

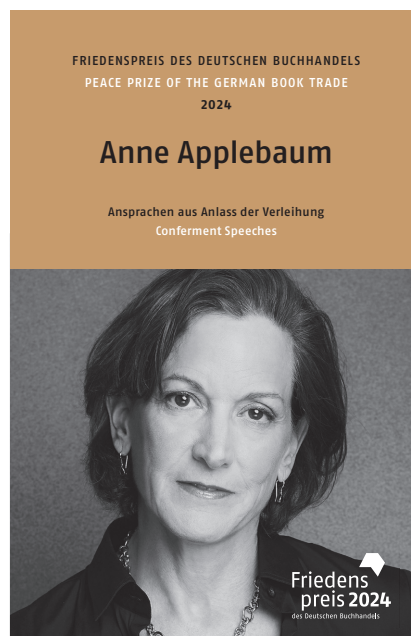
# Friedenspreis 2024

des Deutschen Buchhandels

## Anne Applebaum

Manuskripte der Ansprachen  
aus Anlass der Verleihung

Sonntag, 20. Oktober 2024,  
in der Paulskirche zu Frankfurt am Main



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*Anne Applebaum*  
Ansprachen aus Anlass der Verleihung

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# Mike Josef

Lord Mayor of the City of Frankfurt am Main

## Greeting

As we just saw in the video introduction, in 2015, Navid Kermani compellingly drew our attention to the war in Syria and the responsibility we bear for our fellow human beings. In fact, the quote we just heard ends with the following words: »[T]here is a war [...] and we too, as its close neighbours, must respond to it, possibly by military means, yes, but above all with far more determination than has so far been shown either by diplomats or in civil society.«

Anne Applebaum, you too take a clear position, you support Ukraine, and you drew our attention very early on to Russia as an aggressor state. I know that one of the most difficult things to do in politics is to get ahead of a situation, to analyse it and act accordingly.

You were ahead of the situation, as you still are today, with a clear position and analysis. For this we thank you very much. Anne Applebaum, you too criticise naive notions of peace. For you, freedom and justice are inalienable components of it. A peace that is nothing more than a calm within a country can just as easily be the consequence of oppression resulting from a state of totalitarian rule.

Your approach to peace is very much in line with the spirit of the National Assembly, Germany's first-ever democratic parliament, which met in this church in 1848 and 1849. The main task of the delegates who assembled here was to draw up a constitution for a German Empire that did not yet exist. A catalogue of fundamental rights was formulated and hotly debated. What the National Assembly ultimately came up with was quite radical: The delegates sought complete freedom of the mind, which included freedom of the press, unrestricted freedom to express oneself in public, the abolition of all censorship and the independence of teaching and research. They also insisted that freedom of conscience and belief not be

qualified in any way. The constitution did not survive for long. The democracy created in the Church of St. Paul failed due to resistance from forces ranging from conservative to reactionary. It was only decades later, with the advent of the Weimar Republic, that much of what those delegates came up with in the Church of St. Paul actually became legally binding. Much of it can also be found in Germany's current Basic Law, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today, it is still not guaranteed that fundamental rights are granted to all people everywhere. On the contrary. Mrs Schmidt-Friderichs, Mr Boos, allow me to say once again that I was truly impressed when I saw the discussions taking place at the book fair over the last few days. Whether young or old: we need spaces for discourse if we want to talk about how to protect our democracy and how to position it in the future. I am very grateful that young people, in particular, have also used the book fair to engage in precisely these kinds of debates. This is why I love the Frankfurt Book Fair and also why it is such an important event.

But let's get back to the question of human rights, which continue to be trampled on in many parts of the world. In contrast, here at the Peace Prize ceremony, the spirit of freedom fills the air of this hallowed space, which perfectly suited the self-image of the old Federal Republic in its simplicity and rigour. Today, it should remind us that we are better served by sober and cool analysis than by heated displays of extreme opinions, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Those who abandon the duties and responsibilities associated with democracy will ultimately forfeit the rights it grants them. It is our duty to defend democracy, because democracy – despite all the conflicts, debates and difficulties associated with it – gives us one thing that no other system can: freedom. This

includes freedom of opinion, human rights and a peaceful coexistence with our neighbours. Democracy is not some kind of discount store where you can pick out certain items when it suits you and leave others on the shelf. Instead, it is the task of all citizens to protect democracy and stand up for democracy. It is up to democrats to decide how strong democracy will be in the end. It is not just up to people who are here today, but also the citizens of Germany, the citizens of Europe and the citizens of all democracies in the world. I would like to make one thing clear again at this point, also in view of the debates taking place here in Germany:

It is not a courageous act to make common cause with autocrats, as some people in our country are doing or claiming. In contrast, it does take a great deal of courage to raise one's voice in an autocracy, to speak out in support of freedom and take to the streets, just as the people and civil rights activists did 35 years ago during the Peaceful Revolution in East Germany and Eastern Europe in 1989. That is courage, Ladies and Gentlemen. Raising one's voice in a democracy is a form of participation and self-empowerment.

If we go along with the autocrats' narrative and support their turn from the normative power of democracy and its accompanying achievements, including human rights and freedom of expression, then the autocrats will have won. This is why we must resist apathy and despair. It is our duty to defend democracy; otherwise we will lose our freedom. Let us fight for what is good in our societies and for what democracy has achieved - in spite of all the setbacks - namely a clear commitment to freedom and humanity.

You, Anne Applebaum, describe it as follows: »Citizens must be able to see that good information can

bring about positive change and that truth brings justice«. This is the way you define it. What does this mean for me as a representative of democratic institutions and what does it mean for politics? I believe that we, as representatives of democratic institutions, have a responsibility for our actions and decisions, that we must implement them and then take responsibility in such a way that we convince people of their validity.

This is an unshakeable fact. These fundamental values do not change because of the current situation. We can have differing opinions and responses to social questions. But we cannot justify aggression or oppression, no matter where we encounter these views - whether in the hybrid fighting of autocracies, in social media or in open military attacks that lead to great human suffering.

As democrats, it is up to us to set clear limits in this regard, because the freedom of democracy must be protected where it is under attack, Ladies and Gentlemen. In conclusion, I am convinced that if we are able to convince people of the advantages of democracy, if we take their problems seriously and remind them that human rights and freedom are hard-won achievements, we will be able to stand together against the autocrats and the destroyers of democracy.

Anne Applebaum, you are a classically ideal intellectual. You comment on current events and take a clear stance on issues, while also drawing broad historical lines and analysing them in depth. This is a good thing. And we need more people like you, especially in this day and age.

Allow me to offer you my sincerest congratulations on receiving this year's Peace Prize of the German Book Trade.

*Translated into English by The Hagedorn Group.*

# Karin Schmidt-Friderichs

President of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association

## Greeting

In the name of the Board of Trustees I am delighted to present to you today the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade and thank you for your formidable work. This year, during our work as a jury, we read your articles and books; we discussed the issues; we delved deeper and deeper into your work. With irresistible clarity, you take a stand, dear Anne Applebaum, on present-day politics. And just as your work won over the Board of Trustees, so, too, did our decision to honour you today, with the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, trigger a considerable positive response.

Anne Applebaum analyses the emergence of autocratic networks and reveals with scientific attention to detail the inhuman outgrowths of the Soviet system that emerged under Stalin: the Gulag, the famine war known in Ukraine as the Holodomor and the establishment of dictatorial systems in numerous Eastern European countries after 1945.

Other people, that is how it is, were critical of our choice. How could we give a peace prize to someone who calls for the delivery of arms to Ukraine and who takes a clear position against Putin's Russia, which is seen as an enemy of our democracy? Allow me to speak from a partly personal point of view at this point.

Anne Applebaum and I are of the same generation. We had some of the same experiences, but also many different ones. We experienced moments of history that influenced our view of the world:

When Anne Applebaum was born in Washington DC in the summer of 1964, it had been only six months since the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The building of the Berlin Wall that divided the two German states was complete, the shoot-to-kill order was in effect. All of this was far away from Washington.

Only a few days after Applebaum was born the U.S. entered the Vietnam War, which would last eleven years – and shape an entire generation. In 1968, the Prague Spring began, full of hope, before it was brutally suppressed. Two years later Willy Brandt fell to his knees in the Warsaw Ghetto, and the world stood still for a moment. I was ten years old at the time, and in that moment, I became a political person. Like so many others, in 1982, I demonstrated against the stationing of Pershing II missiles as part of my protest against nuclear armament. Securing peace by threatening mutual annihilation with weapons of mass destruction was simply not the way I wanted to live. In 1986, Ronald Reagan gave a speech at the Brandenburg Gate, in which he demanded, »Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate, Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall«. Two years later, after finishing her degree at Yale, Anne Applebaum went to Warsaw as a correspondent for The Economist. Mikhail Gorbachev, in a speech at the United Nations proposed the idea of unilateral disarmament. In 1989, Perestroika and Glasnost helped bring about the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. In only a few years many countries in the East develop democratic systems. It looked like a peaceful Europe under the umbrella of the European Union could become reality. This development seemed to confirm my own hopes and to vindicate all of those people who'd lived political lives and called for rapprochement rather than the drawing of boundaries.

Others – like you, dear Anne Applebaum – warned us that we might only be seeing what we want to see. As a U.S. citizen and, at that point, a Polish citizen too, you viewed these events from a different perspective. You did not grow up in a divided Germany, which I – living on the western side – wished to see become a country that had learned from its

past, to become neutral, just like Switzerland – or better still, to become pacifist, which is what we called for on our Easter Marches.

The transformations of 1989 triggered other responses besides jubilation. Russia pursued the path of democratisation for only a brief period. Then came a different set of seemingly simpler promises and the desire for the return to a former strength. The country's economy was picking up thanks to oil and natural gas, and many people in the West still saw this as an opportunity. »Wandel durch Handel» [Transformation through trade] was the motto behind which very different plans were gathering speed.

Before 24 February 2022, we couldn't have imagined – or perhaps we didn't want to imagine? – that there could be another war in Europe, after the Balkan wars. But it was long since there, hidden behind the Minsk agreements, behind the building of gas pipelines, transfigured in the memory of the diplomacy of Willy Brandt, Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Angela Merkel. It had all sounded so right. There was so much hope in it ...

But then Russian troops marched into Ukraine and threatened to defeat the country in a very short time. The war came out of hiding and stayed. Any hope for peace is now becoming a distant prospect. It would involve concessions that would threaten freedom and democracy in all of Europe. This does not mean that we have to take leave of our hopes for peace. However, we would be wise to align our ideals with the reality of the situation.

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Dear Anne Applebaum, with your two most recent books in which you explore the emergence of a global autocratic network that probes the weak points of our democratic systems down to the most minute detail and exploits these weaknesses for its own objectives, you provide us with two valuable field guides. You help us understand the world as it

actually is. A world that – whether we like it or not – is divided: into a decreasing number of democracies and an increasing number of autocracies that network with one another across political positions and also support each other militarily. Reading your most recent books is a painful experience. Because you show us that there is another threat, in addition to the dangers of climate change, in addition to the continuing unfair distribution of wealth, in addition to dwindling resources. This other threat was hiding for a time, much like the war in Ukraine, and is now forcing us to act. Especially for these insights I am grateful to you, as is the entire Board of Trustees.

Dear Guests, we are awarding the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade today for the seventy-fifth time. And it is more important than ever, here in the Church of St. Paul to speak about peace. But we must let go of one hope: peace is not a gift. Peace is the greatest task of our time.

In 1983, here in the Church of St. Paul, Manès Sperber was awarded the Peace Prize. He was very ill at the time. Alfred Grosser, who had received the Peace Prize in 1975, agreed to read Sperber's acceptance speech on his behalf. Every time Grosser disagreed with a statement in Sperber's speech, he would add, in a distancing manner: "says Manès Sperber". This is the culture of the Peace Prize: We are allowed to disagree with the opinions of the prize winners. We are encouraged to grow from our encounters with them. Allow me to end with a quote:

»We old Europeans, however, who abhor war, we, unfortunately, have to become dangerous ourselves in order to keep the peace«. Says Manès Sperber.

Thank you, Anne Applebaum, for consistently opening our eyes, for sharing your view towards the East with us, and for helping us see the world as it actually is!

*Translated into English by The Hagedorn Group.*

# Irina Scherbakova

»Fine Lines«

## Laudation

It is a great honour to be giving this speech today, on the occasion of the awarding of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade 2024, one of the most important prizes in Germany, to Anne Applebaum. You might find it unusual that this speech is being given by a political migrant, someone who left Russia in February 2022 and has been living in Germany ever since. I would like to explain why it is important for me to be standing here today. Allow me to go a little back in time.

I am thinking in particular of an incident that occurred at Memorial. It is a scene that – at least in retrospect – doesn't seem quite so bad, especially in light of everything else that has happened since. And yet, it has something ominous about it, and in a way also something symbolic.

It was the autumn of 2021, right before the Russian state ordered the dissolution of Memorial. That evening, we were showing the film »Mr Jones« (2019) by Polish director Agnieszka Holland in our screening room. The film tells the tragic story of a young British journalist who managed to travel to Ukraine in the early 1930s. Once there, he witnessed the terrible famine known as the *Holodomor* – a famine that claimed the lives of millions of people.

As you may already know – you can read about it in Anne's book »Red Famine« – Gareth Jones not only had great difficulty bringing the terrible truth to light, he also encountered direct resistance from Western journalists and intellectuals – of all people!

In August 1930, in deep despair, Jones wrote the following: »Russia (he is referring to today's Ukraine) is in a very bad state; rotten, no food, only bread; oppression, injustice, misery among the workers and 90% discontented. I saw some very bad things, which made me mad to think that people like the Webbs (and, I would add, people like Bernard Shaw and many others) go there and come back, after having been led round by the nose and had enough to eat

and say that Russia is a paradise. The winter is going to be one of great suffering there and there is starvation. The government is the most brutal in the world.«

We were not able to finish watching »Mr Jones« that night. Only a few minutes after it started, roughly 40 men stormed into the screening room – obviously on orders from their FSB »curators«. They pushed their way to the screen and shouted threats at us: »Traitors! Agents! Get out of this country!« We called the police, but they took the men's side, of course. Perhaps some of you may remember a photo from that time. It shows the door of the Memorial building in Moscow, which had been handcuffed shut by the police.

Looking back today, this scene seems highly symbolic in several different ways. For example, it was a clear sign that our attempts at education and enlightenment were increasingly falling on deaf and even hostile ears. In fact, soon thereafter, Memorial was formally charged and liquidated by the Russian state. The public prosecutor's office accused us of conveying a sinister and subversive narrative of the past that was particularly harmful to young people. Only a few months later, our building was impounded by the Russian state. At that time, many people in Russia and the West spoke out on our behalf, including Anne Applebaum. We were grateful for this support, as we knew that Anne had a close relationship to Memorial and our work.

For this reason, I would like to give this speech not only on my own behalf, but also in the name of my friends and colleagues at Memorial, some of whom are with us here today, too.

The first time I saw Anne was in the early 2000s at our old Memorial building in Moscow. Our staff, readers and visitors were all sitting together in an unimaginably cramped space that was packed full of books and documents. You will no doubt remember this, Anne. I often thought about what would happen

if it all suddenly fell on our heads and those of our readers. We would have been buried under a mountain of books and documents to such an extent that it would have been impossible to dig us all out. We knew that Anne was working on a book about the Gulag. At that time, we often had foreign historians, journalists and archivists visiting us. Indeed, things had started changing in the early 1990s: a number of secret archives had been partially opened; there were large amounts of documents, memoirs and witness accounts to search through; and a fair amount of archival and research work was underway. The early 2000s, however, following Putin's accession to power, marked a turning point for Russian society, including its attitude towards its communist past.

At this moment in time, it became clear that a huge gap existed between the knowledge and research findings that had accumulated, on the one hand, and the society's desire to truly understand what had happened to the country, on the other. The most important factor by far, however, was the sheer unwillingness to actually deal with difficult issues from the past. In addition to this reluctance, the general atmosphere was becoming increasingly dominated by nostalgia, resentments and the desire for a 'firm' hand and a dominant authority. And all of this took place against the backdrop of Putin's obvious efforts to instrumentalise history, that is, to establish a doctrine based on this dangerous Soviet nostalgia, on false patriotism and genuine nationalism. In other words, there was an urgent need for a convincing and generally accessible narrative that could be used to depict the past, mass oppression and state terror.

Those of us at Memorial who had long been active in educational work knew how essential such narratives were, but also how difficult they were to create. Anne's famous book *Gulag*, published in Russian translation in 2004, was written for the general reader, also in Russia, in such an accessible and understandable manner that it became a popular book, or one of the most popular books, in the best sense of the word, that is, for general Russian readers as well as for students. This is a tremendous achievement on her part. It is probably also the biggest compliment I can pay her from my position as an historian of Russian descent and, to a certain extent, as an

eyewitness to history and someone who has been dealing with the subject for years.

I believe that Anne accomplished a difficult task with her book on the Gulag, which is to create a narrative that is both true-to-life and explanatory. It was meant to function as a bridge between the accumulated research findings and the desire to understand what exactly happened to the country. In doing this, however, it also achieved something else: it became an early indicator. I wonder whether Anne would have guessed then that many years later she would write in her foreword to the latest edition of *Gulag* that there are more political prisoners in Russia today than in Brezhnev's time and that sentences and prison conditions are now similar to those in the Stalin era. Anne was one of the first people in the West to notice how the Russian state – in its attempt to create an ideology for itself – was increasingly directing its gaze towards the past. It was quite subtle at first – one might say almost aesthetic. As Anne wrote at the time: »I never thought I would live to see the day when Stalinist architecture, once thought to be a sinister embodiment of political terror, would acquire a kind of retro chic.« This, in turn, would ultimately also lead to vindications of Stalinism – and to the dozens and dozens of new monuments to Stalin.

For me – and I hope for all people like me – the truly valuable attributes of Anne Applebaum's books are not only their accessibility and enlightening pathos, but also their political relevance. It is thus neither surprising nor coincidental that almost all of the books Anne has written since then have been prescient. One need only look at their titles to see that this is true: *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe* from 2012; *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* from 2017, and *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism* from 2020. They show that she has been able to diagnose and predict the impending disasters in many different instances. These books trace how Russia's nostalgic yearning for the lost Soviet empire (palpable in *Iron Curtain*) first begins and ultimately culminates in the bloody, convulsive attempt to reclaim that empire by attacking Ukraine. *Red Famine*, in particular, shows how Ukraine became a key part of this monstrous project of perverse self-definition. Reading that book today,

it becomes imminently clear that this crime against a sovereign country and its people is in no way an anomaly or a moment of madness, but rather the central feature, the very quintessence of Putin's ideology.

Anne's book about the oppression of Eastern Europe came at a time when Putin's propaganda was endeavouring to persuade people both at home and abroad that Russia had liberated Europe from fascism, that this victory in the Second World War was a key source of pride and patriotism, and that anyone who spoke of a second occupation of the Baltic States or of the Soviet regime's suppression of democracy and freedom in the countries of Eastern Europe – Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the GDR – was a Nazi and a traitor.

Anne Applebaum, on the other hand, helps readers understand that the victory over fascism did not – and could not – entail any form of liberation for the countries of Eastern Europe. The Stalinist regime had not brought freedom to these countries but merely another form of dictatorship. When her book about the mass famine in Ukraine was published, it soon became obvious that people in the West knew very little about this mass famine that had taken place in the Sowjet Union and in Ukraine in the early 1930s. It was also clear that not many people were aware that the famine had been organised and intentional. The full impact of Stalin's gruesome strategy had descended upon Ukraine and secured his revenge for the country's resistance to collectivisation. The battle against Ukrainian villages also went hand-in-hand with the deliberate destruction of Ukrainian national culture and the arrest and shooting deaths of thousands of its key representatives.

At the same time, it is very important that Anne Applebaum's books – despite their unsparing portrayal of the communist regime and its crimes – are full of empathy for the victims. And it was very significant to us that many of the names and testimonies of Gulag survivors – people we at Memorial knew well and people whose documents can be found in our archives – appear in Anne's book. She made it possible for their voices to be heard.

Another characteristic of Anne Applebaum's books and speeches – and one that I truly value – is her sober, non-sentimental and illusion-free view of Russian history and the Putin regime. Indeed, there is nothing as irritating as hearing people speak of the so-called ›mysterious Russian soul‹ and those constant references to the words of the Russian poet Tyutchev, and I quote: »Russia cannot be understood with the mind alone, nor can you measure it with reason. It has its own particular form. Russia is something you simply have to believe in.« And so on, and so forth.

This definition conveys a mixture of fear and odd illusions, and it also reveals the very concrete and quite cynical economic interests held by those who have been profiting from Putin's Russia for many years. I see this mixture very clearly here in Germany. And it is also clear which forces – be they ultra-left or ultra-right – make use of this mixture for their own political gain.

I am certainly not the only one grateful to Anne that she has been warning for years about the dangers emanating from Putin's regime, much in the same way we did when we were still in Russia. Allow me to quote her again: »My concern is the revival, with amazing speed, of a belligerent Russian state, one led by men who were taught and trained by the Soviet state and are thus prepared to use a familiar blend of terror, deception, and military force to stay in power. One might argue, of course, that such men never really went away. But their level of aggression is rising just as our once formidable ability to counter them seems to have vanished altogether.«

Before the start of the war of aggression against Ukraine, we had repeatedly attempted to explain the nature of Putin's policies to politicians in the West, unfortunately with very little success. In particular, we had tried to clarify how a policy of increased repression aimed at the inside of the country would inevitably lead to a policy of aggression aimed at the outside. Much like we have done all these years at Memorial, Anne Applebaum also attempts in her publications and speeches to explain why it is necessary to examine and come to terms with the communist past in order to be able to conduct any kind of research into *Putinism* as an ideology – because



Putin himself is constantly looking to the past. Indeed, *Putinism* differs from other ideological and cultural phenomena in that it lacks any kind of future-oriented vector. It is a battle over the past – against the future.

In this regard, Anne Applebaum is an indisputable ally for us. In all of her books and speeches, she has tried not just to warn people, but also to convince them that the West must be ready to defend itself in the true sense of the word. In each of the speeches in which she emphasised the West's responsibility, she made direct reference to the Russian human rights activists who were astonished by this Western shortsightedness, opportunism and relativism.

Had voices such as theirs received more attention in the West, it would have been possible to stop Putin much earlier – I am certain of that. Even after the annexing of Crimea and the Russian invasion of East Ukraine, it is unbelievable to see the extent to which many people – and above all many politicians – in the West continue to harbour illusions about achieving peace with Putin. In taking this posture, they are approaching Ukraine not as a sovereign state, but more or less as a Russian zone of influence. There were only a few voices similar to Anne Applebaum, who recognised that Putin's ›historical‹ falsification with regard to the supposed historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians in July 2021 entailed a direct preparation for war. Her latest book »Autocracy Inc.« explores the temptations of authoritarianism, the danger of networking among dictatorial regimes – Iran, Russia, North Korea, China – and the extent to which these regimes cooperate with one another. She also looks at the danger of populism undermining the foundations of democracy as well as the various pretexts under which populism is attempting to achieve this, one of which is the so-called ›fight for peace‹. Anne sheds light on the support Putin gives to these forces, because he knows that this ›fight for peace‹ is in reality merely a covert form of support for his aggression.

I am giving this speech in the middle of very difficult days for Ukraine. The situation there is only exacerbated by the lack of support and any determination to counter Putin on the part of the West, as well as by the constant expectation that peace can be made with him and that everything will return to the way it was before. Anne Applebaum never tires of repeating that these are dangerous illusions, that this war has changed Europe forever, and that it has shattered everything that seemed unchangeable. The fact is that a Putin victory would strengthen the appeal of authoritarianism – and this is what Anne's latest book is about. Indeed, anyone who is inspired to follow Putin's anti-democratic path to politics will subsequently receive or at least feel his support. In this situation, it is difficult for an historian to maintain an optimistic and sober view of events. And yet, despite everything, Anne manages to do just that. There is a line by the famous Ukrainian poet and writer Lesya Ukrainka from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, found in her dramatic poem »Cassandra« (a figure in Greek mythology who is cursed to see into the future but never be heard) that I've often thought of in recent days. Allow me to paraphrase: »In the past, only a fine line separates lies from the truth; in the future, however, even that line will be gone.« This gloomy prophecy has, it seems, come true.

Today, I see Anne's role as an historian, author, journalist and public intellectual in ensuring that this fine line separating truth from lies in the past and present remains firmly in place! Her task is to make sure that this line not be blurred by autocrats and propagandists to the point that we can no longer distinguish the lies from the truth. Indeed, she is one of very few people who have warned us that what begins as a narrative line can turn into an actual front-line.

We should all be grateful for her clarity.

*Translated into English by The Hagedorn Group.*

# Anne Applebaum

## »Against pessimism«

### Acceptance speech

Your Excellencies, dear friends, dear colleagues, dear lovers of books, all of you who have gathered here in Frankfurt for this annual book fair, one of the world's great celebrations of literature, let me begin by thanking you Mr Lord Mayor, and you, Karin Schmidt-Friderichs for your kind words, and by thanking the jury for this prize, one that is for me a truly unexpected honor. It is such a privilege to find myself in the company of the past winners of this prize, especially the novelists and the philosophers and the poets, all people who have a gift for imagining different worlds. I am, by contrast, a historian and a journalist, a person who seeks to explain and understand this world, a task that can often be less inspiring and less satisfying. I am especially grateful that you have included me in this distinguished group.

But let me also extend special thanks to Irina Scherbakova, an extraordinary person who began her career in the same way that I began mine: which is by interviewing survivors of the Soviet gulag. Except, of course, that she did it twenty years before me, at a time when the work of writing history in Russia was dangerous. I had the very good luck to begin my work on the history of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, an era when survivors and historians alike were free to speak as they wished, and when it felt—at least to some—as if a new Russia could be constructed on top of the fundamental, historical truths that Scherbakova and her colleagues at Memorial revealed.

That possibility quickly faded. I can even tell you the exact moment when it finally came to an end: it was the morning of February 20, 2014, when Russian troops illegally marched across the peninsula of Crimea. This was the moment when the work of writing Russian history once again became dangerous. Because that was the moment when the past and present collided, when the past became, once again, a blueprint for the present.

No historian of tragedy ever wants to look up, turn on the television and find that their work has come to life. When I was researching the history of the Soviet Gulag in the Soviet archives in the 1990s, I assumed that this story belonged to the distant past. And when I wrote about the Soviet assault on Eastern Europe, a few years later, I also thought that I was describing an era that had ended. And when I studied the history of the Ukrainian famine and of the Soviet famine, the tragedy at the center of Stalin's attempt to eradicate Ukraine as a nation, I did not imagine that this same kind of story would or could repeat itself in my lifetime. But in 2014, old plans were taken out of those same Soviet archives, they were dusted off, and they were put to use once again.

For those who've forgotten the invasion of Crimea, let me remind you what happened. Russian soldiers who spread across the peninsula traveled in unmarked vehicles, wearing uniforms without insignia. They took over government buildings, they removed the local leaders, they barred them from their offices and for several days afterwards, the world was confused. Were these »separatists« who were staging an uprising? Were they »pro-Russian» Ukrainians?

I was not confused. I knew that this was a Russian invasion of Crimea, because it looked exactly like the Soviet invasion of Poland. That invasion took place seventy years earlier, in 1944 but it also featured Soviet soldiers wearing Polish uniforms, a Soviet-backed communist party pretending to speak for all Poles, a manipulated referendum and a series of other acts of political fakery that were designed to confuse not only the people of Poland, but also Poland's allies in London and Washington. And the invasion itself was only the beginning. After 2014, and then again after the full-scale invasion of February 2022, cruelly familiar patterns also repeated themselves. First in Crimea, then in Donetsk and Luhansk, then, during their occupations of Kharkiv, Kherson,

Sumy and Kyiv provinces, Russian soldiers treated ordinary Ukrainians as enemies and spies. They used random violence to terrorize people, at Bucha and elsewhere. They imprisoned civilians for minor offenses – the tying of a ribbon with Ukrainian colors on a bicycle, for example – or sometimes for no reason at all. They built torture chambers, as well as filtration camps, which we could also call concentration camps. They transformed cultural institutions, schools and universities, to suit the nationalist, imperialist ideology of the new regime. They kidnapped children, they took them to Russia, they changed their identities, as the Nazis once did in Poland. They stripped Ukrainians of everything that makes them human and that makes them vital and that makes them unique.

In different languages, at different times, this kind of assault has had different names. We used to talk about *Sovietization*. Now we talk about *Russification*. There is a German word too: *Gleichschaltung*. But whatever word you use, the process is the same. It means the imposition of arbitrary autocratic rule: a state without the rule of law, without guaranteed rights, without accountability, without checks and balances. It means the destruction of all stirrings or survivals or signs of the liberal democratic order – the *Freiheitliche demokratische Grundordnung*. It means the construction of a regime, in Mussolini's famous words, defined as totalitarian: »Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.« In 2014, Russia was already on the way to becoming a totalitarian society, having launched two brutal wars in Chechnya, having murdered journalists and arrested critics. But after 2014, that process accelerated. The Russian experience of occupation in Ukraine, paved the way for harsher politics inside Russia itself. In the years after the Crimean invasion, opposition was repressed further, independent institutions were completely banned. Memorial, the unique historical and human rights group co-founded by Irina Scherbakova, was one of them.

This deep connection between autocracy and imperial wars of conquest has a logic to it. If you truly believe that you and your regime have the right to control all institutions, all information, all organizations; that you can strip people not just of rights but of

identity and language and property, life; then of course you also believe that you have the right to inflict violence on whomever you please. Nor will you object to the human costs of such a war: if ordinary people have no rights, no power and no voice, then why should it matter whether they live or die?

Not that this connection is anything new. Two centuries ago, Immanuel Kant, in whose memory this prize lecture was created, also described the link between despotism and war. More than two millennia ago, Aristotle wrote that a tyrant is inclined »to foment wars in order to preserve his own monopoly of power.« That same argument, and that same Aristotle quotation, featured in one of the pamphlets circulated in 1942, in this country, by the White Rose Society. Also in the 20th century, Carl Von Ossietzky, the German journalist and activist, became a fierce opponent of war, not least because of what it was doing to the culture of his own country. As he wrote in 1932: »Nowhere is there as much belief in war as in Germany ... nowhere are people more inclined to overlook its horrors and disregard its consequences, nowhere is soldiering celebrated more uncritically.«

Since the invasion of Crimea in 2014, this same process of militarization, this same celebration of combat has gripped Russia too. Russian schools now train small children to be soldiers. Russian television encourages Russians to hate Ukrainians, to consider them subhuman. The Russian economy has been militarized: Some 40% of the national budget will now be spent on weapons. To obtain missiles and ammunition, Russia now does deals with Iran and North Korea, two of the most brutal dictatorships on the planet. The constant talk of war in Ukraine has also normalized the idea of war in Russia, making other wars more likely. The Russian leaders now speak casually of using nuclear weapons against their other neighbors, and regularly threaten to invade them.

As in Von Ossietzky's Germany, criticism of the war is not merely discouraged in Russia. It is illegal. And my friend Vladimir Kara-Murza made the brave decision in 2022 to return to Russia and to speak out against the invasion from there. Why? Because he wanted the history books to record that *someone* opposed the war. And he paid a very high price. He was arrested. His health deteriorated. He was often kept

in isolation. When he and others who had been unjustly imprisoned were finally released, in exchange for a group of Russian spies and criminals, including a murderer taken from a German prison, his captors hinted that he should be careful, because in the future he might be poisoned. And of course he had reason to believe them, since Russian secret policemen had already poisoned him twice.

But he was not entirely alone. Since 2018, more than 116,000 Russians have faced criminal or administrative punishment for speaking their minds. Thousands of them have been punished specifically for objecting to the war in Ukraine. Their heroic battle is mostly carried out in silence. Because the regime has imposed total control on information in Russia, their voices cannot be heard.

But what about us? What about all of who are gathered here in this historic church, a place so closely connected to German democracy, to the German liberal tradition? What about all of us in the rest of Europe - what should we do? Our voices are not restrained or restricted. We are not jailed or poisoned for speaking our minds. How should we react to the revival of a form of government we thought had disappeared from this continent forever? The occupation and destruction of eastern Ukraine is happening just a day's drive by car from here, or a two-hour flight - or it would be a two-hour flight, if the airports were open. Almost the same distance as London.

In the early, emotional days of the war, many did join the chorus of support. So in 2022, as in 2014, Europeans again turned on their televisions to see scenes of a kind they knew only from history books: women and children huddled at train stations, tanks rolling across fields, bombed out cities. In that moment, many things suddenly felt clear. Words very quickly became actions. More than fifty countries joined a coalition to aid Ukraine, militarily and economically, an alliance built at unprecedented speed. I witnessed myself, in Kyiv, Odesa and Kherson, the effect of food, military aid and European support. It felt miraculous. But as the war continues, doubt has crept in, which is not surprising. Since 2014, faith in democratic institutions and alliances has declined dramatically, in both Europe and America. Maybe our indifference to the invasion of Crimea played a larger role

in this decline than we usually think. The decision to accelerate economic cooperation with Russia in the wake of the invasion certainly created both moral and financial corruption as well as cynicism. That cynicism was then amplified by a Russian disinformation campaign which we dismissed or ignored.

Now, faced with the greatest challenge to our values and our interests in our time, the democratic world is starting to wobble. Many wish the fighting would somehow, magically, stop. Others want to change the subject to the Middle East, which is another horrific, tragic conflict, but it is one where we Europeans have far less influence, and almost no ability to shape events. A Hobbesian world makes many claims upon our resources of solidarity. An engagement with one tragedy does not denote indifference to other tragedies. We must do what we can where our actions will make a difference.

Slowly, another group is gaining traction too, especially here in Germany. And these are people who do not support or condemn, but rather affect to stand above the argument - either believing or pretending to believe that it is a moral argument - and declare »I want peace.« Some even call for peace by referring solemnly to the »lessons of German history«.

As I am here today accepting a peace prize, this seems the right moment to point out that »I want peace« is not always a moral argument. This is also the right moment to say that the lesson of German history is not that Germans should be pacifists. On the contrary, we have known for nearly a century that a demand for pacifism in the face of an aggressive, advancing dictatorship can simply represent the appeasement and acceptance of that dictatorship.

I am hardly the first person to point this out. In 1938, Thomas Mann, then already in exile, horrified by the situation in Germany and the complacency of the liberal democracies, denounced what he called the »pacifism that brings about war instead of banishing it.« In 1942, after the Second World War had started, George Orwell condemned his compatriots who called upon Britain to stop fighting. »Pacifism,« he wrote, »is objectively pro-Fascist. This is elementary common sense. If you hamper the war effort of one side you automatically help that of the other.« In

1983, in this same church, Manès Sperber, who has already been quoted today, who was the recipient of that year's Peace Prize, also argued against the false morality of his era's pacifists, who at that time wanted to disarm Germany and Europe in the face of the Soviet threat: »Anyone,« he declared, »who believes and wants to make others believe that a Europe without weapons, neutral and capitulating, can ensure peace for the foreseeable future is mistaken and is misleading others.«

I think we can use some of these words once again. Many of those in Germany, and in Europe, who now call for pacifism in the face of the Russian onslaught are indeed »objectively pro-Russian,« to use Orwell's phrase. Their arguments, if followed to the logical conclusion, mean that we should acquiesce to the military conquest of Ukraine, to the cultural destruction of Ukraine, to the construction of concentration camps in Ukraine and to the kidnapping of children in Ukraine. It means we should accept *Gleichschaltung*. We are nearly three years into this war – what would it have meant to plead for peace in early 1942? Those who we praise now as the German resistance, the White Rose Society – did they just want peace? Or were they trying to achieve something more important?

Let me say it more clearly: those who advocate »pacifism, « and those who would surrender not just territory but people, principles and ideals to Russia, have learned nothing from the history of the twentieth century at all.

The magic of the phrase »never again« has blinded us to reality before. In the weeks before the invasion in February 2022, Germany, like many other European nations and like many others around the world, found war so impossible to imagine that the German government refused to supply Ukraine with weapons. And yet here is the irony: had Germany, and the rest of NATO, supplied Ukraine with those weapons well in advance, maybe we could have deterred the invasion. Maybe it would never have happened. Perhaps this too was, in Thomas Mann's words again, »a form of pacifism that brings about war instead of banishing it.«

But let me repeat again: Mann loathed the war, as well as the regime that promoted it. Orwell hated militarism. Sperber and his family were themselves refugees from war. Yet it was because they hated war with such passion, and because they understood the link between war and dictatorship, that they argued in favor of defending the liberal societies they treasured. In 1937, Mann called for »a militant humanism, conscious of its vitality and inspired by the knowledge that fanatics without shame or doubt must not be allowed to exploit and lay waste the principles of freedom, patience, skepticism.« Orwell wrote that »to survive you often have to fight, and to fight you have to dirty yourself. War is evil, and it is often the lesser evil.« As for Sperber, I am going to quote him again, for the second time today, he declared in 1983 that »we old Europeans, who abhor war, unfortunately have to become dangerous ourselves in order to keep the peace.«

Dear friends and dear colleagues, I am quoting all of these old words and speeches in order to convince you that the challenges we are facing are not as new as they seem. We have been here before, which is why the words of our liberal democratic predecessors speak to us. European liberal societies have been confronted by aggressive dictatorships before. We have fought against them before. We can do so again. And this time, Germany is one of the liberal societies that can lead the fight.

To prevent the Russians from spreading their autocratic political system further, we must help the Ukrainians achieve victory, and not only for the sake of Ukraine. If there is even a small chance that military defeat could help end this horrific cult of violence in Russia, just as military defeat once brought an end to the cult of violence in Germany, we should take it. The impact will be felt on our continent, and around the world. Not just in Ukraine but in Ukraine's neighbors, in Georgia, in Moldova, in Belarus. And not just in Russia, but among Russia's allies: In China, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea.

The challenge is not only military. This is also a battle against hopelessness, against pessimism, and even against the creeping appeal of autocratic rule, which is also sometimes disguised beneath the false language of »peace.« The idea that autocracy is safe and

stable, that democracies cause war; that autocracies protect some form of traditional values, while democracies are degenerate; this language is also coming from Russia and the broader autocratic world, as well as from those inside our own societies who are prepared to accept as inevitable the blood and destruction inflicted by the Russian state. Those who accept the erasure of other people's democracies are less likely to fight against the erasure of their own democracy. Complacency, like a virus, moves quickly across borders.

The temptation of pessimism is real. In the face of what feels like an endless war and an onslaught of propaganda, it is easier just to accept the idea of decline. But let's remember what's at stake, what the Ukrainians are fighting for – and it is they, not us, who are doing the actual fighting. They are fighting for a society, like ours, where independent courts protect people from arbitrary violence; where the rights to thought and speech and assembly are guaranteed; where citizens are free to engage in public life, and not afraid of the consequences; where security is guaranteed by a broad alliance of democracies and prosperity is anchored by the European Union.

Autocrats like the Russian president hate all these principles because they threaten their power. Independent judges can hold rulers to account. A free press can expose high-level corruption. A political system that empowers citizens allows them to change their leaders and international organizations can enforce the rule of law. And that is why the propagandists of autocratic regimes will do what they can to undermine the language of liberalism and the institutions that guard our freedoms, to mock them and to belittle them, inside their own countries and in ours as well.

I understand that for Germans, it is a new experience to be asked for help, to be called upon to provide weapons to be used against an aggressive military power. But this is the true lesson of German history: not that Germans should never fight, but that Germans have a special responsibility to stand up and take risks for freedom. All of us in the democratic world, not just Germans, have been trained to be critical and skeptical of our own leaders and of our own societies, so it can feel awkward when we are asked to defend our most fundamental principles. But please hear me: don't let skepticism decline into nihilism. We, in the rest of the democratic world, need you.

In the face of an ugly, aggressive dictatorship on our continent, our principles, our ideals, and the alliances we have built around them are our most powerful weapons. Against the resurgence of authoritarianism, we in the democratic world are natural comrades. And so we must now affirm – and act upon – our shared belief that the future can be better, that the war can be won and that dictatorship can be defeated once again; our shared belief that freedom is possible, and that true peace is possible, on this continent and around the world.

Thank you all again, so much for this prize and for your time and attention.



Friedens  
preis 2024  
des Deutschen Buchhandels

- 1950 Max Tau – *Adolf Grimme*  
1951 Albert Schweitzer – *Theodor Heuss*  
1952 Romano Guardini – *Ernst Reuter*  
1953 Martin Buber – *Albrecht Goes*  
1954 Carl J. Burckhardt – *Theodor Heuss*  
1955 Hermann Hesse – *Richard Benz*  
1956 Reinhold Schneider – *Werner Bergengruen*  
1957 Thornton Wilder – *Carl J. Burckhardt*  
1958 Karl Jaspers – *Hannah Arendt*  
1959 Theodor Heuss – *Benno Reifenberg*  
1960 Victor Gollancz – *Heinrich Lübke*  
1961 Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan – *Ernst Benz*  
1962 Paul Tillich – *Otto Dibelius*  
1963 Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker – *Georg Picht*  
1964 Gabriel Marcel – *Carlo Schmid*  
1965 Nelly Sachs – *Werner Weber*  
1966 Augustin Kardinal Bea und W. A. Visser 't Hooft –  
*Paul Mikat*  
1967 Ernst Bloch – *Werner Maihofer*  
1968 Léopold Sédar Senghor – *François Bondy*  
1969 Alexander Mitscherlich – *Heinz Kohut*  
1970 Alva und Gunnar Myrdal – *Karl Kaiser*  
1971 Marion Gräfin Dönhoff – *Alfred Grosser*  
1972 Janusz Korczak (posthum) – *Hartmut von Hentig*  
1973 The Club of Rome – *Nello Celio*  
1974 Frère Roger, Prior von Taizé – *(keine Laudatio)*  
1975 Alfred Grosser – *Paul Frank*  
1976 Max Frisch – *Hartmut von Hentig*  
1977 Leszek Kołakowski – *Gesine Schwan*  
1978 Astrid Lindgren – *Hans-Christian Kirsch, Gerold U. Becker*  
1979 Yehudi Menuhin – *Pierre Bertaux*  
1980 Ernesto Cardenal – *Johann Baptist Metz*  
1981 Lew Kopelew – *Marion Gräfin Dönhoff*  
1982 George F. Kennan – *Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker*  
1983 Manès Sperber – *Siegfried Lenz*  
1984 Octavio Paz – *Richard von Weizsäcker*  
1985 Teddy Kollek – *Manfred Rommel*  
1986 Władysław Bartoszewski – *Hans Maier*  
1987 Hans Jonas – *Robert Spaemann*  
1988 Siegfried Lenz – *Yohanan Meroz*  
1989 Václav Havel – *André Glucksmann*  
1990 Karl Dedecius – *Heinrich Olschowsky*  
1991 György Konrád – *Jorge Semprún*  
1992 Amos Oz – *Siegfried Lenz*  
1993 Friedrich Schorlemmer – *Richard von Weizsäcker*  
1994 Jorge Semprún – *Wolf Lepenies*  
1995 Annemarie Schimmel – *Roman Herzog*  
1996 Mario Vargas Llosa – *Jorge Semprún*  
1997 Yaşar Kemal – *Günter Grass*  
1998 Martin Walser – *Frank Schirrmacher*  
1999 Fritz Stern – *Bronislaw Geremek*  
2000 Assia Djebar – *Barbara Frischmuth*  
2001 Jürgen Habermas – *Jan Philipp Reemtsma*  
2002 Chinua Achebe – *Theodor Berchem*  
2003 Susan Sontag – *Ivan Nagel*  
2004 Péter Esterházy – *Michael Naumann*  
2005 Orhan Pamuk – *Joachim Sartorius*  
2006 Wolf Lepenies – *Andrei Pleşu*  
2007 Saul Friedländer – *Wolfgang Frühwald*  
2008 Anselm Kiefer – *Werner Spies*  
2009 Claudio Magris – *Karl Schlögel*  
2010 David Grossman – *Joachim Gauck*  
2011 Boualem Sansal – *Peter von Matt*  
2012 Liao Yiwu – *Felicitas von Lovenberg*  
2013 Swetlana Alexijewitsch – *Karl Schlögel*  
2014 Jaron Lanier – *Martin Schulz*  
2015 Navid Kermani – *Norbert Miller*  
2016 Carolin Emcke – *Seyla Benhabib*  
2017 Margaret Atwood – *Eva Menasse*  
2018 Aleida und Jan Assmann – *Hans U. Gumbrecht*  
2019 Sebastião Salgado – *Wim Wenders*  
2020 Amartya Sen – *Frank-Walter Steinmeier*  
2021 Tsitsi Dangarembga – *Auma Obama*  
2022 Serhij Zhadan – *Sasha Marianna Salzmann*  
2023 Salman Rushdie – *Daniel Kehlmann*  
2024 Anne Applebaum – *Irina Scherbakowa*