



by Dimitrij Kapitelman
Hanser Berlin

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Fiction

🏆 Nominated for the
German Book Prize 2025

Russian Specialities

Russische Spezialitäten

review

Sales

NEW: Italy (Keller), Norway (Kagge), Sweden (Polaris)!
Further sales: Denmark (Politikens)

‘Russian Specialities’ is a witty and thought-provoking read about the power of Russian propaganda. Dimitrij Kapitelman’s novel is a timely literary reflection on the contemporary geopolitical landscape that will appeal to fans of Marina Lewycka and Andrey Kurkov.

The novel’s narrator, Dimitrij, was born in Kyiv, but has spent most of his life in Germany. His family left Ukraine as Jewish refugees in the mid-1990s, when he was eight. His elderly parents are from the Soviet generation. They run a Russian delicatessen and wholesale business in Leipzig, making regular trips to Poland and Ukraine to stock up on produce. After scraping through lockdowns, the delicatessen is wound down as Dimitrij’s father slowly succumbs to dementia.

Dimitrij is shocked to find his parents supporting Putin’s Russia against Ukraine. He sees their near-constant consumption of Russian TV blinding them to reality and alienating them from old friends back in Kyiv. He hears the language he loves, his mother tongue, being used to deny atrocities and claim the Russians are in the right. Russian-speakers, his parents believe, are threatened with violence in a fascist Ukraine.

Determined to see the war for himself and to prove his parents wrong, Dmitrij takes a train to Kyiv. Through his eyes, we see a city grown used to constant danger, where alarms raise little more than a shrug. While convinced that the Russian language must remain part of multilingual Ukraine, Dmitrij feels uncomfortable that he does not speak Ukrainian, and he hears tales of inhumane pressure in the Ukrainian army. He speaks to the people he encounters on his journey and learns about their hopes and fears. On his return, he doesn't try to change his parents' minds – but despite some uncomfortable confrontations, he has strengthened his own connection to the country of his birth and the language he grew up with.

This original novel keeps readers entertained with a combination of humorous anecdotes from everyday life in Leipzig's Russian-speaking community, observations on language and dementia, and accounts of political manipulation. Kapitelman's combination of whimsy and melancholy, and his delight in language, is reminiscent of the writing of Saša Stanišić.

Find out more:

<https://www.hanser-literaturverlage.de/buch/dmitrij-kapitelman-russische-spezialtaeten-9783446282476-t-5525>

press quotes

Kapitelman combines a quirky cast of ex-Soviets in Germany and Ukraine with moving insights about the power of community and the threat posed by Russian propaganda – a fun yet thought-provoking read on an urgent topic for our times.

Katy Derbyshire, NBG Reader

“Kapitelman is a brilliant storyteller — funny, self-deprecating and clear-sighted.”

Tobias Rapp, Spiegel online

about the author

Dmitrij Kapitelman was born in Kyiv in 1986, and came to Germany with his family at the age of eight, as a 'quota refugee'. He studied Political Science and Sociology at Leipzig University and graduated from the German School of Journalism (DJS) in Munich. He now works as a freelance journalist. His first book, *Das Lächeln meines unsichtbaren Vaters* ('The Smile of my Invisible Father') was published in 2016 to huge acclaim, earning him the Klaus-Michael Kühne Prize. *Eine Formalie in Kiew* ('A Formality in Kyiv') followed in 2021, for which he was awarded the Ravensburger Verlag Family Novel Book Prize.

Previous work: *Das Lächeln meines unsichtbaren Vaters*, Hanser Berlin (2016); *Eine Formalie in Kiew*, Hanser Berlin (2021); *Wie wir schreiben wollen*, Hanser Berlin (2022).

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