

Volker Schlöndorff

# Who needs an Identity anyhow?\*

## 1 Introduction

At present a number of Franco-German celebrations are taking place to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Elysée Treaty, signed on 22 January 1963. So why am I, a “child of the reconciliation”, in London tonight?

Simply because I am unreliable.

I have always been running away from the place “where I belong”, “where I should be”. Not for lack of gratitude, but to escape the walls of any given identity. I hate to be defined by this or that, to be given an identity – as if without one, I was a nobody, like a piece of clothing or an accessory without a label.

Friends worry I might be losing my identity, especially my precious cultural identity, when I switch between languages and cultures, genres and styles. But I love to share identities with many others. I feel enriched by them and they make me more myself. Unlike virginity, which indeed is bound to be lost, sooner or later, identity is not a thing you can lose, and personality – as I will try to explain – is shaped by sharing many identities.

So let me go through a quick digest of my identities. I am not sure I was somebody when I was born, but in the words of Raymond Queneau’s *Zazie*: “la vie m’a fait ce que je suis”, life has made me what I am.

## 2 A Childhood in History

Where does fact end and the hearsay begin? I have no memories of night air raids spent in underground shelters, even though there must have been many such nights. I remember that around my fifth birthday, in March 1944, we moved out of the city, into the countryside. We were “bombed out” as the expression went, meaning that our house in the industrial suburb of Wiesbaden had been hit by a bomb and was gone.

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But the real event had happened a few weeks earlier. As my father saw his patients on the ground floor, my mother was warming up floor wax polish on the kitchen stove. My younger brother and I were playing on the second floor. Suddenly there was a huge howling. We raced down the corridor; our father stormed out of his office, up the stairs. Too late. Thick smoke was coming from the kitchen. A spark had ignited the liquid wax, which exploded in a big flame. Mother stood in the kitchen, her body a torch.

I know it sounds like a picture from a horror tale, from *Struwelpeter* to be precise – for that is how I imagined it. Gerda, our kitchen help, immediately locked us in the bedroom. I only remember how, with my tiny fists, I pounded on the door behind which something terrible was happening. Decades later I had little Oskar pounding just as desperately on the lavatory door, behind which his mother, poor Agnes Matzerath, was in agony after swallowing too much fish: sardines, tuna, herring, eels.

I allowed myself no feelings, no pain, no mourning for the loss. The next image in my pathetic recollection shows me six weeks later with a Pickelhaube, the Prussian helmet, and a wooden sword on the uppermost step of the same stairs leading to the kitchen. The charred furniture was still there. It was my fifth birthday. The same day we moved to the country, into the woods. It was the beginning of something new. Mutti, as we called her, was now in heaven; we moved on. For me, moving, packing, going elsewhere was to be associated forever with loss and mourning. “Jetzt ist alles, alles aus ...”, so father told us, were her last words.

And indeed, for the grown-ups “everything, everything was over”. Certainly the war was about to be over – the Nazi times with their pseudo-heroic Nordic race identity were over.

A few days after my sixth birthday, my older brother had to climb up the big birch tree to hang a white bed sheet from the top, as a sign of our capitulation. “They’re coming”: through the woods they came, on big trucks and shiny jeeps. Young, friendly GIs, so different from the bitter, haggard Wehrmacht, who hours before had thrown their guns into the rain-filled bomb craters in the woods, giving up all hope of the “Endsieg”.

Soon every one of us kids had his American friend. Nineteen and twenty-year-old guys from such exotic places as Idaho and Nebraska became our natural allies, for they had defeated our parents. “Off limits”, “no fraternization” were the first words we learned to ignore. We were interested in their trucks and guns, they in our bikes and sisters. We went to the boys’ club, learned baseball and soap box racing, we traded brand new copies of *Mein Kampf* for Camels and Pall Malls. Soon officers’ families followed and we lived in American suburbia,

while receiving at home an education according to the rules of my father's world, the world of Kaiser Wilhelm.

During dinner, father would seize every opportunity to advance "our education", whatever the topic of conversation. Time and again we had to fetch the Brockhaus Encyclopedia, Wasserzieher's Thesaurus or a Duden Dictionary to determine the meaning, origin and spelling of a word. Father added the ideological 'deeper meaning.' Amazingly we must have been listening, because I still remember a lot of this quite schizophrenic upbringing.

As I grew older, books became my refuge, I skipped the boyish reading of Karl May adventure novels and went straight to the American Mark Twain. Later on I discovered Balzac, Dostoevsky and Hemingway. I only lived when reading. My emotions and adventures were literary: I trusted the paper more than my personal experience. I discovered myself in the characters of those novels. Life in books seemed to me more intense, more real than so-called real life. I was seriously infected with literature; and it took several 'applications' to overcome this disease.

I earned money to buy a first box camera working as a caddy for Americans on a golf course. Photography became my hobby. Early in the morning I went out to catch the rising sun in the mist – or else willows over a pond in the moonlight – to illustrate some haikus, and I felt very creative.

My artistic education was shaped by illustrated magazines in the waiting room of my father's practice. Although culture was prized in our middle class, in daily life it was limited to the Request Hour on the radio and a few quotations from *Faust*. My father divided art into two categories: the pleasant and the unpleasant. Since in life he had experienced enough of the latter, art had to provide the former. Later he tried to prevent me, through ruthless intrigue, from making my first film based on Robert Musil's *Young Törless*. He considered it homosexual filth, and he held that *The Tin Drum* was, in a word, "dreadful". I first rebelled against his aesthetics by sneaking off after school to the "Roxy", the "Rio", the "Apollo" or the "Walhalla" – as the popular cinemas were called – to watch Westerns and detective movies, later called "films noirs". They appealed to me precisely because they were regarded as 'filth and trash'. Besides, these movies came from the United States, which made them worse for the adults but all the more attractive for us.

Our generation had started with Hershey bars and the black market; we were now living immersed in American pop culture, movies, music, cartoons and magazines. The radio was always tuned to *AFN*, the *American Forces Network*. Hundreds of thousands of GIs and their families were living around us, in the Frankfurt-Rhein-Main area, making our minds immune to the tales of other

empires, such as those of the Greeks and Romans, that we were bored of at school.

I was about to drop out when I discovered a Pestalozzi society, which organized three-month sojourns in a French boarding school for the purpose of learning the language. ‘This my father would like’, I thought. When he saw that the fees were quite reasonable, he agreed to let me go. The year was 1956, de Gaulle was not yet in power and the Franco-German treaties years away. An eighteen hour-train ride, with a changeover in Paris, brought me to the far end of France, to Vannes, Morbihan, in Brittany. At the station I was met by a priest in a black cassock and a flat wide-brimmed hat. I, the Protestant, had picked a Jesuit boarding school.

Next morning, one of the boys took me to the floor where the priests had their cells. We had to take off our shoes to walk on the shining polish of the corridor. The priests meeting us on the way were gliding along on square pieces of felt, like deadly serious skaters.

I was introduced to “Picasso,” as Father Arnaud de Solages was known. He received me with a smile and reminded me of the famous painter, less in resemblance than in spirit. Although he was the school’s German teacher, I was to learn French from him. Since he was also in charge of the *Equipe-de-théâtre*, he assigned me to this group, and soon I had to perform small parts in French.

A master-student relationship grew out of the many afternoons I spent in Picasso’s cell and led to a friendship spanning over thirty years. When he died, I had the honour of being a pallbearer carrying the coffin down into the Jesuit vault in Tours, along with his fellow monks. My film *The Ninth Day* is a belated tribute to him.

One day the entire school went to the cinema in town, to see a film by a former pupil, who was born in Vannes, and whose assistant I was to become a few years later: Alain Resnais. The film was *Nuit et brouillard*. Of course I had heard about the camps, mostly through jokes about the use of gas and the making of soap from bones. I cannot recall a genuine description of the Holocaust and its images or statistics from our history lessons in Wiesbaden. Therefore, I was neither mentally nor physically prepared for the horror of the images I was about to see.

It is hard to imagine the impact *Night and Fog* had at the time. These images are nowadays exploited at random, in an undignified way, even in feature films. As the lights went up in the auditorium, I found it extremely hard to get up. I was the sole German among a few hundred French kids who were now all looking at me, or at least so I thought. I still see my friends whose silent faces and words begged the same question which, half a century later, we are still asking ourselves: how was this possible?

I was forced to adopt my own view and not collapse in contriteness whenever the topic was raised. Deep down I have never been able to overcome that experience, and most of my films, beginning with *Törless* and up to last year's *Calm at Sea (La Mer à l'aube)*, seek an answer to the question raised by Resnais' documentary.

On the other hand, I felt so much at ease in my new surroundings that I wanted to stay. Maybe I just did not want to be German anymore. I managed to convince my father that I could just as well finish my schooling in France. Instead of the original three months, I stayed in France for ten years: you might in fact say I never returned home. The Americanized German boy was soon to get a new identity; at least he tried hard to become a Frenchman. My teachers were like sports coaches, pushing the wunderkind to perform. I was sent to Paris to compete among all of the best students from France in the *Concours général*, where I won the *Prix de Philosophie*.

The German Embassy invited me to lunch and offered me a scholarship. The République Française did the same. I could have studied for years, for free, but all I wanted was to study film. There were no scholarships and no grants for so vulgar a discipline, I was told. So I registered for Law, in order to get the fellowship, but my real study hours were every night at 6:30, 8:30, and 10:30 p.m. with the screenings at the Cinémathèque Française on Rue d'Ulm.

I must have seen about a thousand films during those years. Somehow I met Lotte Eisner, the wonderful film historian. It was she who engaged me as a simultaneous translator for the films without subtitles. I made friends at the Cinémathèque, with young men like Bertrand Tavernier and Louis Malle, with older ones like Melville – and with true veterans like Fritz Lang and Joseph von Sternberg.

Soon I was an intern to one of them, and I eventually became a professional assistant director to such masters, before deciding, at age 25, that it was about time to do something for immortality myself. During these seven years in Paris, I had become very politicized: it was the end of Indochina, it was the Algerian war, it was the end of the Fourth Republic, it was the return of de Gaulle, and it was, indeed, the Elysée Treaty, an event I was totally unaware of, because “reconciliation” had long since happened for me. I was off to Vietnam with Louis Malle, to make a documentary of what was to become another War.

### 3 Young Törless

The longer I had stayed in France, and the more assimilated I felt, the more German I appeared to my friends. Even Louis Malle advised me not to mix with the large crowd of Nouvelle Vague filmmakers and to try a German film instead. Musil's novel described a world of boarding schools I was familiar with; and the lofty nature of young Törless, his detached connection to life, always the observer, was quite close to my own.

First films usually possess a quality that can never be equalled. One may eventually make better and more successful films, but the urgency and innocence of the first remains unique. But the real challenge was to write and direct a movie in Germany, which I had left almost ten years ago. The assimilated would-be Frenchman finally had to accept his origins. I did this wholeheartedly, curious about this new Federal Republic in the mid-sixties, far from the post-war Adenauer years.

Paris certainly had not been boring, but Munich and Berlin in the sixties was something else. Even before 1968, a whole generation had questioned the history and the culture they had inherited. Reconciliation – whether with France or to reach out to all neighbours except in the East – and travel criss-crossing the Continent and beyond, became everyone's passion. It was not pan-European slogans and no political agenda that inspired this movement, but sheer curiosity and openness. I realized that I had become French to the point that I had effectively become French and I opened up to a more plural identity.

*Young Törless* was invited to the Cannes Festival competition and the “junger deutscher Film” – “New German Cinema” – was born. I do not remember where the phrase came from, but it was apt. Three films opened within a few months in 1966: *Es* by Ulrich Schamoni, which broke all box office records, *Abschied von gestern* by Alexander Kluge in the autumn in Venice, and *Der junge Törless* in May in Cannes.

I missed a curious event during the screening of *Törless* in the main theatre. My friend, mentor and co-producer Louis Malle dragged me to the “Blue Bar” as soon as the lights were dimmed. He thought that the audience should see the film without the director. It was a matter of decency, he said; and besides, it was more elegant. Louis and I were a little the worse for wear as we slid back to our seats through the dark theatre just before the film ended. There were anxious whispers: “Where have you been? There was a scandal!” The German cultural attaché had left the theatre protesting loudly that this was no German film! His outrage was sincere and by no means meant to boost my film by causing a scandal. He later wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “The scenes of the

boys torturing each other would confirm foreign viewers in their negative views of the German people.” Ironically this Herr von Tieschowitz was the same cultured and sensitive gentleman who years earlier had invited me to the Embassy and offered me a scholarship. Without his help I might never have learned to make a film like *Törless ...* But as far as the diplomats were concerned, my film besmirched the image of our nation and was the work of a *Nestbeschmutzer*.

Once again I had a new identity. I enjoyed now belonging to the New German Cinema – a label I worked hard to live up to and that lasted for years. Besides Kluge and the Schamoni brothers, soon Werner Herzog, Peter Fleischmann and Reinhard Hauff joined us, and Wim Wenders a few years later, until in 1969 I finally met Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Margarethe von Trotta when I cast them in Bertolt Brecht’s *Baal*. By then, we were quite a group, and quite a politically engaged one, so much so that I soon acquired a new label: “Sympathisant”. So I was in sympathy – but with what?

In a well-known article in *Der Spiegel* Heinrich Böll calmly asked how six people, the original Baader-Meinhof gang, could pose such a threat to a nation of sixty million. They had forced the state to arm itself, the police to mobilize, and the media to stoke up mass hysteria. Was there no reasonable way to stop this madness? the novelist asked. Shouldn’t the leader of the group, Ulrike Meinhof, be given “safe passage”, in order to halt the escalation of violence by means of dialogue? “Safe passage” is a legal term dating back to the Middle Ages, and Böll was consciously pointing to an archaic sense of justice here. Few others, unfortunately, shared his opinion. Uproar erupted in the media, and the Springer Press in particular stirred up the issue. Matthias Walden wrote in the *Bild-Zeitung* that Böll was himself “the spiritual father of the violence.”

Böll launched a court case to restore his reputation. He lost all appeals and a great deal of money too, but in his view it was his loss of honour that mattered most of all. He sat down to write a pamphlet, the manuscript of which he sent me: *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*. Margarethe von Trotta and I started to write a screenplay, which we co-directed. Heinrich Böll was the first author with whom I worked in person. As it was later with Grass, Frisch and Arthur Miller, I had better relationships with living authors than with the dead ones like Musil, Kleist or Proust.

*The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* was an instant popular success – for us as well as for Böll – and it proved he was not alone in his moderate views. The escalation between a quasi-militarized State and the increasingly violent RAF terrorists continued, however, until a suicidal point of no return was reached: shocking kidnappings, killings and the leaders committing suicide in the autumn of 1977 – all of this in the name of a better, more just society ... A group of filmmakers, Alexander Kluge, Fassbinder and myself, got together to document

these events. Much has been said and written about the violence of the Baader-Meinhof group and about that autumn in Germany. I do not wish to dwell on it, except to say: that when the industrial leader Hanns-Martin Schleyer, shot by the young terrorists, and the core of the original Baader-Meinhof gang were buried in Stuttgart within days of each other – at that moment I felt the beginning of the end of our socialist dreams. If, from the student movement for a more open, liberal and more enlightened society, all that was left was senseless violence, mafia-style murders and the suicide of former idealists, then indeed there was little hope for a socialist society. The fall of the Wall ten years later only confirmed this view – and in any case, my identity was no longer “left wing” by then.

And while my twenty years or so of very European political “engagement” were coming to an end, World War Two caught up with me once again and *The Tin Drum* was to become my trademark, my final label. Success seemed unlikely when we started, but – according to Günter Grass – failure might also be interesting, and he asked me to keep a diary, which I did.

On 23 April 1977 I wrote:

When the book first came out in 1959 I had just obtained my baccalauréat in France: I noticed the publication of Grass’ novel then, but am only reading it now. I’m imagining a film, world history seen from a child’s point of view, from the bottom up, by a tiny Oskar. He has been called a product of the twentieth century. Indeed he has two typical traits of the time – denial and protest. He rejects the world to such an extent that he stops growing. His protest is so loud that his voice breaks glass.

30 June 1977

First visit to Niedstrasse, Berlin-Schöneberg, to see Günter Grass. He was preparing lentil stew with bacon and gets to the point at once: *Die Blechtrommel* is the opposite of the coming-of-age novel: everything and everyone around Oskar make progress – only he doesn’t. Oskar embodies the lower middle class’s thirst for vengeance and their anarchistic delusions of grandeur.

Despite lively conversations we remain distant. I panic at the size of this undertaking and I’m scared of the author. Much of what reads like a fiction actually seems to be for him ‘life lived’, a reality he has actually experienced. The novel may read like pure imagination, a fantasy, but in fact a lot of it is autobiographical –

– though I did not know at the time to what extent Grass himself had been a participant in the horror. And he never, ever spoke of it, even though we became close friends over the following thirty years.

13 February 1978

Visiting Grass for three days with my old pal, screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière. “Not Catholic enough, too analytical, too articulated, too orderly, too Cartesian” he said of our

script. He felt it lacked irrationality, the abrupt interference of historical events in individual lives. This he called the epic dimension, the only interesting one.

14 May 1978

Again with Grass, this time at his home on the Elbe river, almost a year after our first visit. We polish the dialogue, which is a lot of fun. A year's work has brought us closer together. "Next time we'll write an original screenplay from the start," he said as I left.

Only once did he come to the set in Poland.

He is impressed, like all of us, by David Bennent. David had his own problems, similar to Oskar Matzerath's, and that is why he is so convincing. The film thus becomes a documentary about the special child that he is. David made the book completely his own. He treats Günter Grass as if he were the "real" Oskar and the author had merely put it on paper.

When *Die Blechtrommel* was shown in Cannes I remained in the auditorium, and this time I was anticipating a scandal. The film had enough reasons, from the eels in the horse's head to the effervescent powder in the navel. I sat in the dark with Margarethe von Trotta, the twelve-year-old David Bennent, Angela Winkler, Mario Adorf and the producers; we were all extremely nervous because no-one dared to predict how such a 'barbarous' film would be received by this elegant, sophisticated audience. As the lights came on, we bowed to the applause and the jurors left the theatre. As she walked past, the President of the Jury, Françoise Sagan, turned around briefly and winked at me almost imperceptibly. So I knew I was her favourite candidate.

On ceremony night, I was hand in hand on stage with Coppola: his *Apocalypse Now* shared the Palme d'Or with *The Tin Drum*. I do not remember anything except my nice old producer Anatole Dauman sarcastically whispering to me: "My poor fellow, the suffering begins now." Indeed it had hardly started: the Academy Award was to follow. And I certainly never had a similar success again, but in honesty: it has caused me no suffering.

On the contrary it got me to America, but before dealing with the USA I must mention an unexpected and more profound effect of *The Tin Drum*, my discovery of Poland. The book was already extremely popular there, the film even more so. The city of Gdańsk/Danzig, and the fate of its population, changing from Kashubian, to Swedish, to German, back to Polish and sometimes enjoying multi-cultural life, then suffering ethnic cleansing – that is what the history of Poland is all about. I made two more films there in recent years, I teach at Andrzej Wajda's film school in Warsaw, I have many Polish friends – all because of *The Tin Drum*.

Germany's reconciliation with France was much easier than that with Poland: the millions of dead, the annihilated cities and the scorched countryside,

as well as the division by the Iron Curtain, made any approach difficult. The famous Weimar Triangle is far from accomplished, and if I regret one thing about the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the European Union, it is the fact that Angela Merkel, when François Hollande lifted her arm in unison and triumph, did not grab Donald Tusk's hand to have Poland join France and Germany in this celebration. What a picture it would have been, and what an important gesture.

Anyhow, *The Tin Drum* got me to America, which I knew so well at second hand. Now I could double-check my adolescent first impressions. I ended up in New York to make *Death of a Salesman*. Immediately I felt at ease. Just reading the play moved me to tears, which I could not explain to myself. Was I like Willy Loman, who travels the world, peddles his wares, rarely makes a sale, and has huge illusions? I saw a long corridor with greasy wallpaper, through the depths of which a small man emerges, a silhouette, carrying two suitcases full of screenplays, on a bad day for sales. On a late afternoon in July 1984, I met Dustin Hoffman at a café on the Upper West Side. For an hour we spoke about Arthur Miller's play and as we parted, he congratulated me on my Oscar for *Mephisto*. I corrected this misunderstanding. He promised to get a tape of *The Tin Drum*.

Arthur Miller was a wonderful guide to American society. Unlike Willy Loman he had no illusions as to his country, yet he loved it with fervour: it was still the best democracy around. This is what I had felt as a child: the pride and self-confidence of simple soldiers toward their officers, behaving as if no rank, no hierarchy deserved servile obedience. Arthur Miller reaffirmed this individual freedom in every one of our debates and long walks through Manhattan. Besides that, it was a very simple lesson that I learned from him and from his country: whenever something is up, do not hesitate and think it over, just do it!

The true revelation of the production, however, was John Malkovich. One of strongest scenes is the one where Biff, played by John Malkovich, confesses, or rather is forced to admit, that during an interview he stole the fountain pen belonging to his employer. As we shot the scene Miller pointed at Malkovich and whispered to me, "Look at his face. His angelic smile, the perfect expression of a killer ...". John Malkovich was wonderful. During rehearsals I was careful to start with his scenes because he never appeared stressed and never gave a forced performance. He was always so 'right' and focused that his tone was like the concert A that tunes the entire orchestra. We often worked fourteen to sixteen hours but "we never had a bad day", as Dustin put it at the end. "We also had a lot of fun", I added.

Was I finally returning to my childhood dream of becoming an American? I tried hard. I gave up my twenty-year marriage and creative relationship with

Margarethe von Trotta and settled in New York. I made a number of movies in Louisiana and North Carolina, and developed others in California, Utah and Montana. I went through a terrible crisis, I had an American psychiatrist, I half-adopted two deprived kids in the Mississippi delta. I was about to settle down for good, when the Wall came down. My first question was: what are you doing in New York?

The following day I cleaned out my apartment near Central Park, took two suitcases, and left a box full of scripts behind. The five American years that had changed me were over. In a roundabout way I was beginning to find myself. Another return to Germany, to a really new one this time.

## 4 Babelsberg

In Berlin as all across the former East, a Socialist planned economy had to be opened to the markets. Entire industries were sold to Western enterprises. Among others the former UFA film studios in Babelsberg, just outside Berlin, were looking for an investor, more precisely for people who were willing to get involved with this prestigious facility. I flew to Berlin and after a perilous journey on terrible roads filled with huge potholes, I reached the site composed of buildings from the 1920 s, Nazi-era barracks, and grey concrete warehouses – a leftover from the post-war East German days. Some hundred acres of overgrown land now covered what was once “the cradle of the Seventh Art”, where such classics as Asta Nielsen’s 1911 *Totentanz*, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau’s *Faust*, Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, as well as first films with Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich were made.

I began six years of hard work when I moved to Berlin in 1992. In the process of transforming the Studios, I had to work more closely with bankers, business communities and financial advisers than with scriptwriters and producers. Dealing with the 710 employees and workers I realized that the real crime of socialism was not what it had done to the cities, to industry, to craftsmanship, to agriculture and to the environment: the real crime was what it had done to the people, breaking their backbone, taking enterprise and initiative away from them.

I made more business plans than shooting schedules, and after a few years I certainly was not my former self anymore. I had become a CEO, a manager whose attention span is not meant to outlast seven minutes, always on the move, dealing with a zillion problems at the same time, but never seeing the result of any of his doings. As a filmmaker, you turn around and you can at least

see a pile of cans containing the movies you have made. This new identity was not for me, and I eagerly returned to directing films when seven years later the term of my contract was over.

For the first time I felt that I had indeed lost myself.

## 5 Conclusion

So, with several diverse identities, and even with most of them rather enjoyable, I still refuse to define myself by any one of them. I agree that under all the layers of the onion there is something unchanged, but I would not call it identity. Identity is not the innermost core, it is not at the centre, nor in the mind, nor in the heart. As Amartya Sen, whom I discovered only recently, says: “Multiple identities make for a full human being.” Thank you, Amiral Sen. And he continues:

The main hope of harmony in our troubled world lies rather in the plurality of our identities, which intertwine with each other and are resistant to drastic divisions along lines of impassable borders. The nature of human beings is severely tested when our differences are reduced to an artificial system of classification.

As a European I enjoy our diversity: I can share number of identities, without restricting myself to any particular one. It is the mixture of the stories that we share, that we endlessly recount, that makes our culture, made of the shared identities of all its numerous inhabitants. And the pressure of the markets sometimes has the effect of uniting people against an outside force. That force may be financial powers or simply the need to get a job, and therefore to learn foreign languages, as is happening now, without the help of any treaties or celebrations.