

Presse Information

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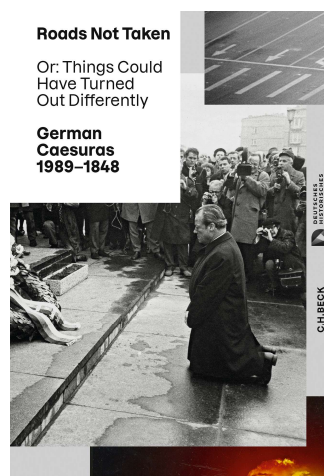
DEUTSCHES
HISTORISCHES
MUSEUM

Roads not Taken. Or: Things Could Have Turned Out Differently

German Caesuras 1989 – 1848

The companion book to the DHM exhibition is now on the market

Things could have turned out differently – from this perspective the new companion book to the Deutsches Historisches Museum's exhibition "Roads not Taken" (showing until 24 November 2024) takes a look back at 14 turning points in German history from 1989 to 1848. The English version will be published on 17 October 2023 by C.H. Beck.



Deutsches Historisches Museum

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With the exhibition "**Roads not Taken. Or: Things Could Have Turned Out Differently**" and its companion book, the Deutsches Historisches Museum throws a new, unusual light on German history in the 19th and 20th centuries. Starting from a historical-philosophical concept developed by the historian Dan Diner, the exhibition poses the question of whether decisive historical events could have had a different outcome. In this quest the Deutsches Historisches Museum has undertaken an experiment. It not only explores decisive moments that have left their mark on history, but also posits alternative courses that were not realised due to other decisions, persons, or simply accidents of fate. These well-known historical events, and the sheer profusion of happenings that led to them, are seen in a new light. There is one limit, however, which it never exceeds: it does not present these possibilities as counter-factual versions of history – they really could have happened.

The authors of the companion volume, like the exhibition visitors, pass through German history from 1989 to 1848 – backwards, as it were. In the individual chapters the essays provide detailed examinations of the political entanglements, personal connections, and unexpected occurrences during, for example, the building of the Berlin Wall, the Cold War, the assumption of power by the National Socialists, the revolution and the democratisation of Germany. In the book it was possible to devote more room than in the exhibition to the question of the alternative outcomes that were available at these turning points in history. These

possibilities are discussed with the aid of historical documents and additional research, thus opening the way to a new assessment of what actually happened.

This original approach to history, a departure from the straight line, sharpens our consciousness of the historical judgements we make. For this fine line between reality and possibility stimulates a reflection on history, on the relevance of every individual action that was taken at the time, and the ramifications it had for the future. Precisely when faced with current socio-political developments, this can be a useful tool in assessing the relevance of occurrences, questioning the actual facts of the situation, and evaluating the various ways of interpreting it.

Roads not Taken. Or: Things Could Have Turned Out Differently German Caesuras 1989 – 1848

Edited by Fritz Backhaus, Dan Diner, Julia Franke, Raphael Gross, Stefan Paul-Jacobs and Lili Reyels

Ca. 288 pages, with ca. 90 colour illustrations

French fold brochure

ISBN: 978-3-406-80095-5 | 28 €

The book is available from 17 October 2023 on in the DHM Museum Shop, the DHM ticket offices, and the [DHM-Onlineshop](#), as well as in bookshops.

For **review copies** please apply directly to the press office of **Verlag C.H. Beck**:

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On the exhibition of the Deutsches Historisches Museum

Starting from key moments in German history, the Deutsches Historisches Museum presents a look back at decisive historical events in the 19th and 20th centuries. It brings actual turning points face to face with possible courses of history – what might have happened if it were not for various factors. Using the example of 14 distinctive caesurae in the German history, the exhibition explores the potential probabilities of unrealised history – prevented by accidents, averted by false starts, or failed due to other kinds of shortcomings.



The exhibition begins in 1989 with the Peaceful Revolution in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and ends in the year 1848, when Germany first attempted a democratic awakening. In reverse order it takes up such topics as "Ostpolitik", the building of the Berlin Wall, the Cold War, the assumption of power by the National Socialists, as well as revolution and democratisation at decisive tipping points, and illustrates the fact that history did not have to proceed the way it did. In this way, milestones such as the Stalin Note of 1952, the Korean War in combination with the Berlin Airlift of 1948/49, the unsuccessful demolition of the bridge near Remagen in 1945, the attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler in 1944, the deposal of Reich Chancellor Brüning in 1932, the revolution of 1918, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, and the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, appear in a new light.

This unusual perspective for a history museum intends to encourage people to take a more careful look at accepted facts and to foster an understanding of the principal open-endedness of history, which is a result of many different constellations and decisions, actions and omissions.

The exhibition was realised in cooperation with the **Alfred Landecker Foundation**.