht had proclaimed the Free Socialist Republic of Germany, an attempt to create a Communist state which was rapidly crushed (see Chapter 22).On the site of the old royal palace, the government of the German Democratic Republic built the new, modernist Palast der Republik, a steel structure clad in bronzed mirror-glass that was the seat of the Peoples Chamber and a centre for cultural and leisure activities until the GDR ended in 1990. But today you cant see that either. In the years after reunification there was intense debate about the proper future of the Palast der Republik in a new reunited Berlin, now that the peoples representatives sat once again in the pan-German Reichstag. By 2008 the Palast der Republik had been demolished, allegedly because asbestos made it unfit for future use. With it disappeared

many of the happier memories of old East Berlin. Its steel skeleton was sold and used to build the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. Thus from the Brandenburg Gate today you can admire neither the triumph of the Great Elector nor the Socialist achievement of the German Democratic Republic. The historic vista now ends on a building site, where a reconstruction of the old Stadtschloss is rapidly taking shape (see Chapter 30). Behind it, though, still stands the other great monument of East Berlin, the thousand-foot-high Alexanderturm, a hi-tech telecommunications tower of the late 1960s designed to be unmissably visible in West Berlin and to broadcast, in every sense, the virtues of the Socialist state. Still one of the tallest buildings in Germany, it dominates the skyline across the city. Just below its summit is a spherical operations centre with the inevitable revolving restaurant. But that is not the reason why the Alexanderturm has become part of Berlins world of memories. By a quirk of geometry and reflection, whenever the sun shone, there appeared on the sphere a large incandescent crossit still appears today and draws ironic smiles from the spectators at the Brandenburg Gate who remember the frustration and embarrassment the cross caused the atheist authorities in the GDRit was quickly dubbed the Popes revenge.Knocked about in the war, the Brandenburg Gate was patched up and repaired by the occupying authorities. Situated right on the boundary between the Western and Eastern zones (and later between the two states), it was one of the authorized crossing points. As in the eighteenth century, it again became an entrance to Berlin, taking on a particular, charged, significance as a place for demonstrations. In 1953 it was the scene of the first major rebellion against Soviet rule in Eastern Europe, as tens of thousands of striking workers called for free elections and tore down the red flag flying over it. The unrest was put down by Soviet tanks. On 14 August 1961, one day after the building of the Wall began, West Berliners gathered on the other side of the Gate to protest against the erection of the Wall and the division of their city. Using these demonstrations as a pretext, the East German authorities closed the checkpoint there until further notice. For twenty-eight years the Gate became a barrier. It did not reopen until 22 December 1989, when the West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, walked through it to be greeted by the East German Prime Minister, Hans Modrow. There is no building or site that speaks so powerfully to Germans everywhere of the division and the reunification of their country.Since reunification, the Brandenburg Gate has once again been renovated and is now at the centre of a pedestrianized zone, the gathering point of choice for celebrations of all sorts. And in the summer of 2014 it was once again used for a triumphal entry into the citynot by a French invader, but by the German football team, returning victorious from the World Cup in Brazil.In the next chapter I shall be going down Unter den Linden towards the east, to explore some of the memories of the Cold War division of Germany. It was so effective and profound that those who lived in East and West have few memories in common. What all do remember is the difficulty of travelling from one Germany to the other and the price paid by those who tried to do so without authorization.2Divided Heaven The restored Reichstag, where the German Parliament meets, stands in the heart of Berlin. Because of its position near the former border dividing East and West Berlin, there are now few buildings near it and it is set between a meadow on one side, and the banks of the River Spree on the other. On most days, the riverside is busy with sightseers and strollers, such as you might find by the Seine or the Thames. But it quickly becomes obvious that this could not be either London or Paris; it could only be in Berlin. In various places beside the river are rows of white crosses. gnter litfen 24 august 1961udo dllick 5 october 1961 hans rwel 1 january 1963klaus schrter 4 november 1963heinz sokolowski 25 november 1965marinetta jirkowsky 22 november 1980It seems like a war cemetery, because all the dead were young. But it is notthe names are of some of those who were killed trying to escape from East to West Berlin after the building in August 1961 of the most potent symbol of the Cold War: the Berlin Wall. The deaths range in date from ten days after the building of the Wall to ten months before its removal.