Dear Readers,

It is an honor to present today’s edition of the Jewish Voice from Germany. When this paper first saw the light of day five years ago, the publisher and executive editor of Transatlantic Relations, Berlin/Maurice Weiss, had precise intention: building bridges between Germany and Jews across the world. The Jewish Voice from Germany has been raising its voice ever since, thus creating links between communities and consciousness of a new reality where Jewish life in Germany blossoms again. Over the last decade, Berlin has become one of the most desirable destinations among Israelis who choose to live abroad. In 2012, the Israeli Embassy in Berlin estimated the number of Israeli residents in the German capital between 10,000 and 15,000. When we look at Jewish communities in Germany on the whole, the number has steadily continued to grow. Today, there are about 100 communities whose more than 100,000 members have made Germany their home. Jewish culture has therefore increasingly contributed not only to Berlin’s but to the entire country’s international, multi-faceted face. This edition of the Jewish Voice from Germany revolves around relations between Germany and American Jews. Jewish organizations and the Jewish community in the United States are key partners in our relations and play a vital role in discussions about our partnership, open societies, free trade, and free science, as well as the fight against racism, populism, and xenophobia.

Distinguished leaders of the Jewish community visit Germany regularly to get a first-hand impression of modern Jewish life in our country. Over the past years, groups including Rabbis from the Boston area, from San Francisco and from Los Angeles came to Germany to meet with our growing Jewish communities and to experience today’s Jewish life in Germany as well as our deeply-rooted culture of Holocaust remembrance.

I am very grateful to see that more and more bridges are being built day after day and I congratulate the Jewish Voice from Germany for its fabulous work. I hope that it will continue to raise its voice in the spirit of a peaceful and common future on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Sigmar Gabriel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany

Transatlantic Relations

German Jews in America

The United States has provided opportunities to live and prosper

By William H. Weitzer

The Leo Baeck Institute—New York/Berlin maintains an archive that documents the lives of Jews in Germany and throughout the German-Jewish diaspora, including Jews from German-speaking lands who played significant roles in major chapters of Jewish history and American history. As America’s first large-scale surge of Jewish immigrants, they utilized traditions, education, and cultural ideals brought from their homelands. Their backgrounds and experiences laid the foundation for what it meant to become an American Jew.

An overview of the impact of German Jews on America might be divided into three periods: the late 18th century and most of the 19th century when German Jews were the largest percentage of American Jewry; the late 19th and early 20th centuries when German Jews continued their influential role but were outnumbered by immigrants from Eastern Europe; and, the German Jews who escaped Nazi Germany.

In the 19th century, German-speaking newcomers were one of the country’s largest immigrant groups. Roughly 5.5 million arrived from Central Europe, some 140,000 of them Jewish. As the only major country to recognize the German revolutionary parliament during its short existence (1848-49), America became a destination for immigrants and political refugees. For Jews, the history of America was particularly compelling: they could literally emancipate themselves by stepping onto America’s shores. Jews arriving in America from Germany brought with them a host of cultural influences and desires. Some came from a broad education shaped by Enlightenment ideals that prized Bildung, which valued self-education, critical reflection, and openness to new ideas. While these underlying values were German in origin, America was a perfect canvas for their expression.

Immigrants embraced the economic opportunities of America, usually with modest beginnings. They worked in trades they knew well: peddling goods, tailoring clothes, making cigars, selling cattle, horses, grain, and wine. The American economy offered lucrative opportunities for the skills and instincts that had sustained them in their homelands – entrepreneurship, making connections, and navigating from the margins of society. Many Jewish businesses took root and flourished, and Jews occupied an important place in the burgeoning economy.

When the American Civil War broke out in 1861, many immigrants were eager to join the war effort. The war provided opportunity for civic engagement and for making their commitment visible to America. German Jews participated not only on the battlefields as soldiers and officers, but also in the public debates and business endeavors that shaped the war’s outcome and the era of reconstruction to follow. The Civil War brought German Jews into a passionate, national conflict and allowed them to play a role in the shaping of America’s future.

I am very grateful to see that more and more bridges are being built day after day and I congratulate the Jewish Voice from Germany for its fabulous work. I hope that it will continue to raise its voice in the spirit of a peaceful and common future on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

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Don’t Get Carried Away by Irrationalism

Checks and balances are still working

By Daniel Killy

We are still alive. We survived. It truly is a miracle. We were preparing for the worst, those who are religious and even those who are not called for their rabbis, priests or pastor respectively – the others called for mercy in the context of apocalyptic approaching. What is the issue here, Irma or any other major natural disaster? No. We are talking about the last nine months – the victory of Donald Trump. However, has destiny struck or are we just hysterical over here in Germany? Let us have a closer look on what really changed during the last nine months...

As a German-American who already personally is torn between Europe and the States, the worst nightmare has come true for the author. Having spent all his life in building bridges across the pond, defending the United States among his friends in Europe has even become harder. Everyone among those slick liberal German friends had fallen in love with the all so refined and intellectual Barack Obama – finally some wit in the White House again. While his second term was ending and the campaign turned rougher, people here got more and more hysterical. Nobody liked Hillary, and nobody ever imagined that a ridiculous figure like Donald Trump could possibly make it to the White House. Well, he did – and no, it was not fake news or a manipulated election after all. Trump won the majority of the electoral votes. Blame it on the ballot system that Hillary Clinton called more votes; no – it’s not blame it on Trump. By the way, all of the author’s heroes of postmodern political romanticism, it was his policy and the Democrats’ failure to nominate a valid candidate that made Trump possible. In a democratic system, voters punish failure. In addition, the lack of consistency of the Obama administration – aside from all the international obstacles he had to face – was the lack of ability to leverage these structures; the court verdicts and other legal decisions against Trump’s government are already legion. Democracy is working seamlessly, although the White House permanently seems to be throwing wrench in the works. But apart from all the Flynn’s, Bannon’s, Spicers, Sessions’ and Scaramuccis there is something you might call a government; considering the fact that most of the experts’ jobs still are vacant, the administration is working.

A welcome demon

Moreover, some of the decisions Trump has been announcing during his first months are not even that far fetched. Deploying more troops to Afghanistan and Africa might be a wiser decision than having withdrawn them. Using some explicit language towards North Korea sounds more feasible than declaring red lines every second month and not acting when somebody is crossing them and it was high time to come clear with the United Nations. Furthermore, at least the Democrats seem to have finally comprehended the Trump principle – first articulating a maximum demand, be it concerning Obama Care or a legal foundation for the “Dreamers,” and then starting to negotiate a realistic outcome. After all, once you have adjusted to this way of thinking, it is a pretty predictable way of doing politics. As mentioned before, the Democrats finally seem to have gotten the message as they are currently sitting down with Trump negotiating a legal successor for the Obama-era executive order called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Trump had previously criticized DACA as executive overreach, but the President has also expressed his empathy for the young immigrants it protects. In addition, a deal might not even be too far away. “We thought we had an opportunity to get something good done, and let’s see what happens. We’re very hopeful that they will keep their word. I’d like to see it within the next little while. Look, I don’t want to set a date. Soon. Soon is the right word,” the New York Times quotes Charles Schumer, the Senate Minority Leader.

Other maximum demands like building the “beautiful wall” between Mexico and the USA and exiting the Paris Agreement seem to have evaporated into thin air for now. The harshest political enemy Trump is facing is called reality, the second foremost answers to the name of democratic structures. It is about high time for Germany and Europe to understand that Donald Trump might be one of the worst and poorest educated presidents in modern American history but that he is by no means a monster or supernatural destiny bringing the seven plagues into the world. For many a complacent German, Trump is a highly welcomed demon to reinvigorate their anti-Americanism barely buried by Barack Obama. You can only counter irrationalism with rational behavior. So let’s give it a fresh start, Germany – the earth is still turning.

American democracy rests on firmer foundations than that of Germany

Américan friends and acquaintances denied knowing anyone having voted for Trump – except one geologist from Houston, a Democratic base voter who openly expressed his disappointment with the Democratic establishment.

The whole of Germany seemed to suffer from a collective hangover the morning after – TV-anchors and other colleagues projected the worst scenarios. In addition, all of them seemed to be right when the great Trump show kicked off. Weird right-wing creatures in the White House’s situation room, family business in the Oval Office, erratic tweets from the Commander-in-Chief – it felt like the end of the world as we knew it. The sense of intellect made way for the terror of oversimplification.

Ignoring democratic results

Of course, Obama was more charming; of course, he made it more comfortable for Europe and the Germans to close ranks as well. “We thought we had an opportunity to get something good done, and let’s see what happens. We’re very hopeful that they will keep their word. I’d like to see it within the next little while. Look, I don’t want to set a date. Soon. Soon is the right word,” the New York Times quotes Charles Schumer, the Senate Minority Leader. Other maximum demands like building the “beautiful wall” between Mexico and the USA and exiting the Paris Agreement seem to have evaporated into thin air for now. The harshest political enemy Trump is facing is called reality, the second foremost answers to the name of democratic structures. It is about high time for Germany and Europe to understand that Donald Trump might be one of the worst and poorest educated presidents in modern American history but that he is by no means a monster or supernatural destiny bringing the seven plagues into the world. For many a complacent German, Trump is a highly welcomed demon to reinvigorate their anti-Americanism barely buried by Barack Obama. You can only counter irrationalism with rational behavior. So let’s give it a fresh start, Germany – the earth is still turning.

Daniel Killy is a renowned Jewish-German journalist
JEWISH LIFE

A New York Rabbi in Berlin
The secret of continuity is education and learning

By Rabbi Yehuda Teichtal

Just recently, my wife Leah and I walked our daughter to the chupah. Here in Berlin. Right in the heart of the city, at the Tiergarten. Just told my grandfather, a Holocaust survivor, that we were o

Building is an expression of trust. Be it building houses, a family, a community. We started building in Berlin, in Germany. Today, I am deeply touched when I walk into our school. Some 200 children are studying here or being cared for in kindergarten. Some 500 children want little to do with Judaism. Our tradition lives.

We are full of positive energy which brings people together, working for a common goal: a free and tolerant society. We are aware that there are problems. We are shocked by the rise of the right-wing AIP party in Germany.

Our goal is to inspire people so that they may inspire other people. Everybody has the ability to do good and we have to help the person bring out the good in them.

Just before Rosh Ha-Shanah, many people have come to me to express their worries and concerns. What will the new year hold in store? Time and again, I heard, we have put trust in this society we have built our lives here, our jobs, our families. They are worried about the impact the refugees will have on German society. Let’s be clear about this: It is a good thing that Germany took in the refugees. But many refugees come from countries where they were breastfed with hatred of the Jewish people. They do not feel the hatred of the Jewish people that is part of German life. It is not their fault. But we have a collective responsibility as a society and make sure – here in Germany even more than elsewhere – that there is tolerance for all people. We have to demand from the political leadership that they do not make ourselves heard because then we would be respected more. On the contrary. We will be respected more if we stand up and say: this is our culture and we are here to stay. We will be respected by those who may not like the idea of having a multicultural society. We stretch out our hands because we can all be different but equal. This is what makes for a healthy society. Not everybody is the same but we all are part of something much larger. We are reaching out to all, whether they are Jews, Muslims, atheists. It is up to us to create a strong Jewish life and a strong society. Where Jews have a good Jewish life, Christians a good Christian life, Muslims a good Muslim life – and at the same time be open and respect one another.

Memorials are important. We must always remember the past. But memorials are not sufficient. We cannot live, we cannot educate a new generation only through memorials, looking at the past. Instead we must live our tradition, fill it with life. The Jewish people have survived nearly three millennia – not because of our language, not because of our land, but because of our tradition. And because of education and learning.

A friend complained recently that his children want little to do with Judaism. I asked him what he had taught them.

“Build ye houses and dwell in them; that ye may live in them, and that ye may flourish in the land that I gave unto you. And lo, I send for many fishers, and will send for great waters.”

Bringing Jewish thought. Our tradition lives.

“Bring out the good in them. Teach your children that it’s good to be a Jew! Teach them that being Jewish is joyful and positive.” People, especially young people, are looking for values. We must give them a strong, clear Jewish identity.

Our goal is to inspire people so that they may inspire other people.

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German Jews in America

The years following the Civil War provided great visibility for German Jews in America. Many working in textiles went on to become major manufacturers, buying land and building grand shopping emporia that reflected not only their success, but their status as Americans.

One of the trademark characteristics of German-Jewish culture was its association with "modern" Judaism. Many fundamental ideas of the modern Jewish world were born in the German states in the early 19th century. But it was in America where the Reform and Conservative movements found exceptional opportunity.

Philanthropic culture

When newer immigrants crowded the Lower East Side of New York City, the more established and successful of the German Jews moved to the Upper East Side where their desired social status was harder to maintain, often with better surroundings. Socially and symbolically, German Jews had become the established set.

By the 1890s the American Jewish community overtook that of Germany, becoming the largest center of Jewish life outside of Eastern Europe. The overall heightened status of German Jews brought with it a philanthropic culture, and many became leaders of aid societies and benevolent organizations.

Philanthropic entities were created to assist Jews in need, including the American Jewish Committee.
How Germany ticks
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The Best of Both Worlds
How science and education build bridges across cultures

Since the times of Immanuel Kant and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Germany has upheld a strong tradition in science and education. Its schools and universities have brought forth some of the most influential thinkers and scientists of their times - among them Alexander von Humboldt, Max Planck, Carl Friedrich Gauß, and of course Albert Einstein. Particularly, starting in the second half of the 19th century, German-born Jewish intellectuals and scientists gained prominence in various fields, from chemistry to medicine, from philosophy to pedagogy - men and women alike.

Paul Ehrlich (1854-1915) pioneered cancer research and was honored with the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1908. Max Born (1882-1970), a physicist and mathematician who was professor at the University of Göttingen, is most noted for his advancement of quantum mechanics. He, too, was honored with a Nobel Prize. His contemporary and fellow mathematician in Göttingen Emmy Noether (1882-1935) is considered one of the most influential scientists of the 20th century although she was never permitted to submit a habilitation treatise - women were generally excluded from professorships at most German universities until after World War I. Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), a leading member of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, along with Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Max Horkheimer (1889-1973), and Herbert Marcuse (1888-1979) is considered one of the foremost thinkers and philosophers of the 20th century. The list goes on and on.

Many of these pioneers and professors contributed not only to the advancement of science and knowledge in Germany, but also changed the face of the American scientific community. When the Nazi regime passed a law on April 7, 1933 forcing "non-Aryan" and politically critical civil servants out of their jobs, many leading Jewish intellectuals left the country to start a new life in the United States. Not that they were always welcomed with open arms - anti-Semitism was prevalent across the Atlantic too. But at least their lives were not at stake.

By 1944, more than 133,000 German Jews, many of them highly skilled and educated, had emigrated to America. Among these émigrés were Nobel laureates and renowned scientists like physicist Albert Einstein, philosopher Hannah Arendt as well as chemists Otto Loewi and Max Bergmann. "German Jewish émigrés had a huge effect on U.S. innovation. They helped increase the quality of research by training a new generation of American scientists, who then became productive researchers in their own rights," says Peter Moser, an assistant professor of economics at Stanford University, who has conducted the first systematic analysis of the émigrés' effects on U.S. innovation. The data sets Moser and her team have studied reveal that U.S. patents in the particular fields of these German Jewish émigrés increased by 3 percent. In Moser's words, "getting these highly talented refugees was a big plus for American science."

Brain drain
Over the post-war decades, U.S. universities and research institutes have retained their attraction for German scientists. For some time in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was even talk of a massive brain drain from Germany to the United States. Not only were working conditions and salaries more attractive, contrary to German universities their American counterparts were offering post-doctorates and young academics a tenured track. As a result, promising young German scientists packed their bags and moved to California, Massachusetts, Connecticut or Pennsylvania.

That trend seems to have been altered. "Today, we see a more dynamic form of mobility, where people will leave the country but also return home after a few years while remaining connected to their networks abroad," says Katrin Amian, Head of the North America, Australia, New Zealand, Oceania Division at Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Of course American universities continue to be magnets for international researchers, but over the past 15 years the German system has increased its attractiveness with valuable and strong networks and solid financial support for research projects. In fact, since the financial crisis and a noticeable decline in tenured positions at U.S. universities, Germany has become an interesting alternative for many researchers. "Germany is a place where you can find excellent research environments in many fields, from the humanities to the natural sciences, life sciences and engineering," explains Amian. But it is not only post-docs and established scientists who find German universities increasingly attractive. For students at both undergraduate and graduate levels Germany has become an interesting alternative. "When I first came to Germany as an au pair, I wasn’t thinking about attending university here," says Brigrid Casey, an American undergraduate majoring in art history at Freie Universität Berlin. "But when I heard how much – and should I say how little – it costs to study here, I immediately started learning German and attended a Studienkolleg, a special preparatory college, to qualify." Currently, she is working towards her bachelor’s degree and thinking about the future. “I miss my family but on the other hand I cannot imagine giving up the European lifestyle I have come to appreciate. And I also cannot see myself paying huge amounts of money for a good education or not having health insurance.”

Common bond of human dignity
Before moving to Berlin, Casey spent a year at the University of Maryland. But she felt underchallenged and at times even bored. Moving to Germany was a way to satisfy her curiosity and at the same time dive into a new culture and language. Today, she moves freely between American and German cultures, reflects on both and even mediates between them. Like so many of her peers and professors alike who have the privilege of oscillating between home and abroad she has become an ambassador for both sides building bridges and thus putting into practice what Senator James Fulbright once accurately described as a path to a peaceful global society when he said, “the rapprochement of peoples is only possible when differences of culture and outlook are respected and appreciated rather than feared and condemned, when the common bond of human dignity is recognized as the essential bond for a peaceful world.” Something we seem to need today more than ever.

German Jewish émigrés had a huge effect on U.S. innovation

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Reflecting on both cultures and mediating between them

By Tong-jin Smith

Places of excellence: Germany’s top alma mater Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich...
Free Trade in a Time of Populism
How nationalists threaten prosperity globally

By Siegfried Guterman

A century and a half following the publication of Das Kapital, Marxism is apparently every bit as topical as during the age of unbridled capitalism. And the idea of free trade – an important forerunner of Marxist theory advanced exactly 200 years ago – is under siege from left and right. In his 1817 work On The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, David Ricardo sought to lend the free exchange of goods a new theoretical foundation. It marked the departure from the mercantilist protectionism earlier espoused by absolutist monarchs. Sober analysis of cost advantages took the place of “my country first.” Today, however, populist isolationism appears to be back on the menu.

Isolationism and protectionism have become the bedrock of policy

The world’s first real bilateral free trade deal was reached between England and Portugal in 1353. The basic principle of such deals is a simple one: international trade is considered “free” when it is not subjected to trade barriers such as tariffs and export regulations or import quotas. The idea of free trade is based on the theoretical expectation that unrestricted trade benefits the prosperity of a country more than protectionism would. The advantages of free trade include improved efficiency (tariffs cause distortions in production and consumption), faster attainment of optimal sizes for companies through international competition, and innovation accelerated by competition.

Exchange of goods

The counter-movement of protectionism has its own logic, too. It was probably first expressed by the English king Edward III when he called on his subjects to wear only English cloth. He also acted according to those words and thereby stood up to the market dominance of Flemish woven fabrics. In the 19th century, mercantilism gave protectionism a theoretical framework. Then, the elevated price of French wine in Britain set the Scottish economist Adam Smith thinking about the tariff-free exchange of goods. His theory of absolute cost advantage was finally augmented by Ricardo’s analysis of comparative cost advantage. Through international free trade structures such as GATT in 1947 and the World Trade Organization since 1995, free trade has been institutionalized and expanded to include services and capital flows.

Yet the globalization crises of the early 21st century also brought to light the considerable downside risks of free trade. For smaller and weaker economies, especially in the developing world, free trade carries more risks than it does for industrialized states. Also, the often politically unstable developing states generally have little influence on the standards on which trade is based.

Through organizations such as Attac, criticism of free trade gained a voice and a face. It summarily declared classical trade theory irrelevant and replaced it with “strategic trade theory” that stresses the advantages of protectionist policy, for instance toward the pharmaceuticals industry. Globalization criticism has a curious attraction for both leftist and rightist politicians. It places national economic and social interests above global prosperity gains, which, it says, benefit only a small minority anyway. In France the economic policy ideas of the far-right Front National are nearly indistinguishable from those of the hard-left La France Insoumise. In Germany, too, has a top position in Trump’s fight against “unfair” trade practices. He seems to care little that his criticism of German carmakers is aimed mainly at BMW – itself the biggest car exporter in the U.S. The negatives and expenditures are two sides of the same coin. Trump pledges to build walls and highways and invest heavily in the US’s aging infrastructure. That finds support not only among the far right, but also among leftists and organized labor. The financial basis for all these plans is a $1 trillion project for the arsenal of trade wars: a gigantic tax cut. According to calculations by the independent Tax Policy Center, through 2025 more than half the cuts would benefit the wealthiest one percent of Americans – while U.S. state debt would rise in the coming ten years by $7 trillion. That equals about a quarter of America’s annual GDP.

In a study released in September, the respected Munich-based ifo Institute demonstrated that an isolationist U.S. would be harmful for all sides. A 20% tariff on all imports to the U.S. would result in drops of 40-90% among U.S. exports to most countries. In this globalized world, U.S. products are also made of components purchased on the open, global market. The competitiveness of U.S. industry would be massively weakened by higher import prices. U.S. GDP could fall by $25 billion. Germany would likewise feel negative effects, with GDP – which totaled nearly $3.5 trillion in 2016 – falling by as much as 12%. U.S. pledges of deficit spending and protectionist policies have come in for scathing criticism in the EU. An internal Brussels paper warns of the risks for the global economy posed by Trumponomics. A global trade war and global recession as in the 1930s could result. Trump’s exhortation to “buy American” would end in “bye-bye America” – something in no one’s interest.

By Siegfried Guterman

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Countering Populists with Democratic Culture

Perverted philosophy. Setting frameworks and roadblocks

By Rafael Seligmann

A specter is haunting the world. Its name is populism. People say it threatens democracy. That conclusion is largely correct. But before we go into the relationship between populism and democracy, first let’s nail down what that unclear term “populism” actually means.

Populism is derived from the Latin *populus*, or nation. But today, different politicians and parties are called populists. For example: Donald Trump, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Marine Le Pen, Viktor Orbán, Jaroslav Kaczyński, Władimir Putin, Geert Wilders, Peppe Grillo, Rodrigo Duterte, Alexander Gauland, etc. This incomplete list makes clear that highly contrasting personalities and political agendas are being put in a box together.

To understand what is happening politically today, we must arrive at a definition of “populism” that can function as the lowest common denominator. Observing politics worldwide, some similarities emerge. These include the strategy of playing on the population’s fears and, where fears do not or hardly exist, of sowing them anew and even deepening them. This way, the psychological reflexes of being curious about the unknown while exercising control are triggered. Simple fear. The native population is fed negative images of the putative threats emanating from minorities, migrants, and other states and told they are existential threats. Taboos are placed on the willingness to stand by one’s fellows. The commandment of compassion in all monotheistic religions is replaced by exclusion.

Idealistic philosophy

Populists claim to be the authentic representation of the majority’s interests. The concerns of the minority are dismissed or even condemned as a threat to the majority. Populists claim to know the majority’s putative national, religious, economic, and social interests. They determine the “enemy” and say how to fight it most effectively. This can reach the lengths taken by the “alt-right” in the U.S. supported and championed by Donald Trump, the “duce” in Italy’s fascists, was a fan of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who was given to “philosophizing with a hammer.” Nietzsche aspired to the ideal of a “superman”. That was no racial or biological attribute, however. It was a call for intellectual integrity and moral rectitude. Mussolini and his followers perverted this idealistic philosophy into the tailored ideology of fascism, which demanded: “Follow your duc unconditionally through all acts of cruelty. This way you will become a superman and serve the community.” Hitler and the Nazis took up the fascist prescription and added a quasi-biological dimension, morphing it into a “master race.”

Trump, Orbán, and Gauland are not Nazis. Yet the method of making the majority interest they themselves devised looked valuable in the service of society, together with its ruthless implementation at the expense of minorities, is taken straight out of the fascist playbook of totalitarian manipulation. The neo fascists understand that. It is why the “alt-right” in the U.S. supported and applauded Trump’s election to the presidency and his contradictory yet polarizing remarks regarding the far right protest in Charlottesville, Virginia.

In Germany, meanwhile, the brief history of the AfD shows how quickly a party can drift into the far-right spectrum. When it was founded in 2013 the AfD vowed to take up the mantle of freedom, dignity, and the economy achieved popularity on-again, off-again as in the U.S., Hungary, and Turkey. However, the example of the United States demonstrates that democratic institutions can place limitations on populism. Donald Trump failed in his efforts to restrict immigration from Muslim countries and dismantle the Affordable Care Act, known gener- ally as Obamacare. Democratic culture imposes a framework on Donald Trump, sets roadblocks in his path and restricts him largely to sloganeering. In Germany too, democratic parties, institutions and the postwar experience are showing their effectiveness. In the recent federal elections an overwhelming majority of voters cast their ballot against populism and radical nationalism. The Germans voted for freedom, dignity, and democracy. Among most people, populist slogans had no realistic chance.

Populists claim to know the majority’s putative national, religious, economic, and social interests of refugees from Syria and Afghanistan that began that same summer appeared to confirm the pre-nationalist course. From then on the AfD styled itself as the keeper of Germany’s national interests that, it said, had been betrayed by the German government. That was because Chancellor Merkel’s Conservatives and the Social Democrats had upheld the protection of human dignity and the right to asylum enshrined in the German constitution. The AfD vowed to take up the mantle of voice of the German people’s concerns. In fact, however, it was generating and amplifying the people’s fears of Islamic migrants who were, it said, threatening Germany’s inner security.

Emotions and anxieties

The emotions and anxieties that Petry had tapped into required ever more drastic slogans to remain active and influential, much in the same way that addicts require ever-stronger doses of their drug. Since Petry was unwilling to do this, however, she was pushed out by her own party allies. In the meantime she has announced to quit the party altogether. The AfD’s new leadership duo gives the radicals and fearful what they need. Also, one of the new leaders, Alexander Gauland, demanded that the ethnic Turkish politician Aydan Öztürk be “disposed of” in Anatolia. Rightwing radicals and neo-Nazis celebrated the dehumanization of a democratic female politician. It was a similar pattern in the U.S., Hungary, and Turkey. However, the example of the United States demonstrates that democratic institutions can place limitations on populism. Donald Trump failed in his efforts to restrict immigration from majority Muslim countries and dismantle the Affordable Care Act, known generally as Obamacare. Democratic culture imposes a framework on Donald Trump, sets roadblocks in his path and restricts him largely to sloganeering. In Germany too, democratic parties, institutions and the postwar experience are showing their effectiveness. In the recent federal elections an overwhelming majority of voters cast their ballot against populism and radical nationalism. The Germans voted for freedom, dignity, and democracy. Among most people, populist slogans had no realistic chance.

Democracy at work: March on Washington, 1963

“Alternative for Germany” mainly criticized the government’s financial policy. The AfD leadership around Bernd Lucke, a professor of macroeconomics, lamented Germany’s abandonment of its cherished currency, the D-mark, in favor of the allegedly softer joint Euro-