

VALUES, CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES

# Transatlantic Relations



Brooklyn Bridge was designed by German émigré Johann August Röbling

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 Dr. Rafael Seligmann had one 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



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 bet-

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, their number has steadily continued to grow. Today, there are about 100 communities whose more than

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

## 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, after a small initial community of Sephardic Jews, German-speaking Jews built many of its signature Jewish institutions and gave shape to their new country. In adapting and contributing to their new home, 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 allure 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.

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## US-GERMAN RELATIONS

# Don't Get Carried Away by Irrationalism

## Checks and balances are still working

By Daniel Killy

**W**e 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 rabbi, priest or pastor respectively – the others called for mercy in that last hour of civilization approaching. What is the issue here, Irma or any other major natural disaster? No. We are talking about an election and its outcome – 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 U.S., 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 got more voters, but do not blame it on Trump. By the way, all of the author's



Like American democracy, the Liberty Bell has weathered threats, and it has endured

hero 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 luck of

able 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 Flynns, Bannons, 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 farfetched. 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 fiercest 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 VOICE FROM GERMANY

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## American democracy rests on firmer foundations than that of Germany

American 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 know it. The reign 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 one big family of man. However, outside of the intellectual comfort zone of world peace and understanding, Obama's foreign policy record was one of the worst in modern history. His political legacy is still hazy and although he might be the unsung

Trump. In the multidimensional charade called politics, the one-dimensional bluntness of the candidate was refreshing for a good amount of voters disappointed with Washington's divorce from reality. Therefore, Donald Trump was not just a product of the Rust Belt's redneck revolution – he was the logical consequence of a presidential system running on its own.

That being said, Germany remained in total shock. Losing all of their diplomatic distance, politicians of various colors expressed their disgust and disappointment over the election's outcome – totally ignoring the democratic result of a free and fair election. No one gave Trump the benefit of the doubt, and doubtlessly, the president behaved like a bull in a china shop. Chaos in the White House, the Free West without a leader, Merkel as the new leader of the free world, there were zillions of premature headlines in German and European papers. If Trump's first year in office were a movie, a proper title would be "The Rage of the Clichés." Nearly all of public Germany was paralyzed by the bluntness and the lack of manners Trump consistently showed. However, no one ever considered the fact that American democracy is resting on a firmer foundation than Germany. No one is

## 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 yards away from sites where the Holocaust was planned, centers of darkness and evil. Yet we had made a conscious decision to celebrate our daughter's wedding in Berlin. Because we are here to stay. Because we believe in Berlin, we believe in the future and we believe in the people and there is no better way than being here. And there is hardly a more powerful message that Jewish life is here to stay than a wedding.

But let's look back. In the summer of 1996, Leah and I were packing our bags to move to Berlin. We were very excited to come here as Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), the Lubavitcher Rebbe, had lived in Berlin before the Second World War. Moreover, the Teichtal family has roots in Germany dating back some 500 years. Many members of my family were killed in the Holocaust. I was born in the U.S., and Germany was far to us, it was not something we related to neither individually nor as the Jewish community. But the Rebbe said that we should not ignore Germany. We should go there and build up with the people there. When I told my grandfather, a Holocaust survivor, that we were off to Berlin, he hesitated for a split second. Then he blessed me and said: "You have to go, Yehuda. It is God's will. And our answer to the greatest atrocity in the history of mankind. Go." So Leah and I got a one-way-ticket. We arrived in Berlin in August 1996. And we have never looked back. Berlin is our home.

## Bring out the good

"Build ye houses and dwell in them." 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 the kindergarten. You see them playing, learning, Jewish children discussing Jewish thought. Our tradition lives.



“We must step out, reach out to others, fulfill our responsibility in this society because we are here to stay

Right here in Berlin. I am deeply touched during the services at the synagogue we built, at each bar and bat mitzvah ceremony. I am deeply touched when I see our young students engrossed in debate at our student's center. I am deeply touched when I see Leah baking challot with 150 women. Recently, we distributed food packages to over 1,000 families from socially weak backgrounds to help them through the High Holidays – that's what Yiddishkeit is all about.

I am deeply touched when each December we light the big Hannukiah at the Brandenburg Gate. And I am deeply touched when I open the Siddur we have just published, complete with new German translation and transliteration which guides us through 362 days of the year – the prayer book for the High Holidays, Rosh Ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, will make a separate volume.

## Memorials not sufficient

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 AfD party in Germany.

But: we are not disheartened by this. Rather, it shows us how important it is that we are here, integrated in society and proud of our heritage. Some say we should do less, we should not say that we are Jews, we should not have our Jewish Parade on the holiday of Lag Ba-Omer, we should not make ourselves heard because then we would be accepted more. No. 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 even 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.

"It's schwer zu seyn a Jid", he said. "No," I answered: "It is good to be a Jew. The secret of Judaism is education. 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 an identity. We must give them a strong, clear Jewish identity.

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 historic responsibility towards 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 make it very clear to any refugee who comes to Germany that part of the package of responsibility is to respect religious freedom, respect others, respect the Jewish past and the Jewish present in this country. We must make this clear from the beginning – one does not have a second chance to make a first impression. But let's also be clear about this: We Jews must be vigilant, awake: but that does not mean we have to hide ourselves. On the contrary, we must step out, reach out to others, fulfill our responsibility in this society. Because we are here to stay.

Soon we will be laying the foundation stone for the Jewish Campus here in Berlin. It will rest on three pillars: education, culture and recreation. The

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

building will house a nursery, a kindergarten, a state recognized elementary and high school for more than 400 children. The cultural center will comprise a movie hall and a dance room. And we will have a state-of-the-art sports arena. The building in the heart of Berlin will be transparent, open, inviting everybody to join us. Two thirds of the funds have been raised so far. We are building again in Berlin, in Germany. Because we are here to stay. ■



# Letter From Philadelphia

By Itai Abelski

The German Jewish view of relations with the United States might differ from mainstream perspective. Born and raised in Germany, I remember throughout my upbringing a particularly positive perspective on the U.S. This is due to the fact that I come from a family of Holocaust survivors liberated by the U.S. Army, with a father born in a DP Camp that was both established and operated by U.S. Allied Armed Forces. As a child, I had this idea of a country of “endless opportunity.” This particularly positive perception is reflected in the gift my brother and I each received for our Bar Mitzvah: a trip across America. Here was my chance to verify my assumptions... But I was 13 years old at the time and probably didn't quite grasp the characteristics of U.S. society and culture.

A few years later, I moved from Germany to Israel. Here, I gained a whole perspective on the U.S., in part through new friendships with American Jews who had recently immigrated to Israel. I started to learn more about the history of U.S.-Israeli relations and the strong alliance

between the two countries. I also learned about the lively Jewish communities there and slowly started to get the feeling this was a place where being Jewish would be anything but extraordinary. This was something I had been yearning for during my upbringing in Germany, where being Jewish meant carrying a heavy load.

During my studies in Israel, I finally got the chance to really discover the U.S. for the first time. I moved to California, to be an exchange student in UC Berkeley's economics department. Post-college, I settled in Zurich, Switzerland, and after a couple of years as an associate in banking, I decided to move to the U.S. to pursue an MBA. Currently, I am in my second year at Wharton School, studying for a double degree in International Studies through the Lauder Institute. The recent heated U.S. presidential election campaign made me want to learn more about the internal workings of the U.S. While the American dream is aspired to by so many, it seems to be unattainable for the majority of Americans.



Itai Abelski (Private)

Furthermore, the equality gap has continuously been increasing over the last decades, a development that is detrimental to the health of any society. I am also concerned about the ongoing racial tensions. The recent nationalistic rallies are just a small indication of develop-

ments in which African Americans, Muslims, and Jews share the same side of the coin. While the U.S. is unique in its ability to unify all its citizens under one flag and instill national pride among all, regardless of differences, the image of “the American” is actually built of individuals between whom traces of discrimination still persist. As a first step, societal tensions need to be addressed more openly, since only a society of open and healthy debate will gain the strength it requires to unite around common values.

Therefore, a strong stance must be taken against all forces threatening the values of an inclusive, open, and caring society and hopefully the administration will remember the weakest of its citizens, who deserve its attention the most. ■

## German Jews in America

**PAGE 1** The years following the Civil War provided great visibility for German Jews in America. Many working in textiles went on to become major manufacturers, buyers, and bankers. Others opened grand shopping emporiums that reflected not only their success as immigrants but their status as Americans.

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

### Philanthropic muscle

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 largely reinforced by their surroundings. Socially and symbolically, German Jews had become an 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 philanthropic muscle, and many became leaders of aid societies and benevolent organizations. Philanthropic entities were created to assist Jews in need, including the American Jewish Commit-



Tobacco store, 1880

tee founded by Oscar Straus, Jacob Schiff, and Cyrus Sulzberger to raise funds for victims of anti-Jewish pogroms in Tsarist Russia.

In August of 1914, Henry Morgenthau, a German-Jewish immigrant to America, was serving as U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. With the outbreak of World War I, Jews in Ottoman-ruled Palestine were cut off from their traditional sources of support in the European Jewish community. In response, Morgenthau immediately sent a telegram to his friend Jacob Schiff that prompted an outpouring of aid to Jews in Palestine. Subsequent pleas for help from war-torn Europe led to the founding in New York of the

Joint Distribution Committee of American Funds for the Relief of Jewish War Sufferers.

After World War I, German cultural ideals and influences endured. Reform and Conservative Judaism remained forces in American religion and Jewish life. Many families of immigrant industrialists, bankers, philanthropists, and intellectuals remained influential throughout the 20th century. The ideals of *Bildung* – openness, self-education, and reflection – helped create a shared language for the Jewish community for decades to come.

Like the German Jews who arrived before them, the émigrés and refugees who escaped Nazi Germany during the Holocaust brought their education, skills, and knowledge with them to America. They contributed to American society, often shaping 20th century culture by combining European approaches with distinctly American modes.

Most German intellectuals who escaped from the Third Reich moved to major urban centers such as New York City and Los Angeles. Certain institutions, such as the New School for Social Research in New York City, Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, or Black Mountain College in rural North Carolina, became hubs for



Jacob Schiff (1847–1920)

émigré intellectuals. Others found academic positions in universities across America, with many teaching in historically black colleges. Refugees established new organizations to help each other, and built organizations and businesses to serve as cultural, social, and spiritual homes for their fellow émigrés. The *Aufbau* newspaper served as a worldwide communication link.

In the United States, émigré scholars and artists were once again outsiders. They had German accents and upbringings. They were new immigrants in a new land. They were often uncomfortable in their new settings, and they sometimes encountered prejudice or bias in America as well. Nevertheless, they managed to become active participants in American cultural and intellectual life. Their insider/outsider status helped to fuel their creativity and achievements, often blending European approaches and new American priorities.

As a country of immigrants, the United States has provided opportunities for German Jews to live and prosper from the 18th century to today. Their German backgrounds combined with America's culture allowed them to seek new opportunities for innovation and encouraged further exploration and originality. As much as America had an impact on German Jews, clearly German Jews have contributed much to America. ■

William H. Weitzer is Executive Director of the Leo Baeck Institute-New York | Berlin

### LETTER FROM GERMANY

## World Famous in Berlin

Mike Cullen was born in New York in 1939 and has lived in Berlin since 1964 (minus two years military service). He is best known for having suggested, in 1971, to Christo and Jeanne-Claude that they wrap the Reichstag; thanks to his efforts the project was realized in 1995.



Michael Cullen (Private)

Although I have been honored by Berlin and the President of Germany for the Reichstag project, there are other things I am proud of. In 1983, I published a history of the Reichstag building, the first attempt about a building Germans held almost sacred. When some asked me why an American wrote about it, I replied that they should ask Germans why they hadn't.

A few days after the fall of the Berlin Wall, an East Berlin landmarks conservator asked for my help in restoring the Brandenburg Gate – BG – and quadriga, built between 1786 and 1793, an even greater symbol of German history. The BG is in Mitte district, entirely in East Berlin until the wall fell, under the control of East Germany and closed to all traffic. It was an offer I couldn't turn down. My fondest memory of working on the BG was suggesting a way to have the quadriga restored in West Berlin in March, 1990. The situation: East Germany still existed; much of the Wall still stood, with the BG behind it. Almost since it was put up in 1793, people thought it was of bronze – it was, however, wrought copper, and as such couldn't be ‘exported’ to the West. Moreover, the giant figures – four horses, a ‘goddess’ – were too large to fit through Checkpoint Charlie. I suggested that the crane operator lift the figures and let them down on the west side of the wall – no ‘export’ and no problems with Checkpoint Charlie. And that's the way we did it.

Until 1978, I operated an art gallery in Berlin (West). As a Jew, I had naively chosen to work in a profession which was known before Hitler to have been a Jewish domain: Jewish art dealers, artists thought, were always successful in trading in art. Artists came to me asking me to show them or at least represent them. I couldn't possibly show or represent them all, and before long I developed a metric for my choices and, out of necessity, a very thick skin. I learned to say ‘no.’ It saved me from trivial choices, and the gallery gained a reputation. It had nothing to do with fame. One of West-Berlin's most beloved entertainers, Harald Juhnke, was unknown in Hannover, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Munich – in fact, all over Germany. He knew his worth: “I'm world famous – in West-Berlin!” That fits me too – ‘to a T.’

Berlin is anything but parochial. It's not who you are or what you believe, it's about what you can do. If I've been successful, I attribute it to a combination of Jewish pragmatism and Berlin's openness. ■

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## ACADEMIA

# The Best of Both Worlds

How science and education build bridges across cultures



Places of excellence: Germany's top alma mater Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich ...

By Tong-Jin Smith

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 pedagogics – 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 (1895–1973), and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) 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

“**Reflecting on both cultures and mediating between them**”

training a new generation of American scientists, who then became productive researchers in their own rights”, says Petra 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 31 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 tenure track. As a result, many 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 2008 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 Brigid Casey, an American undergraduate majoring in art history at Freie Universität Berlin. “But when I heard how much – or should I say how little – it costs to study here, I im-

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

mediately 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 European or 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. ■

Tong-Jin Smith is an American lecturer and journalist in Berlin. She works for the Jewish Voice from Germany



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## WORLD ECONOMY

# 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*, Marx 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.

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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.

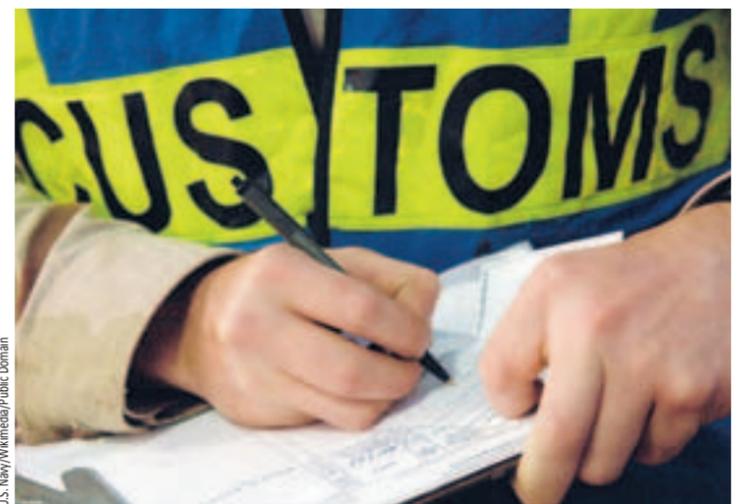
### Exchange of goods

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 18th 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 in-

ternational 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, protectionist ideas have found their way into the platform of both the Left Party and the rightwing populist AfD. However, in a country proud of



U.S. Navy/Wikimedia/Public Domain

calling itself an export world champion and definitely belonging to the beneficiaries of free trade, these ideas do not have much purchase.

The U.S. is a completely different story. With Donald Trump, isolationism, protectionism, and nationalist self-exaltation have become the bedrock of policy. Trump has begun renegotiating trade deals and says he would otherwise tear them up. He has threatened a whole series of states with punitive tariffs. Trump’s chief economic punching bag is China. He says the country manipulates its currency and steals American jobs. Or, in his own vernacular, “China is killing us.” One of his core campaign pledges is to change that. Another country in Trump’s protectionist crosshairs is Mexico, and with it the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Germa-

ny, 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.

Isolationist policies 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 classic weapon from 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 2017, 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 40-50% 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 \$250 billion. Germany would likewise feel negative effects, with GDP – which totaled nearly \$3.5 trillion in 2016 – falling by as much as 22%.

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. ■

