

Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.)



# Freedom, Equality, Solidarity

Thoughts on Europe's Future – from  
Germany, France and Poland

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Thoughts on Europe's Future – from  
Germany, France and Poland

With contributions by

*Marianne Birthler*

*Marek A. Cichocki*

*Daniel Cohn-Bendit*

*Heiner Geißler*

*André Glucksmann*

*Dilek Güngör*

*Martin Hirsch*

*Adam Krzemiński*

*Jacek Kucharczyk*

*Adam Michnik*

*Aleksandra Niżyńska*

*Jean-Fabien Spitz*

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*Antònia Torres*

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# Introduction

JOACHIM FRITZ-VANNAHME AND ARMANDO GARCÍA SCHMIDT

The idea for this book emerged from the depths of a crisis that posed unprecedented challenges to the European Union, leaving many in Europe with serious doubts about the Union and its future. The following essays and conversations address the guiding principles of modern Europe – freedom, equality and solidarity – from French, Polish and German viewpoints. In so doing, they represent a reflective moment in which each author reconsiders his or her country, in the midst of Europe, with a critical eye to the past and recalibrated expectations for the future.

As trust dissipates and fears proliferate during this era of bank, debt and state crises, there is urgent need for reflection on many things: Why is there a European Union? Why do 27 member states and a half billion people cultivate, day by day, a culture of contentious debate as an integral feature of peaceful coexistence? What is it that holds the Union together at its core? A common budget of a mere one percent of its total GDP? A handful of common institutions, most of which are often referred to simply as “Brussels”? A single market featuring widely applicable rules and freedom of movement for goods, people, capital and services?

These things alone will not hold the EU together. It is no accident that Article 2 of the Treaty of Lisbon begins with a reference to the values upon which the Union is founded: “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.” The values identified here are key to pluralism, tolerance, solidarity and gender equality. There is much talk of a “European community of values.” But what, exactly, does it mean or entail? In this publication, German, Polish and French nationals have come together as Europeans with their respective history, culture and tradition in hand. What divides them? How are they different? What unites them when it comes to concepts such as freedom, equality and solidarity?

The illustrious principles of freedom, equality and solidarity have undergone transformations in each of these countries. In some, this has been

a slow process spanning a century; in others, like Poland, the change came with breathtaking speed, spanning only two to three decades. But it is more than history that connects these principles; they are connected as well by the network of relations that the contributors here underscore, often in surprising ways. “Freedom and equality” may have been the banner theme under which Enlightenment and revolutionary thinkers rallied in the 18th century, but without solidarity, freedom can devolve into the selfish pursuit of singular interests, and equality loses the lustre of diversity. Solidarity is therefore also addressed in the pages that follow.

In selecting our contributors, we paid no attention to age, profession, political party or religious background. We were simply interested in capturing what these individuals have to say, each of whom have addressed the broad terrain of these principles in their native Germany, Poland or France either by way of a public speech, a publication or their personal life story. Our only criteria was that each principle be considered from a German, Polish and French perspective. The points of view offered were left entirely up to the contributors.

The intellectual pursuits of the contributors are mirrored in the eyes of three photographers who sought to capture images of freedom, equality and solidarity in everyday life in each country. The only explicit connection between text and image are these three principles. Thus, the photographs are not intended to visualize the texts; they represent instead three additional approaches to “reading” the principles of freedom, equality and solidarity by other means.

The book demonstrates that the ideas of freedom, equality and solidarity continue to capture the avid attention of Europeans. But for those who might think these principles are safe and secure within the European Union, the contributors point to sobering developments: inequalities within and between the member states are growing; solidarity as a task of the Union has been battered by arguments over debt servicing and austerity measures; and the freedoms suffering restrictions in neighbor states to the south and east are under (sometimes open) fire in member states, as well. Given this state of affairs, we believe this book and its contributions hold particular urgency. The principles of freedom, equality and solidarity cannot be taken for granted within the European Union – ensuring their viability requires constant attention.





**FREEDOM**

## Western Freedom – Eastern Freedom? Toward a Common Culture of Memory

MARIANNE BIRTHLER

“The Englishman loves liberty as his lawful wife, and if he does not treat her with remarkable tenderness, he is still ready in case of need to defend her like a man, and woe to the red-coated rascal who forces his way to her bedroom – let him do so as a gallant or as a catchpoll. The Frenchman loves liberty as his bride. He burns for her, he is aflame, he casts himself at her feet with the most extravagant protestations, he will fight for her to the death, he commits for her sake a thousand follies. The German loves liberty as though she were his old grandmother.”

What Heinrich Heine satirized in the 19th century appears true to this day: While many Germans certainly prize their freedom, it hardly tops their hierarchy of values. Indeed, quite a few Germans view freedom with suspicion, equating it with selfishness and free-market radicalism. The risks and burdens of an open society are mounted as arguments against the principle of liberty. Self-will, responsibility and a liberal attitude toward life have difficulty competing with the enticements of a protective and custodial social order.

For three generations, most Germans have lived in a free country whose democratic institutions, structures and practices are regarded as stable and exemplary. This stability is underpinned by the value that the great majority

of the citizens of the former West Germany place on liberty and democracy – and by the fact that their experience of freedom in the past six decades was consistently linked to rising prosperity, economic power and internal as well as external security.

### **West Europe's core liberal values**

Just a few years after the end of the horrors that Germany's National Socialists unleashed upon Europe and the world, the free nations reached out to reconcile with Germany – an essential precondition to the integration of the Federal Republic into the rising Western European and trans-Atlantic community of values. This process extended beyond the political sphere and the decisively Western orientation of its early postwar governments. It also transformed West German society through countless encounters, travels and friendships. These were further fostered by influential institutions, such as the Franco-German Youth Office, German-American student exchanges and the Action Reconciliation Service for Peace. This lively exchange with Western countries shaped much of the generation that now bears responsibility in politics, the media and the universities.

It is a paradox of social change that even those members of the '68 generation who once revered Lenin and Mao, supported communist regimes and were blind to human rights violations behind the Iron Curtain later (sometimes much later) morphed into reliably liberal political and social actors espousing the core liberal values of Western Europe. Yet, even today, it is hard to say how stable this embrace of a liberal and democratic system would have been under challenging political or economic conditions. To date, it has never been exposed to a true stress test.

### **Yearning for freedom**

History unfurled very differently in the former East Germany. Under Soviet occupation, no time was lost in establishing a dictatorship following the Allied victory and the division of Germany into four occupation zones. The German Democratic Republic (GDR), founded in October 1949, subsequently belonged to the Soviet-dominated sphere for four decades, until just before its demise.

In many respects, the people of the GDR shared the fate of other Central and East European societies, whose hopes for finally living in freedom after the war and the Nazi horrors were bitterly dashed. Under Stalin's rule, communist dictatorships were established that brought economic, social and cultural harm as well as destruction to countries already devastated by war. Freedom and human rights counted for nothing; from then on, surveillance, discipline and repression characterized everyday life.

But the 40-year history of communist rule in Europe continually met with resistance and revolts, which were brutally repressed time and again. In every East Bloc country, people yearned for freedom. Countless numbers of them were imprisoned and convicted or had to go into exile. So far, the history of this diverse and courageous resistance has scarcely entered into the historical memory of Europe as a whole.

The significance of resistance in France's political and cultural self-understanding is indisputable. The Polish Home Army, the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the Poznań Uprising of 1956 and the Solidarity movement are each important elements of Polish identity today. The case is similar in Germany for the resistance against Hitler and – more recently – for the June 1953 revolt against the Communist Party and the 1989 revolution. Catastrophes are burned into the collective memory, but so too are the dignity and courage of those who opposed tyranny and totalitarian ideologies, often risking their lives. Remembrance of them is not only an expression of respect and gratitude, but also an affirmation of values. Anyone who pays tribute to Sophie and Hans Scholl also honors their principles and their love of freedom.

### **Manifestations of civil courage**

When people in Central and East Europe come together to proudly commemorate their Peaceful, Singing or Velvet revolutions of 1989, these events do not merely hark back to the past. They are also manifestations of civil courage, human dignity and love of freedom that are crucial for the future. That is what makes these remembrances valuable for society, today and tomorrow. Past experiences become resources for the future.

However, the free Europe of the 21st century has not exactly seized this opportunity. There are no shared symbols, such as memorial sites or days of remembrance, commemorating the 20th-century struggle for freedom.

Nor have there been political decisions to support systematic research into this history. It is as though we have no need to harness the power of memory to confront possible dangers in the future – be they new authoritarian tendencies or ideological temptations. In the wake of dictatorships or civil wars, it remains unusual for societies – and, even more so, their elites – to devote time and effort to reflecting critically and especially self-critically on the past.

Why such restraint? More than a few individuals are concerned with saving their own skin, continuing their career under new conditions or just repressing inconvenient questions that could detract from their self-image. Of course, they use other reasons to justify themselves publicly: Looking backward is a drain on energy needed for reconstruction; no one is really interested in the past anymore; reminders of human rights violations impede initiatives for reconciliation and social peace; confronting the perpetrators and political decision-makers only spawns new injustices. In some East Bloc countries – especially those that were part of the former Soviet Union – there is also a strong tendency to blame the Russians alone; phenomena such as collaboration and betrayal among the native populace become virtually invisible.

It is quite possible that continuities in personnel reinforce this trend. Has anyone ever asked about the political past of all the staff members assigned to the European Parliament and the European Commission after the accession of the Central and East European countries, or their links to the secret police? Nor is there reason to believe that background checks have been done for German EU staffers.

### **Fostering a culture of remembrance**

In the face of such widespread collective denial, those who refuse to forget – whether as individuals or groups – have a hard time. Their efforts rarely reach the public. They may be defamed, persecuted politically and legally, and sometimes even physically attacked.

Yet dangers lurk when politicians too eagerly embrace this subject. They may use their political opponents' past (or even just allegations about it) as a cudgel, especially when no documentary evidence is available to contest the charges. When wrestling with the past becomes a political weapon without the rule of law affording protection against abuse, this can be just as harmful as silence and inaction.









A society that closes its eyes to its own past damages its own self-awareness and thus its culture. No one contests this with regard to the appealing elements of their own history. But the culture of remembrance envisioned here calls for an unromanticized view of the past. It is not limited to heroic stories, triumph and self-sacrifice. Denial of a society's own responsibility, failures and betrayal of freedom spawns nostalgia or falsifies history altogether. As Wolf Biermann said: "A half-truth is a whole lie."

Freedom and lies are mutually exclusive. This is why Václav Havel wrote in his famous treatise against oppression, *The Power of the Powerless*, of the necessity of "living in truth." A free and democratic Europe requires a shared culture of remembrance that pays tribute to the struggle for freedom and honors those who risked life and limb for it; that calls injustice and its perpetrators by their true names; and that mourns the many millions of people who fell victim to European dictatorships.

### **Coming to terms with European communism**

Like any other culture, a culture of remembrance needs people who nurture it, institutions that promote it, media that communicate it, and politicians who support it. However, two decades after the collapse of communism in Europe, this support still has a long way to go. The European Council did pass resolutions in 1986 and 2006 condemning communist crimes in Europe and calling for a process of coming to terms with them. But the European Parliament has taken its time. Only on April 2, 2009, did it pass a resolution acknowledging its responsibility to work through the legacy of European communism. Marking the 70th anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, this resolution declared August 23 to be the "European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Stalinism and Nazism."

This is at least a start. It can be hoped that practical steps will follow this declaration. Simply leaving it to the countries involved is insufficient. European standards are needed to induce these countries – which are "developing countries" in this regard – to take additional initiatives.

There are at least two reasons why the European Parliament and especially the European Commission should finally fulfill their responsibility to grapple with the communist era in Europe. First, Central and Eastern societies will only truly have arrived in united Europe when their experiences and



suffering under 20th-century dictatorships are regarded as part of European history. And, second, a free and democratic Europe cannot afford to forgo commemorating the resistance against totalitarian regimes on its own soil. The revolt against communist rule and foreign domination in Europe is one of the most precious treasures in the history of European freedom.







**Marianne Birthler**



**Marek A. Cichocki**



**Daniel Cohn-Bendit**

#### **MARIANNE BIRTHLER**

Born in 1948. From September 2000 to March 2011, Birthler was Federal Commissioner for the Records of the Ministry for State Security of the former GDR. Previously, among other positions, she worked as a catechist in Berlin and was part of the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights. In 1989–1990, she worked at the Central Round Table; from March to October 1989, she was a deputy in the East German People’s Chamber; and from October 3, 1990 through the first all-German elections, she was a member of the German Bundestag and spokesperson for the Alliance 90/The Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) party. Among other functions, Birthler was Minister for Education, Youth and Sport for the state of Brandenburg from 1990 to 1992, and in 1993–1994 was general speaker for the national Alliance 90/The Greens board. From 1995 to 1999, she headed the Berlin office of the Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary group. Even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Marianne Birthler showed strong solidarity with victims of political persecution, protested against the repression of the SED regime, was a co-initiator of the Berlin Contact Phone project (*Berliner Kontakttelefon*) at the Gethsemane Church, and was a part of the independent committee to investigate the state abuses committed on October 7 and 8, 1989. She has also published her own biography “Halbes Land. Ganzes Land. Ganzes Leben” (Hanser Verlag) in February 2014.

#### **MAREK A. CICHOCKI**

Born in 1966. Cichocki has been the Research Director of the Natolin European Centre in Warsaw and Editor-in-Chief for *New Europe Natolin Review* magazine since 2004. From 2007 to 2010, he served as Advisor to the President of the Republic of Poland Prof. Lech Kaczyński and acted as “Sherpa” for the Lisbon Treaty negotiations. Since 2003 he has also been publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the yearly *Teologia Polityczna*. He is permanent professor at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences of the University of Warsaw. Cichocki has authored many books, essays and articles on international relations (Poland – European Union, *Halfway* (2002); *Europe Kidnapped* (2004); *Power and Remembrance* (2006); *Institutional Design and Voting Power in the European Union* (2010); *Problem of Political Union in Europe* (2012)).

#### **DANIEL COHN-BENDIT**

Born in 1945. The publicist and politician Daniel Cohn-Bendit has been active in European politics since the 1960s. He was a Member of the European Parliament for the Greens from 1994 to 2014, and from 2002 to 2014, co-president of the Greens/Free European Alliance Group in the European Parliament. As a Member of the European Parliament, Cohn-Bendit served on the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs,



Joachim Fritz-Vannahme



Armando García Schmidt



Heiner Geißler

was Vice-Chairman of the Subcommittee on Security and Defense, and a member of the Budget Committee. In the late 1960s, he was a spokesperson and leader of the May Revolution in Paris. In connection with the protests, he was expelled from the country and barred from re-entry until 1978. Thereafter, he was active with Joschka Fischer in the Frankfurt Sponti scene, and beginning in 1978, he worked as a publicist, serving as primary editor and publisher of the alternative city magazine *Pflasterstrand*, among other positions.

#### JOACHIM FRITZ-VANNAHME

Born in 1955. Director of the Future of Europe program at the Bertelsmann Stiftung. Studied history, political science and German language and literature in Freiburg. Trained as a newspaper editor. Journalist from 1977 to 2006, most recently serving as Europe correspondent for the weekly *Die Zeit* newspaper. Since 2007 has been part of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Europe program. Thematic priorities include European politics, economics and society.

#### ARMANDO GARCÍA SCHMIDT

Born in 1971. Senior project manager in the Shaping Sustainable Economies program. Studied history, sociology and romance languages in Bielefeld, Grenoble and Madrid. Research associate at the University of Hagen. Since 2001, has been a part of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Europe program, with responsibility for the Charlemagne Prize and Forum on Europe, the German-Spanish Forum, the Summer Academy on Europe, the International Commission on the Black Sea, and Bertelsmann Stiftung initiatives in southeastern Europe.

#### HEINER GEISSLER

Born in 1930. CDU politician, Federal Minister (ret.), publicist. Geißler studied philosophy and law in Munich and Tübingen, and in the 1960s was appointed first to be a judge, then chief of staff of Baden-Württemberg's Minister of Labor and Social Affairs. In 1965, he was elected to the German Bundestag. From 1967 to 1977, he was Minister of Social Affairs, Youth, Health and Sports in Rhineland-Palatinate, subsequently serving as Secretary General of the CDU; Federal Minister for Youth, Family and Health; member of the National Executive Committee of the CDU; and Deputy Chair of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group. After his career as a professional politician, he was active with numerous NGOs, including *Aktion Courage*. He has been a member of Attac since 2007. In addition, Geißler's services as an arbitrator and mediator have been in demand for more than 15 years, most recently in connection with the Stuttgart 21 project.





André Glucksmann



Dilek Güngör



Martin Hirsch

#### ANDRÉ GLUCKSMANN

Born in 1937. French philosopher and political author, son of German-Jewish émigrés. Glucksmann is counted among the “New Philosophers.” Once an advocate of Maoist-Anarchist positions, he became a vehement critic of all philosophical systems, ideologies and totalitarian worldviews. He was one of the intellectual protagonists of the student riots in Paris in May 1968. His experiences in the student movement and the confrontation with the communist reality converted him to a radical criticism of totalitarianism and utopias, giving rise to the “Nouveaux philosophes” movement. Glucksmann studied philosophy in Lyon and at the École Normale Supérieure Saint-Cloud.

#### DILEK GÜNGÖR

Born in 1972. Journalist. Güngör graduated with a degree in English and Spanish translation from the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz and performed graduate work at the Journalistische Seminar, also in Mainz. At the University of Warwick in England, she earned a master’s degree in race and ethnic studies (2004). From 1998 to 2003, she was a journalist for the *Berliner Zeitung*; for the years 2007–2008, she was awarded a scholarship from the Script Workshop at the University of Television and Film Munich. She is the author of columns including “Unter uns” (*Berliner Zeitung*, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*) and “Weltstadt” (*Berliner Zeitung*), and is author of the libretto for a musical called “Turkish for Lovers” (2008–2009 Opera Neukölln/Berlin). In 2007, she published her first novel in German, “Das Geheimnis meiner türkischen Großmutter” (Piper Verlag).

#### MARTIN HIRSCH

Born in 1963. Hirsch studied neurobiology at the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Paris after graduating with a degree from the School of Public Administration at the Ecole Nationale d’Administration (ENA). He has been Chairman of the Agence du Service Civique volunteer service since its founding in 2010. Hirsch began his political career in 1997 as Chief of Staff to Bernard Kouchner and as adviser to the private office of Martine Aubry. After seven years in the office of the president of the Central Union of Emmaüs Communities (1995–2002), he became President of Emmaüs France in 2002. He resigned from this post in 2007 after he was appointed to the French government. Ending the left-right cleavage in French politics was a primary concern for Hirsch. In this context, he introduced the “income of active solidarity” (revenu de solidarité active) minimum wage program. In 2009 and 2010, he also served as youth commissioner.



Adam Krzemiński



Jacek Kucharczyk



Klaus Mellenthin

### ADAM KRZEMIŃSKI

Born in 1945, Krzemiński is a journalist and editor. He writes regularly for the Polish weekly magazine *Polityka* and the German weekly *Die Zeit*. He is Chairman of the Polish-German Society in Warsaw. After studying German language and literature in Leipzig and Warsaw, he began his journalistic activities. The focus of his writing has been on social developments in Germany and German-Polish relations. Krzemiński has won several awards for his work in both Poland and Germany, including the Grand Merit Cross and the Goethe Medal.

### JACEK KUCHARCZYK

Born in 1962, Kucharczyk is a sociologist and political analyst, and is president of the Institute of Public Affairs, a think-tank in Warsaw. He studied English, philosophy and sociology at Warsaw University, University of Kent, New School for Social Research in New York and the Polish Academy of Sciences, where he obtained a doctorate in 1997. In the 1980s, he was active in the independent Polish student and publishing movement. He is a member of the Advisory Board of Think Tank Fund at the Open Society Foundation and co-funder of the European Partnership for Democracy (EDP) in Brussels and Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS) in Prague. He has authored and edited numerous policy briefs, articles, reports and books on democratic governance, civil society, populism and European affairs. He frequently comments on current affairs for Polish and international media.

### KLAUS MELLENTHIN

Born in 1969, Mellenthin has worked as a freelance photographer since 1993 with a focus on portraits, advertising and travel, drawing themes from real life. He has lived in Berlin since the summer of 2012. He mixes photojournalism with studio photography; while he values a clear style with excellent technique, he loves direct contact with his themes. Since the fall of the Wall in 1989, Mellenthin has dealt extensively with the issue of freedom from a number of different perspectives and worked with this theme in the context of this book as well. He has worked and lived in Barcelona, Paris, London and Stuttgart for many years, but today operates mainly in Berlin and London. ([www.my-photographer.com](http://www.my-photographer.com))



Adam Michnik



Aleksandra Niżyńska



Jean-Fabien Spitz

#### ADAM MICHNIK

Born in 1946. Michnik studied history at the University of Warsaw. After participating in student protests, he was expelled and imprisoned from 1968 to 1969, but then returned to the opposition. He is considered one of the forerunners of *Solidarność* and led the Polish revolution at the side of Lech Wałęsa, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jacek Kuroń and Bronisław Geremek. He was imprisoned again from 1981 to 1984 and from 1985 to 1986. In 1989, he founded the liberal Polish daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and has been its editor and publisher since. Michnik has published several books and has received many awards, including the OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* has described Michnik as the most important journalist in Eastern Europe (August 27, 2011).

#### ALEKSANDRA NIŻYŃSKA

Born in 1986. Niżyńska studied social sciences and law in Bremen and Warsaw. After completing her studies, she worked on several research projects in Berlin as well as at the Mazovia Centre for Culture and Arts and the Res Publica Foundation in Warsaw. Since 2010, she has been a PhD student in applied social sciences at the University of Warsaw and works at the Institute of Public Affairs (*Instytut Spraw Publicznych*) in Warsaw.

#### JEAN-FABIEN SPITZ

Born in 1952. Philosopher and political scientist Spitz has been a professor of political philosophy at the Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne since 2001. Spitz studied philosophy at the prestigious École Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Paris and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), subsequently obtaining a doctorate focusing on John Locke's conceptions of natural law and sovereignty. His scholarly work since that time has concentrated particularly on the ideas and work of Locke as well as on the theory and development of republicanism in France. In addition to teaching and research activities at the universities of Paris Nanterre, Caen and Montreal, he has been a member of the Institut Universitaire de France since 2007.





**Michał Szlaga**



**Antònia Torres**

### **MICHAŁ SZLAGA**

Born in 1978. Szlaga is a visual artist and documentalist working with photography and film. A graduate of the Department of Photography at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk/Poland, his artistic practice focuses on various aspects of Poland. His major projects include *Stocznia Szlaga/Shipyard*, *Szlaga* (an album based on the photo material gathered from 1999 to 2013) and *Polska – Rzeczywistość/Poland – Reality* (an ongoing photographic diary that currently contains more than 2,000 images). ([www.szlaga.com](http://www.szlaga.com))

### **ANTÒNIA TORRES**

Born in 1973. Studied photography in Barcelona (Barcelona Gris Art) and then design at the Escola Massana Barcelona and video production at the I.D.E.P, also in Barcelona. Torres worked as a photographer in Spain until 2007 and then for the United Nations in Geneva. She currently divides her time between Germany and France. She became a BFF professional member in 2014. Her work has been published in several international newspapers and magazines, including *Le Monde*, *The Guardian* and *August Man Singapore*. Her sense of empathy for others and eye for detail have led her to portraiture art. She is uniquely talented in drawing out the beauty and distinctive features of her models, irrespective of age, profession, upbringing and culture, capturing their timeless elegance. ([www.antoniatorres.com](http://www.antoniatorres.com))