

Die Fall der Sonnergespräche im Wienermuseumsquartier zu den heißen Themen des Jahres.
Mittwoch, den 30. August, nimmt die grüne Umweltministerin Leonore Gewessler-Platt.
Es geht um die drängende Frage, wie wir die Klimawende schaffen.
Umweltministerin Leonore Gewessler im Gespräch mit Barbara Todt und Katharina Krobshofer.
Mittwoch, den 30. August und 19 Uhr auf der Bühne im großen Hof im Museumsquartier in Wien.
Der Eintritt ist frei. Schauen Sie doch vorbei.
12. Mai bis 21. Juni. Programm und Karten auf Festwochen AT.
Gute Unterhaltung beim folgenden Podcast wünschen Ihnen Erste Bank und Wiener Städtische.
Die Hauptsponsoren der Wiener Festwochen.
Sehr herzlich willkommen, meine Damen und Herren, im Falter Radio.
In dieser Sendung führen wir Sie auf eine Reise im Theater durch ein Museum.
Das Museum, das ist die Sowjetunion.
Der Staat in Lenin einst als Vaterland der Werktätigen begründet hat
und als Folge der demokratischen Revolutionen von 1989 zerfallen ist.
Theatermacherin Marina Davidova hat ein neues Stück geschrieben mit dem Titel
Der Museum of Uncounted Voices.
Das Museum der ungezählten Stimmen.
Sie hören gleich ein Gespräch mit Marina Davidova,
gemeinsam mit Misha Glenni vom Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschenführer.
Die Weltpremiere des Stücks,
der Museum of Uncounted Voices findet, am 22. Mai bei den Wiener Festwochen
im Odeon Theaterstadt.
Es gibt verschiedene Museumseele in diesem Stück.
Hören Sie aus dem Saal 1 mit dem Titel Imperium,
ein Entsprecher die riesige Landkarte Russlands bewundern,
mit Wiederräte gleich drauf,
eines ukrainischen Sprechers aus dem Saal 2 namens Nationen.
Du kannst nach der Exhibition weitergehen.
Es ist einstahndisch, oder?
Ich dachte, ich würde meinen Kopf liefern, als ich aufhörte.
Was hat er gesagt?
Das Moskau war der Exzessor in Russland.
Dass es neben den ukrainischen Landen, die es jemals gelangt,
was in seinen Händen geht, die besten.
Als ich den Doppatmumeisch, Litvaeimetz und Channuzianmassen
ausmess, jess, ihm es heirinikimasin patmem.
Sorry, you must speak in language we all understand.
No one here speaks Armenian.
Oh, I beg your pardon.
Can you help me, Janikus?
My dear, we have been told about the greatness
of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.
Please show them the great Armenia.
Ah, I see.

Of course.

Our map has been hanged to one side.

We have been sidelined as usual, so no one can see us.

Auf die Stimmen verschiedener Nationen der Sowjetunion,
Armenien, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgien folgt eine
Unterhaltung auf der Bühne.

Dears, why are you all sitting there?

Please come over here.

The museum is over here and not over there.

At least you'll find out in what part of the world Armenia is.

Come on, come on, come.

Don't be afraid, stand up, come.

Do you want me to sing something for you in Armenian?

There is a song my grandmother used to sing me.

Terçe imat koftun

Urimayran erartur desney

I am waiting for you.

I am waiting for you.

I am waiting for you.

I am waiting for you.

Please speak a language we can all understand.

We are not obliged to understand Georgien,

or Azeri especially.

Das waren die Stimmen von Udin Biron, Oleksandri Yatsenko,

Gurgen Zaturjan, Igor Shugaleyev, Jamal Ali

und Luca Calandaze.

Marina Davidova, die das Stück Museum of Uncounted Voices geschrieben hat,
war bis letztes Jahr in Moskau 23 Jahre lang Leiterin des neuen europäischen Theaters.

Sie hat sich gegen den Ukraine-Krieg ausgesprochen und musste fliehen.

Aufgewachsen ist sie als Tochter armenisch-russischer Eltern in Baku,
im heutigen Azerbaijan, wo die älterliche Wohnung in einem antiamäischen Pogrom zerstört wurde.

Im Herbst übernimmt Marina Davidova die Schauspielleitung der Salzburger Festspiele.

Und ich freue mich sehr, dass Marina Davidova in hektischen Tagen der Probe
für das Stück Museum of Uncounted Voices für ein Gespräch Zeitgefunden hat,
das wir auf Englisch führen.

Willkommen Marina Davidova in der Podcast-Falter-Radio.

Hallo.

Hallo.

Wir sind auch mit Misha Glenni. Hallo Misha.

Hallo.

Misha Glenni ist Rektor des Instituts für Human Sciences in Vien.

Marina Davidova in Europas Museum of Uncounted Voices,
in a way recreates for us the Soviet Union.

It gives us a kind of guided tour through the Soviet Union.

Now in the form of a museum.

Now in museums usually we put stuff that we think is worth to remember, perhaps in order to understand the present.

Why is it worth to have a guided tour through the Soviet Union and through the Soviet times?

Actually, is it a question, yeah?

Actually, I cannot say that all you will see in the performance

is dedicated only to the Soviet Union,

because the voices and the uncounted voices as well,

they are discussing history in general

and sometimes they start to talk about the 14th and 19th centuries.

But yes, mostly it's focused on the Soviet Union times,

the Soviet Union period and the Soviet Union borders.

But still, I cannot call this performance a piece about the Soviet Union.

No, it's about some more general issues and problems.

Why uncounted voices?

Because I believe that all the historical discourses,

they also always have some voices that they didn't take into consideration, they didn't count them.

And so to my mind they know objective history.

It's always a very special point of view

and somebody can suggest another point of view in the same events.

It's like in Rassermann in this very famous novel and classical movie.

So it was a kind of certain point.

In my life, when I came to historical museums,

it was a kind of my imagination there.

Because I always felt the performative power of this space

and in my imagination objects suddenly start to leave somehow

to have the spirit and some voices of the past centuries

like appeared in the air and it was in my head.

They started to argue to each other.

And so it's why I decided to make this museum.

But then the second idea was that really when we have an excursion of the museum,

it's always, it suggests one point of view on all the events.

But I just imagined how the history of former Russian Empire

or the Soviet Union would be told by different voices.

Now discussing the Soviet Union,

you have of course in mind the Russia of today, today's Russia.

And we all know the famous quote by Vladimir Putin,

who said that the disappearance of the Soviet Union was one of the biggest, was the biggest tragedy of history.

Now, when the Soviet Union disappeared, you were in your 20s,

you were working as theater critic in Isvestia.

No, no, at that time I was.

That's what I read in the Internet.

Okay, no, no, no.

I mean, I really, I worked in Isvestia, of course,
but it was a bit later because,
because when the Soviet Union last fell apart, collapsed.

I was a postgraduate student in Moscow.

So I started to work as a theater critic a bit later.

At that time I was a theater historian.

I wrote my dissertation, my thesis.

How did you, Marina Davidova, experience this break from the Soviet Union to Russia?

And how different is Russia today from the Soviet Union?

Unfortunately, now it's not very much different from the Soviet Union.

And it's happened just like in front of my eyes, before our eyes,
how this independent and free Russia turned to be in the new Soviet Union.

Because we, of course, as for repressions and this censorship and some other awful things,
we came back to the Soviet Union, to the Soviet time.

But as for this collapse of the Soviet Union,
it's a very important, very interesting question.

What was my personal experience?

Because it was a very special experience.

And partly I will tell about it in my performance.

Because at the same time I was a liberal,
which claimed, of course, the changes which were happening during Perestroika.

I was absolutely inspired by all the spirit of Perestroika.

And at the same time I was a real victim of this collapse.

As I was born in Baku.

Today Azerbaijan?

Yes, independent Azerbaijan.

And my father was Armenian.

And yeah, I know what actually I became a refugee for the second time in my life now.

So the first time being expelled from Baku as a king from an Armenian,
part of the Armenian family.

Misha, in today's Russia, of course, there is a former KGB-Boss,
who rules the country.

But on the other hand, the Soviet Union was not a nationalist,
a Russian nationalist.

It was different from the Russian Empire.

Seen from outside, Misha Gleny,
how would you see the similarities and the differences
between today's Russian Federation and the Soviet Union?

Well, there were occasions during the Soviet Union,
when the leadership would invoke Russian nationalism,
most importantly during the Second World War,
the Great Patriotic War, as it was known,

in the Soviet Union, where Stalin looked back to Russian history for inspiration. That's why he commissioned Sergei Eisenstein to make Ivan the Terrible. Alexander Nevsky. Alexander Nevsky as well. And so you had these symbols of Russian history, which were inspiring the people of Leningrad and Stalingrad and so on, to fight on behalf of Russia. Und he also liberalized the Orthodox Church at this time as well. He sought to mobilize the Orthodox Church on behalf of the defense of the Soviet Union. Then, of course, you returned to a period of repression, specifically of Russian nationalism. But the Soviet Union never really quite understood to what extent it was a Russian phenomenon, to what extent it was a multinational phenomenon. And throughout its existence, it was sort of schizophrenic. The interesting thing is, if you look from the outside onto the Soviet Union, that for many people to an extent in Europe, but to a much greater extent in other parts of the world, the parts we call the Global South, the Soviet Union and Russia are more or less interchangeable. And so if you see leaders like Lula today or Cyril Ramaphosa, for example, they look at what's happening between Russia and Ukraine at the moment, and their muscle memory is filtered through their understanding of Western imperialism, because they were brought up at a time when the United States in particular, but Europe as well, was imposing all sorts of unpleasant regimes on them. And the ANC, for example, in South Africa, were hugely dependent on support from the Soviet Union. Jacob Zuma, the former president, deeply corrupt character, was educated in Moscow by the KGB, speaks fluent Russian. One could perhaps say the Soviet past. For today's Russia is less a burden than an advantage for Putin's policy. It is an advantage because, as the old saying about the Jesuits goes, give me a boy when he's eight and he's mine for the rest of his life. And that's the case with Jacob Zuma, for example, and the KGB. The Russians, when they invaded Ukraine, what was really interesting was that Putin's people did not bother to try and counter the narrative, the Ukrainian narrative in Europe and the United States. They knew that they had lost that, that Ukraine had won it. But Putin put a lot of effort to ensure that India, South Africa, Brazil, other parts of the global south, who he realized would be important in this conflict because it had global implications. That's where he put his effort. And he was able to do that on relatively fertile ground because of that complex relationship in the past that the global south had with the Soviet Union. Marina Davidova, how much of Soviet traditions are alive in Putin's foreign policy

beyond this opportunism to try to profit from the anti-colonial tradition of the Soviet Union, the anti-capitalist tradition of the Soviet Union.

That is popular in Africa and Latin America.

Because on the other hand, what Russia is waging, the wars Russia is waging in Ukraine, but also in the Caucasus, somehow are colonial wars, aren't they?

As far as I understand, you now don't ask me, because of course for me it's a colonial war, but you are asking what is the attitude of our authorities and the majority of the people to this war. I don't think that they consider it a colonial war.

For them it's just a global war with a global west.

And of course, when you say these two words, the Soviet Union, a lot of people think that it was a kind of very homogenous phenomena.

But actually we can now say about an attempt to revive Stalinistic Soviet Union,

because I am not a big fan of this Bolshevik Revolution of 17,

but actually there were a lot of leftist ideas during the 20s, for example, and so on.

Even Lenin, which was a future rascal, he wasn't a Russian imperialist or nationalist at all, but as for Stalin, of course he was.

And step by step he tried to revive Russian Empire, which was called Soviet Union,

but actually what he realized under these leftist slogans,

it was rather a rightist idea of a very strong state and a very imperialistic idea, of course.

And it bought our authorities and Putin himself, but not only him, are trying to copy-paste now.

Today are we witnessing a re-Stalinization of Russian history?

What's the place of Stalin in the official Russia of Vladimir Putin?

How to answer your question.

Russia used to be and it is now a very hypocritical country.

So if you read some official documents, of course they will not announce it openly that what we are realizing now is our attempt to cosplay Stalinistic regime.

But in fact they are doing it.

And if you just look at a lot of our websites, which I pretty sure were made created by FSB people, they mostly are telling people about how Stalin, how great Stalin was as a politician, how great was our country under Stalin.

It's a very, very important discourse of a roulette of Russian Internet.

Misha Glendi, how worrying is this new, if you compare it to Khrushchev and the de-Stalinization, it's a new appraisal of Stalin in today's Russia.

How worrying is that?

It's obviously deeply worrying because freedom of expression, intellectual exchange has been suppressed ruthlessly, systematically.

And of course, particularly as they are now close friends with the Chinese, they have, if they want the ability technologically to monitor and introduce surveillance techniques, the like of which even Stalin could only dream of.

In the long term, there will be a real problem for Russia and for Russians, now that Putin has determined that they are going to go down this totalitarian path.

Because there is a very interesting thing about Russian identity and Russian imperialism.

There are only two empires in this world in the modern period,

which are effectively land empires.
And that is Russia and the United States.
And what that means in the Russian case is nobody knows where Russia begins and nobody knows where Russia ends.
And so this is why in terms of convincing the Russian population, you can persuade them that Ukraine is, you know, that was where Russia was anyhow. And so this belongs to us.
And then that only takes a little more and you go into the movement of Ukrainians and not a proper people and the language is merely a dialect and this sort of thing. And when it comes to the outside world, and I want to go back just for a second on this global south thing, when the West go to places like South Africa or Kenya or Brazil or Columbia and say what you're seeing is a colonial war. Everyone else's experience of the colonial war, a British ships coming in and slaves being taken across to Latin America or the United States or Caribbean. It is an imperialism that is experienced as an invasion. And that's not quite the same as what happened with the expansion of the Russian Empire, which is a huge empire. But in the long term, Putin placing everything on Russian nationalism is going to do immense damage to the Russian people because they have a demographic problem in the long term, which is going to come back and create immense problems for them. And when Putin dies, probably like any mafia leader, he is not going to leave a coherent succession after him. And I fear greatly that Russia will fall into a period of immense instability, not unlike the time of troubles after the period of Ivan Grozny and Ivan the Terrible, when it was consumed by infighting and sort of interneensine warfare. And Putin, I think, runs a real risk as leaving this as his legacy, along with all the terrible things that have happened in Ukraine. We are not there yet, of course. Marina Tabidova. In how far does this situation of imperial feeling explain the fact that Russian society at the beginning, quite some protests against the war, against the mobilization. But after a year, more than a year, it seems Russian society has accepted in large parts this war and the waging of war and through repression, but not only maybe also through an imperialist ideology accepted that there have to be attacks against the Ukrainian cities and this war is fought for Russia. Is that true? I mean, how do you have left Russia because you were against the war, of course. But how do you see the situation of civil society or what is left of civil society in Russia today in relation to the war? Look, of course this imperialistic idea is rather close to the people

because a lot of them think that Russia is everywhere where Russian people live.
It's a very simple idea.
So it was very easy to persuade them that Ukraine is just a part of Russia
and we have a right to invade Ukraine.
But at the same time, it's very important to understand the general attitude
of Russian people to the political issues
because unlike Western people, for Russians mostly,
not of course for all of them, but for a majority of the people,
the political life is very similar to natural phenomena.
Like if it's raining in the street, what shall I do?
Shall I fight against rain?
No, it's very stupid.
I have just to take my umbrella and to put on maybe my coat on me.
That's it.
So okay, it's like a normal way of thinking.
Okay, the war started.
So what shall I do?
There's no need to protest because it doesn't depend on us.
It's the normal attitude.
So if the war started, so I have to either to leave the country
or to be very, very quiet or maybe to do maybe I should put Z on my shop
or my theatre and so on and so on and so on.
In general, people don't even think that something in political life depends on them.
And it was long before the war started.
I just had a lot of conversations with taxi drivers
or the people in the shops and so on and so on.
Very often, I met such an attitude to all this part of life, political life.
But on the other hand, Marino, there has been a democratic upsurge against Putin
when ten years ago, when he falsified elections,
there were tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people in the streets of Moscow
and Peter and of course, there have been also in the time of Gorbachev
and there had been democratic traditions.
It's also part of Russian culture.
Where did it go?
Well, it's a very important part, of course, but it's minority.
I'm pretty sure that it was a minority even during Perestroika and Gorbachev time.
And it's just we were lucky.
My generation and me, we were lucky that it's happily happened during Gorbachev era
that this minority, I don't know, I'm not a historian,
but I feel some historical issues to my mind.
But a lot of things, it was a happy coincidence that this minority could win.
And I think that what happened after Perestroika during this 30 years,
it was a kind of deviation of our history.
But now we came back to the main road.

And I'm sorry to say it, but it's how I feel.

It's a depressing analysis.

The main road is the road of repression of state terrorism.

Stalin was state terrorism on a massive scale.

Millions of millions of people.

But of course, we are now having a light version of Stalinism.

It's rather light.

But, yes, we have it. We will have to my mind.

Michel Glenny, let's come back to this contradiction in the Soviet Union.

On the one hand, repression, on the dictatorship, the KGB.

But on the other hand, the basic idea that this is an instrument or the repression,

the violence is an instrument in order to liberate the country

and also to liberate the world from capitalism and the bad reality of imperialism in the world.

This ideology was the reason why there was a lot of support for the Soviet Union in the West.

Big communist parties, leftist parties, communist parties of France and Italy.

Even if they have taken their distance from Stalinism,

they sort of profited from the existence of the Soviet Union.

Is this contradiction sort of still present in Russia today?

Or is this a fiction that's gone and that maybe Lula believes in

or Ramaphosa in South Africa believes in?

Because the left in Western Europe also partly is rather lenient towards Putin and towards Russia.

Some parts of the West are, some parts of the Western left are, yes.

Look, the Soviet Union's reputation took a hammer blow in Western Europe and the United States, particularly Western Europe in 1956 with the Invasion of Hungary

and then in 1968 with the Invasion of Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring.

And most of the communist parties in Western Europe then adopted what became known as Euro-Communism,

which was basically to work within the democratic frameworks of the West.

The allure of the Soviet Union was largely restricted to the Global South after that.

And then, of course, with the Invasion of Afghanistan, a lot of, in the final days of 1979,

a lot of people began to perceive the Soviet Union as just another imperialist structure.

And so by the time it collapsed, there wasn't a huge amount of sympathy for it around the world.

I mean, I think what one has to remember always in trying to understand why Putin re-emerges

and why Russia goes back to what Marina calls the main road, which I have Russian history,

which is, he said, truly depressing, was the period of freedom during the 1990s was exceptionally chaotic.

And it was a very violent time, particularly the first five years of the 1990s.

It was known as gangster capitalism.

The rise of the oligarchs, who became extremely wealthy, while a large part of the Russian population were impoverished.

Meanwhile, in the background, there was terrible destruction going on during the first and second Chechen Wars.

This was a very traumatized society.

And what I think that Putin landed upon, what he realized, is that this was a society which was ready

for a strongman,
which was ready for a return to the main road.
What didn't happen, however, was the restoration of Soviet-style socialism.
This is what I called at the time market authoritarianism, where you did allow the markets still to be critical in the development of the economy.
But what Putin understood is, whereas in the 1990s the oligarchs controlled the politics, i.e. the oligarchs controlled Yeltsin,
for what Putin was critical was that he needed to control the oligarchs.
And this was the revenge of the KGB, in my opinion.
And he went about re-establishing the security state as the primary structure of the Russian Federation.
In the West, you're absolutely right.
There are still a number of prominent Western leftists who blame NATO for the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
I have to say that there is some merit to the argument that the West moved too fast with the expansion of NATO.
And it wasn't really paying attention as to what was going on in Russia at the same time.
The point about when I speak to people on the left here who say that this is all NATO's fault, that Putin's hand was forced.
I have to say, well, you can make an argument about that up until the point where Putin invades Ukraine and starts bombing civilian targets,
allows his army to rape Ukrainian women, to slaughter Ukrainian civilians, to kill children, to bomb Mariupol in the way that he did and so on and so forth.
There is no justification for the actions that the Russian military have undertaken since February 2022.
And we can argue about the politics behind it, but we have to condemn the action itself under all circumstances.
Misha, probably even the people on the left who criticise NATO most of the time, nearly all the time, they would agree on that point.
Even the most critical anti-American leftists would agree that the attack against Ukraine is a big crime.
Let me come back a little bit, Marina, to conclude, to the contradictions in the Soviet tradition and the presence of these contradictions of the Soviet socialist tradition,
the communist tradition, which is not only terrorism, KGB, Stalin, Chistka, which is also the idea of a just society and overcoming the injustice of our societies.
In how far are there any residues of this big starting idea of communism, which started with Marx in the 19th century?
Is there anything left here in Russia of today?
Because in the West, yes, there is something left, even in Salzburg, who had recently in Austria a big success of the Communist Party of Austria in the elections,
with a very charismatic young leader who says, well, he is of course condemning Stalin, condemning Stalinism,
but this is history and he wants a new start.
Any elements of these ideas of communism and socialism left in Russia?

No, I don't think so.

I don't feel any communist or socialist ideas, which really could survive in now present Russia.

And even more, I think that at least in the middle of 30s, at least, as I told before, what Stalin did, it was an implementation of absolute rightist ideas and leftist slogans.

And even Soviet intelligents and post-Soviet intelligents mostly, they hated this leftist ideas.

We have a very big idiosyncrasy to all the leftist trends, you know?

Because people read it in the textbooks and they were obliged to be communists.

And then it's a very long story and it's very difficult to say all the six in five minutes.

But still, I think that neither inside the country, nor outside, now the Russia has nothing to do with leftist ideas.

But the similarity for me between Soviet Union and today Russia is how to explain it to you.

It will be very strange to hear it, but it's a kind of simplification of life, of simplification of reality.

For people mostly, psychologically for them, it's easier to live in a simplified reality, where we have enemies, like black and white reality.

So it's how people lived in Soviet Union.

There was global, awful, capitalistic world, and we are here trying to survive in this ...

We are surrounded by enemies, but we will survive.

And now we have the same picture. It's not a capitalistic world, it's just a western world, global west.

But we again, we are trying to survive in this awful situation.

And we will win, of course, because we will overcome, we will never surrender.

It's like this, it's like this.

And I can see that for many people, simple people, it's very easy to live with such a picture of reality in their heads.

So, because before, the reality was very complex, and there was only one truth.

There were discussions about our life and so on, so there's no discussion now.

Everybody knows we are enemies and we are evil.

There's global evil, and we have to fight with this global evil.

Well, that's a gloomy, but I'm afraid, realistic picture of Marina Davidova.

Thank you very much for this discussion and for your time.

Thank you, Misha Glene.

This was a podcast produced in cooperation with Wiener Festwochen.

We're looking forward to the upcoming shows of Marina Davidova's piece, Museum of Uncounted Voices.

The first show is scheduled for May, starting with the premiere on May 22nd.

Thank you very much for your interest.

Into Music comes from Ursula Winterauer, Philipp Dietrich,

Miriam Hübel, Sound Engineers.

Ich verabschiede mich in Namen des gesamten Teams.

Bis zum nächsten Sendung.