

WE - HERE

A radio play in four parts

Helgard Haug and Thilo Guschas

Part 1

RONJA

We - nope -

JAN

Here ...

RONJA

We - so how, how, how should I emphasize it?

JAN

A radio play in four parts, Part 1 or how ...?

RONJA

Us ...

KEFEI

You'll see what happens then.

JAN

OK.

RONJA

We...

JAN

We - Here, a radio play in four parts by Helgard Haug and Thilo Guschas.

RONJA

Part 1.

KEFEI

There is no facial expression. That is, actually every personal expression is eliminated.

RONJA

In early October 2019, I see pictures from China on the news ...

KEFEI

So, there should be at the parade thousands of people, but a unity - a homogeneous image should be produced.

RONJA

Fifteen thousand soldiers loyal to the command marching in unison.

KEFEI

This is absolutely a mass parade, mass demonstration.

RONJA

Military helicopters and fighter planes in the sky.

KEFEI

Here you see the demonstration of great power.

RONJA

Nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles that could reach the USA in thirty minutes ...

KEFEI

The so-called future.

RONJA

... are driven through the streets of the capital and celebrated.

KEFEI

The image the Chinese government wants to show the world.

Now sing the national anthem. Now you hear the national anthem and then they hoist the flag.

RONJA

State leader Xi Jinping says, "No one can stop the Chinese people and the Chinese nation on their way forward."

KEFEI

And the modernization of so-called modern China.

RONJA

Here's a country celebrating its birthday.

KEFEI

It will be the biggest military parade in China's history.

RONJA

Its 70th.

KEFEI

Wow - this is with a gas mask, or what?!

RONJA

A passing as muscle flexing.

KEFEI

Is there another country that demonstrates something like this on such a scale?

Original sound bite: DONALD TRUMP

We will never forget that we are Americans and the future belongs to us.

RONJA

There was also less picnicking and more tanks on July 4 for the national holiday of the USA.

Original sound bite: DONALD TRUMP

The future belongs to the brave, the strong, the proud and the free.

RONJA

Trump was inspired by the French national celebration.

Original sound bite: DONALD TRUMP

We are one people - chasing one dream and one magnificent destiny.

RONJA

"One of the most magnificent parades I've ever seen," he enthused, and announced, "We're going to have to top that."

Original sound bite: DONALD TRUMP

We all share the same heroes, the same home, the same heart, and we are all made by the same almighty God.

RONJA

So the "flyover" of Air Force One happened.
How does a country celebrate itself? A people? A nation?
How does it stage itself?

JAN

What could we do?

KEFEI/JAN

We could: shake hands with every person you meet that day, introduce ourselves to each other and exchange a few nice words.

KEFEI

Take down all the curtains to reveal for a day and a night what is going on inside the apartments.

JAN

To uncover what is going on in the apartments.

RONJA

Military parade-holding,
speech-waving,
flag-hoisting,
belting out national anthems,
fireworks-banging ...
What is there to celebrate?
Who is celebrating?
What are you celebrating?

KEFEI

Planting a tree.

RONJA

Uh - We?

I was born on the same day as my country, on 3/10. I let myself be celebrated.

Every year.

Born in 1990.

I am nicely out there - they tell me - I celebrate me - no, I celebrate me - or not: I celebrate me - I celebrate me - I celebrate me and I don't have to think about how and whether I want to celebrate my country.

JAN

Sink a ring into a cake batter.

Whoever finds the ring in his baked piece later gets a wish fulfilled.

RONJA

On my celebration day, the story of my birth is told, which my mother wrote down on a piece of paper and pasted into my photo album.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Yes, so I am named after Ronja the Robber's Daughter, so to speak, and in this album it's always juxtaposed like this. And it starts with ...

KATHRIN BÜCHNER

"The night Ronja was born, thunder rolled over the mountains. Yes, it was such a stormy night that even all the fiends who lived in the Mattiswald were terrified and hid in their caves and hiding places."

Original sound bite: RONJA

... Astrid Lindgren. And then parallel to this ...

KATHRIN BÜCHNER

"When you were born in the night from the second to the third of October 1990, rockets were everywhere in the country, rockets were ignited, celebrated, danced, laughed and also mourned. It was the last hours of the forty-one-year-old GDR and the first hours of the people as FRG citizens in the eastern part of Germany. So you are our personal contribution. Born as the first child of the Federal Republic of Germany in the university women's clinic in Leipzig greeted by the medical team with a bouquet of carnations."

Original sound bite: RONJA

And that is.... So it's the story that's told every year on my birthday.

RONJA

I'm turning the page.

The first pictures -

Original sound bite: RONJA

Exactly - so the first pictures. Briefly, there are my parents in the summer 1990 with me in the womb, to me they really look a bit cliché GDR-like. So my mother wears round glasses, very, very hip, today again. My father has a mullet-like hairstyle. Well, maybe that's the style in this time is in general. I do not know exactly what people in the West looked like.

RONJA

Today we celebrate a country from two countries.

Original sound bite: RONJA

They are young, in any case, too.

RONJA

You didn't know exactly what someone looked like on the other side thirty years ago.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Here it says again birth weight, height.

RONJA

The others should celebrate a country.

Original sound bite: RONJA

I was born at 4:30.

RONJA

Well, not just any country.

The point of this day is to celebrate Germany.
I celebrate myself. Um -

KEFEI

We could -

JAN

Chase fireflies.
Drinking and throwing the glass against the wall behind us.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Yes, when did I realize that I was, so to speak, the contribution to the reunion of my parents ...

RONJA

Unity Day ...

Original sound bite: RONJA

... no, through my parents ...

RONJA

Germany Day.

Original sound bite: RONJA

... their contribution to the reunification.

RONJA

German Unification Day.

Original sound bite: RONJA

I know that also very early that also again and again teachers have said, oh yes -

ORIGINAL SOUND BITES

Joachim Gauck: Our country
Helmut Kohl: Is our fatherland
Wolfgang Schäuble: A fateful bond
Joachim Gauck: Not an island. Germany
Frank-Walter Steinmeier: For all Germans
Joachim Gauck: The Citizen
Norbert Lammert: People born here and immigrants
Helmut Kohl: Dear compatriots
Frank-Walter Steinmeier: After unity
Wolfgang Schäuble: Life paths
Wolfgang Schäuble: Apprentices again.
Angela Merkel: The peaceful revolution
Joachim Gauck: In his own country
Helmut Kohl: The world
Wolfgang Schäuble: The people
Joachim Gauck: The division
Helmut Kohl: The unity of our fatherland
Wolfgang Schäuble: Homeland
Joachim Gauck: Joy
Wolfgang Schäuble: East and West
Norbert Lammert: Women and men
Joachim Gauck: Torness
Wolfgang Schäuble: Young and old
Norbert Lammert: Christians, Muslims and Jews
Frank-Walter Steinmeier: Disappointment or hope
Norbert Lammert: Poor and rich
Wolfgang Schäuble: In town
Norbert Lammert: Germany, ladies and gentlemen
Wolfgang Schäuble: Or the rural regions
Norbert Lammert: Values
Frank-Walter Steinmeier: Riots
Norbert Lammert: And rules
Wolfgang Schäuble: Optimists
Angela Merkel: German revolution
Joachim Gauck: Autumn 1989
Wolfgang Schäuble: Pessimists
Rita Süssmuth: The accession of the GDR to the Federal Republic of Germany
Wolfgang Schäuble: Being able
Rita Süssmuth: Phantom image of a unified identity
Wolfgang Schäuble: To be
Norbert Lammert: What moves us today

Original sound bite: RONJA

On October 3, 1990, well, I still know exactly what I was doing there and -

RONJA

Day of German unity.

Original sound bite: RONJA

That it was always such a thing.

RONJA

If Germany were a body, one would now speak of this thirty-year-old of a slowed metabolism and lack of elasticity.

But it would also be a powerful, potent body.
A body in its prime.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Oh - nope, take a pulse, take a blood sample, take a stool sample.

KEFEI

Cut off the old pigtails.

RONJA

I want to look at this body: I'd like to pluck its skin, check its reflexes ... ultrasound, draw blood, feel the pulse, take a stool sample.

KEFEI

Dig up a compost pile.

JAN

Fill it up.

KEFEI

Throw a smoke candle.

RONJA

I'll get some support:
A historian who deals with the *we* of the Germans and claims a new *we*.

KEFEI

We could.

RONJA

We will never really meet.

KEFEI

Going to donate blood until you get all dizzy.

RONJA

We play long-distance chess.
From two worlds.
My first question to him: what holidays will you celebrate?

Original sound bite: JAN

What holidays will I celebrate? Pfff.
Ah - so Christmas - nope.
My wife is Jewish, but not religious either - we're going to the movies on the twenty-fourth.

Other holidays? Well, the eighth of March, International Women's Day, we always celebrate that. Actually. Um, what else?

On January 27, I'm already thinking, pausing.
So liberation of Auschwitz - Holocaust Memorial Day.
I think that's it, though.

Yes, these are actually so - and also: birthdays. Birthdays, yes, in any case. So, I'm not against celebrating. I think celebrations are important. Celebrations are really good.

RONJA

I'm asking: pause - visualize. Do you do that on October 3?

Original sound bite: JAN

October 3rd - nope. I didn't. Was free. But oh God - scientists - is anyway, you never have time off.

No, but I didn't stop and think about October 3, I didn't do that.

I have never done that.

KEFEI

Throw the glass against the wall behind us.

JAN

Passport inspection.

Original sound bite: RONJA

It says above: European Union, and then only after: Federal Republic of Germany. I also like that quite well. Well, I would see myself more in the generation where I think we would describe ourselves more as Europeans than as Germans. That doesn't cancel each other out, of course. But -

RONJA

And what does your passport say?

Original sound bite: JAN

Oh - well, my name is Jan Plamper. I'm a historian - yes, and I've been around a lot. Well, I grew up in the southwest. Especially in Tübingen. Lived in the USA for nine years at different times in my life. Four years in Russia. And now in London. And I switch between three languages, between German, English and Russian. And without any difficulties. But, when I have to identify myself, I also say I am, I am German - yes.

RONJA

If I were to ask you, "Would you like to sing the national anthem?"

Original sound bite: JAN

Absolutely not.

RONJA

And if I were to ask you, "Would you think of the lyrics?"

Original sound bite: JAN

Uh, already - yeah.

RONJA

Yes?

Original sound bite: JAN

Nope, already at the second ...

Unity and justice and freedom, for the German fatherland - hand and hand - hand in hand.
I wouldn't know where to go from there.
I don't know if we learned it in school. I'm not sure.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Maybe we could sing the GDR anthem. It's actually quite beautiful: Risen from ruins.
That the whole world longs for peace - and so
Germany united fatherland - also funny, eh ...

RONJA:

Then he asks me if I ever sang it - the national anthem.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Have I ever sung our national anthem?

RONJA

Well, the current one.

RONJA

Well, maybe once really drunk at an international soccer match when everyone else was singing.

But now - well, I can't remember.

But no - you really never sing the German national anthem, do you?

RONJA

Another question mark.

KEFEI

Look all the people you meet in the eye until the first one blinks.

RONJA

Don't step on a crack all day.

KEFEI

Do not step on any crack.

JAN

We start an experiment ...

RONJA

We write to all the representations of the countries of the world

JAN

... and ask for an answer.

RONJA

How does your country celebrate? Nah ...

JAN

How does your country celebrate itself?

How does your country celebrate itself?

JAN

How does your country celebrate?

RONJA

How does your country celebrate? Nah, wait.
How does your country celebrate itself?

RONJA

How does your country celebrate itself? Oh, God.

RONJA/JAN

How does your country celebrate itself?

JAN

That's 193 emails.
We'll split it up: You start at A ...

RONJA

You at Z.

JAN

... I at Z.

RONJA

Dear Mr. Ambassador/Dear Madam Ambassador,

JAN

How does your country celebrate its national holiday?

RONJA

We would like to have an interview with you or a member of your embassy staff regarding this question. We look forward to your response and suggestions for dates.

JAN

Dear Mr. Ambassador/Dear Madam Ambassador,
How does your country celebrate its national day?

RONJA

With best thanks and kind regards, Ronja Büchner and Jan Plamper.

JAN

Avec nos meilleurs remerciements et nos meilleures salutations, Ronja Büchner et Jan Plamper.

RONJA

Thank you and with best regards, Ronja Büchner and Jan Plamper.

KEFEI

We could -

JAN

Smash china - all the old stuff.

KEFEI

Tie flower wreaths in our hair.

JAN

Put flower wreaths in our hair.

RONJA:

Estonia is the first country to respond.
The ambassador invites us -

Original sound bite: ESTONIA

I am Alar Streitmann, I am Estonian ambassador here in Berlin.

RONJA:

He is one of only about one million Estonians.

Original sound bite: ESTONIA

Brand new, only three months here.

RONJA

What is being celebrated?

Original sound bite: ESTONIA

In English we say: We re-established in 1991. So we re-established the previous independence.

RONJA

With flag hoisting at sunrise ...

Original sound bite: ESTONIA

This is very important for all Estonians. This is a real national holiday.

RONJA

... choir singing and military parade.

Original sound bite: ESTONIA

Every private family has a festive lunchtime meal and a little schnapps, always for the Estonian republic.

RONJA

There are only one million Estonians with one million internet connections.

Original sound bite: Estonia

Maybe is a bit different here in Germany, but for us, we are such a small nation. It's always a survival. And the Estonian society always quite - how do you say - sticks together. Stays together. But the most beautiful thing is - to stay in our house and watch the parade with family - and that makes - a lot of people watch it on television - watch it, too.

JAN

When Estonians sing their national anthem on the national holiday, they sing it to the same melody as the Finns sing theirs.

Original sound bite: FINLAND

Well, Estonia has chosen that, too.

JAN

I meet the Finnish ambassador.

Original sound bite: FINLAND

We are celebrating the independence of Finland - uh, we were first a part of Sweden and then a part of Russia and in 1917 we declared ourselves independent - peacefully.

JAN

Again -

Original sound bite: FINLAND

The day always starts with a flag hoisting and there is also speech - that is so festive and serious. And then there is also the military parade.

JAN

We could put black, red, gold candles in the windows on your birthday.

Original sound bite: FINLAND

That's actually an old tradition, too, that you also have two candles in the window, blue and white candles.

JAN

There could be a national holiday channel.

Original sound bite: FINLAND

The biggest event of the day is the reception of the president of the republic and his wife ...

JAN

Each day a different celebration is broadcast.

Original sound bite: FINLAND

... and everyone watches it on television.

JAN

So in the evening, one could marvel at the military parade of the others.
Some could be watching the flag-raising ceremony of the others.
One could listen to the speeches of the others.

RONJA

The 1,326,093,247 Indian men and women could watch the parades of the 233,500,636 Pakistanis.

Original sound bite: PAKISTAN

First of all, it's a holiday for everyone. And the TV channels release special programs on the occasion.

RONJA

Pakistan's ambassador sits behind a heavy desk in his office. On it are the daily newspapers, which report on the fighting between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir region.

Original sound bite: Pakistan

So that is the significance of our national day - and this day brings happiness, but also some sadness. You know why? Because the matter is not resolved yet. What happens is, first of all, you know, like it's the whole country celebrates.

Original sound bite: PAKISTAN DAY PARADE

RONJA

He shows me pictures of the last parade in Islamabad.

Original sound bite: PAKISTAN DAY PARADE

RONJA

The demonstrations take place on the widely cordoned off parade grounds in the south of the capital.

Original sound bite: PAKISTAN DAY PARADE

RONJA

"It is not Pakistan that is at the mercy of its enemies, it is the enemies that are at Pakistan's mercy" is the slogan of Pakistan Day.

Original sound bite: PAKISTAN DAY PARADE

Original sound bite: PAKISTAN

In Germany, there's no parade on the occasion.

RONJA

Can he imagine a military parade taking place in Berlin on October 3?

Original sound bite: PAKISTAN

Yes - why not. You have some nice roads where you could do this. You know, this road that starts from Heerstrasse and goes all the way to Brandenburg Gate.

RONJA

Yes - the great parade roads crisscross the cities.

Original sound bite: PAKISTAN

So you can do that parade there.

KEFEI

We could all -

KEFEI/RONJA/JA

Turn right all the time for one day.
Or for one day only ever turn left.
For one day only go straight ahead and then go backwards.

KEFEI

Going backwards at all is good.

JAN/KEFEI/RONJA

Saying “hello” backwards: *olleh*.
Saying “farewell” backwards: *lleweraf*.
The national anthem - if nothing forward - then maybe backward.
Sing -

KEFEI

Or better play it backwards.

RONJA

And also the ambassador from Ecuador agrees to talk.

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

Yes, my name is Manuel Mejia Dalmau. First of all, I want to tell them that I'm sorry that the Germans don't sing the German anthem. I don't think that's nice. Sometimes, I sing the German anthem.

When I do, I sing yes!

RONJA

How does the anthem of Ecuador go?

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

The typical text: the country is so good and so on.
[Sings: “*Salve oh Patria, ¡mil veces! Oh Patria! Gloria a ti!*,” etc.]

RONJA

Hail to the homeland, oh homeland, a thousand times!

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

Etc.

RONJA

O homeland!

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

I want to explain, many things are very interesting for me. From Germany. I have a lot of respect for this country. And I love this country very much. But the events are not very nice for me here, because there is always a speech, which is always long - and after you've stood there for a while, a little bit stiff, yes: Not eating properly, not drinking properly, not entertained properly. And many events are a - how do you say penitence? - *penitencia*? yes, if they are given in the church a *penitencia*.

RONJA

Um, penitence - that's what it's called.

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

Those are invitations with penances.

RONJA

Celebrating Germany, feels like a penance?

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

As you can see, I'm not a diplomat, yes.

RONJA

He says in Ecuador there are no parades either.
But he likes to look at those of other countries.

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

I love to watch parades, they are fantastic. The Chinese, the Koreans, the Russians, too.

KEFEI

There is no facial expression. That is, actually, any personal expression is eliminated.

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

You see thousands of soldiers ...

KEFEI

Although made up of thousands of people, but one unit. A homogeneous picture.

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

... they march perfectly - perfectly. They trained it that way.

KEFEI

It's absolutely a mass parade. Mass demonstration, in that sense.

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

Everybody's looking at exactly the same thing - yeah.

KEFEI

And absolutely eliminating the individual.

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

They're all exactly the same: very elegant - that's fantastic.

JAN

I'm meeting a Chinese friend and watching the seventieth birthday parade with her on YouTube.

Original sound bite: ECUADOR

You can watch that in YouTube: fantastic.

KEFEI

Wow - do you know that?

JAN

What's happening right now?

KEFEI

Those are antennas.

Those are satellite antennas. What's moving slowly here now, they're all ...

JAN

What am I seeing?

KEFEI

On these trucks, you see these drones. I've seen that in the feature film. That's what's being demonstrated here.

JAN

So, what does that mean?

KEFEI

What is it?

JAN

What is it now?

KEFEI

Wow. What is that now?

They're bombs.

JAN

What do I see?

KEFEI

Now the tanks are coming.

So this picture really reminds me then of the event on June 4, 1989. Those were also the tanks that rolled into Tiananmen Square to shoot the students at that time.

JAN

What does that mean?

KEFEI

Yes, they had put down the student movement at that time. So, they were shot. And there was another very famous picture - that a man with a bag in his hand was standing in front of the tanks - I don't know if you've ever seen that picture.

Original sound bite: JAN

So from my practical, scientific positions, I am somebody who thinks that there is a feedback effect, on my belief, or on my *mind*, when I give up my body to anything.

KEFEI

Yes, then everyone sings the national anthem together while the flag is raised.

Original sound bite: JAN

Yes, when body/mind, when bodies/minds move somehow in sync.

KEFEI

I would guess eight thousand -

Original sound bite: JAN

Do anything together, that actually works.

KEFEI

So, all of them.

JAN

Thirty years ago, we failed to invent a ritual for the Day of German Unity. For the Day of German Unity.

What could that be?

JAN/RONJA

What could we do?

KEFEI

We could -

JAN

Cut off the old braids.

KEFEI

Plant a tree.

JAN

Plant a tree.

RONJA

And kiss under mistletoe.

RONJA

Can I just say Germany like that - neutral?

JAN

Can it be purred?

RONJA

Whisper?

JAN

Should I let it stutter?

RONJA

Or say it with more emphasis?

JAN

Should I spell it out letter by letter?

RONJA

Or always say it twice - because there are two?

RONJA/JAN

Germany Germany or German Germany.
Can I shout Germany?

JAN

Should I?

RONJA

Can I?

JAN

You're asking yourself to do an experiment.

RONJA

I do not know.

JAN

Go into the room - the one facing the noisy street - you open the window. The streetcar goes by. Across the street, the carpenter's shop continues to cut up the German forest and you try to shout your country.

RONJA

Oh God.

JAN

Like a cry for help.

RONJA

[tries to shout] Germany!

JAN

Mhm ...

RONJA

Germany - Germany! Shall I try again in a different way?

JAN

Do you really want me to scream or what?

[tries to shout] Germany! [coughs]

Nah - you can't.

That sounds terrible.

It sounds right up there with soccer stadiums and Nazis.

JAN

You heard *We - Here*.

A radio play in four parts by Helgard Haug and Thilo Guschas.

KEFEI

Until the first one blinks.

JAN

Part 1.

WE - HERE

A radio play in four parts

Part 2

RONJA

Okay. Title then?

JAN

Mhm.

RONJA

I'll say "we" a couple of times first. No. We. We.

JAN

But should I say *We - Here* a couple more times - or how did you have that in mind?
We - Here.

RONJA

A radio play in four parts.

JAN

By Helgard Haug and Thilo Guschas.

JAN

Part 2.

RONJA

Part 2.

KEFEI

Liquefy a piece of lead on a spoon and then pour it into cold water to derive something for the future from the solidified figure.

JAN

Put a grape in the mouth for every second of the last ten seconds before the beginning of 3/10.

RONJA

Get on each other's nerves and then shout unity day, unity day, unity day.

KEFEI

Unity day, unity day, unity day.

JAN

To get on each other's nerves and then shout unity day, unity day, unity day.
Shout.

RONJA

Plant another tree.

KEFEI

Shout.

KEFEI

Plant another tree.

JAN

Or cut down a tree -

RONJA

Carry it into the best room, decorate it and put presents under it.
Clean all the windows in the house.

JAN

Opening windows and banging pots with cooking spoons.

KEFEI

Driving a bull through the village.

Original sound bite: IRELAND

The city of Chicago dyed its river green quite a few years ago. And the Empire State Building in New York, it had it lit up green.

JAN

The Irish have made it so that their national holiday is celebrated worldwide.

Original sound bite: IRELAND

The Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro: it went green.

JAN

And increasingly celebrated by non-Irish people as well.

Original sound bite: IRELAND

The great pyramids of Cheops in Giza: they went green.

JAN:

They dye their landmarks green for that.

RONJA

Dress in traditional costumes.

KEFEI

And dance folk dances.

RONJA/KEFEI/JAN

Dip your head under water.

RONJA

Bring a message in a bottle on the way.

JAN

At the Irish embassy, I meet Thomas Bellew.

Original sound bite: IRELAND

Yeah, I'm Thomas Bellew.

JAN

Head of political, press and public diplomacy.

Original sound bite: IRELAND

Well, when we say how do Irish people celebrate their national day, we say very enthusiastically.

JAN

The Irish celebrate themselves all over the world. Great famines have made them emigrate.

Original sound bite: IRELAND

But our ability to fit in and to adapt and to actually assimilate with the local populations is quite strong.

KEFEI

We could use all the services of the state for one day for free.

RONJA

Or amnesty for prisoners.

Original sound bite: IRELAND

There's the London Eye. Sky Tower in New Zealand. The Moulin Rouge in Paris. Table Mountain in Cape Town went green. I can see your eyes popping out right there.

JAN

But how can you celebrate the Day of the Germans on 3/10?

RONJA

New Germans celebrate.

JAN

New Germans celebrate.

KEFEI

New Germans celebrate.

JAN

Together, solemnly welcome all "newcomers."

KEFEI

Together solemnly welcome all "newcomers."

RONJA

We could throw paint powder around.

RONJA

I celebrate my birthday on 3/10.
As the first all-German child, born in Leipzig.

Original sound bite: RONJA

So, of course, the funny thing is that the medical team gave my parents a bouquet of red carnations for my birth. Yah, that was the GDR flower.

RONJA

After the delivery, the doctors gave my parents red carnations.

Original sound bite: RONJA

That's funny, but the other thing was...right, and then my father went to the counter-demonstration.

RONJA

My father went to the counter-demonstration.

Original sound bite: RONJA

My child has just been born, and I can't help but go to this demo now. You have to imagine that somehow. Yes, exactly, I was born at 4:30 in the morning and he was there, too. He was also there, he stood by my mother. And then there was a big demonstration against reunification, and he took part in that. And yes, not because he somehow wanted to keep his GDR as he knew it, but because it had changed and developed quite quickly from "we are the people, and we want to be heard and to have rights and freedoms" to "We are one people." And then somehow all of a sudden also just reunification in the form of annexation to the Federal Republic.

KEFEI

We could -

Original sound bite: RONJA

Without this pause of "somehow we were now also two countries after all. And maybe we can just see who has things to bring in."

RONJA

Dressing us up.

KEFEI

Or wear all clothes inside out.

RONJA

Or reverse the order.

JAN

So that the underpants are on top for that day.

Original sound bite: RONJA

I never asked my mother if she would have actually liked to go. I just thought, probably I would think: yes, it's stupid that I can't go with you now ... I can't go with you now.

JAN

Let's say you were going to have a child.

RONJA

Could you see me now - would you see my body, which is as old as this country, is in the process of reproducing.

Original sound bite: RONJA

"Reproducing" - even now not so much a word I would use. Would you see my body.

RONJA

A body is being created that carries my genetic material and that of my friend.
This body will be born in 2020 - the year in which I and this country will be 30 years old.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Isn't that a bit much, "my body and a body"?

KEFEI

How about -

JAN

How about we have a day of silence.
Not a word is spoken on that day.

KEFEI

Or if everyone and all learn how to say "Welcome" in a new language.

RONJA

If you could see me now - you would see - it won't be long now.
It's only one week until the expected date of birth.
I'm short of breath and it is hard to move.
Excited - what this new life on this Earth will move.
Nervous to see what world it will be born into.

JAN

April 9.
What do you think this day will stand for?

ORIGINAL SOUND BITES

Helmut Kohl: In a few hours a dream will become reality

Gauck: Dreaming of paradise

Gauck: And woke up in North Rhine-Westphalia

Schäuble: All this is history today

Süßmuth: Part of German history

Schäuble: But this is our history

Süßmuth: In the east

Kohl: Our joy

Süßmuth: In the west

Schäuble: Part of our identity

Süßmuth: Coming to terms

Merkel: Peace and freedom

Schäuble: Past
Steinmeier: Not with fear
Schäuble: Also in Germany
Weizsäcker: Unity
Schäuble: The people
Schäuble: Nobody
Schäuble: Elected
Schäuble: Minorities
Schäuble: The people
Steinmeier: Mighty work
Süßmuth: Diversity
Gauck: Moving times
Steinmeier: Mistakes made
Steinmeier: No reason
Steinmeier: Breaks experienced
Kohl: The economic condition
Steinmeier: In the West
Weizsäcker: Constitution
Steinmeier: And onward
Schäuble: Confidence
Steinmeier: Homeland
Süßmuth: Not there
Steinmeier: There is also in the plural
Lammert: Wants to be
Süßmuth: Cannot give
Lammert: Has become self-evident
Steinmeier: Barbed wire and death strip
Kohl: Blooming landscapes
Lammert: But rejoice, we may well.

RONJA

So - we still have a week to look at the worldview from Germany and to ask: how do other countries celebrate their birthdays?

JAN

How does your country celebrate itself?

RONJA

How does your country celebrate itself?

Nope -

KEFEI

Crossing a border.

Letting yourself get the shit kicked out of you.

JAN

How does your country celebrate?

Original sound bite: KOSOVO

I think, for them, I am the most original ambassador, in the sense that I experienced the Independence Day.

RONJA

I am visiting the ambassador of Kosovo - the youngest country in Europe.

Original sound bite: KOSOVO

I can remember everything exactly on that day.

RONJA

And also the ambassador's daughter is as old as her country.

Original sound bite: KOSOVO

It means with me it comes also somehow from home, I know approximately, how it is when you are eleven, ten and twelve.

RONJA

A country goes through puberty.

Original sound bite: KOSOVO

We celebrate. With us, it's really emotional, too, if you think about it, the most recent history of Europe is actually connected with Kosovo, with the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, with the new states that then came along.

RONJA

A country comes of age.

Original sound bite: KOSOVO

Yes, but we are not yet complete in the sense that there are, of course, open political questions.

RONJA

For the founding of the state twelve years ago, the European anthem was played. Barely three weeks later, a competition was announced in which composers could submit their proposals for the new anthem.

Original sound bite: KOSOVO

Our anthem is without lyrics, because we did not reach an agreement.

JAN

The ambassador is a writer and journalist. Your next question is close at hand:

RONJA

Could you imagine writing the lyrics for the national anthem?

Original sound bite: KOSOVO

You're asking a good question now. Yes, that would be interesting.

KEFEI

It could be a day when words are weighed in the balance.

JAN

So far no feedback from the Nigerian embassy, but I am getting in contact with Dr. Sota Omoigui. He is co-author of the Nigerian national anthem. The text of the anthem was compiled from the best entries to a general competition. A “best of”!

Original sound bite: NIGERIA/SOTA

I am Dr Sota Omoigui, one of the co-authors of the national anthem - and one of the lines that we wrote, which is the first line, is: "Arise oh compatriots, Nigeria's call obey."

JAN

Dr. Sota Omoigui is also a pain expert. He has authored a basic book on pain.

RONJA

Does nationality have anything to do with pain?

JAN

Anyway, his law of pain says that the origin of all pain is the inflammation and the inflammatory reaction.

KEFEI

You could savour the sore feeling.

JAN

Get weak in the knees.

RONJA

Cry heartbreakingly.

KEFEI

Heartbreaking crying.

RONJA

He sends you the link to his blazing speech to the nation, "Take back your country."

JAN

Dressing up in traditional costumes and dancing folk dances.

KEFEI

Dipping the head underwater.

RONJA

If all Nigerians sang their anthem together, they would be a choir of 203,452,505 voices.

Original sound bite: JAN

Yes, it does something when we do it together.

RONJA

It always forms a community?

Original sound bite: JAN

And something like that - probably we would need something like that for Germany. But I think it shouldn't be set that it's the national anthem that we have now. I think - I think it

would be very good to have a discussion that could lead to that, that is, to determine the contents and then the practices that belong to it.

RONJA

Some people write national anthems and pain laws - you also write books. Your latest book is titled *The New Us*.

JAN

I try to describe - who this *we* - this "we Germans" actually is.

RONJA

The New Us.

JAN

How is one German!?
Does one remain German?
Does one become German?

KEFEI

We could rise from ruins.

Original sound bite: JAN

Yes, you could, for example, do that in the stadium..., which would also have music somehow. And probably it should be music that represents both our diversity as well as our unity.

So already somehow the understanding of citizen-nation, which we should arrive at, namely one where it is not only okay but normal and good to come from somewhere else and, even better, to speak other languages and to be unconditionally German. This understanding, which in research is called the salad-bowl model that should then somehow be represented at such a ceremony.

RONJA

It sounds better in English somehow. "Salad bowl model."

Original sound bite: JAN

Like the colourful leaves of a salad that are in a bowl and that keep their properties, but at the same time are clumped together, through this bowl - "E Pluribus Unum" as it is written on the bank note I think - so "From Many, One." Many and one at the same time.

RONJA

Salad bowl model Toronto.

Original sound bite: CANADA

Toronto is shown as an example, however, because half of its population were born outside Canada. It's the most multicultural city in the world.

RONJA

The Canadian embassy responds and invites people to talk.

Original sound bite: CANADA

I think what Germany can learn from Canada is how to deal with the local people: What can I do to strengthen their sense of belonging? How can I make them more visible, also in politics, in public? If we look at Canada's cabinet. Not only is it 50 percent women, but different ethnic minorities are represented, and that shows everyone who has come to Canada now belongs, is now Canadian, and can make it to the highest office in the land.

JAN

Ties could be cut off officials.
Eggs to be painted and hidden.

JAN/RONJA

All could lift doors off their hinges, jack them up and use them as a holiday table.

KEFEI

Salt, bread and a hat - drop a coin off with the neighbours.

RONJA

Canada's new citizens are publicly welcomed on Canada Day.

Original sound bite: CANADA

And I think the special thing is that you're never asked about your loyalty. So the origin is not in contradiction to the fact that one is now a Canadian.

RONJA

How does your country celebrate itself?

Original sound bite: CANADA

I believe that making national symbols visible is much more pronounced than in Germany.

Original sound bite: CANANDA

We don't have to talk about German history now, but - I don't know if we wanted to see German flags everywhere - it's just clear that geography and history are so different that you can't draw any simple conclusions or parallels.

Original sound bite: JAN

I mean, that's it, that German is still a blank space. But that is also a form of definition. So to say that practically the core of being German is that you are not national, that you are not German - that is also a kind of definition, it's not a non-definition, but it's a kind of a definition.

RONJA

The youngest country on this earth is South Sudan. It is ten years old. Emerged from a war. The embassy does not respond to our request to talk. But the Danish ambassador invites us.

Original sound bite: DENMARK

I always have the German basic law lying here on my table: Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany. Because that is of course a very important law.

RONJA

An ambassador formulating questions.

Original sound bite: DENMARK

How, how can you read it? What is actually the core of a democracy?

RONJA

At the Danish national holiday, the constitutional law is celebrated.

Original sound bite: DENMARK

Our constitutional law is actually quite nice and short and very understandable. Very memorable:

Equality, ability to vote for all - to determine - freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression.

KEFEI

To send a message in a bottle.
Washing dirty laundry.

Original sound bite: DENMARK

And we don't actually celebrate it with festivals or big parades.

KEFEI

We could ...

Original sound bite: DENMARK

So all politicians in different parts of Denmark make a fundamental law speech about the current state of our democracy, in detail where you are now.

Original sound bite: JAN

Is that enough? I don't know. I do think that also rituals and ceremonies are needed.

RONJA

To feel as one.

Original sound bite: JAN

Perhaps one wants to make sure of the civil rights enshrined in the constitution, the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution?
Maybe you want to connect those to bodily practices?

RONJA

As one - oh, I see.

Original sound bite: JAN

Maybe you want to say a few parts of the constitution, the basic law aloud together?

RONJA

One to feel.

Original sound bite: JAN

I don't know.

RONJA

To feel like one.

Original sound bite: JAN

When people tell me, uh ...

RONJA

To feel as one - what did I say?

Original sound bite: JAN

... that's not necessary. Then I say "but people get it anyway." For example, through the national team.

RONJA

I ask: how can a nation succeed in feeling as one when it consists of 7,000 islands?

Original sound bite: PHILIPPINES

Seven thousand one hundred islands, although they've just discovered new islands now. But some of them are not habitable islands and they're only visible during low tide.

RONJA

The ambassador of the Philippines welcomes me.

Original sound bite: PHILIPPINES

I am Theresa Dizon-de Vega, the Philippine ambassador to Germany.

RONJA

I ask: how can a nation succeed in feeling as one ...

Original sound bite: PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is probably one of the most diverse countries ethnically ...

RONJA

... to feel one - to feel as ...

Original sound bite: PHILIPPINES

... and culturally in the world, we have over 100 languages in the Philippines.

RONJA

... to feel as one, right? Okay. Whew!

Original sound bite: PHILIPPINES

They're not dialects.

RONJA

To feel as one when the inhabitants speak more than 100 different languages?

Original sound bite: PHILIPPINES

But if I may quote, I think the closest you can describe how the Philippines and the Filipinos have been able to establish an identity is what the American scholar Benedict Anderson called imagined communities.

RONJA

Imagining themselves as one nation.

JAN

Being part of a nation through pure imagination.

RONJA

Imagined communities.

Original sound bite: PHILIPPINES

So we - we imagine ourselves as Filipino because of this shared identity, shared cultural values.

RONJA

I can't ask Benedict Anderson any more questions - he has already died.
But on YouTube I find a conversation.

JAN

Why are people willing to die for their country, their nation?

Original sound bite: BENEDICT ANDERSON

The very strange thing about the nation is that it really is imagined and you don't know who these people are for whom you perform sacrificing.

JAN

The nation is presented. You do not know the individual components of this great whole.

Original sound bite: BENEDICT ANDERSON

And many of the people are long dead. And some of the people who sacrifice don't exist yet. It is an enormous, extraordinary fantasy in a way.

JAN

Your child, Ronja, is already part of this nation, even though it has not been born yet and so is my late grandmother.

Original sound bite: BENEDICT ANDERSON

Yes, of course it can be misused ...

JAN

And yes - this national feeling can be misused.

Original sound bite: BENEDICT ANDERSON

... but the basic feeling, I don't think this is a bad one - because there is a difference between, I think, nationalism and ethnicity.

KEFEI

How about closing all the highways to cars for a day.

JAN

They are open for everything else.

RONJA

They are open for everything else.

KEFEI

And if that's not ...

RONJA

Then maybe impose a car-free day on the cities.

JAN

We could eat ice cream all day.

KEFEI

We could ...

RONJA

We could ...

KEFEI

Ask ourselves how things could have been different.

JAN

Wonder how it should have been different.

RONJA

All the way through the day.

JAN

Benedict Anderson has no biological children but some adopted children.
A family that doesn't share the same blood.
One of them is Wahyu, who lives in Indonesia. I try to start a dialogue with him.

RONJA

We could take it up a notch.

JAN

Germany could go offline for a day and a night. The latest message comes from the Chancellor's Office and reads:

RONJA

"Dear Germans ..."

KEFEI

"Dear Germans, Happy Unification Day."

JAN

Then the internet is turned off for 24 hours.

KEFEI

Switched off.

JAN

While I'm waiting for an answer, the Indonesian embassy.

Original sound bite: INDONESIA

So tell me.

JAN

The Indonesian ambassador is interested in Germany's neighbours.

Original sound bite: INDONESIA

And it's very interesting that we have almost the same number of neighbours.

JAN

The independence from the Dutch colonial masters is celebrated annually.

Original sound bite: INDONESIA

And we have a very unique way of celebrating it. It normally contains of three big parts.

JAN

Part Two, the official program with speeches and parades, we know already.

Part Three, fireworks and culture, too.

Part One is new.

Original sound bite: INDONESIA

So in villages and cities we have competitions first. Badminton competitions, football competitions, you have these competitions to "render the trees," but not the tree, a pole or a very high pole. And then on top of the pole, you have prizes. Some are very luxurious prizes. Motorcycles, sometimes cars, and it goes all day.

JAN

Bicycles, motorcycles and cars are mounted on the top of high, greased logs and poles and cars are mounted. Whoever manages to climb to the top gets the prize. A nice action - in a German forest.

Original sound bite: INDONESIA

So it's fun.

It's serious, it's very solemn as well, because it's reminding us that Indonesia today ...

JAN

Outside they are now sawing or something, well - let's hope.

Original sound bite: INDONESIA

... is not a very easy country to build. We are "aqueplatic."

JAN

Indonesia outperforms the Philippines.

Original sound bite: INDONESIA

Seventeen thousand islands.

We have two hundred and sixty-five million populations.

We have three hundred plus different ethnicities.

KEFEI

Do something involving a potato.

KEFEI/JAN/RONJA

Puree? Soup? Casserole?

Original sound bite: INDONESIA

Seven hundred plus different languages.

RONJA

Make a fire.

KEFEI

Opening your mouth.

JAN

Tearing open the mouth.

Original sound bite: INDONESIA

We have five major religions.
And to put this together, it's not very easy.

KEFEI

Something in the forest but without beer and without singing hiking songs.

RONJA

Writing a letter to a complete stranger.

JAN

7,711 km are between Jakarta and Wellington.
And New Zealand has eight times less inhabitants per square kilometre.

Original sound bite: NEW ZEALAND

Just to get a little bit of a sense, so you're really just wanting to touch on the National Day.

JAN

I visit the ambassador of the green island.

Original sound bite: NEW ZEALAND

Okay, well, let me introduce myself. So I'm Rupert Holborow.

JAN

The birth of the country - a treaty between European immigrants and Indigenous people.

Original sound bite: NEW ZEALAND

And that is called Waitangi Day.

JAN

The Maori accept British rule.

Original sound bite: NEW ZEALAND

And the reality was, that the - you know, European settlers did not protect the land and the treasures in the mountains and the rivers.

JAN

The European settlers took what they wanted.

Original sound bite: NEW ZEALAND

After the treaty followed the Maori wars, a loss of dignity, a loss of mana, a loss of status, a loss of soul. They felt disenfranchised, disempowered.

JAN

The treaty was followed by war.

Original sound bite: NEW ZEALAND

So I think most people accept and understand that whilst it's a date which reflects in many ways the founding of the country, it's an unfinished journey.

JAN

The ambassador draws the comparison to reunification.

Original sound bite: NEW ZEALAND

You know, it's a very real national day in the sense that it's still a living occasion. It's a bit like I make a comparison with Germany here reflecting on thirty years since the fall of the wall.

JAN

As the first official voice, he describes not only glories but also the problems that a national holiday brings with it.

Original sound bite: NEW ZEALAND

It is fair to say that it's often occasioned by a degree of demonstration and voices and we hear those.

JAN

And formulates how much also New Zealand is still searching for an attitude, an agreement.

Original sound bite: NEW ZEALAND

So in that context, there are some people who hold passionate views that not enough has been done. There are those who feel enough has been done. And there's a lot of people who recognize we still need to do more.

JAN

How can I write "Germany"?

Quickly striking the keys?

In capital letters?

All lowercase?

A dash between each letter?

Written by hand?

An intertwined cursive script?

I write Germany!

I wrote it in cursive. So with a capital "D" and then in my scrawl script "eutschland" small

after it.

Still no message from Wahyu.

But Valentin Groebner, a historian-colleague from Switzerland, calls me and I ask him if he would like to play a game of Nations Ping-Pong. He agrees and I send him the first message.

Original sound bite: VALENTIN GROEBNER

Now I'm a bit surprised because - I'm not in the right position at the moment - because I'm sitting on a mountain at 2,000 metres above sea level.

JAN

That's the perfect place for my question, isn't it?

Original sound bite: VALENTIN GROEBNER

What do we want to do now?

JAN

I would be interested in this now: Are there ways to write national stories in a politically and ethically responsible way?

Original sound bite: VALENTIN GROEBNER

From the perspective of historians, it's all quite funny, because the national narratives in Europe, that is, the Serbian, the Hungarian, the Polish, the Danish - are all very very similar. They all need medieval origins, all need a hero, all need a miracle at the beginning that creates the flag and all of them create their uniqueness through media: the museum, the parliament, the opera, which are actually interchangeable.

KEFEI

We could ...

JAN

... leaf through history books. Or in old photo albums and let them tell us the stories about the moments that weren't recorded.

KEFEI

Celebrating Mother Nature.

KEFEI

Shitting on father land.

JAN

Shitting on father land.

RONJA

Picking a flower and plucking the petals off individually.

JAN

Go swimming.

KEFEI

Saying: "I love you - I love you not."

JAN

Crying together and catching the tears to let them dry over the duration of the coming year.

KEFEI

To let them dry over the duration of the coming year.

JAN

You heard *We - Here* Part 2.

KEFEI

We could have been waiting for this moment.

JAN

A radio play by Helgard Haug and Thilo Guschas.

WE - HERE

A radio play in four parts

Part 3

RONJA

We. We.

JAN

Here.

RONJA

No ...

JAN

Here, here.

RONJA

We ...

JAN

We - Here.

RONJA

Um.

JAN

We - Here - was that right now?

A radio play by Helgard Haug and Thilo Guschas.

RONJA

A radio play in four parts.

JAN

Part 3.

KEFEI

We could -

JAN

We could ...

RONJA

Walk in other people's shoes for a whole day.

JAN

... show each other the red card.

RONJA

Showing each other the yellow card.

JAN

Marching up and down the country with a whistle between their lips clamped together.

RONJA

Turn off all traffic lights and go for self-regulation.

JAN

And turn on self-regulation.

KEFEI

Again and again.

JAN

Hold your breath - for as long as you can - over and over.

RONJA

Again and again.

KEFEI

Over and over again. All day long just whispering.

RONJA

All day long just whispering.

JAN

And end it with a shout.

KEFEI

Hold your breath.

JAN

Take a deep breath.

RONJA

Really deep.

JAN

Really deep.

RONJA

We play long-distance chess.

KEFEI

Really deep.

RONJA

For some time now. We have written to 194 embassies and had them explain to us how your country celebrates its birthday. How does a country celebrate itself?

A nation?
A people?
How does it stage itself?

KEFEI

We could -

JAN

You studied psychology in Leipzig.

RONJA

What does that do to my ego, that I belong to social groups and stuff. So, what does it do to me, if I don't belong to a "we" - uh ... inter-group conflicts and so on, between well, exactly, East and West and nationalities and soccer teams.

KEFEI

Dressing up in traditional costumes and dancing folk dances.
Together we could provoke a nausea.

JAN

With a friend you opened a café and financed your studies.

Original sound bite: RONJA

There was delicious cake, a proper breakfast, egg pancakes, because that's such an old East/West debate - between egg pancakes and pancakes. For me, it was egg pancakes all my life, and for Sophie, with whom I had the café, it was always pancakes.

JAN

A compromise instead of affiliation.

Original sound bite: RONJA

From egg pancakes to FRGDR? Yes, so that would be quite apart from form and how it was called, it might have been a good idea in terms of content. Perhaps it would also have led to more people feeling that they were being strung along? Because from my grandparents I already know this: Yes, it would have been nice if you had been asked and just have had an unbiased look at the two states.

And not just an affiliation.

Which is what it was in the end.

KEFEI

Risking head and neck and -

RONJA

Take down all the mirrors in the apartment.

JAN

Lose yourself.

KEFEI

Cook a unity pot.

JAN

Slaughter a pig.

RONJA

I will give birth to a child. Give birth. To the world.
You don't say: I will bring a child to Germany.
I will give birth to a child in Germany.
I will bring a child into the world in Germany.

JAN

You are going to have a German child.
A German child.

RONJA

A German child?!

JAN

A German child!

RONJA

Without visible migration.

Original sound bite: RONJA

I find it super weird the idea that I would fly somewhere now and the child would be born on the plane -

JAN

Would you give birth to your child over an area that cannot be assigned to any nation?

Original sound bite: RONJA

Or then you get it automatically as a gift or some such thing there.

JAN

For example, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean - it would get the citizenship of the country where the plane is registered.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Doesn't that have anything to do with me and my citizenship then?

JAN

If you were to give birth over a country, it depends very much on the country over which you give birth.

Original sound bite: RONJA

I think that ...

JAN

Sometimes it's land law, sometimes it's blood law.

Original sound bite: RONJA

... definitely bizarre.

JAN

If your child is born in the territory of the USA, he or she is a US citizen.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Um.

JAN

It also becomes an American if it is born over the territory of another country ...

Original sound bite: RONJA

So, I mean, I haven't thought that much about "What does my German citizenship mean to me and my nationality" or something like that ...

JAN

... but being born on a US-registered airplane that's on its way to the USA.

RONJA Original sound bite:

... but roots and home and somehow something like that.

JAN

But the roots thing is quite a new thing -

RONJA Original sound bite:

So, sure - so always happily a cosmopolitan , but then completely global?!

JAN Original sound bite:

The basic attitude of being human is mobility, is migration.

And then there are only ever periods of settledness. And we have to get this notion out of our heads, erase the hard drive and see ourselves as nomads - of our planet, that is historically, in the long-term perspective, that's the truth.

That is the reality.

And these periods of sedentariness, also of nation, is a very recent invention - eighteenth century, nineteenth century - that's one point, on a much, much longer timescale. And it is very likely that the Germans who are now, after all, holders of the most valuable passport in the world - no passport provides such good opportunities for travel as a German passport - that they will once again be forced to migrate for economic reasons. And I bring the example of the Portuguese, who are now in Mozambique again after the economic crisis of 2008 and are looking for work. Colonial masters until the seventies.

And they had slavery.

They decided over life and death.

It can happen that quickly, is all I'm saying.

RONJA

How about cherry pit spitting?

JAN/RONJA

To make apartments opposite each other?

KEFEI

To get lost.

JAN

Falling in love.

KEFEI

To cheat someone.

JAN

Asking yourself: What is a nation?

Original sound bite: VALENTIN GROEBNER

Nations are self-aggrandizement apparatuses that contain the promise of beaming you up to a bitterly needed uniqueness by way of referencing the collective.

JAN

A message from my historian colleague Valentin Groebner - I asked him for his definition of nations - who are we?

Original sound bite: VALENTIN GROEBNER

What we call uniqueness and individuality is the result of such apparatuses and was not there before. Because who we are is determined by us, not by the apparatuses, but by our actions, and that is something quite different. I think that's the easiest way to answer the question.

RONJA

Okay, last act.

JAN

Now there's a fly here, too.
Wait a minute - it's really loud.
Should I let it out?

KEFEI

You could also read the Fundamental Law, together, publicly.
Or on the windows of all the apartment buildings.

RONJA

Last deed before I retire for the birth.

JAN

Fly, fly, where are you?

RONJA

I'm looking for people who call themselves stateless.

JAN

Fly away!

RONJA

Mike Gogulski filed for divorce with the USA. And consummated it.
From the USA?

JAN

Now it is gone.

RONJA

Or?

Marriage with - divorce from.

JAN

[laughs] Okay. I got the lollipop!

RONJA

Last deed -

KEFEI

Standing up for something.

JAN

All, all the best Ronja. I am looking forward to the new being!

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

Are we recording?

Original sound bite: US Anthem

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

Well, when I listen to "The Star-Spangled Banner," I feel the same kind of - I don't know. What is, what is that feeling? It's the feeling of anticipation, disappointment. The same thing you get when you look at commercials. It's a sales and marketing campaign.

JAN

I'll pick up the thread and talk to Mike Gogulski.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

I'm 47 years old and I live in Bratislava, Slovakia, and I'm a stateless ex-American.

JAN

Mike let his social security card go up in flames - as a first act of detachment. Go up in flames.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

Whether you destroy the card or not, you're still part of the system. So in terms of the process, it was easy ...

JAN

I'm imagining the scene.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

... you know, I lit it [laughs] and - and it burned. It's just a - it's just a piece of paper. It's not even laminated.

JAN

Mike watches his signature burn.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

It was kind of funny to see the signature that was from when I was probably nine or ten years old ...

JAN

A brave child's signature.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

... go up in flames.

JAN

At the time, he believed in America with all his heart. One who stood on the side of the road waving Stars and Stripes.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

I was very much influenced by the people around me and their beliefs, which were embedded in American culture and American civil religion.

JAN

One in 335 million.

Original sound bite: USA

There are about 335 million Americans. And the thing I think about is: how we are brought together, not by blood, but by choosing to adhere to a set of principles.

JAN

American Consul Darion Akins describes his view:
Being American - by conviction, not by blood.
Being an American means adhering to a set of principles.

Original sound bite: USA

We're always striving to be better. And I, for one, am pretty proud of that fact.

JAN

It's a nice thought - the state as a work-in-progress.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

But as I began to grow into a young adult, I began to develop my own beliefs.

JAN

Mike's doubts began in the mid-2000s.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

And what was going on at the time was ...

JAN

The USA was in a nuclear dispute with Iran.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

... who had the gall to dare to have a nuclear program of their own.

JAN

They suspected Tehran of seeking the bomb.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

Which, of course, everybody believed was a nuclear weapons program. And ...

JAN

Who gets to be a nuclear power?

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

... only the existing nuclear powers are allowed to be in the club.

JAN

The US demands for itself the prerogative. Determines who gets to be in the club.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

At the time, I think it was Hillary Clinton who said all options are on the table.

JAN

They threatened Iran, blatantly.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

What was clearly a code for the USA - as a matter of policy, has no problem dropping nukes on you if you don't comply.

JAN

Dropping nukes on an unsuspecting country?

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

That upset me quite a bit.

JAN

Mike couldn't go along with those thoughts.

Original sound bite: USA

And you have to participate in democracy. You have to make sure that you're informed and you understand and you fight for the things that you believe in. And those are all your rights and responsibilities.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

I wanted a political divorce from the United States of America.

JAN

How do you file for divorce from your own country?

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

You get citizenship for free when you're born. But to get rid of it costs.

JAN

An administrative fee.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

So I showed up at the embassy, gave them these documents, and they said, OK, if you really want to do this, we'll make an appointment and you can talk to the consul.

Original sound bite: USA.

I don't know that person.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

So I said, yeah, sure. Let's go ahead and do that.

Original sound bite: USA

But what I can say is - it sounds like he was voicing the very things that we're talking about.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

And about a week later, I was back at the embassy and met with the vice consul, and he questioned me briefly. One, did I really want to do this?

JAN

Do you really want to, Mike was asked?

Original sound bite: USA

He's chosen to express his freedom to make choices and so he's made a choice.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

Two, was I renouncing my citizenship under duress?

JAN

Were you forced to take this step?

Original sound bite: USA

I can't fault someone for making a choice.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

Three, was I doing it because I was insane?

JAN

Are you insane?

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

Which is still an open question.

Original sound bite: USA

So. I believe that's a hallmark of the USA, eh, that it's not saying that we always have to agree.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

And four, was I doing it because I was attempting to evade criminal prosecution or tax obligations?

JAN

Or are you trying to evade criminal prosecution or tax investigation?

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

After all of that, I passed his judgment, I guess.

JAN

Then a few last signatures, turn in the passport.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

I collected my certificate of loss of nationality. And I was no longer a citizen.

JAN

And the divorce was official.

Documented that you had lost your citizenship.

Not surrendered.

Original sound bite: USA

I know very few individuals who have exercised that right, but -

JAN

How did that feel?

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

The heavens didn't open and golden light streamed forth or anything like that. And it was just kind of, you know, kind of the end.

I was ready to be done - so.

JAN

He just had to do it.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

No. No regrets.

JAN

I call Ronja again.

She's fine, she says - the child hasn't come yet.

I play her the recordings of Mike - his look into the future.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

So I look ahead to a future. I wish I could say it was going to be in my lifetime - but, you know, maybe a century from now, maybe less, in which things like national identities can really start to disappear.

Original sound bite: RONJA

Is, so cutting roots, is it worth it? It wouldn't be my form of protest, I don't think.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

There are millions of stateless people in the world.

JAN

Stateless through war and displacement, that's most of them.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

The situation of all but an extremely small minority of them is dire.

JAN

There are only a few who have brought about this situation voluntarily and consciously, deliberately.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

Rather than the happy-go-lucky kind of, oh, it's not a big deal situation that I have.

KEFEI

We could -

JAN

We could initiate conversations with unknowns.

RONJA

Collect autumn leaves.

KEFEI

For example, knocking down a wall.

JAN

Cooking a unity pot.

RONJA

Risking your neck or going to steal horses.

JAN

I'm looking for more examples like that.

Original sound bite: MIKE GOGULSKI

Good talking to you. Take care.

JAN

And find Christoph Heuermann and call him on a shaky connection on the other side of the world.

Original sound bite: CHRISTOPH HEUERMANN

I'm in Herbertshöhe right now, it's a former German colony in Papua New Guinea.

JAN

Like Ronja, Christoph Heuermann was born in 1990, the year of reunification.

Original sound bite: CHRISTOPH HEUERMANN

I've been on the road for six years. I travel through all the countries of the world and have also business, where I advise people from all over the world on how they can emigrate, can live tax-free, and in general I say my global lifestyle.

JAN

He didn't decide against his nation, but for a global lifestyle - tax-free.

Original sound bite: CHRISTOPH HEUERMANN

I could actually live in almost any country in the world for up to half a year, 183 days, without becoming liable to pay taxes. So it's not because I travel relatively fast - it's more my goal to have traveled to all countries in the world by the time I'm thirty.

JAN

At www.staatenlos.ch he offers his services - among others the stateless freedom package for 333 euros.

Original sound bite: CHRISTOPH HEUERMANN

I do not mean in such a way, the actual stateless being that one does not have a passport, and quasi no rights and cannot travel, but rather mental statelessness. That is, I would say, mentally detaching oneself from the concept of the state a bit and trying to take advantage in as many states as possible. Just not only to one state where you happen to be born, for example - yes.

JAN

Then statelessness can be understood more as a business model.

Original sound bite: CHRISTOPH HEUERMANN

Yes, many people are shocked and also outraged, call me antisocial, because I don't pay any taxes, but of course I have profited from the German education system and all the other things I've supposedly benefited from. Others, however, take it very positively and want to do something similar.

JAN

Heuermann therefore sees himself as a citizen of the world and chooses from the global offer that offers him the most advantages.

Original sound bite: CHRISTOPH HEUERMANN

Yes, exactly - I think this interstate competition is very important, that you can take a bit from many different states, like a toolbox, I would say. That's where I have my residence, that's where my company is, there's my bank account and so on.

JAN

He also offers citizenship counselling and mediation.

Original sound bite: CHRISTOPH HEUERMANN

Many Arabs, Russians and so on eagerly take advantage of this and then get a passport from Malta for a million euros, which is almost as good as the German passport.

JAN

A service for rich people.

Original sound bite: CHRISTOPH HEUERMANN

There are also cheaper solutions that are not quite as good.

JAN

I'm receiving a message from Ronja.

Four days before the expected date of birth. Everything is still calm. She has looked through the photo album and looked at the note. The handwritten entry of her mother, declaring Ronja to be her contribution to the reunited Germany.

Original sound bite: CHRISTOPH HEUERMANN

There is always talk of this social contract that we have all signed, that we implicitly agreed to at birth. Of course, you can partly dissolve it by emigrating. That's what I advise people to do, or what I do myself. But that is of course the first criticism, that the state is not really as legitimate as it often thinks. The second criticism is that it can change laws unilaterally.

JAN

I would have liked to talk further with Christoph Heuermann about the social contract and share a few thoughts.

KEFEI

Unity Day could be a day for which day and night are reversed.

JAN

Start the lawn mower at midnight.

KEFEI

Extending a passport at 11pm.

RONJA

Waiting in a doctor's office at 10pm

JAN

Falling out of the club at 3pm.

KEFEI

To slaughter a pig.

JAN

But before I could say more about it, the line broke down and I couldn't reach him on that island on the other side of the world. By next day he had already moved on and was offline for now. I sent a recording after him and summarized what the New We is about.

Original sound bite: JAN

And well, I start with a performative identity concept. So it's nothing fixed, like my skin pigmentation or my body size, which are difficult to change. But identity is something I don't have, it's something I live. And every time I live it, it also changes, is somehow rewritten each time, rewritten, reformatted.

KEFEI

Crossing a border.

Original sound bite: JAN

And I live quite a few. We all live quite many at the same time, without conflicts, without identity conflicts.

KEFEI

Asking ourselves how things could have been different.

Original sound bite: JAN

That is, we live one gender identity, one regional, one local, one national, one supranational, and so on and so forth. And change in the course of a day hundreds of times and without feeling any difficulty. And belonging to the citizen-nation is one of these many identities that we live. Whether we like it or not.

RONJA

All could put on masks - whatever, animal masks or grimaces or rubber masks of politicians.

KEFEI

Slaughter a pig.

Original sound bite: JAN

So - and yes, the problem, the crux in Germany is that people still have such an exclusive way of thinking,

KEFEI

Everybody could drop all their clothes.

JAN/RONJA

Everyone could drop all their clothes.

JAN

Or make themselves useful.

RONJA

How about fasting?

JAN

Just not eat anything for a day.

KEFEI

Or to eat only food in the colors black, red, gold.

RONJA

Start a trial.

JAN

To start a trial: to read the thoughts of other people, write them on a piece of paper and give it to a third person.

KEFEI

Adorning oneself with other people's feathers.

RONJA

Finding excuses for everything and everyone.

Original sound bite: JAN

Yes, and the New We then for me, that means on the one hand simply the sum of all citizens, including the immigrants. And on the other hand it just means this emotionally, symbolically exaggerated collective identity.

JAN

Biting the bullet.
Saving someone else's ass.

RONJA

Or refilling spices.

KEFEI

Or recite the catechism.

JAN

And think about the future.

KEFEI

And think about the future.

KEFEI

Sing a canon ...

RONJA

Sing a canon ...

JAN

Sing a canon - without a conductor.

KEFEI

... without conductor.

RONJA

... without conductor.

ORIGINAL SOUND BITES

Kohl: The black-red-gold flag
Weizsäcker: The whole Germany
Steinmeier: Us against them
Weizsäcker: The unification of Germany
Gauck: That grew together
Weizsäcker: God
Kohl: Germany
Merkel: And dull subservience
Steinmeier: Nonsense of blood and soil
Lammert: The slightest memory
Merkel: Depressing thoughts
Steinmeier: The longing for homeland
Gauck: The will for freedom
Kohl: Willingness to perform
Merkel: Disconcerting degree of lack of freedom
Lammert: Attacks threatening democracy
Kohl: The economic tasks
Lammert: The German people
Weizsäcker: The peace of the world
Weizsäcker: The responsibility
Gauck: Day of unification

Kohl: Many
Steinmeier: The united Germany
Kohl: One people
Schäuble: Wonderful country
Kohl: Our fatherland
Weizsäcker: Expansion
Kohl: Our future
Lammert: The constitutional state
Steinmeier: We Germans, who is that anyway?

JAN

I meet the cultural attaché of the Israeli embassy and the Palestinian ambassador. A meeting at the same table is not possible, so I bring them into conversation together afterwards.

Original sound bite: ISRAEL

So hello and welcome to everyone who is listening. My name is Doron. I am the cultural attaché here at the Israeli embassy where we are sitting right now.

Original sound bite: PALESTINE

My name is Khulud Daibes. I am ambassador and head of the Palestinian mission. Palestinian mission. You notice there, it's not called the Palestinian embassy. This has to do with the fact that Germany does not recognize the state of Palestine.

Original sound bite: ISRAEL

There are three basic or elementary questions that needs to be put on. It's the how, the what and the when. So let's start with the most elementary one. The "what." And that's supposed to be easy because we're talking about Independence Day. And we're obviously celebrating the establishment of Israel, which occurred on May 14, 1948.

JAN

Israel celebrates the establishment of its state. The Palestinians remember their expulsion.

Original sound bite: PALESTINE

Yes, actually it is a day where we commemorate our Nakba, which is the catastrophe of the Palestinians. The expulsion.

Original sound bite: ISRAEL

It's not only the establishment of Israel, it's actually coming back to our homeland country after two thousand years.

Original sound bite: PALESTINE

Israel celebrates the establishment, and the Palestinians are still waiting to celebrate their own state.

Original sound bite: ISRAEL

The Independence Day is always preceded by the Memorial Day. The memorial for the fallen soldiers and for the terror victims throughout the year.

Original sound bite: PALESTINE

This is also about the Palestinians who live in Israel today. That is over 20 percent of the population, who are not even allowed to use the word Nakba, because it's it is forbidden by law to commemorate the Nakba.

Original sound bite: ISRAEL

There are two sirens that go out in Israel. The first one is eight o'clock at night, which commemorates the beginning. It's one minute and people just stand silently. You are actually just with your thought. There is like silence everywhere.

JAN

Sirens sound the day before Independence Day.

Original sound bite: ISRAEL

The car stopping ...

JAN

For one minute a country stops.

Original sound bite: ISRAEL

... the people are stopping what they're doing.

JAN

Pauses and remembers.

Original sound bite: ISRAEL

Everyone steps down to the side of the street. And just ...

JAN

I start an experiment.
Can you broadcast one minute of remembrance?

Original sound bite: Israel

... for one minute thinks about the fallen soldier and about their longing, their sorrow.

JAN

So you don't send anything, but an inner stream of thought?

KEFEI

Be consistent.

RONJA

Pausing.

Original soundtrack bite: ISRAEL

And there is another one that takes place the day after. At eleven o'clock, it will be held with ceremonies all over the country. But the linkage is relatively clear. We are owing our independence to the fallen soldier who gave their life for us to have the country that we have today.

Original sound bite: PALESTINE

And actually, if I were to summarize it briefly, I don't think there is any reason for either side to celebrate.

JAN

We could venture a day without consumption - all - really all the stores are closed.

KEFEI

Bite the bullet.

JAN

It could be a day when all the elevators are stuck.

KEFEI

A community of destiny forms in just a few square meters.

RONJA

One might as well.

Put a knife between your teeth.

JAN

Dusting, and dusting everywhere.

KEFEI/JAN

Drinking one over the thirst.

RONJA/JAN

Turn a blind eye.

JAN

Or go donate blood until you get all dizzy.

KEFEI

Or lie on your back and read in the clouds.

JAN

You heard *We - Here*.

KEFEI

New Germans celebrate ...

JAN

Part 3.

KEFEI

... doing what you can't leave alone under any circumstances.

JAN

A radio play by Helgard Haug and Thilo Guschas.

WE - HERE

A radio play in four parts

Part 4

JAN

Okay, I'll start.

RONJA

A radio play in four parts.

JAN

We - Here

RONJA

With the title alone, I find it difficult. "We" - so - how should I emphasize it? WE. No, wait a minute, now I'm completely lost.

JAN

A radio play by Helgard Haug and Thilo Guschas.
Part 4.

KEFEI

Be amazed.
Let fear grow.

RONJA

Make the fear grow.

JAN

Asking a stranger for directions.
Calling the love of your life and listening to what has happened.

KEFEI

What has been happening.

JAN/RONJA

To be puzzled.

JAN

It could be a day when words are weighed in the balance.

KEFEI

Get suspicious.

JAN

Washing the mouth out with soap.

RONJA

Being handed out and pocketed.

KEFEI

It could be a day -

JAN

You should talk about unlaidd eggs.
Getting cold feet.

RONJA

Pause.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

Every country does well to pause on certain days and reflect on its own life.
That's what the Day of German Unity. And there's no need to make fun of it.

JAN

Actually, we wanted to meet in Potsdam.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

Thomas Braune, 61, journalist by background. Was government spokesman in the state of Brandenburg and is now trying to raise the state's image a bit. In short, I am responsible for the state's marketing and thus also for the overall organization for the German Unity Day 2020.

JAN

The head of marketing for the Deutschlandfest 2020 had to change plans at short notice and asks for a meeting point in Berlin - near Friedrichstraße.

KEFEI

Do not bend.

RONJA

Getting cold feet.

KEFEI

Celebrating unity.

RONJA

Celebrating unity.

KEFEI

Celebrating freedom.

JAN

Celebrate justice.
Celebrate freedom.

RONJA

Celebrating freedom.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

So if you ask me for an ID document in connection with German unity, I'll show you my ADAC membership card, which has since turned gold.
ADAC was my first membership decision after the fall of the Wall.

JAN

I suggested the Palace of Tears.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

When the Wall came down, I was 30, so you could say I lived half of my life in the GDR and the other half in united Germany.

JAN

We sit down on the steps in the exhibition room. A Spanish school class is looking at the exhibits on the border crossing between East and West Berlin. Braune watches them skeptically.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

Actually, we don't want to look back at what happened thirty or thirty-one years ago, but we want to look at what has emerged in the period after the Palace of Tears and how it will continue.

JAN

I'm trying to imagine that.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

We want to create emotions through images. We want to tell stories. We don't want to avoid fates, personal fates.

JAN

I still don't see a picture.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

We have fifteen, twenty, twenty-five large digital pillars on the festival grounds, where we can show emotionalizing moments from the thirty years of German unity. And we want to draw attention to what has succeeded and what has not been so successful.

JAN

But if I don't come to Potsdam to look at the digital pillars on the festival grounds - on this Day of the Germans - how can it be celebrated?

RONJA

Cause a problem.

KEFEI

Scaring the hell out of others.

JAN

Celebrating a day when you take it easy.

KEFEI

Become lucid.

JAN

How can he be celebrated?

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

Well, there are rituals that are also broadcast on television: the ceremonial act, the church service - whether they are always conducive to conveying euphoria, uh, I don't know.

RONJA

Blush.

JAN

Pause.

Feel shame. Turn red - publicly.

RONJA

Pausing.

JAN

All together in the central square of the place or town.

RONJA

Developing the feeling that there is no turning back.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

But the decentralized orientation, that's what I think is good about it in Germany compared to others, it always reaches new, different groups of visitors, so that at the end of the day, we at least don't have to face the reproach that people say, I didn't even know that. Eh.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

I believe that this is a very interesting question. How do we celebrate? And what are we actually celebrating?

JAN

Giggle.

KEFEI

Making a shoulder glance to trick the blind spot.

JAN

Toast to confidence.

RONJA

Loud: Saying shit.

Quietly.

KEFEI

I don't know.

JAN

I don't know either.

RONJA

I don't know either.

JAN

I tell Braune about my visit to the embassy in Mexico - there no one overlooks the national holiday.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

So now the president calls the people and he starts saying: Viva Mexico. So people start reacting to this: Viva Mexico, Viva, Viva Mexico, Viva.

JAN

... and as the press attaché belted out the national anthem.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

So if you ask me how many times I have sung the Mexican anthem, I cannot count them, but many. I hope to be in tune. [sings]

JAN

I ask him: how do you handle the national anthem?

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

Offensively. I always have the feeling that the national anthem is not necessarily the most emotional firecracker in Germany. Perhaps that also has something to do with its birth. As far as I know, it was written at a desk on Sylt and not in the trenches in Paris. This is reflected in the music.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

If you read the lyrics of the anthem, it's quite violent. Mexicans, we go to war! No. Prepare the weapon. Prepare the horse.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

The history of the last hundred years can't be denied either: that we don't sing the first but the third verse - uh, singing it plays a part too.

RONJA

Doing what you can't leave off under any circumstances.

JAN

Kicking out a street lamp.

KEFEI

A day visiting a concentration camp.

JAN

And one of the many that you haven't visited yet.

KEFEI

With the whole family.

JAN

Visit a concentration camp.

RONJA

Kicking out a street lamp.

JAN

And another one until the whole street is dark and you slip on the next banana peel.

RONJA

And one more.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

I've been here in Germany to see how you celebrate the Unity Day.

KEFEI

And another one until the whole street is dark.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

I don't want to compare, but I realize this is different.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

But I think that since 2006, since the soccer world championship here with us we have learned to rally behind the German flag. And in this respect it is more present in my mind's eye at the Citizens Festival than the anthem.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

No? A different thing is what people take of it.

KEFEI

Losing your head.

RONJA

Until the whole street is dark.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

And whether the people of these countries feel related to these performances.
Let's call it like this.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

But I think this is a serious concern, and I think per se days of countries or nations is right.

JAN

We wrote to 194 embassies to find out how other countries celebrate their nation.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

What I like of the way you celebrate here is, is this idea of assuming that a nation has a different meaning for you, than to - I believe - any other people around the world.

KEFEI

Pause.

JAN

Ask yourself: who are you?

RONJA

Ask yourself: who are you?

JAN/RONJA

Ask yourself: who am I?

JAN/KEFEI/RONJA

Ask yourself: what am I when I have no border?

Ask yourself: who am I when everything is different?

JAN

I ask Braune if there is a country for him that is a good role model.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

Well, in Italy or France, for example, I think it's cool when three jets open the whole thing at the beginning of a festival, and the flag, uh, crystallizes out of the back of the exhaust.

I think that's a beautiful image. I could imagine that for Potsdam, too.

But as a whole, I say: we Germans celebrate the way we are.

We are matter-of-fact, we are - we are sober. We don't like to have it in our heads, but we need something to touch.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

This is a unique fact that you should also be proud of.

KEFEI

Ask yourself: who am I when everything is different?

JAN

Trying to find an answer to the question: how do we want to be?

KEFEI/RONJA

Trying to find an answer to the question: how do we want to be?

KEFEI

How do we want to be?

JAN

How do we want to be?

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

And that's why we don't stand on the Champs-Élysées and wave and toast to each other.

But we walk through the "Ländermeile" - this year in Potsdam - and touch something, touch Germany objectively.

JAN

What do I get to touch when I touch Germany? Is it rough, velvety, slimy, hard.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

That's how we are and that's how we make our festival.

JAN

Does it have angular edges or no end?

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

And I actually don't think it's wrong.

JAN

How does it feel, this land? Soft, rugged, prickly, lush, brittle?
Can I hold that, change the shape?

Original sound bite: MEXICO

Yeah. Well, it's also very interesting that it's - this has a very different meaning, I believe, in one part of the country and in the other part of the country.

JAN

I ask him: what do you think about the term reunification?

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

Wasn't it? I guess it was a reunification. Nah, I don't think it was accomplished. Nor did I have the expectation that it would ever be completed in one day. But I would have liked it to have happened a little bit differently.

JAN

Where can that be touched?

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

Where do I feel that we're not in the same league, East and West? For example, soccer, where we first have the situation that a handout took place after 1990. There are a total of six teams in the first and second Bundesliga from the East. But the subsequent economic conditions that followed the economic changes in the East led to the fact that almost no Eastern team was able to keep up. And the consequence of that is that, of course, all the important international matches take place in the big stadiums of the West. But there is an incredible soccer craze in the East that doesn't get any representation.

Original sound bite: MEXICO

I mean, I never spoke with a German friend or *gute Bekannte* who have told me something like, "Yes, we were celebrating at home." No.

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

Since we Germans, as I said earlier, are rather of a factual nature, we need an occasion to become euphoric.

Soccer and our good performance in this sport are an ideal breeding ground for euphoria. And then one thing has to be said for once in all the debate that is now taking place here in Germany about the 2006 World Cup. It came at the right time. It came 16 years after German unity, and it has helped to simply erase and fill the void in terms of patriotism and flag display.

JAN

This void in terms of patriotism ...

Original sound bite: BRAUNE

And this sea of flags was simply an awesome sight.

JAN

... I would like to fill it with something other than flags.

ORIGINAL SOUND BITES

Lammert: Germany is changing

Bärbel Bohley: And that's a little bit due to the courage of the people and you could try that try it from below, if it wasn't a condition from above, so to speak

Radio Schlutup: The bringing down of the GDR flag

Lothar de Maiziere: There were tasks to be solved - without example

Radio Schlutup: Re-flagged

Honecker: All talents and all abilities

Jens Reich: Dialogue is not the main course, but the appetizer

Helmut Kohl: God bless our German fatherland

Lammert: German unity

Rita Süsmuth: Identity of the Germans

Steinmeier: A united, free and peaceful Germany

Lammert: Astonishing indignation

Steinmeier: A free and democratic Germany

Honecker. Our state

Steinmeier: Confidence in the future

Radio Schlutup: Adoption of the road code of the Federal Republic

Westerwelle: Inner German border

Lammert: This country

Westerwelle: Internet

Westerwelle: German Unity Day

Schäuble: And so I wish us all a good German Unity Day

Steinmeier: Ladies and gentlemen, we owe this Germany to our children

KEFEI

Bringing the truth to light.

JAN

I still tell Braune that I also met the ambassador of South Korea.

KEFEI

Raising your arms.

JAN

A country still waiting for its reunification.

Original sound bite: SOUTH KOREA

Good day, my name is Jong Bum Goo.

JAN

My question also to him: how does your country celebrate itself?

Original sound bite: SOUTH KOREA

Officially, we have a total of five national holidays a year.

JAN

The one I particularly like is the day when South Koreans celebrate their alphabet.

Original sound bite: SOUTH KOREA

A day of Hangeul. 14 consonants and 10 vowels.

JAN

What a beautiful celebration.

Celebrating our 26 letters, 3 umlauts and the sharp s.

Original sound bite: SOUTH KOREA

And on October 3, which is for you Germans also a very important day: Unity Day.

RONJA

We could -

KEFEI

Let all dogs off the leashes.

Original sound bite: SOUTH KOREA

But for us, October 3 is sky-opening day.

RONJA

Poking a wasps' nest.

JAN

The ambassador of Malaysia receives me.

Original sound bite: MALAYSIA

When I was ten years old, I participated in one of the performances of the National Day.

JAN

And tells how he became a pixel of the Malaysian flag as a child.

Original sound bite: MALAYSIA

Which is red, blue, white and yellow.

JAN

As a child, he was a tiny red dot - among lots of tiny red dots ...

Original sound bite: MALAYSIA

So we formed the national flag.

And so it is a huge national flag seen from an aerial view.

JAN

... which formed a gigantic red area.

Original sound bite: MALAYSIA

And it really fills me with pride. Even to this day.

JAN

Pride. Pride. Pride.

KEFEI/JAN/RONJA

Disappearing somewhere untraceable for a day.

JAN/RONJA

Raise flags.

KEFEI

Burning flags.

JAN

Finally got word from Ronja today.

RONJA

Yes, Fred has come into the world, Fred is living with us now.

JAN

The child was born, he is healthy.

RONJA

Smallest roommate I've ever had.

JAN

They are doing well.

RONJA

What surprised me was that Fred was sent a tax number right away. Shortly after the birth certificate, I think two to three days later, his tax number arrived.

JAN

I wish him a peaceful life.

RONJA

Yes, I wish him peace too, I wish him community, I wish him to feel in his family, in his environment - in everything that will come his way. It's completely crazy, what's waiting for him...

KEFEI

Would this be a good day to conceive a child?

RONJA/JAN

Would this be a good day to conceive a child?

JAN

To give birth to a child?

KEFEI

Fingers crossed and knock on wood.

Original sound bite: SEYCHELLES

Because there has never been a war, people are always in a very positive mood with all the speeches and that is always very valuable and very nice.

JAN

When I meet the consul of the Seychelles, I notice that he is actually an island salesman.

Original sound bite: SEYCHELLES

I always like to call myself an art dealer of nature. But you're right, my job is selling private islands.

JAN

I wonder if owning an island is mainly a status issue?

Original sound bite: SEYCHELLES

You have a status, of course, if you have an island then, that's for sure. But that's not so much the reason. The reason is that you just want to control what you see. That's something we don't know here in a civilization. Here I have neighbors, here I have traffic lights. Here I have a thousand people who interfere with my daily business. On an island, I wake up in the morning and you don't hear anybody, you don't see anything.

JAN

If Ronja was the contribution to the German reunification, maybe we should give her an island for the birth of her child? I'll leaf through the catalog that the consul gave me.

Original sound bite: SEYCHELLES

I do what I want there, and there is only one sovereign on the island and I am subordinate to him: that is nature. And people find that fantastically beautiful.

JAN

I imagine what it's like to live alone on an island like that.

What rituals would I come up with?

Would there be a flag?

A currency?

A national anthem?

Postage stamps?

RONJA

Understand everything.

KEFEI

Understand everything.

RONJA

Beating yourself up.

JAN

Crossing a border.

Getting the shit kicked out of you.

KEFEI

We could -

RONJA

Become music.

JAN

In England, it's not the nation or the country or the liberation, or the independence or any founding myth, but the Queen's birthday that is celebrated.

Original sound bite: GREAT BRITAIN

That goes back to the role of royalty and the important role it still plays in embodying our national identity - is there - can you say that in German: to embody the spirit of the country?

KEFEI

To listen to the heartbeat of another person.

RONJA

To feel a sense of shame.

KEFEI

Gently tucking in a sleeping person.

JAN

In her carriage, she passes her soldiers and inspects the troops.

RONJA

My friend Kefei comes to visit and to meet Fred and when he is finally asleep, we watch the seventieth anniversary parade in China again together on YouTube:

KEFEI

Xi Jinping is also a statesman now in charge of the whole military. Now, said the officer to him, now is the time that he passes the whole thing once and controlled. And Xi says: Start.

RONJA

The head of state's car passes the troops.

KEFEI

He's inspecting all the troops now.

RONJA

With critical eye and encouraging word.

KEFEI

And he also calls into the microphone from time to time, "You're working hard," and then they say, "Statesman, you work hard."

RONJA

Then the car turns and takes the head of state back to the grandstand. Now all the troop units and wagons start moving and drive past the tribune. A seemingly endless procession.

KEFEI

So, when I see a picture like this - I don't know what the future is.

RONJA

At the end, it becomes more colorful: after the military, sports, technology, space travel present themselves, culture and the different provinces.

KEFEI

What kind of car? Ah, Mongolia here. Shanghai here. Hong Kong. And here is Taiwan. So, Taiwan even has a car.

RONJA

The consul of Taiwan grimaces when I ask him about it.

Original sound bite: TAIWAN

When we were very young, military parades were held every year.

RONJA

Now, the parade on the streets of Beijing is a re-enactment of everyday life.

KEFEI

So yes, so bicycle, go to work, be in love, maybe.

Original sound bite: TAIWAN

In the past, schoolchildren and students were forced to attend the National Day to celebrate, participate and lift up signs on the spot.

KEFEI

Ah, "Long life fatherland" is the name of it.

Original sound bite: TAIWAN

Many young people don't know that anymore.

KEFEI

And here on the flag it says: "I love you China."

Original sound bite: TAIWAN

A democratic country will not force people to participate in the national holiday.

KEFEI

In China, now a lot of young people, well they are very, very patriotic.
Yes, they are born into this image.
Into such an image of the mighty China.

JAN

What does the consul of Taiwan say about the way the Germans celebrate themselves?
No, how the Germans celebrate themselves?

Original sound bite: TAIWAN

I think the Germans are very modest. [giggles] Not as celebratory as Taiwan, no, no, very quiet. Yes.

Original sound bite: JAN

Because we're so scared of ending up back at the Nuremberg Party Congresses again. That sits deep in me, this fear that if you say "emotion" and "nation" in one sentence that at some point you'll end up at the Nuremberg Party Congress.

JAN

Celebrate how? Celebrate what? Celebrate how?

Original sound bite: JAN

And how, as I said, the contents - I think - should not be presupposed, there are no essences! I think it will come down to very little.

KEFEI

We might have been waiting for this moment.

JAN

Be consistent.
Thinking from the cradle to the grave.

RONJA

My child's birthday coincided with International Roma Day.
At the first meeting of Roma representatives in 1971 ...

JAN

That's when the idea of a common flag and anthem was born.
Since then, this has not stood as symbols for a territory or a nation ...

RONJA

... but for the worldwide Roma civil rights movement ...

JAN

... and their political struggle for equal participation in society.

RONJA

And the dismantling of discrimination.

KEFEI

Talking to someone in private.

RONJA

Closing an account and burying the money under a tree.

RONJA

A message from Valentin Groebner.

Original sound bite: VALENTIN GROEBERN

We turned to the figure of William Tell and said, who actually tells the story of William Tell? We treated the national hero not as a figure, but as a material and asked who are his narrators.

JAN

The historian deals with flying carpets.

Original sound bite: VALENTIN GROEBERN

Because William Tell is not from Switzerland. He comes from the *Gesta Danorum*, which is written in Denmark around 1200 and tells the story of shooting the apple, the narrative motif of the apple shot is even older. It comes from the last third of the 12th century, from today's Iran from a Sufi story collection. That is, the narrator of the national tales is always a story of flying carpets - which can cover long distances very quickly because, well, stories are irresistible. And well-told stories are irresistible because they radically simplify reality. The nation works only because it is never verifiable - but because it is a - a fairy tale. A flying carpet.

KEFEI

To become loud. Speak out.

Original sound bite: JAN

What else would be important with the content. Personally, I think it would be good if, in practice, the overcoming of the nation were inscribed in the content, that is, that one in some way inscribes the supranational or ultimately our belonging to humanity is already inscribed in these practices.

KEFEI

Going out of one's skin.

Original sound bite: JAN

That one does not set the nation as a *telos*, as the final goal, but always already thinks about its overcoming as well.

RONJA

And these citizens of the world we could celebrate ...
Can or could?
Could we celebrate.
Celebrate the festival with a ritual -

JAN

Making a sound with your finger circling on the rim of a half-filled glass.

RONJA

Denying oneself.

JAN

To declare war.

RONJA

Teaching the truth.

RONJA

Kneeling down: theatrically, uninhibitedly.

JAN

Kneeling down: theatrically, uninhibitedly.

KEFEI

And don't come up again - just keep kneeling until - I don't know what.

JAN

Standing up for something.

KEFEI

National group sex.

JAN

Bringing the truth to light.

RONJA

Raising your arms in the air.

JAN

Getting loud. Leading a rebuttal.

RONJA

Wondering why history threatens to repeat itself.

KEFEI

Kneeling down.

JAN

Going out of one's skin.

RONJA

Burning a passport.

JAN

Developing tenacity.

KEFEI

Developing tenacity.

RONJA

We - Here, a radio play in four parts by Helgard Haug and Thilo Guschas.

JAN

Mhm and should I try it now in one fell swoop?

with

Ronja Büchner

Jan Plamper

Kefei Cao

Benedict Anderson

Thomas Braune

Katrin Buechner

Mike Gogulski

Valentin Groebner

Christoph Heuermann
Sota Omoigui

as well as ambassadors, consuls and representatives of the following countries: Estonia, Finland, Pakistan, Ecuador, Ireland, Kosovo, Canada, Denmark, Philippines, Indonesia, New Zealand, United States of America, Israel, Palestine, Mexico, South Korea, Malaysia, Seychelles, United Kingdom and Taiwan.

Composition: Frank Böhle
Sound and technology: Werner Jäger and Jeanette Wirtz-Fabian
Dramaturgy: Martina Müller- Wallraf

KEFEI

Asking yourself why history threatens to repeat itself?

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